

ONTARIO.

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Historical.—In 1763 Canada, with all its dependencies, passed from French to British rule by the Treaty of Paris, signed on February 10 of that year. From this date to 1774 the country was under military rule. In 1774 the “Quebec Act” of the Imperial Parliament (14 Geo. III, c. 83) gave French-Canadians the free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion, the enjoyment of their civil rights and the protection of their own civil laws and customs. The

Act annexed large territories to the province of Quebec, and provided for the appointment by the Crown of a Legislative Council and for the administration of the criminal law as in England. In 1791 the country then called Canada was divided by Act of the Imperial Parliament (31 Geo. III, c. 31) into Upper Canada (now Ontario) and Lower Canada (now Quebec), and the Act established a constitution for each, with a Legislature consisting of a Legislative Council and a Legislative Assembly. In 1841, following Lord Durham’s report, the provinces were reunited under the name of the province of Canada by an Imperial Act (3-4 Vict., c. 35), which established responsible government. The Legislature under this Act consisted of a Legislative Council of 40 members appointed for life by the Crown and a Legislative Assembly of 84 members elected by the people. Subsequently (1853) the members of the Legislative Assembly were increased in number to 130 and (1856) the Legislative Council became an elected chamber.

Present Constitution.—Under the British North America Act, 1867, and other legislation, the government of the province of Ontario is vested in a Legislature consisting of a Lieutenant-Governor appointed by the Governor-General of the Dominion, and of one House styled the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, consisting in 1916 of 111 members. The Assembly is elected for four years on a manhood suffrage, and members receive statutory indemnities and an allowance for travelling expenses on a mileage basis. The Lieutenant-Governor is advised by an Executive Council of ten members, now consisting of the President and Premier, the Attorney-General, the Treasurer of the province, the Secretary and Registrar of the province, the Ministers of Education, Public Works, Lands, Forests and Mines and two members without portfolio. The powers of the Ontario Legislature are defined under Sections 92 and 93 of the British North America Act, 1867.¹

Municipal Organization.—Municipal Government in Ontario traces its origin to the recommendations in the report of Lord Durham (1839), and the District Councils Act of 1841 was the first measure of local self-government in the province. A more comprehensive measure known as the Municipal Act of 1849 provided for the incorporation of local municipalities. In 1868, when the Ontario Legislature met for

¹See Canada Year Book, 1914, page 12.