

usually with only a smattering of learning. By mid-century a third of the population could read and write with ease, another third could read haltingly, and the rest were illiterate.

Education then was the cheapest and simplest government service, casually planned and easily paid for. Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick retained full control of their educational systems when they joined in Confederation in 1867. The other provinces inaugurated their own systems when they joined, and free, tax-supported elementary schools were common across Canada by 1875. Secondary education was still reserved for the sons of gentlemen, however, and the subjects were limited to the classics and mathematics.

Upper-class boys in Ontario often went to prep schools with Anglican church connections. The Lord Bishop of Niagara is still the official visitor at Ridley College in St. Catharines, Ontario. In Quebec the Catholic *collèges classiques* taught future priests, notaries and doctors. In both provinces students were required to pass stiff entrance examinations.

By 1911 the average adult Canadian still had only eight years of schooling, but education was becoming more accessible. In some provinces new schools gave instruction in scientific agriculture, and others offered industrial and vocational training. The federal government began channeling money to the provinces in 1919.

The upheaval came after World War II. Birth rates and expectations rose together, and between 1950 and 1960 the number of youngsters between the ages of five and nineteen grew from 3.5 million

to 5.2 million. During the fifties and sixties royal commissions studied the systems in each of the provinces, and in three of them—Quebec, Newfoundland and Alberta—they recommended sweeping reforms.

In 1951 Parliament authorized unrestricted federal grants to the provinces for the support of universities, both public and private, and in 1966 the provincial governments were given complete control of the funds. By 1970 Canada ranked first in the world in government spending on post-secondary education.

Today more than thirty per cent of all Canadians are enrolled in some institution of education, over ninety-five per cent of those fifteen years old are in high school, and some twenty per cent of those between eighteen and twenty-four are attending advanced schools of one type or another.

---

## The One-Room School House Is No More

---

The number of public, federal and private schools in the Atlantic Provinces has declined remarkably in recent years. In 1960-61 there were 4,481 in four provinces; in 1973-74 there were 1,986. Some one-room public schools were abandoned, others were merged. The number of federal and private schools was reduced when Indian pupils were integrated into the public school classes.



School at Moose Factory, Ontario, c. 1890.