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POOLING OF MONEY FOR COUNTY ROADS

Discussed by Frontenac Council—Provincial Engineer Tells of Merits.

An evening session of the Frontenac county council was held on Tuesday, for the purpose of allowing the members of that body to hold a conference with R. C. Muir, chief engineer of municipal roads, who came to Kingston to discuss the question of pooling the money which is raised for road purposes in the townships included in the good roads system.

When the council resumed at eight o'clock on the motion of Reeves Drew and Spankie, it was decided to go into the committee of a whole with Reeves Drew in the chair. Mr. Muir was asked to speak on the question of the county roads system, and he gave a very clear explanation of its workings. It was the wish of the government to have a more uniform system, and this could only be accomplished by adopting the county system, by which all money raised is pooled and expended in the places where it is most needed.

The speaker said that up until a few weeks ago there were only five counties in the province operating under the old township system, the money being expended under the direction of the reeve. Oxford township, one of the five, has recently decided to go into the county system. The county system is more uniform, and it gets away from the discontinued links, and also the local jealousy which exists in many places. Mr. Muir urged upon the members of council to treat the road question as more than of local importance.

Mr. Muir intimated that he was satisfied the money should be expended on the roads which carried the traffic. The idea of pooling the money and appointing a committee to handle the expenditure on the roads, was to give a central control for the expenditure. By this greater efficiency could be secured.

Situation in Frontenac.

Referring to the situation in Frontenac, Mr. Muir said that there were six townships in the good roads system, and to his mind the back townships had no interest in the question, but he hoped they would pay attention to the discussion as it might be very valuable to them at some future date when their townships would decide to enter the system. He wanted it distinctly understood that he was not present for the purpose of dictating, but his idea was to put the matter in a fair manner before the members of council. Mr. Muir thought the committee which would handle the spending of the money should be a small one, as it had been found by experience that this was more beneficial.

At this point Mr. Muir took occasion to thank the Frontenac council upon the excellent roads of the county. He also complimented R. H. Fair, the county roads superintendent, upon the excellent way in which he handled his job, and said the department considered him a very satisfactory man.

Referring to the question of machinery for road work, Mr. Muir said that under the proposed system, it would not be necessary to have as much machinery, as it could be moved from place to place.

In closing his talk, Mr. Muir said that the government was behind the county good roads system, and wanted to make it as good a road as the provincial highway, if possible.

Questions Asked.

Reeve Edward Freeman of the township of Portland and Reeve David Barr of the township of Bedford, who were opposed to the pooling of the funds, expressed themselves in no uncertain manner. Reeve Jamieson, who was the first man to ask a question, wanted to know what percentage the government intended to give back as a subsidy in connection with the work on the county roads. He was informed that the bill which was now before the house called for fifty per cent. Reeve Freeman then started his series of questions. The first thing he asked Mr. Muir, was where Portland township would come in. He said that at the present time, the township was maintaining seventeen miles of county provincial highway, over which all the people of the northern county travel when they are coming to Kingston. He asked whether the councillors thought that the township of Portland should help pay for the upkeep of the roads in the township of Kingston.

Mr. Muir replied, that under the new system he could rest assured—and he would give his word that he would see it was carried out—if the work on the township of Portland road would require a larger sum than was raised. In the township, the committee which had the supervision of expenditure would see that sufficient money was allowed to make up for it.

Mr. Muir told Mr. Freeman that the roads in the township of Portland would certainly not be neglected.

Councillor Barr was informed by Mr. Muir, in answer to a question as to where Bedford would get off, that the province would see that it would be given proper treatment by the committee which had charge of the spending of the money. Mr. Barr wanted to know if Mr. Muir thought it was right to raise money in the township of Bedford and then spend it on roads in another township. He

was told that he could rest assured that Bedford would certainly not be neglected, that the committee would be composed of men who had no particular township interest at stake, and would work for the interest of the whole county.

Reeve Freeman said he considered that things were getting along very nicely under the township system, and he felt it was a hardship to his township to change. He referred to the heavy debt which is being carried by the county for the construction and maintenance of the provincial highway, and he thought that the people of the county would be paying interest charges on this heavy expenditure for the next hundred years.

Portland Cannot Drop Out.

The Portland representative declared that if the by-law for the pooling of the funds was passed, his township would want to get out of the good roads system, as he was satisfied it could get more work done as a township proposition, than if it entered the new scheme. Mr. Muir informed Reeve Freeman that the province would not stand for the Portland road reverting back to the township, and told him that a township cannot drop out of the system, as the government had a share in the cost of it, and would certainly have something to say about it.

Mr. Muir told Reeve Freeman that suppose the Portland roads needed ten thousand dollars expenditure on them, and only four thousand dollars was raised, the balance would have to come out of the general pool. He was satisfied that this road, referred to by Mr. Freeman, and the other main roads in the county, had to be kept in first-class condition, and it was the intention of the government to open a road away back into the county for the purpose of tourist trade, which would be suitable for motor traffic. Mr. Muir also stated that he was convinced that Portland would get all that was coming to it, and he was also satisfied that it was better off than Bedford township. He informed Reeve Freeman that he thought the township of Hinchinbrooke would be in the good roads system within the next twelve months.

Loughboro Reeve Satisfied.

Reeve William Guthrie said that he was satisfied that Mr. Muir had made things very clear. He had been opposed to the county road system before his township entered, but he had changed his mind during the past few years. He was glad to know that the government was prepared to go fifty-fifty on the subsidy. Mr. Guthrie said he was convinced that the government was quite justified in asking the townships to pass this by-law which calls for the pooling of the funds. The county had already appointed the committee and he was convinced that this body of men could be trusted in the spending of the good roads' money in the proper way. In closing his remarks, Reeve Guthrie stated that he wanted to deal squarely with all parties, and he was satisfied that the council should pass the by-law for one year and give it a fair trial, and then if it did not carry out as expected, he would vote with Reeve Freeman to rescind the by-law and go back to the old system.

Reeve Sibbit when referring to clause 4 of the by-law said that he did not think it was right to raise certain money from all the townships in the county, but it should be confined to the ones included in the good roads system. He was advised by Mr. Muir that the government had made provision for counties where the townships are not all in the system, and this money which is required would be raised in the six townships in Frontenac.

Reeve Graham said that he was satisfied to support the by-law and thought that it should go through council as it was the best thing for the road system.

Reeve Freeman claimed that it

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was all very well for the government to legislate but it was another thing to enforce. He was satisfied that Mr. Muir would carry out his part of the agreement but he was not so certain about the others. Mr. Muir in answer to Reeve Freeman said that he thought the expending of the road money should be in the hands of the small committee, and not handled by the Reeves of each township. The county road system was here to stay and the system of putting a patch of good road here and there was no good. Mr. Muir told Reeve Freeman that if there were roads in his township which needed repairing to get into the new scheme and they would be attended to. If his township could not raise enough money to look after its roads that was the very reason why it should adopt the new system. A township was never forced into any scheme which was not a benefit to it.

Other Reeves Satisfied.

Reeve Graham agreed with Mr. Muir that the spending of the road money in the townships should not be left with the Reeves and he was glad to know that he could get rid of the job.

Reeve Jamieson was of the same opinion as Mr. Graham, and he was convinced that the road committee will deal fairly with all. In closing his remarks Reeve Jamieson said that he hoped that the township of Bedford was dealt fairly with.

Reeve Barr said that if the by-law was carried he would be ashamed to go back to his township. Reeve R. A. Hamilton was satisfied, as far as his township was concerned, with the present system.

Mr. Muir stated that there are ten thousand miles of county roads in the province and 16% of them had not had one cent of money spent on them since they were taken over.

Reeve Halliday asked Reeve Freeman what was his objection to the pooling system, and the latter went over the argument which he had presented to the members of council during the earlier part of the debate. Mr. Halliday reminded him that he had not answered his question as to what he had been told when he went to Toronto and waited upon the minister of highway. Hon. George Henry, Reeve Halliday said that Reeve Freeman had been told by the minister that for the purpose of getting the new system under way he was satisfied to have the money which was raised by taxation in the township spent on the roads in that township, but the subsidy money had to be pooled and spent where the road committee and the road superintendent decided it was most needed.

Before the meeting adjourned two or three by-laws were given their first reading. One calls for the expenditure of about \$50,000 on the good roads system and the other was for the purpose of rescinding the old by-law and adopting the pooling system. The council adjourned at ten o'clock.

Will Inspect "Pumper."

Mayor Reynolds of Brockville, along with the fire chief and a number of the members of the council will pay a visit to Kingston tonight, in order to make an inspection of the city's Ahren-Fox motor pump.

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Mr. and Mrs. Andrew O'Brien left on Sunday for Midland, where Mr. O'Brien is preparing his boat for the summer. Mrs. A. Gamble was called to Morton to attend the funeral of Mrs. John Kirkland. Clarence Kinney has returned home from the hospital very much improved.

Mr. and Mrs. Byron Gamble spent Sunday at A. Gamble's. Mr. and Mrs. Leonard McBratney at Clair Churchill's; Hilda Burich at W. Glover's on Sunday. Mrs. Clifford Gallon is spending a few days with her parents. The cars are running in the neighborhood, although the roads are in a very bad condition.

Grant For School Sports.

The regular monthly meeting of the Robert Meek Home and School Club was held Tuesday evening, March 31st. After the opening, a very short business meeting was conducted. The sum of \$25 was voted for school sports. The programme for the evening was an excellent one, and was very much enjoyed by the large audience present. The school choir rendered pleasing selections. The club felt especially pleased to have with them such talented musicians as Messrs. Garvey, Lowman, Staub, Watdell, Priest, Pilgrim and McBride, who supplied many delightful numbers. Later in the evening, delicious refreshments were served to the school choir and musical entertainers.

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Bank Clearings. The Kingston bank clearing house total for March, was \$2,336,750; March, 1924, \$2,405,449.

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