

Section 4.—Municipal Finance*

Material dealing with the organization and growth of municipalities in Canada as well as classification and population, which in previous editions appeared in this Section, has been expanded and may now be found in Chapter III, pp. 130-134.

Subsection 1.—Municipal Assessed Valuations

The revenue resources of municipalities are limited generally to direct taxation, based on assessed valuations of real and other types of property. The assessment of personal property has had its ups and downs particularly in the Prairie Provinces. The Maritime Provinces, Manitoba and Alberta are the only provinces at the present time in which municipalities assess and tax personal property. In Alberta in 1946 there was an increase in the use of this basis for tax revenue by villages while in Manitoba it is used generally by all classes of municipalities except cities. Aside from real property, the next important type of valuation for taxation purposes is business assessment, although not all provinces assess for business purposes separately and distinctly from real property valuations. A variation of methods, schedules and rates exists not only between provinces but also between municipalities within the same province. Some municipalities use the rental basis, others the value of floor space occupied and still others the capital value of the premises occupied. Most of the provinces have other miscellaneous types of assessment, the general nature of which will be noted from the footnotes to Table 35. It will also be noted that income assessment, which formerly was employed in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick only, disappeared in 1943. This is a result of the operation of the Dominion-Provincial Tax Agreements whereby the provinces and municipalities abandoned the income-tax field for the duration of the War and a limited period thereafter, so as to leave it open to the Federal Treasury.

It should be noted that the figures in Table 35 are not entirely comparable, on an interprovincial basis, from the standpoint of relative values of properties taxable for municipal purposes. Each province operates under its own assessment laws, which are not all similar, either in application or in effect. For instance, in British Columbia cities and municipal districts improvements cannot be taxed on a value in excess of 75 p.c. of taxable values or in villages in excess of 50 p.c. of taxable values; the values actually taxed in 1947 ranged from nil to 75 p.c. In the majority of cases, improvements were assessed for tax purposes at 50 p.c. of taxable values, but for all municipalities the total improvements actually taxed represented approximately 48 p.c. of total taxable values. It should also be noted that Table 35 does not include assessed valuations in Improvement Districts for either Saskatchewan or Alberta. In Saskatchewan these amounted to \$28,598,170, \$27,327,995, \$26,874,190 and \$26,892,080, and in Alberta to \$61,016,330, \$63,171,742, \$62,753,779 and \$68,645,962 in 1944, 1945, 1946 and 1947, respectively. In addition there are other intra-provincial inconsistencies between municipalities which, in turn, further affect interprovincial comparisons. These may be said to be due to the lack of integrated municipal assessment systems and uniform standards for establishing values on a province-wide basis, under the direction and control of a central authority. Some provinces, however, have made considerable progress along these lines in recent years, as in the case of Saskatchewan, the results of which are referred to in the text following Table 35.

* Revised in the Public Finance Division, Dominion Bureau of Statistics.