

Local School Organization.—Authority has been delegated by the provincial departments of education to publicly elected or to appointed municipal boards, which function as corporations under the school Acts and regulations, and are held responsible to the provincial government and resident ratepayers for the operation of schools. Through such delegation of authority, publicly controlled education has become a provincial-local partnership with the degree of decentralization varying somewhat from province to province and from time to time. For example, matters concerning control of the curriculum, supervision and contributions of revenue to the boards are, and will continue to be, recurrent problems. Local boards may be elected, appointed or partly elected and partly appointed. They differ in number of members—usually three members for one-room rural districts but as many as five, seven or even twelve or more for urban units. Where larger units in rural areas have been established there are central boards for the unit representing the component districts, although there may be local boards which retain some custodial and advisory duties.

The larger unit replacing rural districts, which were usually about four miles in extent, was introduced by legislation in several provinces and made optional in others in an effort to provide better school facilities and greater equalization and to mitigate the problems caused by a chronic shortage of teachers. Larger units have been established by legislation in Alberta and British Columbia and by Acts with provision for local option in Saskatchewan and the Maritime Provinces. Southern Ontario has been gradually organizing its rural areas into county units; Manitoba has recently introduced legislation whereby communities will find it beneficial to form larger secondary units; and Protestant Quebec has been essentially organized into larger units. In Catholic Quebec one board of commissioners administers all Roman Catholic schools in a municipality, whether rural or urban. In that province there have always been more residential schools established by religious groups than elsewhere. In addition, the fact that Quebec has more than 100 vocational and agricultural schools has lessened the need for the composite type of school.

Larger units vary in organization. In some provinces the rural sections are formed into units of perhaps 80 or more rural schools; in others the towns and villages are included in the units, or may be included if they so desire; in still others secondary schools only are consolidated in the larger units. Usually each unit board is advised by a superintendent who maintains liaison with the department of education, and where units are headed by a professional educator there is a trend towards delegating more professional responsibilities to the unit board. In several provinces there remains the problem of making school administrative units and municipal units coterminous.

Each department of education, among its duties, undertakes to provide for the selection, training and certification of teacher candidates; to establish courses of study and prescribe school texts; to provide inspection services and liaison between the local boards and the department; to assist in financing the schools through grants and services; and to make rules and regulations for the guidance of trustees and teachers. In return, regular reports are required from the teachers and districts.

The first government grants were based on such factors as number of teachers, enrolment, days in session and attendance. Later, special grants were introduced in most provinces to meet a variety of expenses such as the erection of the first school and other construction, the organization of special classes, transportation for pupils, and school lunches. More recently, most provinces have made some provision for equalization grants and several have introduced a basic grant for operation supplemented by a limited number of special grants.