

Higher education before Confederation was conducted in private institutions, most controlled by religious authorities. A Jesuit college that would evolve into the Université Laval began in 1635; the oldest English-language institution, King's College at Windsor, NS was founded by the Anglican Church in 1789. By 1867, Quebec had three universities and 712 classical colleges. There were three universities in New Brunswick, five in Nova Scotia and seven in Ontario. As well as in Nova Scotia, King's colleges had been established in New Brunswick and Ontario. Queen's and Victoria universities, supported by the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, had been chartered in Ontario. Only McGill in Montreal and Dalhousie in Halifax were non-sectarian.

Constitutional responsibility. The British North America Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1867, united four provinces, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Section 93 of the act placed education "exclusively" under the control of each province, confirming variations in the systems that already existed. As other provinces were admitted (Manitoba 1870, British Columbia 1871, Prince Edward Island 1873, Saskatchewan and Alberta 1905 and Newfoundland 1949) the provisions of the section were reaffirmed.

Officially the act recognized no federal presence in education. However, the federal government assumed direct responsibility for the education of persons beyond the bounds of provincial jurisdiction — Indians and Inuit, armed forces personnel and their families, and inmates of federal penal institutions. And as the education enterprise expanded, indirect federal participation in the form of financial assistance became extensive.

The education explosion. Until the late 1940s, Canada, according to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, was "one of the less educationally developed of the great democracies." Today it ranks among the world's educational leaders. This evolution was compelled by unprecedented population growth combined with the desire of students to continue to higher levels.

The population grew because of the post-war baby boom and sizable net immigration. Rising expectations and widespread belief in education as a means of upward mobility encouraged students to stay in school longer. Consequently, Canada's educational enrolment in the post-war period increased faster than that of any other industrialized country. Between 1951 and 1971 combined elementary-secondary enrolment more than doubled. The 1960s were the decade of fastest growth, with the number of elementary-secondary students increasing 40% and post-secondary enrolment 168%. Such growth necessitated construction of new schools, expansion of the post-secondary sector and a commensurate rise in numbers of teachers at all levels.

As well as increasing facilities and personnel, it was imperative to revise the curriculum to reflect new social and economic realities. A more industrialized and sophisticated economy imposed new standards on the labour force. The comprehensive secondary school, offering a wide range of options, was recognized as part of the answer to the need for versatility and choice.

Expansion of the education enterprise could not occur without a spending increase. In 1947 education expenditures totalled \$350 million. By 1960 annual costs had risen to \$1.7 billion. During the 1960s, expenditures grew at an average yearly rate of more than 10% (sometimes 20%) to \$7.7 billion in 1970. The rate at which spending rose was faster than that of enrolment — costs tripled although total full-time enrolment at all levels increased by only 46%.

The decline in the birth rate and lower levels of immigration have produced an enrolment decline in elementary-secondary schools that is expected to persist into the 1980s. The 1970-71 peak is unlikely to be attained again this century. Post-secondary institutions will feel the effects of this decline.

Provincial administration

Each province and territory is responsible for its own education system. As a consequence, organization, policies and practices differ from one to another. A department of education in every province is headed by a minister who is an elected