

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

Bill Reducing the Number of County Councillors.

AN IMPORTANT MEASURE.

Seven to Eleven Councillors According to Population.

THE ELECTORS THEMSELVES TO DECIDE NEXT JANUARY WHETHER THEY WILL ADOPT THE ACT.

TORONTO, March 14, 1892.

In the Legislative Assembly to-day the following bills were introduced and received a first reading:—

Mr. Balfour—To prevent the waste of natural gas.

Mr. Tait—To amend the acts respecting truancy and compulsory attendance; also to amend the Municipal Act; also to amend the Lands Titles Act; also to amend the Debentures Registration Act; also to amend the Public Health Act; also to amend the Free Libraries Act.

Mr. Gilmour—To amend the Street Railway Act; also to amend the Municipal Act.

Mr. Davis—To amend the General Road Companies Act.

Mr. Miscampbell—To amend the Sawlog Driving Act.

Mr. Hardy—To reduce the number of county councillors.

COUNTY COUNCILS.

Mr. Hardy, in introducing his bill providing for a reduction in the number of county councillors, said the question had frequently been before the House in former years. The opinion has been abroad that, while the basis of the formation of County Councils was excellent at the time of its inception, it has assumed a different phase with the increase of population. No substantial change has been made in that basis since 1853. In the meantime the old municipalities have grown largely and new ones have arisen, and the result is that County Councils have grown beyond the needs of the work they have to do, and have become unwieldy, cumbersome and disproportionate in force to the questions which come before them. In 1884 circulars were sent out asking for opinions on this question of reduction, but no precise method of reform apparently was suggested. The question has stood still until now. The Municipal commission of 1887 dealt with some phases of this question, but nothing definite grew out of it. The bill introduced by the member for Grey, if accepted by the House, would reduce the number, but there would probably be a difficulty in applying it to all municipalities. In the Municipal Act a small number of sections embraces the whole scope of County Councils' work. Mr. Hardy ran over the work set out for them to do and said that there were none of these functions which could not be done as effectually and efficiently by eight or ten as by 40 or 50 councillors. On examining the replies to the circulars of 1884 it was found that 523 were in favor of reduction and 108 opposed to reduction, 479 said the feeling was in favor of reduction and 140 said that it was against reduction and so it was obvious from the replies that there was a large preponderance of opinion in favor of

reduction. Mr. Hardy next gave some figures as to composition and cost of Councils and the expenditure in their control. He said that while the figures were not absolutely accurate they were nearly so and showed that some means should be afforded of reducing the number of councillors if the people so desired. In Bruce the number of councillors was 45; the total expenditure, \$122,000; controllable expenditure, \$15,000; cost of services of the councillors, \$1,580. In Huron there were 50 councillors; total expenditure \$89,000; controllable expenditure, \$14,000; services of councillors, \$1,570. In Middlesex there were 49 councillors; total expenditure, \$133,000; controllable expenditure, \$31,000; services of councillors, \$2,259. In Oxford there were 35 councillors; total expenditure, \$93,000; controllable expenditure, \$15,000; services of councillors, \$2,650. Perth, 30 councillors; total expenditure, \$63,000; controllable expenditure, \$15,000; service of councillors, \$1,014. Simcoe, 56 councillors; total expenditure \$121,000; controllable expenditure, \$20,000; service of councillors, \$4,519. Northumberland and Durham, 49 councillors; total expenditure, \$51,000; controllable expenditure, \$31,000; services of councillors, \$4,104. Hastings, 36 councillors; total expenditure, \$120,000; controllable expenditure, \$36,000; service of councillors, \$3,048. Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, 43 councillors; total expenditure, \$88,000; controllable expenditure, \$5,596; services of councillors, \$1,580. Grey, 50 councillors; total expenditure, \$30,000; controllable expenditure, \$13,000; services of councillors, \$5,500. These figures are significant, and show that some remedy of which the people will approve should be submitted. The measure which he introduced consisted of two parts, the first points out the means for bringing the law into effect and the second the means for the election of County Councils on a new basis. The county clerk shall at the next municipal election, January, 1893, irrespective of the vote or opinion of the Council, submit to the electors of the municipality by ballot the question "Are you in favor of adopting the County Councils Act of 1892." If the majority of the people vote for it it will come into force. If the people in smaller counties do not desire to reduce the number of councillors they may reject the question. The question is to be submitted in those counties which have more than fifteen councillors. In counties which have less than fifteen councillors it is not to be submitted unless by direction of the County Council. The rest of the first part of the bill is concerned with the details connected with the adoption of the act. The second part prescribes the number of county councillors and the mode of their election. In counties having a population of 40,000 or less there are to be seven councillors, in counties with a population between 40,000 and 60,000 there are to be nine councillors, and in counties with a population over 60,000 there are to be eleven councillors. Cities and towns separated from the counties are not to be included. Fifty or more electors may sign nomination papers nominating one or more for councillors, and if the number nominated does not exceed the number to be elected they shall be declared elected. Each voter may give all his votes to one candidate or may distribute them as he sees fit. This mode of election is something similar to the cumulative system adopted by the London School Board and secures a mixed Council if politics enter at all into the election. If politics enter into the election each party will be represented on the Council. Mr. Hardy said there might be defects in the bill, but, on the whole, he believed it would prove acceptable. Mr. Meredith asked if there was any provision for returning to the old system. Mr. Hardy said there was a clause providing the means for a repeal in the original draft of the bill, but it was struck out. The House, however, might consider the question, and, if it desired such provision to be made, the Government would not ob-