

Education in Canada

6.1

Post-secondary expansion

6.1.1

Bolstered by the last students born in the baby boom after World War II and a tendency for more students to stay in school longer, enrolment in post-secondary education grew modestly in the late 1970s while lower levels showed declines. Post-secondary enrolment levelled off in universities while expanding in community colleges and vocational training institutions. More students remained in school until secondary graduation and about 60% of these graduates entered post-secondary institutions.

Elementary-secondary enrolment was 5,374,000 in 1977-78, down 2% from the previous year and a half million below the 1970-71 record. Falling birth rates since 1960 have produced an enrolment slump at every level as the children matured.

The number of full-time elementary-secondary teachers fell from 278,300 in 1972-73 to 259,500 in 1977-78. However, because the number of teachers has not decreased as quickly as enrolment, every year there has been a smaller number of students in relation to teachers.

In contrast, the number of full-time post-secondary teachers doubled in the decade 1968-78. It rose in both universities and non-university institutions, but more rapidly in the latter to keep pace with enrolment.

Spending for education from kindergarten through graduate studies was \$15 billion for 1976-77, and estimates place the 1977-78 figure at \$17.1 billion. Elementary-secondary education absorbed \$11.4 billion of the 1977-78 total. Universities received \$3.3 billion; non-university institutions \$1.3 billion; and vocational training \$1.1 billion.

History of education

6.1.2

The earliest organized forms of education in the territory that was to become Canada were under church control. Quebec was founded as a colony of France in 1608 and the first school soon opened. But it was not until 1824 that Quebec passed an education act. Nova Scotia had done so in 1766, followed by New Brunswick in 1802 and Ontario in 1807. However, education at lower levels continued to be church-dominated until the mid-19th century.

During the 1840s and 1850s a public system of education was developed in Quebec (Canada East), supplemented by schools and colleges operated by Roman Catholic orders. At the same time, Ontario (Canada West) also established a public system, as did the Maritimes (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island). Higher education before Confederation was conducted in private institutions, most controlled by religious authorities.

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. As the education enterprise expanded, indirect federal participation in the form of financial aid 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