

NEWS OF MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Wetaskiwin Financial Difficulties—Regina Utilities Show Deficit—Moose Jaw Finances in Good Shape

Niagara Falls, Ont.—The Hydro Commission appealed at the Court of Revision, held at Niagara Falls last week, against its assessment on other than land values on the Ontario Power Company plant. It asked for exemption from taxation from all except land values. The appeal was disallowed.

Montreal, Que.—The city will apply to the provincial legislature at the next session for certain amendments to its charter, included amongst which are the following matters: Sale of immovables for taxes; taxes for local improvements, pavings and sidewalks; annual budget; taxes on public utility companies; taxation system; debentures, bonds or registered stock of the city placed in its sinking fund.

London, Ont.—A statement just issued by the London and Port Stanley Railway Commission shows that operating expenses for the years 1916, 1917, 1918 and 1919 were \$180,000, \$207,356, \$223,389 and \$307,815, respectively. For the same years the pay-rolls were \$102,633, \$142,984, \$147,769 and \$199,697. The gross incomes for the four years were \$100,438, \$109,329, \$114,254 and \$148,915. The total surplus for the four years of operation was \$99,612.

New Westminster, B.C.—Alderman Johnston, chairman of the finance committee, has submitted a statement in connection with tax receipts. This statement records a total collection of \$385,384, made up as follows: Land tax, \$322,775; local improvement, \$62,609. This is an increase of \$45,000 over the same period of last year, the increase being \$25,000 on land and \$20,000 on local improvement. Alderman Johnston reported that the city sold \$450,000 debentures for \$462,640, and that this sum was then invested in Victory bonds of the 15-year term.

Wetaskiwin, Alta.—The town has applied to the Alberta Finances Commission for advice as to how to secure an extension of time for the payment of the municipal debt. The Alberta Finances Commission is the body charged with the administration of the Act passed at the last session of the Legislature to assist municipalities which are in financial difficulty. As a result of Wetaskiwin's application, the interested bond dealers and bond holders held a meeting in Toronto on November 19th, and further meetings this week, to discuss their position. At the latter meetings, Mr. Nash, who is secretary of the commission, was present.

Moose Jaw, Sask.—The financial statement of the city for the first ten months of the year has just been issued. The report shows excess revenue over expenditure of \$125,119, revenue amounting to \$1,072,389, and expenditure to \$947,270. The balance sheet shows that total assets are \$8,490,938, and total liabilities, \$5,990,232, a surplus of \$2,500,705. Tax collections were \$568,986, and tax arrears \$595,783. The tax rate this year is 22.8 mills.

The net debt of the city at 31st October was \$5,129,571 as compared with \$5,107,296 at the same period last year. The only debentures sold during the year were a \$10,000 issue for the Children's Home to the sinking fund trustees and a \$206,000 issue for electric and power extensions to Messrs. Wood, Gundy and Co.

The sinking fund, for the purpose of redeeming the debenture debt of the city, has increased from \$654,273 to \$832,920. Since 1914 moneys were only paid into the sinking fund as the taxes were collected, but this year the city borrowed money from its bankers in order, as far as possible, to bring sinking fund payments up to date, and the city is only behind in its payments the sum of \$1,651, and as an offset to this the surplus earnings in the sinking fund amount to \$65,371.

Regina, Sask.—The financial report of the city has just been issued by the city commissioners for the ten months ended October 31st, 1919. The statement of assessment is given as follows: Realty, \$42,858,650; improvements, \$7,948,970; business and income, \$4,596,280; property exemptions, \$13,981,510; taxable assessment, \$41,422,390; total assessment, \$55,403,900. The bonded debt at October 31st was

\$10,917,324 and the debt per capita \$296.75. Debentures authorized and unissued amounted to \$114,084.

The total tax levy for the year is \$1,433,575, exclusive of local improvement taxes, and is made up as follows: General levy, \$898,905; public schools, \$350,851; separate schools, \$39,149; collegiate, \$61,773; public library, \$22,650; public revenue tax, \$62,247. The general or municipal levy includes provision of \$99,522 for the deficit of 1918.

A further statement which follows shows the arrears of taxes to date, including school taxes, etc. The item for 1918 taxes, \$222,291, will be reduced below \$30,000 by the tax sale being held this month. The statement also includes \$765,928 current taxes not yet paid. Of the total amount, \$1,243,697, the sum of \$442,569 is in respect to schools and other outside authorities.

The statement of general revenue and expense of the city for the ten months ending October 31st last shows a deficit of \$28,438, including the utilities deficit of \$7,708. The actual expenditure for the ten months was \$780,591, compared with the estimate of \$757,210 and the estimate of \$908,652 for the whole year. Actual revenue totalled \$752,153, compared with the estimate of \$746,125. It was estimated that there would be a utilities surplus of \$11,084.

The amount to the credit of the sinking fund is as follows:—

On deposit in Bank of Montreal October 31st....	\$ 113,789
Balance of 1919 levy due by city of Regina as of	
October 31st, 1919	47,655
Investments—Book value	1,659,142
Interest accrued on investment	59,324
	\$1,879,910

Montreal, Que.—Taxpayers of the city will be called upon to provide over \$20,000,000 for administration and the payment of interest on its debt during the coming year. The actual figure as given out is \$20,850,999 as compared with \$18,944,850 last year. The taxes that they will impose, however, to raise this sum will not be any greater than they were last year, with the exception that the charge for snow removal on sidewalks has been increased from seven cents to ten cents per lineal foot of property facing on the sidewalk that is maintained. The realty tax will remain at \$1.35 for the city generally, except for Maisonneuve, where the tax is \$2.50, as fixed by the charter for a period of fifteen years. The two special taxes of 25 cents each which were formerly imposed on Maisonneuve were removed by the Legislature at the last session, but, despite this loss of a 50-cent tax, the commission have been able, by economies effected in various departments and by the increase in the assessable value of the city, to make both ends practically meet with the same tax as last year. Their estimated revenue for 1920 is \$20,504,173, which leaves a deficit of \$346,826, but it is anticipated that this deficit will be covered by the supplementary budget made up of arrears of revenue received after the close of the civic financial year.

The general summary of the budget provides for the payment of \$6,985,296 for interest on the city debt, an increase of \$63,487 over the total provided for the current year. The school tax is also considerably increased, the figure being \$4,552,278, an addition of \$571,087 over the present revenue collected by the city and handed over to the school commissions. The estimate for the reserve fund is \$615,125, an increase of \$46,780 over the current year. The possible losses in collection of revenue is put at \$160,000, which is \$10,000 more than for the present year.

The new taxes that it is proposed to impose in addition to the realty tax are a surtax of 1 per cent. on water companies' property and 5 per cent. on other public utility companies, 10 cents per lineal foot for snow removal on sidewalks, 8½ per cent. business tax, 6 per cent. water tax, and a variety of licenses and permits, the same as last year. Before the budget comes to the city council in detail, the commission will probably issue a statement showing the economies that have been effected during the past year, and how the money has had to be expended in increased wages and cost of materials and other expenses incurred for the better administration of the city.