

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

THIRD PARLIAMENT--SECOND SESSION.

TUESDAY, 23rd Jan, 1877.

The Speaker took the chair at 3 o'clock.

The House sat for a considerable time with closed doors.

PETITIONS.

The following petitions were presented:—

Mr. Sinclair—Of the County Council of Bruce, praying for certain amendments to the Assessment Act with respect to the exemption clauses, excepting in reference to municipal and Government property.

Mr. McCraney—Of the School Board of Grimaby, for an amendment to the School Act.

Mr. Ferris—Of the School Board of Brighton, for an amendment to the School Act.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. Fraser presented the second report of the Private Bills Committee.

Mr. Pardee presented the first report of the Railway Committee.

ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Mr. Baxter introduced a Bill to amend the Assessment Act of 1869.

The Bill was read the first time.

EDUCATION.

Mr. CROOKS introduced a Bill to amend the several Acts respecting the Education Department, the Public and High Schools, and the University of Toronto. He said he proposed to state briefly the principal provisions which he proposed to introduce, not in order to bring about any radical changes in the principles now on the statute book, but rather to give more effect to those principles. He hoped these proposed amendments would be fully discussed upon the second reading, so that the measure might be improved by the suggestions of hon. members who had practical experience in connection with the question. He would not have introduced several of these amendments at this time had it not been desired that the revised statutes in regard to education should be a perfect compendium of the law on the subject. He had, however, endeavoured to supplement his own lack of experience by the information derived from those who had for a lifetime been acquainted with the educational system of the country. He proposed to deal, first, with the amendments respecting the Education Department; secondly, with those affecting the Public Schools, then with those relating to the Separate Schools, and lastly with what affected the other institutions, such as the University of Toronto and Upper Canada College. The amendments related chiefly to that part of our educational system which was under the control of the Educational Department. The High Schools had come to occupy a position which was mainly dependent on their scholastic as distinguished from their other qualifications. It was thought desirable to encourage them, so that their curriculum might enable a boy of ordinary ability and industry to prepare for such examinations as he might have to pass in any career he might propose to adopt in after life. In regard to the qualification of teachers for Public Schools, a great difficulty at present arose from the large number of inexperienced teachers who had charge of the great majority of the schools of the Province. The number of Public Schools in Ontario in 1876 was 4,834, and these schools were in charge of 6,018 teachers, more than one-half of whom held third-class certificates. There had been a larger influx of teachers holding that class of certificates in 1876 than in 1875. Out of 1,801 candidates who were successful at the July examination, 1,668 were for third class, only 11 for first-class, and 122 for second class certificates. The present tendency was to fill the vacancies which occurred in the teaching profession with inexperienced teachers. There was a superabundant material from which to draw our teachers, and the proposition was not now how to encourage young men and women to enter the teaching service, but rather to take advantage of their tendency and give them the opportunity of improving themselves, as he was certain they desired to do if the opportunity was afforded them and was made accessible in their localities. Another difficulty arose from the extremely temporary nature of the teaching service. In the United States the average

period of service was less than five years, in Massachusetts it was about three and a half years, and in Ontario it was about five years. The Government proposed to establish one or more Model Schools in each county, where candidates for third or second-class certificates might have the opportunity of gaining the practical knowledge which would enable them to become efficient teachers. The High Schools now were able to give instruction in the general subjects of education, but it was proposed to give the Department authority to make such arrangements in connection with the Normal Schools as would best facilitate giving an opportunity to the candidates for second-class certificates to overcome the difficulty of distance. It was proposed to pay their travelling expenses, and also to give them a small contribution towards their weekly maintenance when attending the Normal School at Toronto, or that at Ottawa, for not longer than two months, provided that at the end of that time they were able to pass an examination in the theory and art of teaching. It was not intended that they should attend regular classes of instruction, but that they should take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Model Schools to observe the best plans of teaching. It was not intended to exclude any who were still anxious to get the fullest advantages of the Normal Schools as they now were, but it was proposed that the accommodation which was not required by them should be utilized as he had mentioned. It was not proposed in the least to interfere with the status of those now in the profession, but it was desired to obtain a larger number of second-class teachers. The amendments proposed to the law had the object of enabling the Department to adopt regulations which might enable it to carry out the scheme which he had sketched. In regard to the Public Schools, it was necessary in many respects to correct the phraseology of the Acts. He also proposed to provide a new machinery for the formation of township boards, making it, however, entirely permissive. The Bill also aimed at simplifying the law in relation to union sections, where they comprised parts of different municipalities. He had also found a practical difficulty in connection with the working out of the Separate School Acts—both the Act in relation to Separate Schools, which might be taken advantage of by Protestants and coloured people, and the Act respecting Separate Schools which might be formed by Roman Catholics. Without at all interfering with the principles of these Acts, he proposed to introduce a machinery which would relegate to each class of schools its proper supporters, so that none should escape paying their share of school taxes, as many did now. He proposed to make some clauses more clear in reference to compulsory attendance, so as to show that the trustees on the School Board were to judge of the ability of the child to attend school. The High School question probably presented more difficulty than any other. The Province had contributed to these schools very liberally, and its liberality had been rapidly increasing; while in 1869 the amount contributed out of Provincial funds to Grammar Schools was only \$27,613, in 1875 the Province contributed as much as \$80,000. There did not, however, appear to be the same proportion of increase in the contributions of the localities which derived a special and peculiar benefit from these institutions. When Grammar Schools were instituted, they were evidently intended to occupy the position to the county which the Common School occupied to the township. The County Council originated it just as it could take the initiatory steps for abolishing the High School in a county. In many counties the liberality of the council and people was quite satisfactory, but in many other counties there was an extreme parsimony, which had led many councils to confine the area of taxation to the town or village in which the High School was situated. It was clear that the surrounding portions of the country derived a large proportion of the benefit of the school. As far as that was represented by the attendance of children, it was one-third to the outlying districts to two-thirds to the town or village. There had been a good deal of discussion on this point, and many wardens and others conversant with the question were prepared to admit that a large amount of liberality should be shown if the county was, as a whole, to get the benefit from education which, considering the large appropriations from the Provincial revenue, it should derive. It appeared to him that the sound principle was that the burdens of education should be