

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN HUNGERFORD TOWNSHIP

Public elementary schools were first established in Upper Canada by the Common School Act of 1816. They were known as common schools until 1871, when they became public schools. The act authorized the inhabitants of any town, township or village to organize a school, provided an undertaking was made to provide at least twenty pupils and to pay part of the teacher's salary. Three trustees were to be elected by the people, and were empowered to judge the educational fitness of the teachers, who were required to be British subjects. Teachers were to be paid in proportion to the number of pupils attending the school, and since most pupils attended only part time it was possible for a family to pay the teacher for, say, 1½ pupils, signifying that one pupil had attended for the full session and one only half time. District Boards of Education were appointed to distribute the money voted by the Legislature for the common schools of the district. Very few teachers at this time were properly qualified, and many were transients who had no real interest in the education of their pupils. School accommodation and equipment were very poor.

The Act of Union of 1841 made provision for an improved plan of school administration. A Chief Superintendent of Education was to be appointed to see that the schools were uniform. A permanent school fund was to be established to consist of money accruing from the sale of School Reserve Lands. Money for school purposes was also to be raised through assessment by municipal councils, and an annual Government grant of £50,000 was to be made. District Boards of Education were to be abolished and the municipal council of each district was to constitute the board of education. A school fee of 25¢ per month per pupil was established. The municipal councils were authorized to divide the townships of their district into school sections, and to tax the inhabitants of each section to the extent of \$200 for the construction of new school buildings. Trustees were to be abolished and township boards of trustees were to be elected, to be known as Common School Commissioners, whose duty was to manage the schools within the township. Schools could be established for religious minorities; here is seen the first legislative recognition of separate schools.

The regime of the Common School Commissioners was very brief. They were abolished in 1843, when authority was given to revert to the election of three trustees for each section.

The School Law of 1846 provided for a Chief Superintendent of Schools, a