

Section 3.—Municipal Government*

There is great dissimilarity in the organization of local government across Canada. Constitutionally jurisdiction over municipal affairs rests with the provincial governments and each province has passed legislation governing aspects of municipal incorporation, powers and duties. Differences in origin and independent growth as well as in geographic location and population composition have naturally resulted in individual requirements among municipalities which have been individually met. A short history of local government organization in Canada is given in the 1955 Year Book, pp. 87-88.

Constant fluctuation in organization is also a feature of local government, particularly evident in the recent period of urban growth. Two major developments in municipal organization occurred in Canada during 1954. Of widespread interest even beyond Canada—its progress is being followed in many of the larger urban areas abroad—was the establishment of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto on Jan. 1, 1954. It was incorporated to co-ordinate the more vital services of the thirteen municipalities comprising the metropolitan area of the city and, together with the corresponding Metropolitan School Board, provides education, water supply, major sewage services, area recreation, public transport, arterial roads and other metropolitan services. Local problems of education, public works and municipal services are left to the local school boards and the individual municipalities. The latter also provide police and fire protection. The whole area has been re-assessed on a uniform basis by the Metropolitan Council and a uniform levy is made on the constituent municipalities which continue to impose and collect the taxes.

A development of more immediate concern to rural municipal administration was the establishment in Alberta of the Coterminous Boundary Commission which was directed to adjust and bring into conformity the rural municipal and school district boundaries. Except for the Peace River area in the north the work was completed during 1955.

An outline of municipal organization at the end of 1954 in each of the provinces of Canada is given in the following paragraphs.†

Newfoundland.—Newfoundland has only one city, St. John's‡. The remainder of the population is dispersed in small settlements along the coast and only since 1937 have a few of the larger of these been set up individually as towns with local councils or, where two or three are close together, as rural districts (43 in 1953). These latter are not rural municipalities but merely towns consisting of two or more settlements. Local affairs in the remainder of the Province are administered by the Provincial Government. In 1949 the Local Government Act was passed to facilitate incorporations. There were 32 towns and four rural districts incorporated under the Act at the end of 1954 and 11 local government communities with lesser powers of government.

Prince Edward Island.—The Province has one city, Charlottetown, and seven towns, all incorporated by special Acts. They comprise less than one-half of one per cent of the area of the Island and only about a quarter of its population. The Village Service Act, 1951 provides for the incorporation of villages. The remaining area of the Province is not organized municipally, the three counties being provincial administrative units only.

Nova Scotia.—Municipal organization in Nova Scotia covers the whole of the Province. The two cities, Halifax and Sydney, operate under special charters and certain special legislation. Forty towns operate under the Town Incorporation Act but there are no municipalities incorporated as villages. Cities and towns are independent of counties. The rural area is divided into 18 counties which, in themselves, do not represent units of local government. However 12 of these counties each comprise one municipality and the other six each comprise two municipalities, making a total of 24 rural municipalities.

* Prepared in the Public Finance and Transportation Division, Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

† Municipalities are summarized by type of organization on p. 99.

‡ The incorporation of Corner Brook as a city became effective Jan. 1, 1956.