

EDUCATION

Elementary Schools.—The administrative unit of the educational system of Alberta is the school district. A district usually includes an area of approximately four miles square, and may be organized on the initiative of the ratepayers as soon as the area proposed to be formed into a district contains eight resident children of school age and four resident ratepayers. Should the indifference or opposition of the settlers prevent the organization of a school district, the Minister of Education is vested with power to establish such a district without regard to the attitude of the ratepayers, and should the indifference in any community, or any other cause, result in the failure of the board of trustees to administer satisfactorily the affairs of the district, the Minister may appoint an official trustee to perform, under the school laws and regulations, all the functions of a school board. There is also provision whereby the minority, either Protestant or Roman Catholic, in a school district may establish a separate school district, which, however, is subject to the same laws and regulations with respect to teachers' qualifications, courses of studies, inspection, grants, etc., as a public school district.

Town Schools.—In the case of a school district in which is situated a city or a town the municipal council is responsible for the assessment and also for the levying thereon and the collection of the amount of taxes requisitioned by the board of trustees of the school district. Similarly, the council of a rural municipality is entrusted with the collection of taxes for each of the school districts within the limits of the municipality, while in the case of a village school district these duties and responsibilities rest with the school board and its officials.

Financial Arrangements.—Schoolhouses are usually built from the proceeds of school debentures. Such debentures must first be authorized by the Board of Public Utility Commissioners, and when issued must be registered and countersigned at the Department before they are marketable. In order to secure the best possible price for school debentures, statutory provision is now made whereby the Department of Education may negotiate the sale of debentures in behalf of school districts, and by offering a comparatively large block composed of the debentures issued by several districts, a market may be tapped which would not be open to individual school boards.

Sources of Revenue.—The revenue of a school district, which is required to meet debenture payments, teachers' and officials' salaries, supplies, fuel, insurance and other current expenditures, is derived from two sources—government grants and local taxation. The grants are paid on the basis of the number of days during which the school is in operation, and the scale of grants is so arranged that the newly organized district receives a larger grant than the older district, and as a community grows into a populous centre it is gradually thrown more and more upon its own resources so far as school grants are concerned. On the other hand, provision is made for grants for supervisors, and for instructors in special subjects, such as manual training, household science, music, art, agriculture, etc., which compensates the progressive town or city school board in a large measure for the lowering of the grant payable in the larger centre.