

Act from this Department to the Industries and Commerce Department. There was a Lights on Vehicles Amendment, which made provision for bicycles to be equipped with rear reflectors, and exempted vehicles from the lighting provisions of the Lights on Vehicles Act, 1915, whilst those vehicles are subject to regulations as to lighting made under the Motor-vehicles Act, 1924. An important measure was the Local Elections and Polls Amendment, designed with the object of local elections being conducted as far as possible along the same lines as parliamentary elections. One of the principal alterations made was the adoption of the system of voting by striking out the names of the candidates not required, in lieu of the previous system of indicating the candidates desired by means of a cross. This provision has given rise to some criticism, primarily on account of the large number of candidates who offer themselves for election in the cities and larger towns. It is recognized, however, that, generally speaking, the adoption of the system is in the interests of the country as a whole, as it provides a uniform method of voting. Another important provision following the principle of parliamentary elections provided for voting by declaration under certain circumstances. A short Marriage Amendment was passed.

As usual, a number of local Bills were considered by the Department and reports furnished to the Local Bills Committee. In communicating with members of Parliament and with local authorities concerning the Local Legislation Bill advantage was taken of the opportunity to urge—firstly, that more use be made during the recess of the provisions of subsection (2) of section 4 of the Statutes Drafting and Compilation Act, 1920, which imposes on the Law Draftsman the duty, where so directed either by the Prime Minister or by the Attorney-General, of revising local Bills proposed to be promoted by any local authority; and, secondly, that local Bills be forwarded by local authorities to any Government Department which might be concerned in the provisions contained therein in ample time to allow the Department to consider the proposals before the Bill comes before Parliament.

LOCAL LEGISLATION.

The first Local Legislation Act was passed last session, and the system brought about by the adoption of the Standing Orders referred to in my last report proved beneficial. With a view to making the system more perfect and arranging for clauses for the Local Legislation Bill to be promoted earlier than has been the case, all members of Parliament and local authorities were communicated with during the recess and advised of the policy you propose to adopt in regard to these matters in future. A strict scrutiny is made of all proposals which come forward for the Local Legislation Bill, and it may be mentioned here that, among other things, the policy is not to agree to the inclusion of any clause which is of a continuing nature or confers continuing powers on any local authority or public body. Matters of that nature should be dealt with by way of local Bill.

TOWN-PLANNING ACT.

The last reports in which I mentioned the subject of town-planning were those of 1918-19 and 1919-20. In those reports I referred to the various reasons which led up to town-planning being the prominent subject of the day in local-government matters, but public opinion was not then sufficiently aroused to the necessity of localities being developed along town-planning lines.

The increase in the population of the Dominion, the cutting-up of large areas in the suburbs, the enormous increase in building, and the extension of towns generally, brought home the fact that the subject was one affecting the practical problems of the every-day life of the community. Public opinion thus became more developed, and in due course a Town-planning Bill was prepared and introduced into Parliament last session. The measure, with certain alterations, was finally passed and became law.

A Director of Town-planning (Mr. R. B. Hammond), was appointed, and later on the Town-planning Board provided for in the Act, representative of the organizations primarily affected, was set up and held its first meeting. One of the first matters dealt with by the Board was the consideration of regulations defining generally the procedure to be adopted in having town-planning schemes prepared and adopted. These regulations were circulated to local authorities and others interested throughout the Dominion. They were accompanied by a statement prepared by the Director of Town-planning, explaining briefly the general purposes of a town-planning scheme, and at the same time elaborating some of the matters dealt with in the regulations.

During the year the Director of Town-planning commenced a tour of the whole of the Dominion, with the object of meeting local authorities and explaining to them more fully the general purposes of the Act and regulations. It may be mentioned that numerous requests have been received from local authorities and others for fuller particulars concerning the subject of town-planning, and the Department is co-operating with them in every possible way.

Generally speaking, the objects of the Act are as follows:—

- (1) The preparation by the Council of every city and of every borough having a population of one thousand and upwards, and by the Boards of certain road districts in the Eden County, where the Counties Act is suspended, of a town-planning scheme for its district, within three years from the 1st January, 1927. The scheme will be considered by the Town-planning Board, which may provisionally approve the same, and provisions are made for the lodging and hearing of objections. The final decision rests with the Town-planning Board.
- (2) The preparation by the responsible authority, when so required by the Governor-General in Council, of a regional-planning scheme for a rural area. A rural area is generally a county or a small borough or town district. The procedure to be adopted in the preparation of a regional-planning scheme is generally along the same lines as that of a town-planning scheme.