

down this session. He also stated that the supplementary estimates would be laid on the table on Monday or Tuesday.

#### To Improve Highways.

The Premier's bill for the improvement of public highways has been recast to meet the general view expressed by those who gave evidence before the Good Roads Committee. The first radical change as compared with the original measure is that the appropriation of \$1,000,000 shall be set apart at once and paid over as soon as earned, instead of being spread over a period of ten years in equal annual instalments. The control of the County Councils is enlarged, though the rights of the townships where there is opposition to county roads are safeguarded by provisions for arbitration. Municipal or Township Councils taking advantage of the act may raise by debentures payable in twenty years their proportion of the money to be expended on improving the roads. The clauses of the original measure providing that the whole or part of municipal shares of the appropriation may be expended on roadmaking machinery do not appear in the bill as revised. It is provided that the road mileage to be designated and assumed under the act shall be as nearly as practicable in proportion to the assessed area of each township and county.

#### Third Readings.

The following bills were read a third time and passed:—

To incorporate the Norwood & Apsley Railway Company—Mr. Blezard.

Respecting the South Essex Electric Railway Company—Mr. Auld.

To incorporate the Niagara District, Wellandport & Dunnville Electric Railway Company—Mr. Gross.

To incorporate the Windsor, Essex & Lake Shore Rapid Railway Company—Mr. McKee.

To incorporate the Magnetawan River Railway Company—Mr. Beatty (Parry Sound).

Respecting the Welland Vale Manufacturing Company, Limited—Mr. Jessop.

Respecting the Town of Fort William, 1901—Mr. Conmee.

Respecting the Town of Ingersoll—Mr. McKay.

#### Morning Sessions.

The Premier moved that morning sessions be held on and after Wednesday next. He hoped that the House would thus be enabled to conclude its sessions before Easter.

Mr. Whitney hoped that such might be the case. He suggested that the railway resolutions be brought down as early as possible. It would be too bad to have such important measures dealt with in the last hours of the session.

The Premier promised to have the resolutions brought down at the earliest possible moment.

#### The Assessment Act.

The Premier, in moving the second reading of his bill to amend the municipal act, said it empowered municipalities to remit taxation in whole or in part, or to enter into an agreement

with persons exercising or about to exercise within the municipality any public franchise for the supply of water, light, heat, transportation, or other public service, as to the amount of taxation to be imposed. The Government had had a large number of applications from small municipalities to the effect that the assessment bill he had introduced earlier in the session should not apply to them in its full force. If those municipalities would come into full swing of the act the burden of taxation would be oppressive. Many of such companies were paying no dividends, although perhaps not working at a loss. The present bill left the municipalities authority to make relief if they desired to do so. That power he believed they would exercise wisely. Such agreement shall not be in force for more than three years without re-enactment. The remission would not apply to school or local improvement taxes. The House had passed numberless bills permitting such remission of taxes in the past, in order that those small franchises should not be extinguished.

#### Mr. Whitney Condemns It.

Mr. Whitney declared that since Confederation there had never been a bill which deserved more severe and distinct condemnation than that bill. (Opposition applause.) It was not the purport of this bill to be friendly to a few small lighting companies. What did the bill propose to do? To give Councils the right to exempt corporations without any appeal to the people. When the Premier's predecessor introduced his tax bill several years ago the corporations who had materially assisted in carrying the bye-elections rebelled, and he would say now that the notorious scrap-iron provision was inserted in the law to placate those corporations. (Opposition cheers.) Last year, when the assessment question was taken up, the Premier had recommended an Assessment Commission. The corporations were now objecting to the assessment bill introduced on the recommendation of that commission. Whether that bill was reasonable or unreasonable did not affect the question. They were objecting day by day. The present bill had been introduced into the House to placate those men, and to prevent them working against the Government. (Opposition cheers.) For ten or fifteen years bills had been introduced to permit exemptions, until last year the situation became intolerable, and the law was greatly restricted. The Councils would now have the power to exempt those corporations for three years at a time without the consent of the people. If this law passed the House there was nothing that might be proposed there that the House would not let go through.

#### Power of Municipalities.

Hon. Mr. Stratton asked why municipalities should not have the right to make such arrangements with their public companies. Should the people not have the right to make such arrangements? The bill gave to the municipal Councils the right they should possess of dealing with the franchises in their jurisdiction.