

Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

ISSUED BY THE



189 CHURCH STREET

TELEPHONE: MAIN 3620

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The "New" Union Station, the Proposed Viaduct, the Harbour Development and the Customs House Situation

From the standpoint of an interested newcomer to Toronto.

LETTER No. 2.

MR. _____

TORONTO.

Dear Sir:—

Re Customs Facilities.

A newcomer, who is considering locating permanently in a city, naturally makes enquiries as to its importance from a business standpoint. One phase of this is the amount of business done through the Customs.

Looking up the Customs reports for the month of April, 1923, I noticed that the total revenue collected during April from Customs import duties, excise taxes, excise duties and sundry items amounted to \$20,492,020.00 and that of this amount \$5,294,536.00 was collected in Toronto. Approximately the same proportion has been collected for some years past.

Further enquiries brought out the information that the daily Toronto Customs entries will run over 1,000 and in some cases up to 1,500. The Customs revenue to be collected in Toronto in 1923 fiscal year will probably amount to some sixty million dollars.

With the estimated Customs revenue in Toronto running over twice the estimated revenue of the city itself, with one-quarter of the total Customs revenue in Canada being collected in Toronto, and with the large number of daily entries, the stranger at once looks for a Customs building in keeping with the volume of business done and in which all main Customs services could be centralized in the interest of the thousands of individuals who must necessarily do business with the Toronto Customs department.

Contrary to expectations, however, I found that the Customs offices and departments are not housed in one building, but that the various departments are scattered. The head office for Toronto is located at 54 Wellington St. West, in a rented building; the Chief and General Inspector of Customs for the Dominion of Canada is located at 52 Wellington St. West; the King's Warehouse for unclaimed goods is located at the corner of Yonge and Esplanade; the Canadian National Express Customs Office is on Esplanade, west; the Dominion Express Customs Office is at 54-56 Wellington St. West; the freight examining warehouse is located on the corner of King and Duncan Streets, in another rented property; and the Postal Customs Branch is located in the East Wing—third floor—of the New Union Station.

The first question which came to my mind as a prospective citizen of your city was, "What is the economic loss to the business man occasioned by this separation of Customs services?" Just try and calculate the expense, which must be involved in the wide separation of services, by hundreds of business houses in the city who have goods coming in by freight, by express and by post. The entry must be cleared at the Wellington Street office, then if any freight misunderstanding exists, a visit must be made to the department at the corner of King and Duncan Streets, then Express details must be investigated at either the National Express Customs Office or the Dominion Express Customs Office, and Postal troubles at the department located in the New Union Station. Certainly one must take these points into consideration when looking into any business development.

The second question which arose in my mind was, "What rentals are paid on the private properties now being used?" I understand that the rentals for Wellington Street and King and Duncan Street properties, plus departmental messenger service, will run close to \$40,000.00 per year. In addition to this, there are, I understand, charges in connection with the Postal portion of the New Union Station.

Department of Agriculture*—

Health of Animals.....	573 Keele St.
Meat Inspection	573 Keele St.
Live Stock Branch.....	Union Stock Yards
Live Stock Branch, Sheep and Swine.....	36 Adelaide St. E.
Seed Branch	36 Adelaide St. E.
Poultry Division	44 Adelaide St. E.

Public Works Department—

Superintendent of Buildings.....	36 Adelaide St. E.
Immigration and Colonization Department....	46 Adelaide St. E.
Trades and Commerce, Gas and Electricity	
Inspection	55 Victoria St.
Marine Department	59-61 Victoria St.
Department of Labour.....	65 Victoria St.
Income and Business Profits War Tax.....	21 Lombard St.
Finance Department, Assistant Receiver General....	10 Toronto St.
Railway Commission.....	675 Yonge St.
Trades and Commerce Dept., Grain Inspection....	28 Front St. E.
Department of Soldiers Civil Re-establishment..	185 Spadina Ave.

A sum equal to the capitalization of the rentals, messenger service, and the estimated loss to the business firms who have to do business with scattered departments, etc., would certainly go a long way toward the construction of a Dominion Building, which would centralize many of the above services and be a credit to the City of Toronto. Vacating the present scattered premises would release a considerable number of buildings for private enterprise and as the buildings owned by the Dominion Government were sold would increase the municipal assessment for taxation purposes.

With the present vacant lot lying in the very heart of the business district, one can readily conceive private interests being influenced in postponing proposed construction and the inception of new enterprises. Previous to 1919 a Customs House, not

*Not all these offices, of course, could be centralized in a Federal building.

entirely adequate for all Customs and Excise purposes, but of remarkably good construction and rendering good service within its limitations, occupied this land, and in that year it was torn down. At the time, the citizens naturally believed that this was a preliminary step toward the erection of a new and modern Customs House. The only reasons which I have been able to discover for the destruction of the building so long in advance of the construction of a new building are that at some time the city might want to widen the street and that the demolition of the building would provide some work at a time of serious unemployment. No doubt more employment would have been furnished if more buildings had been torn down.

In talking with me many citizens have mourned the loss of the fine old Customs House. Has not the period of mourning about elapsed? Is the policy adopted with regard to Toronto a general policy throughout the country? Or is Toronto a Cinderella among the cities?

The present situation gives a very poor impression to a newcomer. The active interest of a large number of citizens and citizen organizations, continued until results are obtained, is what the situation demands.

Faithfully yours,

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- Studying the facts;
- Analyzing the facts;
- Reporting the facts in clear and simple language;
- Making constructive suggestions based on the facts.

This work is not spectacular, but is fundamental. The degree of success attained depends upon the amount and vigour of citizen co-operation.