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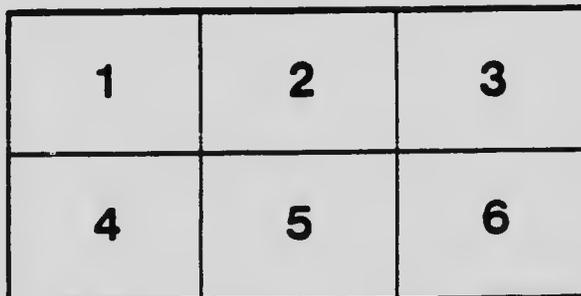
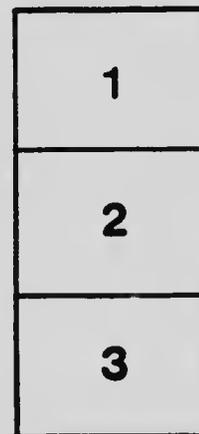
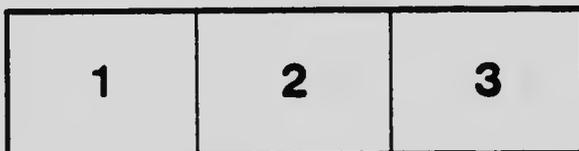
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THE FINANCIAL CONDITION AND NEEDS
OF THE
PROTESTANT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OF MONTREAL.

570-



PUBLISHED
BY ORDER OF THE BOARD,
MAY, 1908.

MONTREAL, May, 1908.

In view of the public interest which has lately been manifested in the question of protection from fire in the public schools, the Protestant Board of School Commissioners of the City of Montreal desires to place before its constituents a statement of its position, its needs, and its policy in that department of its work which relates to its school buildings

The territory of the Board includes the whole of the City of Montreal with the exception of St. Henri and Ste. Cunegonde Wards, and portions of St. Denis and St. Mary's Wards formerly known as Villeray and Rosemount. Within these limits the Board is charged with the duty of providing, as far as its means will allow, elementary and secondary education for the children of all Protestant and Jewish residents. For purposes of elementary education this area is divided into fifteen school districts, each provided with a school building. For purposes of secondary education three schools have been established, the High School of Montreal, the High School for Girls, and the Commercial and Technical High School. The first two of these occupy one building, and have attached to them classes of elementary grades. Of the seventeen school houses, sixteen are the property of the Board, and one, the Belmont Street School, is rented from the Provincial Government. It is impossible to deny in the face of recent experience, that in each of these buildings the occupants are exposed to certain dangers, greater or

less arising out of the risk of fire. These dangers may be classified as follows :—

1. The danger from flame.
2. The danger of suffocation.
3. The danger from crushing in panic.
4. The danger from the collapse of the floors or roof.

The means which have so far been taken to guard against these risks include both preventive and protective measures. As preventing the beginning or the spreading of a fire, the following precautions have been taken :—

In all schools, the supply of kindling wood has been removed from the vicinity of the furnaces, and placed beyond the reach of the pupils. The furnace-rooms have been made as nearly fireproof as possible in the circumstances. Suitable metal receptacles have been provided for waste paper. Chemical fire extinguishers have been placed in all basements, cookery rooms, and manual training rooms, and also in such other places as have been indicated by the City Building Inspector. The last four of the Board's buildings, the Commercial and Technical High, the Sarah Maxwell Memorial, the Earl Grey, and the new Ann Street Schools, have been made fireproof.

The arrangements made for the preservation of the lives of the pupils and teachers in the event of fire consist of the installation of special fire alarm boxes in all the larger schools, the hanging of the doors of exit so as to open outwards, the adoption of an organized system of fire-drill, frequently practiced, and in all schools of two or more stories, the provision of canvas chutes to serve as a means

of escape in the event of the occupants of a class-room or an upper story being unable to reach the ground by the ordinary exits. In addition to these, three of the school buildings are provided with outside iron fire escapes, one other, in which the need appeared to be urgent, is about to be similarly equipped, and one, the new Ann Street School, now in course of erection, will contain inside fireproof stairways, separate and distinct from the ordinary staircases, and each connected only with three intercommunicating class-rooms at the top, and with the street or the school yard at the bottom. As supplementing these arrangements, there has been a widespread demand upon the part of certain residents for the immediate erection of broad outside iron galleries completely surrounding the buildings, communicating with all the rooms of the first and second stories, and connected with the ground by iron staircases. The advocates of this system, which is not in general use in other cities, seem to have overlooked some of the facts of the case. A bill is now before the Quebec Legislature defining more exactly than does the present law, the character of the fire escapes to be provided, and until this bill becomes operative, it is quite uncertain whether or not any system which might now be adopted would conform to the requirements of the future law. It is probable that some liberty of action will still be left to the School Board, and in their choice of the style of fire escape, the Commissioners should in the discharge of their duty, consult the best expert opinion obtainable, including that of the principals of their schools, who are familiar

with school conditions and limitations, and who will be required to make frequent use of the new apparatus for purposes of practice. It may be remarked in passing that as the danger from crushing in panic is obviously lessened as the number of separate exits to the street is increased, the plan adopted in the new Ann Street School seems to offer advantages in this respect at least. That building will contain on the first floor six class-rooms each accommodating about fifty pupils. These have been provided with intercommunicating doors so arranged that three rooms in the front and three in the back of the building have access both to the common corridor and to one or other of two special fireproof staircases, communicating with the school yard or the street. Not more than one hundred and fifty pupils will, therefore, be obliged to use any one exit in the event of fire. At the present moment all the school buildings of the Board are equipped with fire escapes in accordance with the terms of the law, and this fact is attested by the certificate of the City Building Inspector. The Commissioners do not administer their trust without regard to these moral obligations which include much more than compliance with the letter of the law, and if, at the present moment, active steps are being taken only in the most urgent cases, the reason is to be found in the uncertainty of future legal requirements, and in the limitations imposed by their present financial condition. Whatever may be the advantages or disadvantages of any system of fire escapes applied to the school buildings generally, it is quite safe to say that its installation

would be costly, and it is equally certain that the necessary funds are neither in hand nor in sight, so long, at least, as the income of the Board is not increased from a new source, or so long as its present scale of expenditure remains undiminished. This fact will be evident from an examination of the following summarized statement of revenue and expenditure upon income account for the year ending June 30th, 1907:—

REVENUE.

City School Tax.....	\$298,267 07
Government Grant.....	6,014 41
School Fees.....	43,660 73
Other Income.....	1,673 71
	<hr/>
	\$349,615 92

EXPENDITURE.

		Percentage of Income.
Interest and Sinking Fund.....	\$ 57,548 60	16.46
Salaries.....	219,254 61	62.71
Stationery.....	5,746	1.65
Fuel.....	12,361	3.54
Repairs.....	17,853 39	5.10
Water, light, printing, rent and miscellaneous expenses.....	21,672 19	6.20
Subsidy to McGill Model Schools...	6,292 28	1.80
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance available towards capital requirements.....	\$340,729 09	97.46
	8,886 83	2.54
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$349,615 92	100.00

The narrow margin of income thus shown was chargeable under the terms of the law, with the expenditure necessary for the purchase of furniture, and as this item amounted last year to \$13,529.53 there was an actual deficit of \$4,642.70 as the result of the year's operations. The prospects for the current year are scarcely more promising, and it appears quite clear that in 1908-09, when the four new school buildings now in course of erection, will be occupied, a considerable additional annual expenditure will be necessary for their maintenance. Nor does the necessity for school accommodation end even here. Of the four school buildings now in progress, two merely replace other buildings destroyed by fire, one is an addition to an existing school, and the fourth will serve as the successor of a smaller and much dilapidated structure. The increased number of school places thus obtained will satisfy only the present needs of the immediate localities, while already congestion exists in at least two others. The Dufferin School is crowded to its utmost capacity, and no further extension is possible, while in Aberdeen School the attendance is actually above the class-room accommodation. In these and other schools, seats can be found for the junior pupils now in attendance only by doubling the use of some of the rooms, one half-day class occupying it during the morning, while another attends in the afternoon, an arrangement which is certainly undesirable in the educational interests of the latter class. The necessity of providing more school accommodation has always been before the Commissioners as a problem

of annual recurrence since the organization of the Board. In the early days of its history school places could only be provided for those districts in which the need appeared most urgent, and considerable sections of the city were entirely without Protestant public school houses as lately as 1885. Of the sixteen buildings now belonging to the Board thirteen have been erected, and two entirely rebuilt since that time. A very considerable part of this work has been done within the last four years, and since the 1st of July, 1904, a sum of upwards of \$640,000 has been expended by the Board in the erection of the Commercial and Technical High, the Sarah Maxwell Memorial, the Earl Grey, and the new Ann Street Schools, and in the enlargement of the Aberdeen, Dufferin, Lansdowne, Mount Royal, and Riverside Schools.

As illustrating the need for the increased school accommodation thus provided, it may be stated that the average attendance rose from 8,011 in 1903-04 to 10,073 in 1906-07, an increase of 2,062 pupils, or more than twenty-five per cent in three years. It appears probable that the growth of the population of Montreal will continue at an accelerating rate. Even if the numerical increase is merely maintained in the future, it will be sufficiently great to require the annual addition to the system of a new school house capable of accommodating 700 pupils, or of equivalent extensions of the existing buildings. An additional difficulty exists in the fact that the Belmont Street School, which has an attendance of nearly 600 pupils, is housed in a building leased from the Provincial Govern-

ment up to August 1910 only. If at the end of that time the owners should decide to sell the property, it is difficult to see where the requisite accommodation could be found elsewhere.

So far, the funds necessary for building purposes, with the exception of some \$14,000 received as insurance, have been provided by the issue of bonds, the interest and sinking fund upon which now form a heavy first charge upon the income of the Board. The amount retained by the City Treasurer from the City School Tax upon this account during 1906-07 was \$57,548.60, or more than sixteen per cent of the Board's entire income. As each school building erected or enlarged involves either an entirely new or an increased charge for ordinary maintenance in addition to the interest and sinking fund upon its cost, it is scarcely surprising that the annual increase in the income yielded by the City School Tax has failed to keep pace with the double demands made upon it both upon income and capital accounts. This is especially evident when the large foreign immigration into the city is taken into consideration. At the present moment, and in view of the deficit in income of 1906-07, the Board is certainly not in a position to undertake further heavy disbursements either for new school houses, though two at least are urgently needed, or for the addition of any costly system of fire escapes to its existing buildings. If new burdens are to be assumed, one or other of two courses must be taken, for no third is possible. Either the income of the Board must be increased, or its expenditure must be

diminished. A glance at the statement of disbursements will show that one item only, that of salaries, is sufficiently large to suggest even the possibility of serious reduction, and this possibility will scarcely present itself a second time to the minds of those who are acquainted with the facts of the case. So long as the scale of salaries of any class of teachers is below the level of the living wage, as is now the case in Montreal, and so long as some recognition is given to differences in amount and in difficulty of work, it will be quite impossible to seek relief in this direction. The alternative is an increase of revenue. The income of the Board arises from three sources, the City School Tax, the grant made by the Provincial Government, and the fees of the three High Schools. School fees in the elementary schools, so far as Protestant and Jewish residents are concerned, were abolished in 1904 by Act of Parliament. It would be possible to re-impose them if the consent of the Legislature could be obtained to what would certainly be regarded as a retrograde measure, but the amount which could annually be collected from this source would be quite insufficient to meet the needs of the case. The probability of any increase in the Government grant to the City Schools is too remote to demand notice, and the only possible source of additional income is, therefore, an increase in the rate of the City School Tax. As has been already stated, the constantly increasing strain placed upon the Board's income by the annual requirements for interest and sinking fund upon its bonds has reached the breaking point, and it is now

suggested that permanent relief should be given by the imposition of a small special tax for building purposes only, as is done in Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Toronto. At present, an addition of one mill to the Protestant and neutral panels of the school tax would relieve the Board of the necessity of providing for its capital requirements out of its ordinary income.

In the present circumstances the duty of the School Commissioners seems plain. It is their intention to present at the next session of the Provincial Legislature a bill for the imposition of an additional school tax to provide for the interest and sinking fund upon the bonds representing their capital expenditure. If, in the meantime, it should become necessary to expend any considerable sum in the erection of fire escapes under the terms of the bill now before Parliament, it is quite certain, in the face of the deficit of last year, that the funds cannot be provided out of the ordinary income. A temporary loan to be repaid from the proceeds of a new issue of bonds or the placing of a mortgage upon the school buildings will be the only resource. The addition thus made to the capital liability will still further increase the annual charge for interest and sinking fund, already unduly high.

It is quite probable that any proposal to augment the rate of school taxation will meet with opposition before the Legislature. The issue is, however, perfectly plain. As the entire annual income of the Board is now required for the maintenance of the existing schools, and as no

margin is available for future building requirements, it follows as a matter of course that the public must either supply further funds for this purpose or rest content with such accommodation as is afforded by the present buildings. The determination not to submit to increased taxation carries with it of necessity the deliberate acceptance of the latter alternative, involving the exclusion for lack of room of the large number of pupils representing the growth of the population. Should this result follow, the responsibility will rest, not upon the School Board, but upon those who refuse it the funds necessary for the extension of its work.

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