

# British Columbia Report on Insurance in 1916

## Superintendent of Insurance, Victoria, Gives Out Valuable Report on Insurance in the Province

The sixth annual report of the Superintendent of Insurance of British Columbia, Col. E. F. Gunther, has just come from the government printing office, Victoria. The Colonel is to be commended for the report, which is replete with information and tables concerning the field of insurance in British Columbia.

At the end of 1916 there were 114 companies licensed for the business of fire insurance in this province under the "British Columbia Fire Insurance Act." Six companies ceased to do business, as follows: American Insurance Company, Anglo-American Fire Insurance Company (in liquidation), Lumber Insurance Company of New York (merged with the Stuyvesant Insurance Company), Montreal Canada Fire Insurance Company (in liquidation), Indiana Lumberman's Mutual Insurance Company and the West of Scotland Insurance Office, Limited. Six new companies commenced fire insurance business, as follows: Canada Accident Assurance, Imperial Guarantee & Accident Insurance, Millers' National Insurance, Provincial Insurance, Industrial Fire Insurance, and Merchants' Fire Assurance. During the year the Stuyvesant Insurance Company obtained a Dominion licence.

City and district municipalities during 1916 reported to this department 668 fires with a loss of \$1,380,952, as against 709 reported for 1915 with a loss of \$1,230,810.

The information contained in reports on fires received from city and district municipalities has, as heretofore, been arranged to show the number of fires reported by each municipality, the values destroyed, the causes of such fires so far as ascertained, and a classification of the property destroyed.

In future information as to all fires occurring in the province will be available, as under arrangements which went into effect at the beginning of 1917, reports on all fires in unorganized territory are now made to this department by the provincial police. Every fire, therefore, is now the subject of inquiry and report by a municipal or government officer.

Referring to fires in city and district municipalities, amongst the causes most frequently reported are the following:

Cause of Fire	No.	Loss reported
Sparks from chimneys falling on shingle roofs	89	\$22,694
Furnaces, stoves or pipes insufficiently protected	69	58,182
Defective chimneys and fireplaces (not including six fires caused by stovepipe chimneys; loss, \$1,480)	60	40,872
Match carelessness and children playing with	26	6,057
Smokers' carelessness	22	7,034
Clothing or firewood too near stove	20	70,409

The percentage of preventable and partly preventable fires is very large. It is obvious that care and attention to the very ordinary matters referred to in the above table and to others, which the table of causes of fires (see Appendix) will readily suggest, will prevent many fires and much loss. The net losses incurred, as reported by the fire insurance companies and which obviously do not cover the total of property destroyed by fire, show a loss of over \$2.75 per capita of the population. With a view to inculcating fire prevention, bulletins are issued by this department periodically dealing with fire hazards by way of information and by way of warnings, and suggesting better practices. These bulletins are distributed to the press and to all officers reporting fires and to all fire insurance agents in the province, as well as to others who evince an interest in fire prevention, and thanks are due to the press and others who disseminate such information and warnings. As pointed

out in the report of last year, interest in the subject of fire prevention is increasing, as has recently been evidenced by the distribution of warnings and information by the fire departments of the cities of New Westminster, Revelstoke and Vernon.

Thirty fires of alleged suspicious origin were carefully investigated by this department.

Under the "Insurance Act" of British Columbia there were ninety-four companies licensed at the end of 1916. The Canadian Casualty & Boiler Insurance Company ceased business, as did the Union Pacific Life Insurance Company. The Scottish Union & National Insurance and the British Crown Assurance were licensed to do other than fire insurance business.

The superintendent makes the following recommendations:

"The amendment of the 'Mutual Fire Insurance Companies Act' so as to bring the formation and supervision of such companies under the Department of Insurance. Such companies are not now subject to regular inspection.

"The regulation of the storage of gasoline and similar oils in all parts of the province, including municipalities where no satisfactory municipal bylaw has been enacted.

"Uniform standard health and accident policies. This matter has received the consideration of the insurance companies interested, and proposals have been laid before the Insurance Departments of the Dominion and of the several provinces. Believing that the enactment of policy conditions is a matter within the legislative jurisdiction of the provinces, and as uniformity of such conditions throughout the Dominion is most desirable, I had it in view to recommend conference with other provinces upon the subject before the next session of the legislature. In a bill (the 'Insurance Act, 1917'), however, now (June, 1917) before the Parliament of Canada it is proposed to enact standard general conditions as obligatory upon Dominion licensees transacting accident and sickness insurance, to which I respectfully draw your attention.

"Legislation regulating the carrying-on of insurance business in the province by fraternal, benevolent, industrial and similar societies.

"The consolidation, with amendments suggested by experience and by decisions of courts, of the insurance acts, some seven in number. I am of opinion that such legislation will be of advantage in administration as well as otherwise."

The following tables have appeared in the issue of June 2, 1917, of this journal: "Life Insurance in British Columbia in 1916" and "Net Fire Insurance Premiums and Net Losses in 1916."

In the report is given a table of the investments in British Columbia of companies other than life insurance companies, which is interesting reading. The table is as follows:

Name of Company	Mortgages	In other Securities*
American Central Insurance Co. ....		\$ 30,660.00†
Boiler Inspection & Insurance Co. ....		44,000.00†
Boston Insurance Co. ....		25,000.00†
British America Assurance Co. ....		156,000.00†
British Columbia Plate Glass Insurance Co. ....		5,973.33†
British Crown Assurance Corporation, Ltd. ....		25,220.00†
California Insurance Co. ....		24,684.00
Canada Accident Assurance Co. ....		15,000.00
Canada National Fire Insurance Co. ....	\$103,759.45	
Canadian Surety Co. ....		25,733.33†
Century Insurance Co., Ltd. ....		26,000.00†
Commercial Union Assurance Co., Ltd. ....	466,250.00	
Dominion Fire Insurance Co. ....	13,000.00	35,353.33
Dominion of Canada Guarantee & Accident Insurance Co. ....		103,911.50†