

Two attempts were made in the past to remedy this situation. In the year 1882 the Federal Government instituted a plan for recording annually the mortuary statistics of cities of 25,000 and over, by subsidizing local boards of health to supply the necessary information under special regulations. By 1891, twenty-five cities were included in this plan. With the organization of provincial records, the work of the Federal Government in this connection was abandoned.

The other attempt to meet the situation was through the medium of the Census. In the earlier censuses of the Dominion questions were included in the schedules requiring the number of births and the number and causes of deaths occurring during the preceding year. This method was followed until 1911 when the obviously unreliable character of the results led to the elimination of the questions from the census schedules.

As provided under the Statistics Act of 1918, which established the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, and as the result of two Dominion-Provincial Conferences on vital statistics held at Ottawa, in June and December, 1918, a plan was devised whereby the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and the Vital Statistics offices in each province would co-operate in the production of national vital statistics. Under this national system, while registration of births, stillbirths, marriages and deaths was to be carried out as heretofore by the provincial authorities, the legislation of each province conformed in essential features to a Model Vital Statistics Act—one of the features of which was compulsory registration—adopted by the 1918 Conferences.

An essential part of this scheme of co-operation was that the registration of births, deaths, and marriages be made on standard registration forms to be supplied to the provinces by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Copies of the completed forms were to be forwarded to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. From these were compiled the national statistics and the main tabulations required by the provinces for insertion in the Annual Reports made to their respective Legislatures, thus ensuring uniformity in the treatment of the material. The operation of the arrangement did not in any way prevent provinces or cities from making such additional compilations as they might desire.

On Jan. 1, 1920, eight provinces entered into the co-operative system for the production of national vital statistics. A summary report covering these eight provinces was issued for that year but the first detailed report published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics was for the year 1921. For reasons connected with its system of registration, Quebec, the oldest province in Canada, found it impossible to enter into the national system at the time it was established. Later the difficulties were overcome and this Province entered the Registration Area from the beginning of the year 1926.

Through the close co-operation of the Provincial Registration Offices and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, very material progress was made subsequent to the initiation of the national system in modifying and improving registration techniques and procedures. Of particular interest in this regard was the revision in 1935 of the medical certificate of death which is an integral part of the death registration form. There has always been one main objective in the collaborative effort of these early years of the national system—the complete and accurate registration of all 'vital' events in Canada, which in turn is reflected in the availability of more complete and accurate vital statistics data.

Conferences on vital statistics, held in 1943 and 1944, were attended by provincial and Federal officials, by representatives of departments of government, and other interested national agencies. Topics discussed at these conferences