

Section 3.—Municipal Government*

Most Canadians are served by municipal government, although, paradoxically, a great part of the country does not have municipal government. The populated strip running through the Maritime Provinces, along the St. Lawrence River and the eastern Great Lakes, and from Lake Superior to the Pacific is largely municipally organized, but vast areas of the Provinces of Newfoundland, Quebec and those of western Canada, together with the Territories, are so thinly populated that only a few isolated municipalities have been set up.

Except in the Territories, municipal government is organized and functions under provincial jurisdiction. While there are basic similarities in the municipalities as between provinces, there are infinite variations in the detail of legislation governing incorporation, power and functions, in methods of control and assistance, and in local administrative practices.

For municipalities the postwar period has been changeful. Reorganization has been a live topic, and to a degree has come about in some provinces. Ontario has formed a Metropolitan Municipality in the Toronto area. Alberta has realigned the boundaries of its rural municipalities. Like actions are being debated in other provinces. A whole system of local government has grown up in Newfoundland. Several legislative Acts governing municipalities have been substantially rewritten. The Federal Government and some provincial governments have instituted plans for payments in lieu of taxes on Crown property. Serious thought has been given to assessment methods, their improvement and standardization. Financial reporting is gradually being made comparable. Provincial assistance has been revised and increased. And as yet there appears no slackening in the pressure to change the municipal systems, though not all are in accord on degree or on direction, or on the need for any basic change.

In their operating programs many urban municipalities are faced with a great demand for facilities and services as a result of increased need for modern amenities, for better roads and streets and more services, and also as a result of their rapid and sometimes almost explosive growth. The resulting increase in taxation, borrowing and provincial aid is causing much of the pressure for organizational and financial changes, even of a constitutional nature.

An outline of municipal organization at the end of 1956 in each of the provinces of Canada is given in the following paragraphs.†

Newfoundland.—Newfoundland has two cities, St. John's and Corner Brook, the latter becoming incorporated on Jan. 1, 1956. 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. 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 31 towns and four rural districts incorporated under the Act at the end of 1956 and 24 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

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

† Municipalities are summarized by type of organization on p. 75.