

LEGISLATURE OF ONTARIO.

SECOND PARLIAMENT—THIRD SESSION.

Feb 13

The Speaker took the chair at three o'clock.

Mr. DEROCHE presented the fifth report of the Standing Orders Committee, which was adopted.

BILLS INTRODUCED.

The following Bills were introduced:—

Mr. Bethune—To incorporate the London Junction Railway Company.

Mr. Oliver—To incorporate the North Simcoe Junction Railway Company.

Mr. Bethune—To incorporate the London Junction Railway Company.

Mr. Rykert—To amend the indenture between the London and Port Stanley Railway Company and the Great Western Railway

Mr. Hardy—To consolidate and amend the charter of the Norfolk Railway.

Mr. Merriek—To incorporate the Loyal Orange Association of Eastern Ontario.

Mr. Hodgins—To amend the Act 36 Vic, cap. 128, entitled an Act to incorporate the Toronto Fuel Association.

Mr. O'Donoghue—To authorize the Corporation of the City of Ottawa to widen Broad-street in the said city.

Mr. Meredith—To incorporate the London Life Insurance Company.

Mr. Wood—To authorize the Church-wardens of St. Paul's, Lindsay, to sell certain lands.

Mr. Deroche—To amend the Act respecting the Credit Valley Railway Company.

Mr. Prince—To extend the time for the completion of the Sandwich and Windsor Railway.

Also—Respecting a concession line in Sandwich East, County of Essex.

Hon. Mr. Currie—Respecting limitations of actions and suits relating to mortgage sales, and provide a mode to conduct future mortgage sales.

Mr. Farewell—To incorporate the Ontario Central Railway Company.

Mr. Clarke (Norfolk)—To confirm by-law 191 of the County of Perth.

Mr. Caldwell—To incorporate the Huron and Ottawa Railway.

Mr. Gifford—To vest certain lands in the High School Board of the town of Cobourg, and to empower it to sell the same.

Mr. Deacon—To incorporate the Loyal Orange Association of Western Ontario.

Mr. Sinclair—To enable the trustees of the Regular Baptist Church in Toronto to sell certain property.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS.

Mr. WILLIAMS, of Durham, moved that the petition presented to the House for the incorporation of the Hamilton Exchange be received, and referred to the Committee on Standing Orders.

Mr. RYKERT said that if this petition were received it would open the door to other petitions, the promoters of which had been told they could not be received.

After some discussion, Hon. Mr. MOWAT said it would be inexpedient to allow any more private Bills to be received, for the reason that a great many others would have to be received.

THE ASSESSMENT LAW.

Hon. Mr. CROOKS, in moving the second reading of the Bill to amend the Assessment Act, said he proposed, in explaining the extent to which the Government felt justified in assuming to deal with the question of local assessment, to touch briefly upon the questions which in truth underlie some of the proposed amendments, and especially that which related to the alteration in the assessment of bank stock. He did not propose to offer any observations which were not entirely pertinent to the amendments proposed by the Bill before the House. He knew that the general question of taxation was an extremely complicated one, and difficult to deal with—one of the questions upon which political economists and whole communities have differed and continue to differ. There was probably the widest difference of practice with regard to the matter of taxation in the two communities of England and the United States. The Bill assumed to deal with local taxation entirely, and, therefore, he would content himself with simply endeavouring to lay down some limit which should guide legislation in such municipalities as might have occasion to discuss it. The general principle applicable to the system of taxation proposed was, that every person who enjoys the benefit of general government should contribute to its maintenance in the same proportion; or, in other words, that the amount of taxation which a man pays for the support of the General Government, was an equivalent for the benefits he derived from its administration. The same principle was applicable to Local Government, except, of course, in smaller proportion; and to the extent that a man contributed to the maintenance of the Local Government, to that extent, relatively, should he be benefitted by its legislation. During last year, and also in connection with the legislation which had from time to time been enacted, there did not appear to him to have been a sufficiently distinct recognition of this principle. Every inhabitant of a country was under the general protection of the laws of that country, and under its governmental machinery he enjoyed the fullest possible liberty for himself and the most complete protection for his property which that machinery as existing could provide. Therefore to the full extent to which he is protected he should contribute to its support, but when we came to Local Government, it was only locally that benefits could arise, and only to the extent that such benefits did arise should the community be required to contribute. For instance, a municipality ought not to tax a man to a greater extent than he derived benefits from living within the municipality, whether it were city, town, or country. The benefits which the general public derived from Municipal Government would be such as arose from lighting the streets, watering them, measures with respect to public health, and police. It did not follow that according to the amount of a man's wealth he realized benefits in proportion, and even greater benefits might accrue to another citizen who had realized much less. For instance, a person who was content to live in a small dwelling-house, and invest his means in another way, derived no benefit from the municipal expenditure, except so far as, dwelling in that municipality, he reaped in common with those of smaller means living in a house of the same dimensions. That is, he had the advantages of street lights, street-watering, and police in his own locality; but any expenditure for the improvement of the streets in another portion of the Municipality did not bring him the same amount of advantage as if he were engaged in trade, and extensively using these conveniences. Taxation for the support of the General Government in Great Britain and this country was derived chiefly from indirect sources, and only when we came to Local Government was the principle of direct taxation sought to be applied. He had made some investigation into the matter, the result of which he proposed to lay before the House. The chief source of revenue for General Governmental purposes was the merchandise consumed, and to the extent to which the article was taxed in order to raise that revenue so far was its purchase-value enhanced. The same rule might be applied to real property, for, to whatever extent it was taxed for municipal purposes, the tenant, not the owner, was really the sufferer. The owner of real property, in order to be placed in a fair position, must have an equivalent granted for the burden of taxation to which he was subjected. He had made an examination into the subject, and he found that in the city of Toronto, as one instance, fully 50 per cent. of the total amount raised for municipal purposes was directly traceable to expenditure upon real estate, consisting either in local improvement, or interest upon money bor-