

CHAPTER 4

EDUCATION

4.1 Education in Canada

4.1.1 Summary statistics

Between 1971 and 1981, the median number of years of formal schooling of Canada's adult population rose from 10.6 to 11.8. By 1984, the proportion of adults who were graduates of universities or community colleges stood at an estimated 20.9%, up from 17.6% just five years earlier.

Full-time postsecondary enrolment increased throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, while enrolment at lower levels declined. Total full-time postsecondary enrolment reached 789,800 in 1985-86, a 33% increase from 10 years earlier. Growth was slow in the late 1970s, averaging just over 1% a year. At the beginning of the 1980s, enrolment rose rapidly, gaining more than 5% each year, but by mid-decade, annual increases had dropped to less than 1%.

About six out of 10 full-time postsecondary students are enrolled in universities; the rest attend community colleges. After two years of decline, full-time university enrolment started to increase in 1979-80. The following year, numbers surpassed the previous high reached in 1976-77 and continued rising. The 1985-86 total of 467,300 was a 26% increase over 1975-76.

Full-time postsecondary students in community colleges totalled 322,500 in 1985-86, up 46% from 1975-76. Although growth was steady, annual gains were greatest in the early 1980s and have since fallen off.

The number of full-time postsecondary teachers rose in both universities and community colleges, but more rapidly in the latter to keep pace with faster enrolment growth. In 1984-85, full-time university teachers totalled 35,100; full-time community college faculty teaching at the postsecondary level numbered 24,100.

Nearly 4.9 million students were enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in 1985-86. This represented a 15% drop from the all-time high of 5.8 million in 1970-71. Since that year, elementary-secondary enrolment has fallen

steadily. The rate of decline, however, is leveling off. Annual losses in the late 1970s were around 2%; since 1982-83, the yearly loss has been about 0.5%.

In 1984-85, there were 271,000 full-time elementary-secondary teachers. This was nearly a 5% decrease from the high of 284,900 in 1976-77. With the exception of one year, the elementary-secondary teaching force has declined annually since then. But this rate of decrease did not match the more rapid decline of elementary-secondary enrolment. As a result, the number of teachers in relation to the number of students has risen.

Spending on education from kindergarten through graduate studies rose steadily to \$30.5 billion in 1983, an increase of 219% from a decade earlier. During the same period, the Consumer Price Index went up by 146%. Elementary-secondary education absorbed \$20.0 billion of this total. University education received \$6.0 billion; college, \$2.4 billion; and the trades level, \$2.0 billion.

4.1.2 History of education

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 opened soon afterward. 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. Nevertheless, until the mid-19th century, education continued to be church-dominated.

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.