

## CHAPTER 4

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# EDUCATION

### 4.1 Education in Canada

#### 4.1.1 Summary statistics

Between 1971 and 1986, the median number of years of formal schooling of Canada's adult population rose from 10.6 to 12.2. In 1986, the proportion of adults who were graduates of universities or community colleges stood at an estimated 22.4%, up from 17.6% at the beginning of the 1980s.

Full-time postsecondary enrolment increased throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, while enrolment at lower levels declined. Total full-time postsecondary enrolment reached 797,000 in 1986-87, a 32% 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 1986-87 total of 475,400 was a 26% increase over 1976-77.

Full-time postsecondary students in community colleges totalled 321,600 in 1986-87, up 46% from 1976-77 but down slightly from the high of 322,300 attained the previous year. 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 1986-87, full-time university teachers totalled 35,600; full-time community college faculty teaching at the postsecondary level numbered 23,600.

Over 4.9 million students were enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in 1986-87. This represented a 15% drop from the all-time high of 5.8 million in 1970-71. Elementary-secondary

enrolment fell steadily, following the all-time high in 1970-71, although the rate of decline levelled off in the early 1980s. Annual losses in the late 1970s were around 2%; between 1982-83 and 1985-86, the yearly losses were about 0.5%. The first increase in enrolment (0.2%), in over a decade and a half, occurred in 1986-87.

In 1986-87, there were nearly 270,000 full-time elementary-secondary teachers. This was a 9% decrease from the high of 284,900 in 1976-77. With the exception of one year, the elementary-secondary teaching force declined annually from 1976-77 to 1985-86. An increase was recorded in 1986-87.

**Spending on education** from kindergarten through graduate studies rose steadily to an estimated \$36.8 billion in 1986-87, an increase of 144% from a decade earlier. During the same period, the Consumer Price Index went up by 110%. Elementary-secondary education absorbed \$23.4 billion of the 1986-87 budget. University education received \$7.3 billion; college, \$2.9 billion; and vocational training, \$3.1 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.