

From the beginning, each department of education has undertaken, among other things: (1) to provide for the training and certification of teachers; (2) to provide courses of study and prescribe school texts; (3) to provide inspection services to help maintain specified standards; (4) to assist in financing the schools through grants and services; (5) to make rules and regulations for the guidance of trustees and teachers. In return, each department requires regular reports from the schools.

Other provincial departments having some responsibility for operating school programmes are: the departments of labour, which operate apprenticeship programmes; agriculture departments, which operate agriculture schools; departments of the attorney-general or of welfare, which operate reform schools; departments of lands and forests, which operate forest-ranger schools; and departments of mines, which conduct prospectors' courses.

Local Units of Administration

In all provinces, school laws provide for the establishment and operation of schools by local education boards, which operate under the public-school act and are held responsible to the provincial government and resident ratepayers for the actual operation of the local schools. Through the delegation of authority, education becomes a provincial-local partnership, with the degree of decentralization changing from time to time. Questions concerning the extent to which curricula development, local supervision and the percentage of the education burden that should be local rather than provincial will probably occupy the minds of Canadians for decades to come, as well as problems such as the optimum size of units, schools and classes, qualifications of teachers, and so on.

From the beginning, the provincial departments delegated authority to publicly-elected or appointed boards, which functioned as corporations under the school acts and regulations. These three-man boards were expected to establish and maintain a school, select a qualified teacher, prepare a budget for the annual meeting and present it to the municipal authorities. As towns and cities developed, the original boards remained as units, but provision was made in the acts for urban school-boards with more members and, generally, with responsibility for both the elementary and secondary schools, though in some districts separate boards are still to be found.

In the rural areas, a number of pressures were brought to bear on the organization of districts, some four miles square, which were established when local transportation was by ox-team or horse and the school had to be within walking distance of the home. The realization grew that the manner of living had changed, that farms were much larger and mechanized, that most farmers had trucks and automobiles, that there were fewer children to the square mile, and that it would be more efficient and economical to provide central schools and transportation. In addition, there was considerable discontent among the teachers, as security of tenure was rarely found under the three-man local school-boards. Add a shortage of teachers, differences among the districts in their ability to pay for education and a demand for high-school facilities in rural areas, generally of the composite type, and some of the reasons become clear why larger administrative units were introduced.