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Centre aims at providing useful role in administration of justice

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics is a newly established facility that is expected to provide the federal, provincial and territorial governments with the kind of data necessary for studies of the justice system.

The organization was set up by Statistics Canada to be both a unique and useful part of that department. While the centre is attached to Statistics Canada, it is not controlled by it.

It is different in that while it is funded by the federal government, the centre is controlled by a board composed of provincial and federal deputy ministers attached to the various attorneys-general, solicitors-general and ministers of corrections. As their share of costs, the provincial governments have agreed to finance the delivery of needed data. In some cases the outlay is very little; in others quite a lot.

"The centre is a satellite," explained Gaylen Duncan, executive director of the facility, "We operate in our own way, but have the use of Statistics Canada expertise. No one knows how well things will go, but I see the centre playing a useful and needed role *vis-à-vis* the administration of justice in this country. We need to examine not only how our system runs, but who runs it, how many use it, and who are employed by it, prosecuted with it, or punished by it."

"Recently we did a survey on the number of police officers in Canada, an exercise you'd think would be fairly straightforward. Well, it wasn't all that simple. Compiling the numbers of actual officers was easy enough. That was well over 50,000. But what we didn't know was that as many people again have some or all of the powers of a local constable — search, seizure, and even arrest."

The idea for such a centre first originated in 1949. Later, the need for co-ordinated system of statistical analysis and reporting became more and more obvious and in 1979 the provinces set up a task



Gaylen Duncan, head of the new centre.

force on the administration of justice. Out of that grew the one-year National Project on Resource Co-ordination. It became clear during this time period that the available statistical information was both inadequate and fragmentary. Something needed to be done and the idea for a centre for justice statistics emerged.

In 1980, an implementation work group set up an organizational plan, created the outline of the aims and objectives, and set the requirements for staff. The plan was approved by the deputy ministers in May 1981 and the centre was begun with a three-year mandate.

"Not many departments or projects have a 'sunset clause' like the centre's," said Mr. Duncan. "We have three years to prove that the service we are going to provide will be valid and useful."

Usefulness of legislation

"It's all very well to say that we know what is happening in our courts," said Mr. Duncan. "But we really don't. Right now it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tell how many judges there are in



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