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ISBN 0-612-15525-0

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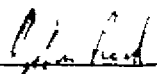


This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

The writing of this thesis reflects an inter-disciplinary approach conducted within the Atlantic Canada Studies program at St. Mary's University, Halifax NS.

This thesis has been read and approved by:

  
Dr. Colin Howell

  
Dr. John G. Reid

  
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## Abstract

### **The Fiscal Legacy Of School Reform In Victorian Halifax**

Submitted by: David Hood

September 25, 1995

In 1960 Douglas Casey traced the legislative development of public school funding in Nova Scotia, from the 1760's to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This thesis picks up where Douglas Casey left off. It looks at the spending and management of educational tax dollars against the background of Victorian notions of progress. This study is confined to the city of Halifax, although it seems clear that the basic framework and philosophy of the Halifax School Board recurred in school boards throughout the province, New England and Ontario. The information presented here thus contributes to the general knowledge of Victorian educational reform in Nova Scotia and beyond, but seeks in particular to point out the financial legacy of school reform in Victorian Halifax. The source and methodology of public school funding and our dependency on deficit financing are carry-overs from the Victorian period. The insolvency of Victorian school reform was in large part due to an inadequate funding process. The fundamental elements of that process remain in place today. Consequently the public schools of Halifax have remained in the red for 130 years. The financial legacy of Victorian school reform is the perpetuation of a particular funding process, one that has left successive generations unable to keep the City's schools in the black. Providing adequate and secure funding for the Halifax school system continues to be a problem in our own time. It is impossible to understand or change that reality without knowing how it was constructed. The intention of this thesis is to inquire carefully into the fiscal history of education in Halifax, in order to suggest directions for further investigation and perhaps to come up with alternative funding arrangements to those that are now in place.

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## Preface

Much of this thesis is about educational finance in Victorian Halifax. Consequently it is filled with numerical details gathered from late 19<sup>th</sup> century reports published by the Halifax Board of School Commissioners. These numbers and the school funding policies they represent are difficult to follow. Grasping their fiscal consequences demands a narrow focus, immersion in minute detail. At the same time a broader view is needed to understand what motivated and molded Victorian school reform and the funding mechanisms it created.

Connections between the narrow and the broad can be difficult to see. Nonetheless, such connections are real. During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Halifax Board of School Commissioners adopted a series of fiscal policies and practices which resulted in tremendous losses through poor debt financing. Initially educational debt was created by the Board's fiscal and political inexperience and by its administrative rivalry with Halifax City Council. During later years inherently weak fiscal policies were left unattended while the Board focused on the expansion of public education and its own authority. The zest for educational and administrative expansion came from the sweeping socio-economic transformations generated by industrial development and advances in science and technology. The technological application of scientific discoveries introduced mass production, the ability to move goods and people over great distances, and the will to manage the previously uncontrollable. Changing conditions reconfigured society and its reconfiguration demanded higher levels of individual knowledge and skill. Demand and enthusiasm for change inspired school reformers to answer the call for trained labour. At the same time school reformers felt a need to inculcate social morality and viewed progressive education as an ideal means to that end. Meanwhile, the long term fiscal consequences of school reform were left unattended by Victorian school reformers who were consumed by an overwhelming enthusiasm for progress and a heady responsibility for the molding of future generations.

The public schools of contemporary Halifax are accountable for an enormous debt. Current debt was not inherited from Victorian school reformers. However, the methodology currently being used to collect funds for public education, the primary source of those funds, and our predilection for deficit financing were all established

within the Victorian context and they remain in place today. The fiscal legacy of Victorian school reform is not an outstanding debt. It is a set of assumptions or notions about how public schools ought to be funding. This thesis will draw connections between 19<sup>th</sup> century school reform and our contemporary public school debt. The purpose is not to lay blame on the past. Rather, the goal is to search the past for an understanding of the present. More specifically, this thesis profiles the past 130 years of public school funding in the city of Halifax, a record that can be used to support further research and an argument for changes to our school funding methodology.

In order to survey and describe the context of Victorian society and the connections between that context and the details of the Board's fiscal policies this study draws upon literature from a variety of disciplines. Literature from political scientists helps to explain the relationship between Halifax City Council and the Provincial government as well as the continued influence of denominational leaders, particularly the influence held by successive Catholic Archbishops in Halifax. Literature from the field of economics points toward the relationship between education levels and financial success, for individuals, collective groups and communities as a whole. Sociological writings provide insight into the changes that occurred within interpersonal relationships and within broader cultural and social dynamics as a result of scientific advancement and the centralization of authority, particularly the centralization of educational authority. For example, factory production moved families from the open spaces of the country into the congested confines of urban life. In an effort to improve educational quality through centralization, the closeness of one room school houses was lost to the impersonalization of large consolidated schools. Such changes redefined everyday life for many people and transposed sociological norms. Educational literature outlines the current debate surrounding educational funding. Existing historical research provides a wealth of references and confirms the originality of this study. This study is primarily descriptive and does not attempt to explain events within any single analytical framework. Instead, an inter-disciplinary approach has been used to guide the selection of material for this study and to enrich and enliven the research into the nature of public school funding.

## Introduction

Children are born unfamiliar with the ways of the world. Consequently, parents have always shown their children how to behave and taught them the fundamental principles of language and the natural world. But, few parents have ever had time or the skill themselves to provide their children with an advanced education. Since the industrial revolution the knowledge essential to everyday life has become greater than ever before, both in complexity and volume. Meanwhile the ever rising cost of living has forced most parents to work long hours either in or outside of the home. Since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children have needed to learn more. Parents, particularly urban parents, have had less time to teach them. Consequently, the responsibility for educating children has moved almost entirely out of the home. Teachers and schools of one form or another are as old as humankind. Modern schools and their teachers are largely responsible for who we are and what our children will become.

Schools have played a leading role in modern life. Since the state took control, education has also consumed a large proportion of tax dollars. In Nova Scotia the first mandatory school tax was imposed by the Provincial Government in 1865. Questions surrounding the legitimacy and level of school taxation ignited fiery debate across the province for the next fifty years. This study is a case in point. It is an examination of the management and spending of school taxes in Victorian Halifax. The first chapter will deal with the mechanics of school finance in Halifax; the collection and transfer of tax revenue, debt funding, construction costs, leasing costs, etc.<sup>1</sup> Here the imprudence of the fiscal policies devised by the Halifax Board of

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<sup>1</sup>The factual data of this section was drawn from the annual reports of The Halifax Board of School Commissioners and The Superintendent of Education, Halifax City Council Minutes, Minutes of The Halifax Board of School Commissioners, Provincial Statutes of Nova Scotia, and the Debates and Proceedings of the House of Assembly. In trying to understand the complex mechanics of public school finance the following works were consulted: Tim Sale, *An Analysis of School Funding Across Canada* Vancouver: EduServ Inc., 1993., Stephen B. Lawton, *The Price of Quality: The Public Finance of Elementary and Secondary Education in Canada* Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1987., Stephen B. Lawton, and Rouleen Wignall, Eds. *Scrimping or Squandering? Financing Canadian Schools* Toronto: OISE Press, 1989., Frederick Enns, *The Legal Status of The Canadian School Board* Toronto: MacMillan, 1963., William Casteller, *Public School Debt Administration* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958., Charles Benson, *The economics of Public Education* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961., Walter I. Garms, James W. Guthrie, and Lawrence C Pierce, Eds. *School Finance The Economics and Politics of Public Education* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1978 and Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.



School Commissioners will become apparent. The second chapter will present the circumstances or context that explains the Board's costly fiscal decisions.<sup>2</sup> Issues such as denominational conflict, the Victorian notion of progress, the conflict between church and state, separate schools, the ascent of public bureaucracy and the emerging hegemony of the middle class will be discussed. The final section will draw some connections between past and present. What is the fiscal legacy of Victorian school reform? What can this study contribute to the current educational debate, particularly the debate surrounding the restraints and methods of school funding?<sup>3</sup> The remainder of this introduction will outline the sweeping social and economic changes that occurred within the Victorian period and how these changes were reflected in Nova Scotia and Halifax, and present a review of the local educational literature.

Prior to 1766 education was a private matter affiliated with various religious organizations. The Nova Scotia Legislature entered educational affairs in 1766.

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<sup>2</sup>In addition to the sources cited elsewhere in the introduction the following sources were used to gain an understanding of the local and broader context surrounding school reformers in Victorian Halifax: *A Study Of The School System of The City of Halifax*, Halifax: Catholic Archdiocese, 1968., Rev. William McCulloch *Separate Schools*. Truro: W.B. Alley Book and Job Printer, 1876., Rev. T. B. Gregory. "The Halifax School Question. Shall The State Surrender To The Church?" Killiam Library, Dalhousie University, MFM # F1001 C1155 34663, Rev. J. M. King. "Education: Not Secular Nor Sectarian, But Religious" Lecture. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Oct. 29, 1889., Terrance Murphy. "The Emergence of Maritime Catholicism 1781-1830." *Acadiensis* VIII, II (1984): 31., James D. Frost. "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880-1910." *Acadiensis* I (Spring 1983)., Ernest R. Forbes. "Misguided Symmetry: the Destruction of Regional Transportation Policy for the Maritimes." *Canada and the Burden of Unity*. Ed. David J. Bercuson. Toronto: MacMillan, 1977., T.W. Acheson. "The National Policy and the industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910." *Acadiensis* I (Spring 1972)., Robert Nicholas Berard. "Moral Education in Nova Scotia" *Acadiensis* XIV (Autumn 1984): 49-63., C.B. Sissons *Church and State in Canadian Education: An Historical Study*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959., David Alexander. "Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region, 1880-1940" *Acadiensis*. VIII (Autumn 1978)., L.D. McCann. "Staples and the New Industrialism in the Growth of Post-Confederation Halifax" *Acadiensis* VIII, II (Spring 1979), Manoly R. Lupul. *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question: a study in church-state relations in western Canada, 1875-1905*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974., Margaret Scott MacGregor. *Some Letters from Archbishop Tache on the Manitoba School Question*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1967., Alison Prentice. *The School Promoters Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977., David C Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Robert M. Stamp, Eds. *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1979., Nancy M Sheehan., Donald J. Wilson, and David C. Jones, Eds. *Schools in the West Essays in Canadian Educational History*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1986. and Joy Parr, Ed. *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982.

<sup>3</sup>For a sense of current issues in education the following works were consulted: Phillip Buckner, *Teaching Maritime Studies*. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1986., Paul Robinson, *Where Our Survival Lies Students and Textbooks in Atlantic Canada*. Halifax: Atlantic Institute of Education, 1979., Terry Wotherspoon, Ed. *The Political Economy of Canadian Schooling*. Toronto: Methuen, 1987., Douglas Myers, *The Failure of Educational Reform in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973 and Terry Wotherspoon, Ed. *Hitting the Books the Politics of educational Retrenchment*. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1991.

Initially, it merely sanctioned Anglican control of schooling. Later, driven by Victorian notions of progressive reform the Province assumed full authority for all aspects of public education. Among other things, the actions of the Nova Scotia government evinced a broader desire to reduce the role of the church in public affairs. Its actions were also in step with the mid-nineteenth century school reforms taking place in New England and Central Canada. Meanwhile, all school reform followed sweeping changes brought on by the advancement of science and mass technological production.

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the onset of the first world war European and North American societies were dramatically transformed. The primary transitional force in western capitalist communities was the application of science and its concomitant technologies to industrial production. Science replaced sails with steam engines. It brought far away places near with rail lines and telegraph wires. Advances in engineering produced new machines able to do the work of many hands at a rapid pace. Factories replaced craftsmen and cottage industries. Manufactured goods became widely available at low cost. The rage to consume new products was met by legions of factories as capital scrambled to supply the demand. Lured by promises of a steady wage and hopes of prosperity beyond the farm workers swelled the urban ranks. Patterns of population distribution were permanently transformed. Established links between infectious disease and sanitation allowed doctors to save countless lives. And, modernized printing technology provided innumerable books and newspapers that continuously sang the praises of progress.<sup>4</sup>

Science and technology provided the opportunity to do things on a massive scale. The Victorians longed for a progressive society purged of immorality, want and suffering. They faithfully believed in science as a means to that end. Faith and opportunity combined to create huge factories, national rail networks, electrification, sewer systems, hospitals and public schools all in the name of progress. Large projects demanded efficient organization. Following the principles of scientific

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<sup>4</sup>For an overall view of changes in Canadian society during this time see: Robert Craig Brown, and Ramsay Cook. *Canada 1896 - 1921 A Nation Transformed*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. For a focus on the Atlantic region see: E.R. Forbes, and D.A. Muise, Eds. *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993. - first six chapters. For a discussion of technology's impact in the later part of the 20th century see: George Grant. *Technology and Empire*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1969.

production (the division of labour, systematic management and the veneration of specialized knowledge) large bureaucracies were built to meet the organizational task. The expense of these large projects often required government support. Moreover, projects that extended public welfare were seen to be part of the government's responsibility for progressive social reform. Governments replied through their own scientifically managed state bureaucracies. Self-righteousness and the exhilaration emanating from progressive achievement compelled bureaucracies (public & private) to grow, to accumulate power and to assume authority. By the turn of the century many previously unregulated facets of living and working became subject to bureaucratic control, subject to the prevailing vision of progressive reform.

For the sake of operational efficiency (investment return) mass production and scientific management reduced the population and solvency of small rural communities by harnessing the labour force and shifting it to factories usually in or near urban areas. The dignity, pride and kinship of labour became to some extent lost in the unrewarding and routinized tasks of factory production. Self-worth and notions of mutuality became harder to maintain in an urban bureaucratic milieu that marginalized labour and increasingly defined human value in contractual ways. Victorian progress changed not only the means of production and the availability of goods and services, it also influenced the way people related to one another and the way they saw the world.<sup>5</sup>

Nova Scotia was not sheltered from the 19<sup>th</sup> century winds of change. An economy narrowly based on the export of raw resources grew to include diverse manufacturing, investment banking and a wide range of public services. Such ventures as the Intercolonial Railway, the Dominion Cotton Mills and the General Mining Association were initiated with modern technology and administered by large centralized bureaucracies. As rail lines tentacled the province factory production followed. Centers such as Pictou, New Glasgow, Halifax and Windsor boomed with the making of everything from textiles to farm tractors. When the Intercolonial reached Montreal in the 1890s Nova Scotian producers were able to add the Canadian prairie and west coast markets to their traditional trade with New England

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<sup>5</sup>For a good discussion of the mechanics and the pervasive affects of modern bureaucracy see: Peter L. Berger, *The Homeless Mind. Modernization and Consciousness*. New York: Random House, 1973.

and Europe. Confederation's promise of a solid yet diverse industrial base seemed to have finally been delivered.

As well as a healthy economy, Nova Scotia would produce a variety of notable individuals during the Victorian era, including Joseph Howe who was instrumental in bringing responsible government to Nova Scotia and Charles Tupper who introduced 'The Free School Act', the beginning of our public education system.<sup>6</sup> Both Howe and Tupper later carried themselves well in federal politics. Internationally renowned geologist and educator Sir John William Dawson was born in Nova Scotia. He lived and worked here much of his life until 1855 when he moved on to Montreal and the principalship of McGill. "Andrew Downs of Halifax... created the first zoological garden in British North America [1847]... An authority on birdlife and an expert taxidermist, Downs supplied specimens to many museums in America and Europe (including the personal collection of King Victor Emmanuel of Italy)."<sup>7</sup> The socio-economic milieu of Victorian Nova Scotia was vibrant, forward looking and full of hope. The province was not a reluctant child dragged along by progress. Nova Scotians were not mere followers. They helped to define progressive trends.

As Nova Scotia moved forward, the city of Halifax led the way. Halifax had been founded in 1749 in order to expand both the English presence in Nova Scotia and British investment opportunities.<sup>8</sup> As the city grew so did its potential as a political, economic and social centre not only for Nova Scotia, but the entire Maritime region. During the Victorian period the City fulfilled its destiny. Other areas of the province matched the industrial growth of Victorian Halifax. Yet, none equaled the City's depth and permanence of socio-economic and scientific leadership. Through the efforts of those such as Andrew Downs, Sir John William Dawson, A. H. MacKay, George

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<sup>6</sup>The Act was so named because it eliminated tuition for common schools, it allowed children to attend school 'free' of tuition. Yet, education did not become free. In actuality the Act changed educational funding from direct (tuition fees) to indirect (universal mandatory tax).

<sup>7</sup>Carl Beger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983 p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Mid 18th century Nova Scotia was dominated by French Catholics and what remained of the Micmac nation. British officials feared the province would fall back into French hands unless a strong English presence was established. Moreover, it was hoped that the French and Micmac people could eventually be assimilated - learn English and renounce the Catholic faith. See Terrance Burns, "Public School Education of Catholics in The City of Halifax." Unpublished Master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1962. p. 3 See also James Bingay, *Public School Education in Nova Scotia - A History and commentary*. Kingston: Jackson Press, 1919 pp. 8-9 and Patricia Ann Emenau, "The SPG in Nova Scotia: Survey of a System of Parochial Education." Unpublished Master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1967. p. 1.

Munro Grant, Robert Sedgewick and Alexander McKay, the City went beyond commercial success to become a cultural centre and the prime focus of information and power east of Montreal.<sup>9</sup>

As Halifax matured in the post-Confederation period, its citizens became the first generation dependent upon formal education and the advancement of science and technology. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a formal education was beyond the means, interest and necessity of most people. Yet, a few inspired souls managed to acquire enough information and skill to explore and advance knowledge in a variety of fields, including plant and animal life, the molecular structure of matter, human anatomy and mechanics. The practical application of scientific principles raised the level of knowledge needed for everyday life in the future. For example, the work of a farmer in the mid 1800s was relatively simple. He ran a small farm, limited by the capacity of family labour, horsepower and mother nature. If a grandson remained in farming, however, the job would be far more complicated.<sup>10</sup> His large scale farm would likely depend upon complex machinery and hazardous chemicals. He would require knowledge and skill unknown to his grandfather.

As production processes increased in complexity, the demand for an educated labour force also increased. Enhanced levels of education and technical skill became tightly connected to the economic success of individuals and communities. During the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, public school systems responded by increasing the scientific content of their curriculum. In Nova Scotia, Halifax led the way with the opening of a public high school in 1880, the inauguration of the Victorian School of Art and Design in 1888, the addition of manual training (industrial arts) to the public school curriculum in the 1890s and the opening of the Nova Scotia Technical College in 1909. Endeavoring to maximize profits, capital then used the heightened ability of workers to create new technologies and once again raise the requirements needed to enter the labour force. This

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<sup>9</sup>The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* provides excellent biographies for Downs, Dawson, Grant and Sedgewick. *Who's Who in Canada* provides a biography for A.H. MacKay and a profile of Alexander McKay can be found in the *Acadian Recorder*, April 9, 1917.

<sup>10</sup>One of the consequences of progress was the need for fewer farmers as machines replaced men. As will be seen later, such change was a source of Victorian conflict.

perpetuating cycle assured continuous technological change and a constant upward pressure on the minimum level of education requested by employers.

The push for public education had its practical economic side. It also had a moral and social side. As workers flocked to urban factories they brought their children with them. Family farms provided children a healthy level of work and space for play. In the eyes of public officials city children often were consumed by arduous factory labour or were rogues lacking direction. Schools were seen as a constructive alternative to vassalage and mischief. This common attitude was well expressed by Alexander McKay, Supervisor of Halifax Public Schools, in his annual report of 1888:

If the city has the right to tax the citizens to protect them from the dangers of ignorance, then it becomes its duty to see that all classes are receiving that education which is necessary to make them good citizens. Any system of public education is, to a large extent, a failure, if it permits a considerable percentage of the youth of a country to grow up without the discipline, culture and knowledge requisite to make them safe and useful members of society. Our public school system, which has been in operation since 1864, has already done very much to soften the manners and improve the morals of our people. It still fails, however, to reach many who most need it. In almost any street in this city, one meets during school hours large numbers of children of school age, who, instead of getting ready to be self-supporting and helpful to the community, are evidently destined to be added to the criminal classes, whose punishment costs ten times as much as their education would have done. The police or other suitable persons should be appointed truant officers to compel the attendance of such as are found to be beyond parental control.<sup>11</sup>

Schools were also seen as a means of inculcating scientific principles, principles essential to good citizenship and a progressive society. Science eased the conditions of everyday life. Its offerings were temporal and tangible. Religion offered spiritual comfort and philosophical guidance, food for the soul. But, it could not manufacture the skills and utensils required to improve the material conditions of everyday life. However, many Victorians, particularly the emerging middle class, were extremely pious and had to struggle with the conflict between religious and scientific priorities. Historian Brian McKillopp has shown how Victorian reformers incorporated scientific discoveries into religious paradigms. With a sympathetic environment scientific principles gained acceptance and flourished. In time science and its technological offspring established their precedence and enlivened the Victorian era with an overwhelming faith in the ability of science to cure the ills of

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<sup>11</sup>Supervisor's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax, 1888*, p. 117.

society.<sup>12</sup> Public schools were increasingly promoted as a social manifestation of applied science and a means of providing the tools to build individual and societal rewards.<sup>13</sup>

Science and technological production dramatically changed the conditions and habits of everyday life throughout the western world. The improvements offered by science sparked a new faith in human possibility and an urge for a better society founded upon benevolent scientific principles. New economic realities combined with progressive notions of reform to establish mandatory public education. Nova Scotia followed and contributed to these sweeping transformations. As the province moved forward it was led by its capital city of Halifax. Through the activities and achievements of its social and economic leaders, Halifax stood as the regional benchmark for progressive reform during the Victorian era.

Victorian progressive idealism pervasively changed the Canadian socio-economic landscape. Faith in scientific principles motivated and guided the direction of those changes. At the same time lingering discordance between religious and scientific principles maintained some feelings of ambivalence below the veneer of Victorian confidence. The Victorian context was ultimately one of conflict, both of faith and condition. That context coloured the Victorians and their actions, including their drive to reform education.

The preceding description encapsulates the Victorian context identified within a broad body of literature. However, it also offers a jumping off point for an examination of school reform in Victorian Halifax. While the Victorian context has been well identified elsewhere, the literature on Victorian education in Nova Scotia often gives short shift to the nature of Victorian progressivism. In *Public School Education in Nova Scotia-A History and Commentary*, for example, James Bingay meticulously followed school legislation from 1713 to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> His work is a very useful factual record often used by other authors. Various Education Acts are quoted in full and glimpses of everyday life are provided

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<sup>12</sup>Brian McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era*. Montreal, 1979.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Bingay, *op. cit.*

at different points along the way. Yet Bingay does not connect religious or socio-economic factors to changes in education. Nor does he connect educational developments elsewhere to educational developments in Nova Scotia. We see the actions of politicians and school officials, but we do not hear the public debate which surrounded and helped direct those actions. Nor do we learn much about the fiscal implications of our expanding public school system. Similarly, Douglas Casey, the only author to provide detailed research on school funding in Nova Scotia during the Victorian era, relies heavily upon provincial statutes.<sup>15</sup> Although Casey's analysis of the evolution of school funding is valuable to researchers, his work avoids both the larger dimensions of Victorian progressivism and implications of the funding practices and policies developed in these years.

Although much useful work has been done on denominational schooling, professionalization and legislative reform, much of this work takes the form of institutional history. The role of the Catholic church and its schools has been well documented by the works of Terrance Burns, Sister Francis Xavier Walsh and John Carroll<sup>16</sup>. Patricia Ann Emenau has traced the efforts of The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.<sup>17</sup> The political and legal particulars regarding the establishment of Free Schools has been thoroughly recorded by D.C. Harvey, Charles Fergusson and P.L. McCreath.<sup>18</sup> And John Earle has followed the professionalization of teaching in Nova Scotia.<sup>19</sup> Together these works represent much of the historical research done on Victorian education in Nova Scotia. At the core of this research is factual data from school reports, legislative acts, personal letters, school board minutes and newspaper articles. What emerges is a solid account of what was done by leading figures, but little about students and parents. Furthermore, the mien and motivation of these figures and the influence of the socio-economic changes that swirled about them is largely ignored.

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<sup>15</sup>D. M. Casey. "The Financing of Education in Nova Scotia" Unpublished Master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1960.

<sup>16</sup>See: Burns, *op. cit.* Walsh, *op. cit.* and Carroll, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup>Emenau, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup>See: D.C Harvey. "The Establishment of Free Schools in Nova Scotia" *Journal of Education* (1939), C.B Fergusson. "The inauguration of the Free School System in Nova Scotia" *Journal of Education* (1964-65) and P.L. McCreath "Charles Tupper and the Politics of Education in Nova Scotia" *Nova Historical Quarterly* (1971)

<sup>19</sup>John A. Earle. "The Development of the Teaching Profession in Nova Scotia" Unpublished Master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1960



If much of the literature has a narrow institutional perspective there are those who adopt a more inclusive approach. Janet Guildford uses the notion of separate spheres and points to broader trends in the regional economy to explain the feminization of teaching.<sup>20</sup> Dianne Hallman uses oral history to vividly illustrate rural permanence, one-room schools and the everyday life of rural school teachers.<sup>21</sup> Against this background we can see the real life drama associated with school consolidation, and can appreciate the effects of theories and statutes applied by school administrators. Other examples of this more holistic approach can be found in the works of Karl W. Perry, Nancy M. Sheehan and B. Anne Wood.<sup>22</sup> The context established by these authors allows a greater depth of analysis. Guildford is able, for example, to explain the feminization of teaching, a fact Bingay could merely record.

This thesis picks up where Douglas Casey left off. It looks at the spending and management of educational tax dollars against the background of Victorian notions of progress. This study is confined to the city of Halifax, although it seems clear that the basic framework and philosophy of the Halifax School Board occurred in school boards throughout the province, New England and Ontario. The information presented here thus contributes to the general knowledge of Victorian educational reform in Nova Scotia and beyond, but seeks in particular to point out the financial legacy of school reform in Victorian Halifax. The source and methodology of public school funding and our dependency on deficit financing are carry-overs from the Victorian period. The insolvency of Victorian school reform was in large part due to an inadequate funding process. The fundamental elements of that process remain in place today. Consequently the public schools of Halifax have remained in the red for 130 years. The financial legacy of Victorian school reform is the perpetuation of a particular funding process, one that has left successive generations unable to keep the City's schools in the black. Providing adequate and secure funding for the Halifax

<sup>20</sup> Janet Guildford, "'Separate Spheres': the Feminization of Public School Teaching in Nova Scotia, 1838-1880", *Acadiensis* XXII, 1 (Autumn 1992)

<sup>21</sup> Dianne M. Hallman, "'A Thing of the Past': Teaching in One-room Schools in Rural Nova Scotia, 1936-1941," *Historical Studies in Education* 4, 1 (1992)

<sup>22</sup> See: K.W. Perry, "The Sources of Information That Affect Curriculum Change in the Public School System of Nova Scotia" Unpublished Master's Thesis, St. Mary's University, 1960., Nancy M. Sheehan, "Alexander H. MacKay: Social and Economic Reformer" in R.S. Patterson, et al. Eds., *Profiles of Canadian Educators*. Toronto: 1974. and Anne B. Wood, "Thomas McCulloch's Use of Science in Promoting a Liberal Education", *Acadiensis* XX, 1 (Autumn 1984)

school system continues to be a problem in our own time. It is impossible to understand or change that reality without knowing how it was constructed. My intention is to inquire carefully into the fiscal history of education in Halifax, in order to suggest directions for further investigation and perhaps to come up with alternative funding arrangements to those that are now in place.

## Chapter One

This chapter will focus on the fiscal policies of the Halifax Board of School Commissioners (HBSC), from the institution of The Free School Act in 1865 through to the onset of World War I. Schools existed in Nova Scotia prior to the founding of Halifax in 1749 and before public education was mandated by The Free School Act. However, educational funding was much different prior to 1865. While it is not the central issue here, a summary of early educational funding will be provided as a point of comparison with the HBSC and its actions after 1865. Some sense of earlier arrangements allows us to appreciate both how much the fiscal responsibility of school officials increased under The Free School Act, and, indeed, how much more important sound fiscal management became after 1865.

### **School Funding In Nova Scotia Prior To 1865**

During most of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Nova Scotia was officially under French rule. Education was in the hands of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> Clergymen, usually missionaries, offered informal unstructured lessons to Acadian and Micmac children. Rote learning of the catechism and rudimentary reading and writing formed a sparse curriculum. Lack of parental interest, marginal financial support, arduous traveling conditions and a lifestyle that drew children into farm labour at an early age prevented education from extending much beyond this basic level. The Catholic Church controlled education. The public provided indirect and voluntary financial support through church donations.

In 1713 when the treaty of Utrecht was signed, Nova Scotia was populated primarily by French Catholics and what remained of the Micmac nation. Halifax was founded in 1749 as a tangible economic, military and religious counterweight to the French Catholic majority.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the mere presence of English speaking Protestants did not assure the furtherance of Protestantism or British economic interests. British

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<sup>1</sup>Bingay, *op. cit.* p. 3 Letters from French officials at Louisbourg in 1733 indicate the existence of a school for cadets. According to Bingay, this is the only known record of formal education outside of church control within the French population at that time. In 1737 there was also a school for girls established at Louisbourg. However it was under church control through the Congregation de Notre Dame - an order of teaching nuns.

<sup>2</sup>Burns, *op. cit.* p. 3 See also Bingay, *op. cit.* p.8-9. and Emenau, *op. cit.* p. 1.

officials saw education as a way of neutralizing the numerical superiority of the French Catholics. If the King's new emissaries received 'proper guidance' they would be safe from 'subversive influences' while securing and expanding their presence. Accordingly, British Parliament commissioned the services of The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). The SPG sent six missionaries and six schoolmasters. The missionaries were "armed with religious tracts against popery, and a number of Common Prayer Books."<sup>3</sup> As for the schoolmasters the Lords recommended that some of them be able to speak French in order "to advance the true Protestant religion."<sup>4</sup> The SPG's synthesis of religion and education was intended to preserve the English Protestant integrity of Halifax and to 'enlighten' surrounding dissenters.

The British Lords willingly used teachers to support a political and economic agenda. But, they were not inclined to pay teachers from the King's treasury.<sup>5</sup> Nor were the Lords willing to impose a school tax upon the citizenry of Halifax. Education was merely a means to an end. It was not an asset or a passkey to prosperity that people should have to pay for. Teachers did not hold professional status, automatic entitlement to remuneration for services rendered. In the eyes of the Lords and the public, teaching seemed to be repayment or justification for the land teachers were granted. Moreover, neither the state, the public nor teachers as a group claimed financial or didactic responsibility for the training and supervision of teachers. Initially, the expanded British presence in Nova Scotia did not alter the reality of educational funding. It remained sectarian, voluntary and inadequate.

While the SPG had been sent to Nova Scotia at the request of British Parliament, there was no direct State involvement in daily educational affairs until

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<sup>3</sup>Emenau, *op. cit.* p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Bingay, *op. cit.* p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>In lieu of a salary teachers were granted lots of land. From these lots each schoolmaster was expected to eke out an existence. The Lords realized that some time would have to be invested in preparing the land and hoped that the Society could provide for the schoolmasters in the interim. (See: Bingay, *op. cit.* p. 8. Here Bingay quotes the original letter from the Lords to the SPG asking them to send missionaries and schoolmasters.) The land was poor and unyielding even to the greenest of thumbs. In reality teachers depended upon the Society's meager grant (20 pounds annually) and what parents could provide. This was a scant existence. It is not surprising that the first schoolmaster, Mr. Halhead, resigned in 1751 "because his pay was so poor that he couldn't eat properly." (See: Emenau, *op. cit.* p. 14.) For many years teaching remained a means of last resort attracting many unsuited to the task.

1766 In that year the Nova Scotia Legislature passed "An Act concerning Schools and Schoolmasters."<sup>6</sup> The primary focus of the Act was to protect the position of the established church in educational affairs. This was done in two ways. First, the Act forbade Catholics from teaching or operating schools. Second, the Act established licensure for teachers and penalties for teaching without a license. To be certified under the Act candidates had to be declared morally fit by at least six community residents and the local clergy, or two justices of the peace. The clergymen had to be of the established church. And, fealty to the Church of England had to be sworn in open court, or as directed at the time of application. Anyone refusing the oaths was taken to be a papist recusant and refused a license.<sup>7</sup> Glaringly absent from the Act were any provisions that would positively secure or increase school funds. Although, the land to be set aside in each township for school purposes was raised from 200 to 400 acres. School lands were to be managed by trustees to be appointed by the Legislature. But, the Act did not spell out any regulations for the management of school lands or for the management of any moneys derived from them. The Act was very limited in scope. A fledgling legislature with scarce financial resources could not direct or assume responsibility for schooling much less usurp the authority of the established church(s). Nonetheless, the Act marks the Legislature's entrance into educational affairs and the first secular regulation of teaching.

During the next sixty years numerous changes were made to the school laws. For example; in 1780 the Legislature introduced a bill for the funding of a public school in Halifax.<sup>8</sup> In 1786 restrictions on Catholic schools were lifted.<sup>9</sup> In 1811 a new Education Act introduced a provincial grant for the payment of teachers and the

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* p. 23-24. Here Bingay quotes the entire Act from the statutes of 1766.

<sup>7</sup>As written the Act applied to the entire province. However, in practice it seems to have been intended for Halifax only. Catholic missionaries had been teaching in Acadian and Micmac communities for many years prior to the Act and continued to do so afterward. See Burns, *op. cit.* p. 5. There is no reference in the literature of these activities being curtailed under this Act.

<sup>8</sup>Bingay, *op. cit.* pp. 25-26. This bill authorized a lottery to raise funds for a school building. It marked the first money vote for school purposes. The preamble to the bill also noted "it is impracticable to procure a person sufficiently qualified for the purpose, [of teaching] without making a handsome and liberal provision for his easy support and maintenance" This is recognition that teaching requires expertise which is entitled to a commiserate wage. However, it would be many years before this recognition translated into better training, salaries and benefits.

<sup>9</sup>Burns, *op. cit.* p. 5-8. Burns describes the efforts of Halifax Catholics which lead to repeal of the penal laws. The petition presented to the Assembly concerning education is presented in full.

option of voluntary assessment for the support of schools.<sup>10</sup> The Education Act of 1826 created a new group of local bodies - Boards of School Commissioners.<sup>11</sup> These new Boards took over many duties formally performed by trustees; for instance, the inspection of schools and the determination of sectional boundaries. The Boards also assumed responsibility for the examination and licensure of teachers. This was an important step for it ended the power of religious authorities to appoint teachers.<sup>12</sup> Commissioners remained concerned with moral character. However, pedagogical credentials were becoming a greater concern.

Added together these Acts formed and continued to build a State educational bureaucracy, eventually the Provincial Department of Education and its accompanying Municipal School Boards.<sup>13</sup> More will be said about bureaucratic ascendancy in the next chapter. The fiscal particulars are the primary concern here. Up until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, education in Nova Scotia was primarily funded by provincial revenues and denominational resources. Provincial grants shared the funding of teachers' salaries and contributed toward construction costs

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<sup>10</sup>Bingay, *op. cit.* p. 33-35. The Act is quoted in full. The annual grant would continue to grow over the years and become a burden upon the provincial treasury. Yet, the grants were not able to meet growing educational demands. Limited provincial funds and the need for greater financial resources were two of the stronger arguments in support of compulsory assessment. Another argument for compulsory assessment was the fact that voluntary assessment was not providing a system of public free schools. Rather than assessment, communities preferred to raise money via subscriptions and church donations. Schools built with these funds usually charged tuition.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>12</sup>Despite this law the Catholic Archbishop continued for many years to approve if not appoint teachers in the City's catholic schools. In 1874 the Halifax School Association claimed the Archbishop did in fact appoint teachers contrary to the law. The BSC publicly denied the charges. However, a letter from the Board the following year asks the Archbishop to appoint a teacher for a school in the Dutch Village area. While the Board officially appointed teachers, it seems clear appointments to Halifax Catholic schools were done in consultation with the Archbishop. This practice did not compromise the quality of teachers in the Catholic schools. On the contrary, as the Halifax School Association pointed out, 3/5 of the first class male teachers were working in the Catholic schools. See Burns, *op. cit.* pp. 52-58.

<sup>13</sup>This summarization of school legislation connotes a smoothness to the process that led to the formation of an educational state in Nova Scotia. In *Building The Educational State: Canada West, 1836-187*, Bruce Curtis presents the tremendous conflict that surrounded this process in Canada West (Ontario) during the middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The construction of an educational state in Canada West pitted the economic political and social agenda of an emerging urbanized bourgeoisie against a predominantly agrarian population determined to maintain its freedom of self-determination and its autonomy in local affairs. A system of centralized state education eventually prevailed, but not without frequent and sometimes violent clashes. The formation of an educational state in Nova Scotia has not been as thoroughly studied. However, conflicts similar to those identified by Curtis are reflected in Nova Scotia's 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers, school reports, etc. and in the writings of Judith Fingard. See: Judith Fingard, "Attitudes Towards The Education Of The Poor In Colonial Halifax" *Acadiensis* II (Spring 1973).

and school supplies. The Church provided teacher training and built schools. Assessment was legal, but it was not the desired method of funding. When a community or group wished to raise money for hiring a teacher or building a school they preferred to rely on subscriptions or endowments. Finances were easily handled by local trustees. Small school districts with low budgets and uncomplicated funding did not require professional managers able to administer complex financial portfolios. Schools were not 'free', meaning they were not paid for indirectly through taxes and formally open to all children. Officially, parents paid directly for the education of each child via subscription and tuition fees. Many parents were unable or unwilling to pay. However, a "gentleman" who lived through this period is quoted by James Bingay as saying:

...he never knew a case of a child being refused admittance to the school because of inability to pay the fee. Every parent who wished to send his children to school was free to do so, where they were indistinguishable from the children of those who assisted in supporting the school. This practice held, not only under one master, but under a succession of them, for a quarter of a century, until 'free' schools were established.<sup>14</sup>

Many parents failed to send their children to school because of a seeming indifference toward schooling.<sup>15</sup> Many children attended sporadically because of distance, inclement weather or being needed at home. Others had to work in support of their families. Under these circumstances the majority of children grew up lacking an exposure to formal education. A legal process for providing formal education existed, but the law did not demand that it be provided. Assuming the gentleman quoted above was correct, in practice the schools that were provided took all children who were willing and able to attend. Therefore, it seems that low levels of formalized education were as much a matter of choice as a matter of means.

A pay-as-you-go policy is the best way to describe educational funding prior to 1865. Pay-as-you-go produced a greater number of schools in wealthier urban areas such as Halifax. The culture and services of urban areas also attracted and produced the more accredited teachers. Poorer rural school districts built fewer

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<sup>14</sup>Bingay, *op. cit.* p. 54.

<sup>15</sup>Bruce Curtis explains absenteeism in 19th century Ontario as a product of both parental resistance to the imposition of centralized state education and the dislike children had for the moral and social molds cast upon them by the emerging system of public education. Judith Fingard points to similar attitudes in Nova Scotia.

schools and offered lower wages. Under the pay-as-you-go scheme educational quality and opportunity varied widely. In some areas services were very good, others had no schools at all. There were no minimum requirements. According to the literature and the school reports appearing in the *Journals of the House of Assembly*, no school district carried any long term financial debt. In other words, at the community level education was not a priority that warranted the safeguard of minimum standards or the protracted borrowing of money. People were more concerned with keeping dollars in their pockets than children in the classroom.

#### **The Free School Act And Public School Funding In Halifax, 1865-1912**

Having introduced the character of school funding prior to the FSA, the remainder of this chapter will examine the particulars of school funding within the City of Halifax under the FSA. As that examination unfolds the weight of the FSA will be much more intelligible against the background of school funding described above. That understanding will also be useful when assessing the pecuniary wisdom of the FSA and the ensuing fiscal policies of the HBSC.

Educational affairs changed dramatically in 1865 with the passing of the Free School Act. The Act made school assessment mandatory throughout the province. In 1864 the Legislature passed a bill which formalized a provincial system of common or public schools. The new system was to be governed by a newly created Council of Public Instruction (CPI) and directed by a Superintendent of Education. The Free School Act of 1865 took the next step. It compelled the public to financially support the new system of public education. Property assessment was to be the principle means of collecting school revenue. Residents of each county were to pay a percentage of the assessed value of their real and personal property to the county collector for the support of schools. Provincial grants would continue. But, only as a secondary means primarily for the purpose of funding teacher's salaries. The 1865 bill also required parents to henceforth send their children to school. Prior to 1865 the Provincial Government had only described options that individual school districts might use to raise school funds, communities remained free to choose how or if schools would be funded. Attendance also remained optional. In 1865 the Provincial Government established *how schools would be funded, that all communities would*



fund schools, and that all children would attend school, regardless of the attitude toward public education held by any particular community.

The FSA was passed over loud objections in the legislature and the press.<sup>16</sup> The loudest objections came from the Halifax City Council. The Legislature had not consulted with City Council in the process of drafting the bill. Besides the seemingly dictatorial tone of the Legislature's actions, Council was also upset by section 49, subsection 3 of the Act which in essence maintained separate schools within the city, separate schools that would now be supported with public funds.<sup>17</sup> Council must have also disliked the prospect of taking political backlash for collecting a potentially hefty tax which it neither enacted nor supported. Despite widespread opposition and attempted amendments, the bill passed as tabled on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1865 and became law on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May. However, state administered public schools began operation in Halifax without financial support. Maintaining its opposition, City council refused to add the estimates it received from the HBSC to the City's annual assessment.<sup>18</sup> The Board was forced to borrow operating funds in order to provide the educational services prescribed by the FSA.<sup>19</sup> With the Legislature pursuing legal action, Council finally conformed to the law. On November 29, 1866 Council instructed the City Assessor to begin collecting the school tax.<sup>20</sup> Difficult fiscal relations between Council and the Board continued for many years, despite the fact that three seats on the Board were held by Council members.

By the time City Council began collecting and paying over school tax dollars to the Board, the City's public school system was over \$30,000 in debt. Back taxes for 1865 and 1866 were eventually collected and paid to the Board. However, Council did not reimburse the Board for the interest payments it was forced to make on

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<sup>16</sup>See: Burns, *op. cit.* pp. 35-40 and Bingay, *op. cit.* pp. 63-64.

<sup>17</sup>Council Minutes, April 10th, 1865, pp. 303-304 and June 1st, 1866, p. 515. The views of Council were expressed in the Legislature by Mr. Blanchard of Inverness. See: *Debates and Proceedings of the House of Assembly During the Second Session of the Twenty-third Parliament of the Province of Nova Scotia 1864-65*, p. 201. In fact separate Catholic schools had received public funds for many years through the provincial grant. However, the FSA supported Catholic schools in a much more direct and obvious fashion. The continuance of separate Catholic schools also contradicted notions of secularism used to justify the creation of a public school system.

<sup>18</sup>Council Minutes, April 10th, 1865, pp. 303-304 and June 1st, 1866, p. 515.

<sup>19</sup>School Board Minutes, October 30, 1866, p. 101. and November 5, 1866, p. 104.

<sup>20</sup>Council Minutes, November 29, 1866, p. 613.

borrowed operating funds. During the next fifteen years Council's payments to the Board were frequently in arrears. As a result the Board was repeatedly in debt for its operating expenses. By 1881 the problem still had not been resolved. As a comparison between Table 1 and Table 2 shows, until 1900 the annual amount received by the Board from City assessment was often more or less than the amount requested. In the years receipts were down the Board was forced to borrow money (overdrafts) in order to meet its operating costs. From November 1881 to April 1899 the Board paid a total of \$18,984.01 in interest on overdrafts.

In the 18 years between 1881 and 1899 the Board actually received \$76,531.50 more from assessment than it requested. However, the solvent years of high assessment receipts were not strong enough to carry the Board through the lean years. This was particularly true during extended periods of low assessments. For example, between May 1<sup>st</sup> 1889 and April 30<sup>th</sup> 1890 the Board received \$580.61 more from assessment than it called for in the estimate. However, the surplus of 1889-90 was far from large enough to cover the losses incurred during the next six years. Between May 1<sup>st</sup> of 1890 and April 30<sup>th</sup> of 1896 the Board's total assessment receipts were down by \$24,230.03. As will be discussed below, discordant fiscal years skews any direct comparisons between Table 1 and Table 2 for periods prior to 1899. Therefore, the figures in the above example are based on a comparison between the annual estimates as shown in Table 2 and the monthly receipts published in the Board's annual reports. In other words, for comparison purposes the Board's fiscal year has been synchronized with the City's fiscal year. Synchronizing the fiscal years provides a more accurate accounting of Council's response to the school estimates.

It must also be remembered that the apparent overall surplus of assessment receipts (\$76,531.50) between 1881 and 1900 was in fact not a surplus at all. It was merely the receipt of late disbursements from Halifax City Council. Moreover, the circumstances depicted in the preceding tables existed throughout the period between 1865 and 1899. For thirty four years the Board was forced to borrow operating funds because of nagging shortfalls in its returns from Council. As a result, tens of thousands of school tax dollars went to banks for interest instead of teacher's salaries, books or some other constructive purpose.

**Table 1**  
**Revenue Received During**  
**HBSC Fiscal Year, 1881-**  
**1912**

School Board fiscal year	\$ Received from city assessment <sup>1</sup>
Nov. 1881 Oct. 1882	162222.22
Nov. 1882 Oct. 1883	98556.58
Nov. 1883 Oct. 1884	54091.83
Nov. 1884 Oct. 1885	85608.84
Nov. 1885 Oct. 1886	57307.30
Nov. 1886 Oct. 1887	69519.74
Nov. 1887 Oct. 1888	75673.39
Nov. 1888 Oct. 1889	66170.21
Nov. 1889 Oct. 1890	81281.99
Nov. 1890 Oct. 1891	78156.71
Sub total	768588.81
Nov. 1891 Oct. 1892	80172.33
Nov. 1892 Oct. 1893	70957.41
Nov. 1893 Oct. 1894	83984.09
Nov. 1894 Oct. 1895	85088.93
Nov. 1895 Oct. 1896	83255.14
Nov. 1896 Oct. 1897	118566.88
Nov. 1897 Apr. 1898	59277.86
May 1898 Apr. 1899	103872.86
May 1899 Apr. 1900	99308.76
May 1900 Apr. 1901	96800
Sub total	881284.26
May 1901 Apr. 1902	98500
May 1902 Apr. 1903	103500
May 1903 Apr. 1904	102500
May 1904 Apr. 1905	110350
May 1905 Apr. 1906	116000
May 1906 Apr. 1907	125300
May 1907 Apr. 1908	135000
May 1908 Apr. 1909	139715
May 1909 Apr. 1910	144200
May 1910 Apr. 1911	146400
May 1911 Apr. 1912	153900
May 1912 Apr. 1913	156950
Sub total	1532315
Grand total	3182188.07

<sup>1</sup>All of the figures in this table are drawn from the cash accounts appearing in the Board's annual reports from 1882 to 1913.

**Table 2**  
**Revenue Requested**  
**By The HBSC At the**  
**Begining Of Each City**  
**Council Fiscal Year,**  
**1881-1912**

City Council fiscal year	\$ requested by Board from assessment <sup>1</sup>
Nov. 1881 Apr. 1882	38616.50
May 1882 Apr. 1883	64820
May 1883 Apr. 1884	66460
May 1884 Apr. 1885	66820
May 1885 Apr. 1886	67700
May 1886 Apr. 1887	68600
May 1887 Apr. 1888	70600
May 1888 Apr. 1889	72000
May 1889 Apr. 1890	74300
May 1890 Apr. 1891	78900
Sub total	668816.50
May 1891 Apr. 1892	84000
May 1892 Apr. 1893	85000
May 1893 Apr. 1894	88500
May 1894 Apr. 1895	85600
May 1895 Apr. 1896	89900
May 1896 Apr. 1897	90000
May 1897 Apr. 1898	92000
May 1898 Apr. 1899	94000
May 1899 Apr. 1900	98720
May 1900 Apr. 1901	96800
Sub total	904520
May 1901 Apr. 1902	98500
May 1902 Apr. 1903	103500
May 1903 Apr. 1904	102500
May 1904 Apr. 1905	110350
May 1905 Apr. 1906	116000
May 1906 Apr. 1907	125300
May 1907 Apr. 1908	135000
May 1908 Apr. 1909	139715
May 1909 Apr. 1910	144200
May 1910 Apr. 1911	146400
May 1911 Apr. 1912	153900
May 1912 Apr. 1913	156950
Sub total	1532315
Grand total	3105651.50

<sup>1</sup>All of the figures in this table reflect the school estimates as they appeared in the Board's annual reports from 1881 to 1912.

<sup>2</sup>This figure represents one half of the total school estimate for the year ending April 30 1882. The adjusted figure is used so that the timeframe covered by table 1 and table 2 is exactly the same.

The Board and Halifax City Council got off to a bad start in 1865 when Council refused to assess for schools. That event and the fiscal problems it caused were beyond the Board's control. Nor could the Board control the difficulties associated with tax collection - an unsophisticated system, resistant citizens, late payments, and the like. However, the Board did have control over its own budgeting process. From the time the FSA went into affect until 1899 the fiscal year of the HBSC ran from November 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. Meanwhile, the City's fiscal year ran from May 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>. This created a needless accounting nightmare that went uncorrected for 34 years. More importantly, discordant fiscal years also made it politically difficult to expose the shortfalls in Council's payments to the Board. For example, the amount requested in the school estimate for the year ending April 30, 1882 was \$65,733. By April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1882 the City had paid over only \$63,349.41, a shortfall of \$2383.59. But, by the time the Board released its year end figures six months later the City had paid over \$102,222.22. Council could use the Board's figures to publicly claim that for 1882 it had provided the City's schools with a surplus of \$36,489.22. However, the 1882 'surplus', collected between May and October of 1882, was actually a portion of the receipts for the fiscal year ending April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1883. With discordant fiscal years Council's response to the school estimates could not be accurately seen without labourious calculations. The public was disinclined to perform those calculations. Hence, the Board's case remained difficult to argue in the political arena. Meanwhile, the chronic shortfalls continued.

Because of the difficulties associated with tax collection, Council's receipts varied from month to month and from year to year. But, as Board Chairman Jas. J. Bremner pointed out in his report of 1880, shortfalls in Council's payments to the Board had less to do with the difficulties of tax collection and more to do with Council's use of school funds for its own financial and political gain:

The City Treasurer not only holds over a balance from the previous year, refusing to pay it because he has not collected it (and there seems to be no provision made for it in the following year's assessment), but he actually uses the money collected for school purposes, for other purposes of the city, and the School Board is consequently obliged to borrow money to pay the school expenses.

The [City's] financial year begins 1<sup>st</sup> May, and on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1879, (six months) the amount due by the city was \$39,633...being over \$6000...more than the portion of the city assessment for school purposes for that period.

In other words, the city makes use of the School Board as a means of borrowing money for its necessities.<sup>21</sup>

Bremner was not the only Board Chairman to express concern over Council's manipulation of school funds. In his report of 1894, Chairman John P. Longard accused Council of artificially inflating the school tax as a means of reducing its own rate of taxation. Between 1884 and 1894 the total school estimate was \$756,120. To this figure Council added 4.1% or \$31,368 for short collection, making the total school assessment for that period \$787,488:

On referring to the annual reports of the city government we find that the actual loss for short collection was in the vicinity of one per cent on the total assessment, so that in the ten years the schools contributed between \$20,00 and \$25,000 to the city council's unexpended balance fund, and which was used by the council to reduce its own rate of taxation.<sup>22</sup>

Longard went on to show that the assessed value of all real and personal property within the City for the fiscal year ending April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1895 was \$22,952,237. The school rate for that year was 43 cents per hundred dollars of assessed value. According to Longard's figures, in the City's 1894-95 fiscal year the school tax produced \$98,694.62.<sup>23</sup> The school estimate called for \$85,600. The Board actually received \$88,614.93.<sup>24</sup> Assuming Longard's figure of one per cent real loss, in 1894-95 Council retained \$9092.74 or 9.2% of the money it collected for schools. Council does not appear to have turned that money over to the Board in the following year, for in the 1895-96 fiscal year the City paid \$80,664.68 to the Board - \$9235.32 less than the school estimate.<sup>25</sup>

As might be expected Council had a different view of school finances. During a meeting of Council on October 5, 1891 a letter was read from R. J. Wilson, Secretary of the HBSC. The letter showed the "...amount due by said Board to the bank of Nova Scotia to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1891, the amount due for interest and the amount of school rates unpaid for years ending April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1890, and April 30<sup>th</sup>,

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<sup>21</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1880, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1894, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>This is the amount the Board received within the City's fiscal year.

<sup>25</sup>This is the amount the Board received within the City's fiscal year. At the end of the Board's fiscal year six months later the amount had risen to only \$83,255.14 - still \$6644.86 below the school estimate of \$89,900 for the year ending April 30, 1896.

1891.<sup>26</sup> The letter was referred to the Committee on Public Accounts. The Committee reported back on October 29, 1891 and its comments were read in Council on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1892:

Your Committee had before them a letter from the Secretary Board of School Commissioners, referred to them by the City Council on amount due by the City to the Board. Also, a letter from the City Treasurer, showing a balance due the School Board for year 1889-90 of \$2696.89, and for year 1890-91 of \$8775.54 making a total of \$11,474.43.

Your Committee found that there are no available funds in hand to make advances to the School Board, and would recommended [sic] the continuance of the present system of making payments to the Board.<sup>27</sup>

According to the Committee on Public Accounts, there were no school tax dollars being retained within Council's unexpended balance fund or such funds had been used for other purposes, as both Bremner and Longard had suggested.

Longard accused Council of increasing its own revenues by inflating the school tax. Meanwhile, the Board took the political heat for the heavy burden carried by the City taxpayers. On the other hand, Council bemoaned the rising cost of education and the fact it had no control (responsibility for) those increases. Council urged the Board to parsimoniously protect the taxpayers interests. Council's view was epitomized by the comments of the Committee on Public Accounts in June of 1893:

...Your Committee call attention to the enormous proportion which the expenditure for Public Schools has assumed, and strange as it may appear, though the Council has to provide the money, it has no control or veto of the amount, i. e. the School Board, an independent body, not responsible to the citizens can compel the Council to assess the citizens for any amount they think necessary, upon obtaining the matter of form assent of the Governor-in-Council...Your Committee recommend the adoption of the following resolution: *Resolved*, That while anxious to see the City Schools maintained at the highest possible state of efficiency in view of the burden of taxation resting upon our citizens, the Council call the attention of the Board to the constantly increasing expenditure for Schools, and respectfully urge that body to consider retrenchment, if any can be made, and to economize in every possible way.<sup>28</sup>

Obviously the Board and Council had a contentious relationship. However, the Legislature was very cooperative with the Board. The Superintendent of education often attended Board meeting. If the Board requested changes in the Education Act

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<sup>26</sup>Council Minutes, October 5, 1891, p. 128.

<sup>27</sup>Council Minutes, March 31, 1892, p. 303.

<sup>28</sup>Council Minutes, June 9, 1893, p. 59

or clarification on regulations under the Act, the Legislature was quick to respond. For example, on October 16<sup>th</sup>, of 1865 the Board met and discussed Council's refusal to assess for schools as directed by the FSA. A committee was struck to carry the matter before the Provincial Government.<sup>29</sup> At a meeting three days later, which included the Superintendent of Education, the Board was informed:

...that the committee approved at the meeting of Oct. 16, to confer with the Government, had an interview with the Provincial Secretary, he informed the Committee that the Government were willing, during the ensuing secession, to make such alteration to the Education Act relative to the City of Halifax as the Board may deem it their duty to recommend, in order to remove any difficulties and render it more easy to carry out its provisions and objects. The Provincial secretary [sic] also informed the Committee, that the Government would advance the whole of the Provincial Grant for the City, or any portion of it, in the first half year.<sup>30</sup>

The Provincial Government pressed the issue during the next year and eventually forced Council to assess for schools. A review of the Board's minutes and annual reports reveals that the Board continued its positive relationship with the Province through the Superintendent of Education. In the face of ongoing difficulties with the Council, in 1896 the Board once again turned to its allies in the Legislature:

The custom in the past has been for the city to pay over, at the end of each week, such sums as were collected. The Board thinking this unsatisfactory (especially as the city makes provision for short collection in its annual assessment, which includes school rates, and has the power to charge interest on all taxes overdue), application was made to the City Council to change the present system to twelve monthly payments of equal amounts, for the whole assessment of the year, which application being referred to a sub-committee was reported upon unfavourably. It will be advisable, therefore, to make application to the Legislature at its next meeting to insert a clause in the School Act, recognizing the Board's authority to continue the present system of providing funds in the interim.<sup>31</sup>

The Chairman's Report of the following year shows that the Legislature not only approved the Board's overdrafts for 1896, it also forced Council to comply with the Board's request for annual payment of the school estimate in full through equal instalments:

For many years past, owing to delays in collecting taxes, the City Council was unable to keep the school tax paid up to date. In consequence of this delay the School Board was often obliged to meet its obligations by an overdraft at the bank. The interest on this constituted a very considerable item of the school expenditure. To remedy this evil,

<sup>29</sup>School Board Minutes, October 19, 1865, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1896, p. 9.



legislation was secured at the last secession of the legislature, by which it became the duty of the City Council to pay the school grant in full in ten equal installments. The previous overdrafts were also legalized and an act passed requiring the School Board, when asking the City Council to assess for any sum exceeding £90,000, to submit a detailed statement of their school estimates, so that the council might appear before the governor-in-council in relation to them when considered desirable.<sup>32</sup>

The FSA established the methodology of school funding and the Board was forced to work within those limits. Initially, Council withheld the Board's operating revenue by refusing to assess for schools. The Board can not be held accountable for the resultant problems of that refusal. However, Council eventually began paying over school taxes to the Board and the Board is very much accountable for its management of those tax dollars. For 34 years between 1865 and 1899 discordant fiscal years blurred the financial picture of the City's schools. Cloaked in a fog of numbers Council repeatedly made short payments to the Board. Short payments forced the Board to borrow money for its operating expenses. Between 1881 and 1899 the total interest paid on borrowed operating funds amounted to \$18,984.01. Projecting that rate over the entire period from 1865 to 1899 places the total cost of borrowed operating funds in excess of \$36,000. The Board had the power to align its fiscal year with the City's at any time. Yet, it waited until 1899 to do so. Its positive history with the Province suggests that the Board could have secured annual payment of the school estimate in full long before 1897. Between 1865 and 1899, the Halifax public school system lost at least \$36,000 largely because of the Board's inaction.

The preceding section has looked at the overall financial picture of the Halifax School Board, total receipts vs. total expenditures. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the financial particulars of leasing and building schoolhouses. As the high costs are revealed, the financial planning and management of the Board's building program becomes questionable, particularly given the fiscal background just presented. The building program becomes even more difficult to defend, when one

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<sup>32</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1897, p. 10. Having secured annual payment of the estimate in full, it is interesting to note that the reason for Council not having always done so is now said to be "owing to the delays in collecting taxes" and not due to the direct actions of Council as the Board had maintained in the past. Perhaps the Board was feeling comfortable enough to be tactful.

looks at the success of previous arrangements used to provide denominational schools in the City of Halifax.

When the FSA was passed approximately half of the children going to school in Halifax were attending schools built and operated by the Catholic Church. At that time eight Catholic schools taught 1050 or 54% of the City's common school students.<sup>33</sup> Rather than force the City's taxpayers to provide new schools, the so-called Halifax Section was written into the FSA.<sup>34</sup> The Halifax section allowed the HBSC to make arrangements with the Catholic Church. In other words, the Board could lease existing schools and incorporate them within the new free or public school system.<sup>35</sup> Some assurances were made to the Catholic Archbishop regarding teachers and denominational lessons. However, leased schools fell completely under the Board's jurisdiction. The political aspects of the Halifax Section, the precedence of the City's Catholic schools and the broader separate schools question will be discussed in the next chapter. The Halifax Section was very much a political concession essential to the passing of the FSA. However, it was also a sound fiscal decision. It allowed the Board and the City's taxpayers to avoid the financial shock of having to build several schools immediately.

The Halifax Section eliminated the need for an immediate building program. However, increases in the student population caused by compulsory attendance and the structural decline of existing buildings soon required the Board to build. Section 23 of the FSA said that all money borrowed (the principal sum) for the leasing, building or renovation of school houses and all resulting interest was to be repaid through the school assessments.<sup>36</sup> For example, suppose the HBSC proposed to build a school costing \$20,000. Suppose also a simple interest rate of 6% annually, a repayment term of 20 years and a tax base of \$20,000,000. With interest the total cost of the building would be \$44,000. If the building was approved, under Section 23 property owners would pay 1.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value. A person whose

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<sup>33</sup>Burns, *op. cit.* p. 35. The total number of children attending common, or public schools, was 1960.

<sup>34</sup>Nova Scotia Laws, *Statutes at Large*, Chapter 29, section 49, subsection 3, 1865. Quoted in Burns, *op. cit.* p. 36.

<sup>35</sup>Schools incorporated under the Halifax Section had to be deemed free schools. In other words, owners of these schools were no longer permitted to recover any of their costs through tuition fees.

<sup>36</sup>See: Bingay, *op. cit.* pp. 67-68.

real and personal property had been assessed at \$5000 would pay an additional 55 cents per year in school taxes for 20 years, or a total of \$11 toward the cost of building the school. If the existing school rate was 30 cents per hundred at the time the building was approved the taxpayer described above could expect to see his school taxes increase from \$15 to \$15.55. Of course over a twenty year period the tax base and school rate would vary. However, the figures quoted above were typical for the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and they accurately illustrate how the FSA intended construction costs to be recovered.

However, in Halifax, Section 23 of the FSA did not operate as it was intended. Ratepayers in Halifax were assessed only for interest payments and not the principal sums borrowed for construction and maintenance costs. As a result tax rates were held down. The taxpayer in the example above would have actually seen only a 30 cent increase in his annual school taxes and would have contributed only \$6 to construction costs over twenty years. By not assessing for the principal sum the tax rate was essentially halved. This made sense politically, but was unsound from a financial point of view. After twenty years of payments the principal debt of \$20,000 remained unpaid. The fiscal folly of this practice was pointed out by Chairman John P. Longard in his report of 1894:

The city of Halifax is, I believe, the only school section in the province exempted from the operation of the clause in the Education Act which provides that, "All moneys borrowed for the purchase or improvement of grounds for school purposes, or for the purchase or building of school houses, shall be paid by equal yearly installments not exceeding twelve, to be assessed upon the section."

When trustees are allowed to create a permanent debt for school purposes, the amount borrowed should be limited to the market value of the real estate owned by the section, otherwise the burden of paying the principal - as we are to-day, the interest - will fall upon those receiving little or no benefit from a large portion of the expenditure...<sup>37</sup>

The Halifax Section was clearly written into the FSA and openly debated in the Legislature and the press. But, neither the request nor the approval for the City's exemption from Section 23 of the FSA appear in the minutes of the Board or Council. It was not written into the FSA or subsequent Education Acts. The exemption existed and was thoroughly exercised as Chairman Longard pointed out. Yet, neither Longard nor anyone else writing in the Board's annual reports explained

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<sup>37</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1894, p. 11.

why or how it came about. The exemption may well have been a political bargaining chip used to calm City Council's resistance to school assessment. The City's Protestant congregation disliked the notion of separate schools. The Halifax Section essentially granted separate schools for Catholic children. Perhaps the exemption was a way of easing Protestant resistance to the potential financial burden of building separate Catholic schools. Regardless of the rationale behind the exemption, it allowed the Board to accumulate a debenture debt which it had no means to repay. By 1890 that debt totaled \$216,144. And while the exemption held down the annual school rate, in the long term it greatly inflated the cost of school buildings.

The Halifax Academy perfectly illustrates the inflationary effects of not assessing for principal debt. The Academy was built in 1878 using \$35,000 which the Board raised by issuing 25 year debentures at six per cent. By 1903 interest payments totaled \$52,500 and the \$35,000 principal had fallen due.<sup>38</sup> Using its exemption from Section 23 of the FSA, the Board had not requested assessment for the repayment of the principal sum. As a result, in 1903 when the Academy's debentures fell due the Board had only \$6000 which it could put toward the repayment of the Academy's principal debt.<sup>39</sup> It was forced to raise the remaining \$29,000 through a second debenture issue. The second debentures paid interest at 4 per cent and matured July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1928. Total interest paid on the second debentures equaled \$29,000. It took 50 years and a \$116,500 to pay for the Academy. Half of the time and at least \$29,000 of the cost could have been saved had Section 23 of the FSA been applied.

As well as having no means to repay mature debentures, during the 1860's the board often sold its debentures below par.<sup>40</sup> For example, on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1868 the Board issued \$3600 worth of debentures at 91% of par.<sup>41</sup> The Board received \$3420, but for 25 years paid 6% interest on the par value of \$3600. In other words the Board made \$270 worth of interest payments on \$180 that it never received. And, when these debentures matured the Board returned their full value of \$3600, the Board

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<sup>38</sup> *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1903, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> The \$6000 came from the sinking fund established by the Board in 1901. The fund was established to retire old debentures as they fell due. As will be seen such a fund would have saved the Board and the City's taxpayers a great deal of money had it been established sooner.

<sup>40</sup> For a good explanation of debenture or bond values and their yields see: *Casteller, op. cit.* pp. 34-38.

<sup>41</sup> *School Board Minutes*, May 5, 1868, p. 348.

returned \$180 it never took in. Selling below par in this case increased capital costs by \$450. Between 1867 and 1869 the Board issued \$128,700 worth of debentures below par and lost \$4273.43 to increased capital costs.<sup>42</sup> Fortunately this practice was soon ended. After 1870 all debentures appear to have been issued at par or at a premium.<sup>43</sup>

By 1890 debentures issued by the HBSC totaled \$216,144 and the Board had yet to establish any means for repaying this debt. Moreover, the debenture debt would have been much higher if not for the Halifax Section of the FSA. In addition to its cumbrous debenture debt, during the first half of the 1890's the Board borrowed heavily to cover operating expenses due to an extended period of low assessment receipts. As previously noted, between 1890 and 1896 total assessment receipts were down by \$24,230.03. At this point the Board was yet to realign its fiscal year or to be guaranteed full payment of its annual estimate. Despite the Board's vigorous claims to the contrary, the Halifax public school system stumbled into the 1890's on very wobbly financial legs. But, instead of taking measures to steady its stride, in 1892 the Board abandoned its arrangements with the Catholic church under the Halifax Section. The Board resolved to build all schools within its jurisdiction, and decided no longer to lease schools from the Catholic Archdiocese. In other words, despite its precarious financial position the Board resolved to increase its debt, a debt which it did not yet have any means to repay.

#### **The Resolution of 1892**

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892 The Halifax Board of School Commissions resolved that it would henceforth build and maintain all schools within its jurisdiction.<sup>44</sup> This resolution suspended the arrangement with the Catholic Archdiocese which had existed since the inception of the FSA in 1864-65. Under that arrangement the Archbishop built and maintained all schools attended predominantly by Catholic children. The HBSC then leased these schools, at very reasonable rates, and

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<sup>42</sup>School Board Minutes, September 16, 1867, p. 241, October 21, 1867, p. 252, November 4, 1867, p. 262, January 20, 1868, p. 301, February 2, 1868, p. 311 and May 5, 1868, p. 348. See also: *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1867, p. 34 and 1869 p. 39.

<sup>43</sup>Debentures sold at a premium (above par) provided the Board with capital above face value, capital on which the Board paid no interest.

<sup>44</sup>School Board Minutes, March 10, 1892, pp. 554-555.

managed them alongside all other schools within its jurisdiction. Though unusual, this arrangement was a successful political and financial compromise which had served the Board and the City very well for 27 years.

On March 11, 1892 *The Halifax Herald* presented the debate behind the resolution.<sup>45</sup> Commissioner Wier, who moved the resolution, suggested the Board could save money by building instead of leasing. Suppose, said Wier, that the Archbishop were to build a school for \$20,000 and lease it to the Board at 6% of cost. The Board would pay \$1,200 per year. According to Wier the HBSC could borrow at 4.5%.<sup>46</sup> At that rate a \$20,000 school would cost \$900 per year. The remaining \$300 formerly paid in rent could be deposited in a sinking fund which after forty years would yield over \$28,000. Moreover, the land, which may also have appreciated in value, would belong to the board.

In opposition to Wier, Commissioner Butler suggested that while these calculations were correct the initial figures were not assured. The rate of 6% charged by the Archbishop was not immutable. Nor were lending rates or investment returns. Moreover, there would be taxes owed on the proposed sinking fund and the school property which do not appear in Commissioner Wier's calculations. Commissioner Butler "believed that the system of erecting buildings which had existed in the past and had given such satisfaction was really the best in the interest of the citizens financially and otherwise."<sup>47</sup> Agreeing with Commissioner Butler, Commissioner Cragg "did not think there had been any loss from the system hitherto in vogue of renting or paying the interest on the costs."<sup>48</sup>

On March 31, 1892 the *Halifax Herald* printed Archbishop O'Brien's response to the Board's resolution and the argument of Commissioner Wier. First the Archbishop

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<sup>45</sup> *Halifax Herald*, March 11, 1892. MFM #6697, PANS.

<sup>46</sup> *Halifax Herald*, March 31, 1892. MFM #6697, PANS. In this article Archbishop O'Brien claims that "until lately the City was paying 5 and 6 per cent for money" The Archbishop's comment, if accurate, suggests that in the past the HBSC did not lose by leasing schools. Section 63 of The Education Act appearing in *The Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1900*, p. 386 prevents school trustees from paying more than 5% on borrowed money. The Board paid an average of 4.5% between 1892 and 1907. However, the principal is the crucial factor, not the interest.

<sup>47</sup> *Halifax Herald*, March 11, 1892.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

reminded the Board of the agreement reached in 1867.<sup>49</sup> At that time Archbishop Connolly built a school on Russell Street which the HBSC agreed to lease from the Episcopal Corporation (EC). In 1871 the school on Lockman Street was built under the same agreement. The process was repeated in 1874, 1887 and 1889. "For twenty five years the compromise has worked harmoniously and ...beneficially for the taxpayers."<sup>50</sup>

The Archbishop went on to note that the 52 classrooms which the Board rented from the EC cost \$5,128 or \$98.60 per room per year. Most of the remaining 64 classrooms were owned by the Board. According to the Archbishop those rooms cost \$10,079 or \$157.48 per room per year. The rooms rented from the EC were \$60 cheaper. "In other words a saving of \$3,000 a year to the City."<sup>51</sup> The Archbishop also lists the cost of the last four schools built by the EC at \$87,839 and the rent for those schools paid by the HBSC at \$4,220 or 4.5%. This is much lower than the 6% rate used by Commissioner Wier to produce the great saving which would see the HBSC "not only practically get its buildings for nothing, but [also] have a large surplus."<sup>52</sup>

From the arguments presented in the Board minutes and the newspapers of March 1892, it is difficult to know which method of procurement made the most economic and political sense. In Commissioner Wier's example a sinking fund would replace borrowed building capital and return more than \$8000 to the Board. However, that process would take forty years. Typically the Board raised building capital through 25 year debentures. In Wier's example annual debenture interest would be \$900 x 25 years = \$22,500. At the end of the 25 years the \$20,000 principal would also be due. As we have seen the principal sum would not have been covered by assessment. The Board could reissue debentures for the entire \$20,000 or it could pay a portion of the principal with a premature withdrawal from the sinking

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<sup>49</sup>The agreement referred to by the Archbishop is of course the Halifax Section of the 1865 FSA. The date of 1867 does not denote a separate conciliation. It simply indicates the first time a school was constructed under the provisions of the Halifax Section.

<sup>50</sup>*Halifax Herald*, March 31, 1892.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>*Halifax Herald*, March 11, 1892. It is interesting to note that if the rent figures presented here by the Archbishop are correct the cost for rent and interest were equal and the financial gain suggested by Commissioner Wier nonexistent.

fund and reissue debentures for the remainder. Either way there would be no surplus as Wier had suggested and the actual cost of his scenario would be at least \$37,000. Moreover, Wier failed to account for insurance, furniture or repairs. Without factoring in these costs and without presenting the full costs of financing, it was premature and inaccurate for Commissioner Wier to present ownership as cheaper than leasing. But, whatever the cost, ownership did provide land - an appreciable asset that even the lowest rent could not provide.

The calculations of the Archbishop were equally debatable. He claimed that the Board paid \$98.60 per year for each room it rented from the EC - nearly \$60 cheaper than the annual cost of each room owned by the Board. However, the Archbishop did not consider the Board's maintenance, insurance or furniture costs for the rooms it rented from the EC. A special committee appointed by the Board to examine the matter conceded that rooms rented from the EC were cheaper, but by only \$20 not the \$60 reported by the Archbishop.<sup>53</sup> Citing the Board's latest annual report, the committee claimed the total cost of rooms rented from the EC to be \$101.11 per room. Rooms owned by the Board were reported to cost \$126.30 per room.<sup>54</sup> However, this figure would soon be reduced by the completion of the Alexander School and a 1.5% reduction in the interest paid on \$134,000 worth of debentures. The committee went on to point out that schools built by the Board included much larger playgrounds. While this inflated the cost it provided a much safer and enjoyable environment for the children. In closing, the committee noted its exception to the following words purported to be the Archbishop's. "[W]ith the exception of the Alexandra school the board has no other building anything like as good as the Catholic buildings." In response the committee wrote "we must with all due deference to his Grace's (sic) opinion, take exception to his statement, and while we will not go so far as to say that all our buildings are superior, yet we believe them to be equally as good as the best of those rented from the Episcopal Corporation."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Halifax Herald*, March 31, 1892. Some of the calculations were loosely presented in the press. According to the Archbishop, rooms rented from the EC were \$58.88 cheaper. According to the Board they were \$25.19 cheaper.

<sup>54</sup> *The Evening Mail*, May 6, 1892.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*



The debate surrounding the resolution failed to confirm the most fiscally responsible method of providing schools for Catholic children. The debate also failed to consider the Board's overall financial position. Costly overdrafts caused by low assessment receipts were never mentioned. Nor did anyone question the wisdom of increasing the Board's debenture debt, a debt still without a repayment plan. The Board and the Archbishop vigilantly presented their own versions of fiscal reality. But, neither was able to present a truth undeniable to the other or to the ledgers.

Table 3 shows that by 1892 the Board's debenture debt had climbed to \$234,700. This debt reflected the costs of construction, repairs and furnishings prior to 1892.<sup>56</sup> It also reflected the consequences of not assessing for principal sums. The Board knew it had never been forced to assess for principal debt. It was also aware of the large debt already accumulated through that exemption. Despite this knowledge the Board expanded its building program. Moreover, it did so without finding a way to extinguish the existing principal debt or the additional principal required to build schools attended predominantly by Catholic children, a debt previously avoided by renting space from the EC through the Archbishop.

The expanded building program increased the debenture debt by \$102,082, or 43.5 %. According to the newspaper reports of March 1892, the Board discussed the establishment of a sinking fund to pay off the principal debt resulting from an expanded building program. The Chairman's report, appearing in the annual *Report of The Board of School Commissioners*, also called for a sinking fund in 1894, 1895 and 1896. For some inexplicable reason the Board did not pass the necessary resolution until 1900, clearly imprudent from a fiscal standpoint.<sup>57</sup> Enactment of the fund also required provincial legislation. This was obtained in 1901 and a sinking fund finally created.<sup>58</sup> By this time the total debt had reached \$311,000. According to the to the Chairman's report of 1907 the sinking fund had in six years generated

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<sup>56</sup>The figures in this table were gathered from the annual *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax 1892-1907* and *The Annual Report on The Public Schools of Nova Scotia 1892-1907*. The figures in these reports sometimes differed, likely because they were published at different times of the year. Hand written corrections also appeared, presumably entered by officials of the day. The figures here are those most consistent with other information presented in the reports. Further, the differences or corrections did not represent large amounts and thus do not alter the trends shown here.

<sup>57</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1904, p. 135.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

**Table 3**  
**Total Debentures Issued And Interest Payments**  
**As A Function Of Total**  
**Expenditure For The HBSC, 1892-1907**

School year	Total debentures issued	Total interest paid	Total expenditure	Interest as % of total expenditure
1892	234,700	10,901	89,865	12.13
1893	253,400	11,743	85,327	13.76
1894	254,600	11,797	91,204	12.93
1895	258,100	11,954	91,298	13.09
1896	262,100	12,134	94,210	12.88
1897	262,100	12,134	96,194	12.61
1898	262,100	12,134	95,867	12.66
1899	271,600	12,562	98,620	12.74
1900	292,600	12,562	98,636	12.74
1901	311,100	14,142	99,812	14.17
1902	311,100	13,402	103,792	12.91
1903	311,100	14,142	106,689	13.26
1904	306,100	13,242	127,227	10.41
1905	330,600	14,222	114,796	12.39
1906	336,100	14,422	121,895	11.83
1907	336,782	15,132	129,720	11.67

\$21,091.67.<sup>59</sup> Clearly the sinking fund would have repaid much, if not all, of the principal debt incurred from the expanded building program if it had been created in 1892.

The information presented in Table 3 helps to clarify the financial consequences of the resolution. However, the corollary question remains unanswered: what were the fiscal implications of continuing to lease schools from the Catholic Church? Between 1892 and 1907 the HBSC built three schools attended predominantly by Catholic children. The Church would have built these schools had the resolution not been passed.<sup>60</sup> The total construction cost of these schools was \$63,207.<sup>61</sup> This represents 61.92% of the construction debt accumulated between 1892 and 1907. The Young Street School was the first Catholic school built after the resolution. It was completed in 1894 at a cost of \$21,817. A closer look at the Young Street School further illustrates the financial distinctions between ownership and leasing.

The annual operating costs of the Young St. School included \$981 for interest on debentures, \$100 for insurance, and structural maintenance costs as required.<sup>62</sup> Assuming the rate of 6% previously charged by the Archbishop, rent for this building would have been \$1309 per year. In the old lease agreements the Board would have also been responsible for insurance and maintenance. Later agreements saw the Archbishop responsible for these costs. The new arrangements relieved the Board from having to raise capital for repairs and thereby enlarging its debt. Of course a portion of the repair bills were passed on through rent increases. But, regardless of the leasing terms, the difference between interest and rent appears to generate a small saving - provided annual repair and administrative costs remained below \$228.<sup>63</sup> However, to gain that small saving the HBSC assumed a debt of \$21,817 for

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<sup>59</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1907, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup>The three schools were St. Joseph's School, Young Street School, and St. Patrick's Girl's High School.

<sup>61</sup>This figure comes from the *DEBENTURES-CONSTRUCTION-ACCOUNT* tables in the annual reports for 1894, 1906 and 1907. However, page 12 of the 1907 report cites the cost of St. Patrick's Girl's High School as \$41,500 not the \$18,343 used here. The difference may be due to the account table being completed before the final figures were in. The additional costs would appear in the calculations for the following year. The higher figure would mean that a greater percentage of money was spent on Catholic schools. But, it does not effect the leasing vs. ownership argument.

<sup>62</sup>The figure for insurance is based on the average rate paid from 1892-1907 according to the Board's annual report. The figure for interest is an average based on figures presented in table 1.

<sup>63</sup>Repair costs would certainly be low in the early years. However, as the building aged repair costs could easily negate any savings. Moreover, duties previously handled by the Archbishop; such as, fielding

the Young Street School and \$41,390 for two later schools. Moreover, the debt was assumed without a means of repaying the principal. Any saving secured through ownership was eclipsed by the parallel increase in debt which suggests that carefully negotiated leases made greater fiscal sense.

The Board knew leasing would have been cheaper. A committee of Board members which included the author of the resolution Commissioner Longard confirmed this fact in May of 1892.<sup>64</sup> The committee had been struck to audit and respond to the claims made in the Archbishop's letter of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1892. In that letter the Archbishop claimed that classrooms owned by the Board cost \$60 per year more to operate than the classrooms leased from the EC.<sup>65</sup> As we have already seen, the committee confirmed rooms leased from the EC were in fact cheaper, but by only \$20 not the \$60 declared by His Grace.<sup>66</sup> The findings of the committee led Commissioner Cragg to put the following motion at the Board meeting of May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1892:

Whereas the disclosures submitted by a report of a special committee shows that the present arrangements existing between this Board and the R.C. Episcopal Corporation are in the interests of harmony and economy Therefore Resolved that the motion passed at the meeting of 10 March offering the principle that this Board should own all its own buildings be and is hereby rescinded and that plans and specification be forthwith prepared for the proposed new building on Campbell Road known as the Russell St. School and that the same be submitted to His Grace the Archbishop with the request that he tender for same giving full particulars as to site.<sup>67</sup>

Commissioner Cragg's motion was defeated. The Board was obviously determined to stand by its earlier decision, despite the knowledge that leasing Catholic schools would have been cheaper than building them. The motivation to build was clearly not financial. But, regardless of the reason, the decision to build was not inherently bad. The inherent evil lay in bungled debt financing and the Board's preexistent financial weakness.

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tenders for initial construction and subsequent repairs, supervision of contractors, securing property title and building permits, paying property taxes, etc., etc., now were the responsibility of the Board. The Board's staff had always performed these functions when building non Catholic schools and perhaps existing staff absorbed the additional work load. Or possibly more administrative staff were hired. Either way there were costs that further decreased the potential saving of building Catholic schools.

<sup>64</sup>School Board Minutes, April 7, 1892, p. 569.

<sup>65</sup>Halifax Herald, March 31, 1892.

<sup>66</sup>The Evening Mail, May 6, 1892.

<sup>67</sup>School Board Minutes, May 19, 1892, p. 585.

The resolution of March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892 did not by itself create the large debt load that had accumulated by 1907. The resolution did expand the Board's building program. That program did not address the repayment of construction costs, no increased taxes or sinking fund. As a result the Board's debt increased by \$102,082. During the 15 years between 1892 and 1907 the increased debt does not seem to have changed the daily operations of the Board. Yet, there are signs that the large debenture debt eventually curtailed the Board's fiscal independence. In 1904 the lease on the St. Mary's Boy's School expired and the building was deemed to be unfit. As a result "negotiations were entered into with His Grace the Archbishop, with whom arrangements were made for the erection and lease of a modern and commodious new brick building at an annual rent of \$2740.00."<sup>68</sup> This was a complete reversal of the March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892 resolution and was likely necessitated by the Board's inability to gain approval for the financing of another building. Then in 1907 the City Council requested the following amendment to the City Charter:

...at the request of the City council the right to issue all school debentures was thereafter vested in the City, and the act amended accordingly. Whenever the Board requires money that is a debenture charge, the Governor-in-council after a hearing directs the city to issue such debentures. In the event of any such direction not being carried out, the Board may issue debentures to the amount required. This clause conserves the City's educational interests. As school debentures mature, they will be paid off or re-issued by the City.<sup>69</sup>

This action did not completely remove the Board's ability to freely issue debentures.<sup>70</sup> But, it did regulate the process and suggests that the Provincial Legislature and the City Council were concerned over the Board's financial affairs. In 1907 the City also took over the management of the Board's sinking fund, a further indication of concern.

The resolution of March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892 was the most talked about and scrutinized fiscal decision made by the Board prior to World War I. This was because of its links to the controversial Halifax Section of the FSA and the broader and always heated

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<sup>68</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1904, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1907, p. 10-11.

<sup>70</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1922 - 1923, p. 40. In 1923 the accounting firm of Price, Waterhouse & CO. were hired to audit the financial position of the HBSC. The auditor's report identifies the only instance of the Board issuing its own debentures after 1907. The auditor's note confirms that the 1907 amendment did not completely remove the Board's ability to issue debentures. However, the Board has issued its own debentures only once since 1915.

debate surrounding the question of separate schools. Yet, despite all the attention paid to school finances in 1892, the overall weak fiscal position of the City's public schools went unattended. So did the Board's long history of shortsighted financial management. The resolution was shown to be imprudent from a fiscal standpoint, yet in keeping with its history the Board refused to waiver. Between 1892 and 1904 the Board built three Catholic schools. Over the next 25 years the Board spent \$40,000 plus maintenance costs that it would have saved had the practice of leasing schools from the Episcopal Corporation been continued.<sup>71</sup>

By itself the resolution was not a financial disaster. It was merely a prominent case in point. The point being that from the 1865 to the early 1900's the HBSC fumbled the financial football. The Board sold debentures below par. It waited far too long to realign its fiscal year. It should have and could have secured full payment of the school estimate long before 1899. Through these delays thousands of dollars were absorbed by interest payments on overdrafts and thousands more got siphoned from the schools by Council. The Board waited until 1901 to establish a sinking fund for the retirement of mature debentures. Again needless delay saw thousands of dollars wasted. Between 1865 and 1913 the HBSC wasted at least \$238,000 of the taxpayers money and accumulated a debt of \$336,782.

The focus of this chapter has been the management of school funds in Victorian Halifax. As we have seen, ill-advised fiscal policies implemented by the HBSC resulted in the needless loss of thousands of dollars. The Board's 19<sup>th</sup> century financial management is surely open to criticism. However, it is also true that much of the debt and losses resultant from poor management after 1890 might have been avoided had the Board been less dependent upon deficit financing. In other words, if the Board's annual receipts had been higher the volume and cost of long term borrowing might have been reduced. Education was a priority for late 19<sup>th</sup> century reformers. But, was the funding methodology established in 1865 sufficient to support the ambitious reforms that came later? Victorian school reform went ahead. Meanwhile, this question does not seem to have been raised by the Board, Halifax

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<sup>71</sup>The figure of \$40,000 was arrived at by subtracting the likely cost of leasing over a 25 year period - \$95,000 from the actual costs of construction and financing - 135,000. All three figures are close approximations.

City Council, the press or the Provincial Legislature. This chapter has questioned the fiscal policies of the HBSC, policies established within the parameters of school funding that existed within Victorian Halifax. However, in retrospect there is also call to question the sufficiency of those parameters. More on this point in chapter three which introduces the fiscal legacy of Victorian school reform.

Did the quality of education in Victorian Halifax suffer because of the Board's fiscal mismanagement? Relative to the rest of the province probably not. Despite the Board's fiscal problems the City's children had access to more schools than children in rural Nova Scotia and teachers in Halifax tended to have higher qualifications. However, there were potential benefits to better money management. For example, the lay offs and 10% salary cut teachers were forced to take in 1880 could have been avoided.<sup>72</sup> Based on 1891 costs, the money wasted by the Board could have funded 25 first class female teachers for 25 years.<sup>73</sup> This would have lowered the student teacher ratio from an average of approximately 55/1 to 45/1.<sup>74</sup> Had that money been put toward construction costs the Board could have built and paid for six schools equivalent to the Academy or eleven schools like the Young St. School which it opened 1894. That money would have bought a wealth of laboratory apparatus, books or athletic equipment. The common perception is that better equipped schools with more teachers provide a better education. Public education was and is suppose to provide a healthier economy and community. Yet, there is very little research data to support these claims. Nor are there any studies confirming the relationship between sound fiscal management and the positive effects of schooling. Without such data it may be impossible to prove that the children of Victorian Halifax would have received a better education had the School Commissioners been better financial managers. However, students certainly did not receive any benefit from money the Board wasted.

Seeing the Board's record of poor financial management after the passing of the FSA, it is only natural to wonder how and why such fiscal irresponsibility could have happened. In an age characterized by scientific management and efficiency how

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<sup>72</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1880, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup>*The Annual Report on The Public Schools of Nova Scotia 1890-91*, p. 31.

<sup>74</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1904, p. 41.

could the Board display such financial incompetence? The next chapter will attempt to answer these questions.



## Chapter Two

Chapter one exposed the financial mismanagement of the HBSC. Seen in isolation and solely from an accounting perspective the actions of the City's school Commissioners seem improvident, perhaps inane. Yet, given the ardent faith in education and scientific progress that characterized late Victorian Canada, these actions appeared to contemporaries as logical, even pragmatic and wise. In order to grasp and appreciate Victorian logic it is necessary to look past the account books and into the broader intellectual milieu of 19<sup>th</sup> century Halifax. This chapter takes that wider view. Investigating the social and intellectual context does not change the numbers, but it does go a long way toward explaining them. It also sheds light on the continuing denominational conflict, and the difficult adjustment that Christian churches had to make to new scientific discoveries and forms of explanation.

### **Catholic Schools In Halifax**

The fact that a public school system was impossible without the Halifax Section confirms the social and educational strength of the City's Catholic congregation in 1865. However, that strength had not come as a matter of course. Halifax was founded as a Protestant response to the Catholic populations of Cape Breton and western Nova Scotia. The vast majority of the City's original settlers (80%) were Protestant.<sup>1</sup> To protect and maintain a Protestant majority the first assembly of 1759 passed laws preventing Catholics from owning land and ordered any popish priest to leave the province. In 1766 a school law prevented Catholics from teaching or operating schools.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in spite of these harshly worded laws, and the prejudicial feelings behind them, the Catholic population of Halifax would grow both in size and influence. By 1771 Catholic spokesmen began petitioning the Lieutenant-Governor for the repeal of the penal laws. In 1784 Catholics became legally permitted to own land and the ban on Catholic priests was lifted. "Immediately, the Catholics began to build their chapel [St. Peter's]. This, the first Catholic church in Halifax, was built a little west of the present Cathedral and faced on Grafton Street."<sup>3</sup> Two years later the

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<sup>1</sup> Burns, *op. cit.* p. 3. Here Burns cites D. Allison LL.D., "Notes on Census of 1767", *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, Vol. 7, 1894, p. 60

<sup>2</sup> Burns, *op. cit.* p. 4. Here Burns quotes the Nova Scotia Laws, *Statutes at Large*, c7, Section 1, 1766. See also C. B. Sissons, *Church and State in Canadian Education*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959, p. 305-306.

<sup>3</sup> Burns, *op. cit.* p. 6. For the time and location Burns cites: Cornelius O'Brien, D.D., *Memoirs of Bishop Burke*. Ottawa: Throburn and Co., 1894, p. 60.

School Act was amended and Catholics were allowed to teach and operate schools.<sup>4</sup> Prejudicial feelings remained. At the same time, harsh statutes were moderated so that "well before The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 in England Roman Catholics were enjoying in Nova Scotia equality of rights with other dissenting bodies."<sup>5</sup> Under these "relaxed" conditions the Catholic congregation of Halifax "seems to have doubled between 1801 and 1814."<sup>6</sup>

After 1786 Catholics were permitted to operate schools provided they "...did not accept Protestant youths under fourteen years of age into their schools."<sup>7</sup> But, the lack of teachers, resources and organization and the resistance of Anglican authorities prevented the opening of any Catholic schools in Halifax. These circumstances began to change in 1801 with the arrival of Father Edmund Burke. Soon after his arrival Burke began a tireless campaign for the establishment of a Catholic seminary and a common school for Catholic children. Each would reinforce the other. The seminary would address the dire need for priests and teachers. The common school would eventually provide seminary candidates. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1802 Burke voiced his concern for Catholic education in a petition to the Assembly:

That the situation of the Youth under his care, Scotch, Irish, and Acadian in many parts of the Province totally destitute of the means of obtaining the information necessary for the common purpose of Life, is distressful in the Extreme; that from the facility with which the uninformed imbibes Principles subversive of Order and inimical of Government the consequences, which must result from such a state of Ignorance, if permitted to continue, and its inseparable attendants, Idleness, Drunkenness and other vices not to be named, are truly alarming; that the Roman Catholics robbed of the means and desirous of giving their children an Education suitable to their intended pursuits, are under the necessity of sending them either to other countries where the Languages and Laws are different from ours, or to the United States, where principles inimical to our Constitution are taught.<sup>8</sup>

In 1802 Father Burke managed to build a suitable school house. He searched for teachers in Canada, Ireland and the United States, but to no avail. Without instructors Burke was forced to rent the building in 1805. Undaunted Burke

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<sup>4</sup>Burns, *op. cit.* p. 8. Here Burns cites Nova Scotia Laws, *Statutes at Large*, Caput. 1, 1786.

<sup>5</sup>Sissons, *op. cit.* p. 306.

<sup>6</sup>Terrance Murphy. "The Emergence of Maritime Catholicism 1781-1830" *Acadiensis* VIII, II (1984) p. 31. The growth came primarily from Irish immigration. Whether these immigrants came because of the relaxed penal laws or their presence necessitated the relaxation is unclear from this source.

<sup>7</sup>Burns *op. cit.* P. 8.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

continued his efforts to establish Catholic schools within the city of Halifax. In the meantime Catholic children attended non-Catholic schools, though in Burke's opinion "...they were wasting their time and were learning nothing."<sup>9</sup>

The educational goals of Father Burke were linked to the broader mission of Catholic self-sufficiency:

From about 1800, and especially after 1815, the major concern of leading clergymen in the region was to find ways by which Maritime Catholics could provide for their own needs. The education of clergy was an important element in this, because it seemed clear that the central problem of the supply of missionaries could never really be solved until the Maritimes were able to raise up their own priests. The goal of self-sufficiency seemed in turn to demand independence. Consequently, one of the major thrusts of the period between 1815 and 1830 was toward gradual separation from the diocese of Quebec.

Edmund Burke was undoubtedly the pioneer in this respect...<sup>10</sup>

Originally the Catholic congregation of Halifax fell under the auspices of the Quebec diocese and Halifax priests were directly accountable to the Archbishop of Quebec. This arrangement made sense in the early days when the City's Catholic congregation was small. However, a growing Catholic population needed freedom to speak and act for itself, particularly if it was to gain any concessions from local government and Protestant vanguards. Bishop Plessis at Quebec was too far removed. He lacked local presence and the consequent political influence necessary to address the educational concerns of Halifax Catholics. With these views in mind, Burke asked Rome to separate Nova Scotia from the Quebec diocese in 1815. Rome conceded and appointed Burke Bishop of Sion and Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia.<sup>11</sup> This gave Burke much greater freedom and influence among the Catholic congregation and within the City's corridors of political power. Undoubtedly Burke's elevated status helped him to establish the City's first Catholic seminary in 1818 and in the following year the first Catholic common school for boys.

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Murphy, *op. cit.* pp. 44-45.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* p. 45. Here Murphy explains the complexity of Canon Law surrounding a Vicar Apostolic. The essence of the matter being that after 1815 Nova Scotia was completely separate from the Quebec Diocese and Burke derived his power directly from the Pope. Later subdivisions created separate dioceses across the province each with its own Archbishop. Murphy does not explain the technicalities behind these developments. However, it is obvious that Burke was largely responsible not only for the expansion of his own authority, but that of his successors as well.

Fate prevented him from embedding and solidifying the Catholic leadership he founded at Halifax, for Burke died in 1820. However, his successors ably picked up where he left off. By 1865 Halifax had become a complete and separate diocese headed by its own Archbishop. The noble and painstaking efforts of Archbishop Connolly and later Archbishop O'Brien provided the post with respect and influence, not just within Halifax but throughout the entire Maritime region.<sup>12</sup> A growing congregation, solid leadership and a traditionally strong commitment to education ironically led to Catholic hegemony within the Halifax school system and the inability of any single Protestant church to challenge that authority. By 1865 eight schools had been built and were operated by the Catholic Archdioceses. The Catholic schools housed 1,050 of the 1,960 children attending school in Halifax.<sup>13</sup> No other religious group was to provide new school facilities after 1865, nor were they to keep in such close contact with the Board as did the Catholics through their Archbishops.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Catholic Schools In Quebec, Western Canada And New Brunswick**

The strength of Catholic schools in Halifax was not unique. From the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic schools gained prominence all across North America. The manner and level of Protestant resistance varied with each location. However, Catholic leaders everywhere worked passionately to establish and protect Catholic education. As a result, Catholic schools became firmly incorporated within every region of Canada. Control of those schools grew into a contentious issue as provincial governments moved toward state administered systems of public education. As the state assumed greater financial responsibility for education, state control and supervision increased concomitantly. Increased state control was partially due to accountability for the spending of public money. However, the state also sought greater control in order to implement its own educational agenda, its motivation for entering educational affairs in the first place. Meanwhile, Catholics fought to protect and maintain their position by fighting for separate status within the realm of public education, the right to maintain practices which imbibed Catholicism as children moved through the common school

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<sup>12</sup>*The Dictionary Of Canadian Biography* provides excellent profiles of Burke, Connolly and O'Brien.

<sup>13</sup>Burns, *op. cit.* p. 35.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.* p. 47.

curriculum. In French communities across Canada separate schools were connected not only to the proliferation of Catholicism, but also to the preservation of the French language and culture. Consequently, the separate school debate tended to be more intense within French communities, particularly in Quebec and Manitoba.

To reform-minded educators in the rest of Canada, Quebec seemed the antithesis to progress. Victorian reform in general tended toward the reduction of ecclesiastical authority, particularly within the administration of public affairs. Public education was a prime example of that trend. The Catholic church influenced schools to varying degrees in other provinces. However, that influence tended to be unofficial or strictly limited by a state bureaucracy which had aggressively assumed control of schooling for its own economic and social purposes. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century no church outside of Quebec was formally able to dictate its educational wishes to the state. The authority of state bureaucracy grew within Victorian Quebec as it did throughout the rest of Canada. However, in Quebec the church, particularly the Catholic church, would not be easily overwhelmed by expanding state authority.

The Catholic clergy in Manitoba were equally resolute. They were also aligned with the powerful Catholic presence in Quebec. Between 1840 and 1870 educational policy in western Canada vividly reflected the influence of the Catholic church. In 1870 the Manitoba Act conferred provincial status upon the Red River Region. The Act "...was in essence an attempt to set up on the western plains a tiny Province in the image of Quebec." The new province was to be officially bilingual "...and it was to have separate schools for Protestants and Roman Catholics." However, neither the Quebec system nor separate schools were to last in Manitoba. Available land and an aggressive federal immigration policy increased the population of Manitoba tenfold over the next twenty years. The vast majority of the newcomers were made up of English speaking Protestants or non-French speaking European emigrants.<sup>15</sup> Neither group whetted an appetite for separate schools nor French-Catholic authority. Changing demographics shifted the political winds. In 1890 the Manitoba Legislature "...abolished both the official use of the French language in the province and dual

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<sup>15</sup>Sissons, *op. cit.* p. 177.

system of separate denominational schools.<sup>16</sup> Despite a comparative weakness in the quality of Catholic schools and a comparatively high illiteracy rate among a Catholic population ambivalent in its support for separate schools, the Catholic clergy of Manitoba remained vigilant. During the 1890's they argued for the reinstitution of publicly funded separate schools through the lower courts of Manitoba, the supreme court of Canada and finally the British Privy Council, all to no avail. The separate school question was the central issue in the Manitoba provincial elections of 1892 and 1895. Each time the government in support of non-denominational schools was returned with a large majority. The Federal government was unable to pass remedial legislation that would reinstitute separate schools. Catholics were eventually able to negotiate some concessions. However, the legislation of 1890 remained essentially intact and public funds continued to be withheld from separate denominational schools.

In 1871 the Protestant-dominated New Brunswick legislature passed the Common Schools Act which denied public funding to separate denominational schools. Not only was the Act offensive in principle to the Catholic minority, regulations adopted under the Act prevented the display or wearing of any religious symbols or emblems in public school classrooms. "Applied literally, this meant that no member of a religious order could be employed as a teacher."<sup>17</sup> The Act was challenged in the New Brunswick Supreme Court and in the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, but to no avail. With the support of Archbishop Sweeny of Saint John and Archbishop Connolly of Halifax, the Catholic minority gained some regulatory concessions. However, they remained obligated under the Act to pay taxes in support of non-denominational public schools. It was resistance to the school tax and the heightening of religious and cultural conflicts brought on by the separate schools question that led to the Caraquet riots and the death of two men in 1875.<sup>18</sup> The Caraquet riots resulted in a compromise that allowed Catholics "...to

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<sup>16</sup>W.L. Morton. "Manitoba Schools and Canadian Nationality, 1890-1923" *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*. Nancy M Sheehan, Donald J Wilson, and David C Jones Eds. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1979 p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>George F.G. Stanley. "The Caraquet Riots of 1875" *Acadiensis* II (Autumn 1972), p. 21.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* As Stanley points out the incidents that led to the deaths were initiated by cultural and denominational conflicts expressed through the separate schools question. However, the deaths were also unintentional, the result of confusion and overreaction.

send their children to the school of their choice, to expose their children to the catechism, and to have them taught by members of Catholic religious orders."<sup>19</sup> However, public education continued to be a medium that both expressed and intensified religious and cultural antagonisms. Consequently school matters continued to impact upon the politics of New Brunswick well in to the 1890's.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Scientism And The Protestant Response To Catholic Schools In Halifax**

The national and local press followed events in Quebec, Manitoba and New Brunswick. The School Commissioners, politicians and public of Halifax were well aware of the legal and social controversies generated by Catholic leverage upon educational affairs elsewhere. The School Commissioners also studied school systems across Canada, New England and Europe. They were aware of the comparatively low performance levels often associated with Catholic school districts. They were also able to see that the Catholic church was reluctant to reconcile itself to emerging scientific forms of explanation. In Halifax the church could not prevent science and progressive ideas from being taught in Catholic schools supported by public funding. However, Catholic schools in Halifax were able to employ strict codes of discipline and to promote deference to Catholic authority and tradition. Moreover, non-Catholics were prevented from teaching in the Catholic schools. Conditions in Halifax enabled Catholic schools to promote a separate educational agenda that subtly but effectively opposed the Board's progressive directions.

At the same time the enormous wealth offered by scientific production combined with the social popularity of science to increase public demand for scientific training. Specialized industrial schools were opened. Universities developed degree programs in various branches of science. Pressure to bring public schools abreast of advancing social conditions came primarily from within the system as public school administrators increasingly became men of science. For example, Alexander H. MacKay, the principal of the Pictou Academy from 1873 to 1889 and later Nova Scotia's Superintendent of Education, was a botanist and a fervent supporter of scientific study.<sup>21</sup> Changing attitudes within and around the public schools called for

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>20</sup>John I. Little. "New Brunswick Reaction to the Manitoba Schools Question" *Acadiensis* II (Spring 1972).

<sup>21</sup>Berger, *op cit.* p.11-12.

changes in school format and curriculum. Eventually scientific knowledge became ubiquitous and essential to life in a technologically advancing society.

In the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the methodology and theory of science often clashed with traditional wisdom and religious explanation. However, by mid century many staunch members of Protestant churches had reconciled their faith with the principles of natural science. By studying both the laws and complexities of nature, it was argued, mankind was understanding and worshipping the work of God. Darwin's theory of evolution, on the other hand, was hard for devout Christians to accept. Accepting both creationism and Darwinism was impossible. But, as Carl Berger has argued, many Christians accepted elements of both. This amalgamation facilitated scientific inquiry.<sup>22</sup> It was believed that God had given man the power of reason in order for him to gain control of his surroundings. Scientific study, in all its forms, was thus a means to that end and as such venerated the Lord's gift of human intelligence. Science became intertwined with religion and as fervently followed and supported as the faith that now legitimated it. The advancement of the scientific method became the advancement of the lord's work:

The chief claim of natural theology was that there existed an overall design in nature, a rank and order in the chain of life, and a regularity in the operation of the laws, all of which were evidence of a transcendent guiding intelligence. For [Protestant] theologians, these abstract truths became arguments for the existence of God; for naturalists they offered a religious sanction for scientific investigation.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile the predominant view emanating from the Catholic hierarchy repudiated science as a blasphemous threat to Catholic authority. Catholic officialdom preferred small parochially-managed schools and an analogy based curriculum that provided explanation through biblical parables and the metaphysics of classical literature, rather than a curriculum that provided answers through Laboratory tests and empirical studies. Amidst the growing numbers of passionate Victorian scientists Catholics were conspicuous by their absence. There were of

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<sup>22</sup>In the final section of his book Berger discusses how Darwin's theory eventually severed the union between science and religion by moving scientific study toward greater specification and materialism. "The naturalist rejoiced in field study and in the direct observation of living things and had coupled accuracy of description with the aesthetic and emotional appreciation of nature...The new investigators left the field for the laboratory, probed beneath the surface of things and set out to discover how particular adaptations came to be." (p.76) Science eventually undermined the faith which had given it life. But that does not belie the importance of the original bond. Ironically, 19th century science could not have advanced without it.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* p.32.



course some notable exceptions. One was, Abbe' Leon Provancher, who "...edited and wrote most of *Le Naturaliste Canadien*, published between 1868 and 1891,"<sup>24</sup> and was also well recognized for his "...contributions to botany and entomology and his extensive connections with naturalists in the United States and continental Europe."<sup>25</sup> Provancher felt that a state could be measured by its appreciation and pursuit of scientific knowledge and he urged his Catholic compatriots to play a more active part in the advancement of technology. Provancher judged French Canada to be deficient in this area due to the nature of its school system and "...the tendency of the educated elite to concentrate upon careers in the church, law or medicine, and the disregard for other professions, including scientific ones."<sup>26</sup>

Of course not all Catholics were French Catholics and not all Catholic schools suffered from the "inadequacies" described by Provancher. For example, the Irish Catholics of Ontario and their schools were usually more receptive to progressive ideas than their French Catholic counterparts. Progressives were predominantly Protestant and progressive discourse was culturally and linguistically English. At the same time, Canadian Catholicism was internally divided along nationalistic, cultural and linguistic lines. Energies that might have been devoted toward a speedier acceptance of a changing world were consumed by inward struggles.<sup>27</sup> Yet, as Robert Choquette points out, the struggle to reconcile conflicts of faith, culture and language eventually formed the impetus for some Catholics, particularly the Irish Catholics of Ontario, to adopt and further progressive trends.

From the Protestant perspective, however, all Catholics and all Catholic schools seemed inherently backward and anti-progressive. Failing to recognize the varying shades of opinion towards scientific education in the Catholic community, the Protestant community of Halifax held a generalized and negative view of Catholicism

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* It is interesting to note Provancher's classification of medicine as unscientific. Ironically the rise of the medical profession in Victorian society was heavily based on projecting the scientific nature and content of medical practice.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Choquette, *Language and Religion A History of English-French Conflict in Ontario*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975. Choquette provides a detailed following of Catholicism's internal struggles within Ontario. Through the leaders on either side Choquette describes the collision of French Catholic ultramontaneism and Irish Catholic totalitarianism.

and Catholic schools. In July of 1893, Protestant feelings toward Catholicism, Catholic education and the Halifax separate school question were captured in the following sermon delivered by Rev. T.B. Gregory, pastor at the Church Of The Redeemer in Halifax:

There is nothing practical or truly helpful in the Church education proper. How can a child be helped to fight the battle of life, how can it be made stronger in truth and virtue, by merely giving it a little music, and a little painting, and a little garbled history, with big doses of nonsense about a lot of old saints, who died a thousand years ago, and whose chief virtue was that they never lied half as much themselves as the church has lied for them since their death. Indeed, if the priests of the church had their way, they would, through their miserable parochial schools literally ruin the human mind. They take the young child, when it is wax to receive and marble to retain, inoculate it with certain ideas, and presently the child is a slave, with no more *mind*, in the true sense of the word, than a post. The dawning reason in the little one's soul is stamped out so soon as it makes the first appearance, and the pupil is taught not to think, but simply to listen and repeat. The Chinese woman's foot is *not* a foot-it is the caricature of a foot: and the mind that is turned out by the purely Parochial School is not a mind, but simply the caricature of a mind.<sup>28</sup>

There was little here that suggested the possibility of ecumenical compromise. At the time of Rev. Gregory's address, the School Commissioners of Halifax were embroiled in the Russell Street School issue and the controversy surrounding its 1892 resolution to assume responsibility for the construction of Catholic schools. As we have seen that responsibility had traditionally been held by the Catholic church and was closely overseen by the Archbishop of Halifax. Rev. Gregory spoke directly to the Halifax School Commissioners and to the question of separate Catholic schools:

If the members of the Halifax School Board are here tonight, I would implore them to stand by the civil power. If you want your city to remain the home of freedom, you must not duck your head to the agent of an Italian priest who never saw your city, who cares for you only in so far as he may induce you to give him your ducats, and who loves you with so tender a love that, the means permitting, he would most speedily and effectually burn you at the stake!...Go on, then, gentlemen of the School Board! Build your school. And when you have builded [sic] it, elect your own teachers: elect them to teach neither Catholicism nor Protestantism, but the plain non-sectarian truth! And when you have done that, and opened your school house doors for the children to come in, if somebody refuses to let them enter, then let that person, out of his own money, provide such place as he would like.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Gregory, T. B. Rev. "The Halifax School Question. Shall The State Surrender To The Church?" Killiam Library, Dalhousie University. . MFM # F1001 C1155 34663 pp. 12-13.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 8-9 & 15.

Despite Rev. Gregory's expression of Protestant antipathy for separate Catholic schools, neither the Board nor the Protestant community, Rev. Gregory included, could dispute the positive contributions the Catholic church had made to the public school system of Halifax. Indeed, without Catholic support a public school system would not have been possible in 1865. Moreover, the Board, particularly its members from City Council, as well as the City's provincial politicians had to respect the power of the Catholic vote. Although it had happened a quarter century before, the dismissal of T.H. Rand, Superintendent of Education, still offered a firm reminder of Catholic political influence. Rand's dismissal in 1870 stemmed from his handling of a complaint lodged by the Anglican clergy at Arichat regarding the local Catholic school - "...unauthorized textbooks, objectionable religious exercises and instruction, and compulsory attendance at such."<sup>30</sup> Rand appointed a special investigator. Catholic officials objected and Rand was ousted.<sup>31</sup>

The Rand case was but one of many examples confirming the willingness and ability of the Catholic community to unite against politicians or policies that threatened its religious or educational privilege. By the latter stages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, political resolve within the Catholic community of Nova Scotia to protect its interests remained undiluted. Catholics had fought long and hard for their place, particularly within education. A pastoral letter published in the *Halifax Evening Express* on January 13, 1874 epitomized the religious, political and educational determination of the City's Catholic church:

That Church, through its supreme Oracle, our glorious Pius the Ninth, has settled the question for ever. "No Catholic" he says, "can approve of the system of educating youth, unconnected with the Catholic Faith, a system which regards the knowledge of natural things as the great end of social life." The same authority, replying to the Archbishop of Freiburg, states: "There is no doubt that the greatest injury is inflicted on society, when the directing authority and salutary power of the Church are withdrawn from public and private education, on which the happiness of the Church and the Commonwealth so much depends. Thus society is little by little deprived of the truly Christian spirit which alone can permanently secure the foundations of peace and public order, and direct the true and useful progress of civilization, and give man the assistance which is necessary to attain, after this life, his last and in eternal happiness."...In view of these all important and undeniable truths, Saint Peter has over and over spoken through Pius the Ninth, and secured perfect unanimity on this grand point among the Catholic Bishops of the whole

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<sup>30</sup>Sissons, *op. cit.* p. 328.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* p. 329.

world. In Ireland, in England, in America, the Bishops of the Church in pastorals and synodical addresses have, with one accord, pronounced that education based on our holy religion alone is suitable for Catholic children. So far therefore, from approving of so called mixed schools, where religion is, as it were, divorced from the school room, they have unanimously condemned them as being positively injurious to the best interests of Catholic youth. With this conviction we feel that any interference of the State with the natural right of our Catholic citizens in this country would be a galling tyranny. When we are taxed directly or indirectly for the maintenance of mixed schools, and are called on besides, as we are in conscience, to support separate schools for our own children, as men of honor, in this free land, we are bound to oppose such a system by every legitimate means in our power.

What impact did this controversy have on the members of the HBSC? Of course, Board members were well versed in the local and broader controversies generated by the separate schools question. They knew too that their existence and ability to function in the past and in the present was very much dependant upon the cooperation of the Catholic church, particularly the Archbishop of Halifax. At the same time, the Board was a government bureaucracy seduced by hopes of expansion, centralized management and the fostering of new scientific discoveries. For the most part, members of the HBSC were professionals eager to provide leadership in a world of unfolding progress.

### **The Emergent Middle Class And The Influence Of Alexander McKay**

The membership of the HBSC was predominantly drawn from the emerging realm of middle class professionals. Doctor Archibald Lawson, Professor of Obstetrics and Assistant Registrar at the Halifax Medical College, sat on the Board from 1880 to 1883. Herbert Read MD was a School Commissioner from 1883 to 1885. Grocery store owner Isaac Creighton sat on the Board from 1889 to 1892 and again as an Alderman from 1893 to 1896. Michael E. Keefe owned a construction company and served as an Alderman and School Commissioner from 1886 to 1888. In 1892 he became Mayor of Halifax. Keefe later returned to the Board for a second term, 1899 to 1901.

Robert Sedgewick was a Board member for six years between 1878 and 1885. During the latter three years he was also an Alderman. Sedgewick graduated with a BA from Dalhousie in 1867. He studied law, and articulated in Ontario under John Sandfield Macdonald who was premier and attorney general. Sedgewick practiced

law in Ontario from 1868 to 1872. Upon his return to Nova Scotia Sedgewick became actively involved in local professional and political affairs. He played a large role in the establishment of a law school at Dalhousie and lectured there free of charge for 15 years. "He also sat on the board of governors, became president of the Alumni Association, and led fund-raising efforts in the 1870's."<sup>32</sup> Sedgewick was appointed QC in 1881. From 1885 to 1888 he sat on the Nova Scotia Supreme Court. In 1888 he moved to Ottawa as deputy minister of justice. In conjunction with George Wheelock Burbidge he drafted the first criminal code of Canada enacted in 1892. "He was the central figure in the extraordinary renaissance of the legal profession which occurred in late-Victorian Nova Scotia. His creative impetus was responsible for the Criminal Code of 1892 and the Dalhousie law school, two key elements in the formation of the modern Canadian legal tradition."<sup>33</sup>

Henry Dugwell Blackadar sat on the Board from 1884 to 1887 and was chairman in his final year. He studied law and articulated briefly. However, the newspaper business was his first love. His father was sole proprietor of the *Acadian Recorder* from 1857 until his death in 1863. Upon his father's death Henry joined the paper as a reporter while his brother Hugh took over the proprietorship. Henry became the editor in 1867 and held the position until his death in 1901. In 1874 he assumed the proprietorship from his brother Hugh who moved on to become postmaster of Halifax. Henry Blackadar "also became vice-president of the Nova Scotia Tourist Association, advanced its work through correspondence, and according to one observer was primarily responsible for the discovery of Halifax by many Americans."<sup>34</sup> Under his direction the *Acadian Recorder* provided the people of Nova Scotia with interesting and instructive reading. "He was also a shrewd man, under whom the *Recorder* prospered. Together with careful investment, the paper enabled him to build up an estate in excess of \$100,000, a comfortable fortune at that time."<sup>35</sup>

The likes of Doctor Archibald Lawson, Michael E. Keefe, Robert Sedgewick and Henry Dugwell Blackadar dominated the HBSC and set the direction of educational

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<sup>32</sup>Ramsay Cook Ed. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. XIII*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. p. 932.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* p. 934.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* p. 70.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* p. 71.

policy in 19<sup>th</sup> century Halifax. Victorian school reform was executed predominantly by an emerging group of middle class professionals.<sup>36</sup> If most Board members were professionals, the Victorian working class was surely underrepresented.

The School Commissioners personified the personal and social improvement that could be derived from the learning and application of modern knowledge. Their success instilled in themselves and in others a faith in science and technology and support for reforms founded upon principles of efficient scientific management. It was their progressive ideals and actions that inspired middle class professionals to join the Board and to move it in a progressive direction. These same progressive notions particularly influenced Alexander McKay who was supervisor of the City's schools from 1883 to 1916. McKay faithfully advocated the teaching of science and the application of scientific management to the public school system. He was tireless in his efforts to expand and improve the City's schools. McKay instituted a manual training program (the predecessor to industrial arts), and incorporated high school education within the City's common school system. McKay organized regular teachers meetings for the discussion of educational questions. He also helped to establish the teachers' summer school of science, a series of lectures and seminars intended to broaden scientific knowledge and to present progressive educational techniques:

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<sup>36</sup>In addition to using the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* background information on the School Commissioners was gathered by tracing their names through several years of the *Halifax City Directory*. Information from the *Halifax City Directory* was supported by articles and advertisements found in various newspapers. The City's industrial capitalists were identified and profiled in the same manner. The Directory names the board of directors for all major organizations in Halifax, including banks, numerous manufactures and philanthropic bodies. These boards were dominated by a small group of wealthy men who formed the ruling class of Halifax. For example, Robie Uniacke was President of the Halifax Banking Co., President of the Nova Scotia Permanent Benefit Building Society and Savings Fund, President of the Halifax and Dartmouth Steamboat Co., Vice President of Starr Manufacturing, Vice President of the Nova Scotia Telephone Co., Vice President of The Bras d'or Marble Co., a director of Eastern Trust Co., President of the Halifax Club and a member of the Gentlemen's Committee Managing St. Paul's House of Industry for Girls. While the middle class dominated educational affairs in Halifax, there are some examples indicating the influence of the City's ruling class. For example, William Butler sat on the Board from 1890 to 1893 and again from 1895 to 1898 as an Alderman. He was also part of James Butler and Co., and a director of the Canada Atlantic and Pinst Steamship Co. His brother was the Hon. James Butler, Vice President of the Merchant's Bank of Halifax. W.J. Stairs was a member of the Gentlemen's Committee Managing the Halifax Protestant Industrial School and Robie Uniacke was a member of the Gentlemen's Committee Managing St. Paul's House of Industry for Girls. While these institutions were not a formal part of the common school program, they were included within the City's overall system of public education. Sir. William Macdonald was directly involved with public schools through his funding of specific programs. See Bingay, *op. cit.* pp. 78, 102 and 118.

Nearly all the pupils of our schools receive two or three lessons a week on the science of Common Things. Beginning with Form and Color they proceed to study the qualities of minerals, to classify plants and animals, and become familiar with the elementary principles of physics, chemistry and physiology. There has been gratifying progress in this direction since the opening of the Summer School of Science. In consequence of its teaching and inspiration, there has been excellent science teaching in some departments...As the great value of this kind of training is every year more clearly manifested, it becomes necessary for teachers to qualify for science teaching. Otherwise they cannot keep abreast of the times and maintain their standing.<sup>37</sup>

If the schools are to be improved it must be done by increasing the knowledge, skill and enthusiasm of the teachers. An *esprit de corps* must be created among them similar to that which exists in other professions. This can best be done by holding teachers' meetings for the discussion of educational questions, by the formation of teachers' classes for the study of special subjects, by the attendance at educational conventions and summer schools, the study of educational literature, and by seeing the methods used by successful teachers in the management of their classes.<sup>38</sup>

Determined to keep the public schools of Halifax up to standard, McKay's efforts and enthusiasm furnished him with great influence, particularly within the like-minded membership of the HBSC. McKay's obituary published in the *Acadian Recorder* made favorable note of his pervasive and positive influence upon the Board and the City's schools:

Of the successive school boards he was Master and Advisor, almost invariably having his will, for he was as determined and diplomatic, as he was experienced and wise, so it can be said that for many years at least, every change, every forward movement could claim him as its inceptor.<sup>39</sup>

The Board's resolution of March 10, 1892 responded to a particular context: the past and prevailing Catholic influence within the Halifax public school system; broader conflicts surrounding the separate schools question; the state's eagerness to foster the advancement of scientific knowledge; and the will of middle class professionals to provide leadership and progressive change. As seen in the previous chapter, the resolution offered no financial saving. The resolution increased the Board's debt by \$102,082 and deflected attention from important matters such as the establishment of a sinking fund and Council's short payments to the Board. But, it was a masterful stroke of conciliatory political wisdom. It followed the conventional trend of separating the church from public affairs by reducing the Archbishop's role

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<sup>37</sup> Supervisor's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1889, pp. 5-6.

<sup>38</sup> Supervisor's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1892, pp. 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> *Acadian Recorder*, April 9, 1917.

in school construction. At the same time, it recognized the past contributions of the Catholic church and its continued political influence. Upon passing the resolution the Board assured the Archbishop that while the Board would henceforth build all schools attended predominantly by Catholic children, the practice of only appointing Catholic teachers to such schools would continue:

The Committee [School Sites & Buildings] beg to report having had the conference with his grace the Archbishop, and after giving the matter careful consideration adopted unanimously the following resolution, - Whereas on the first day of June, 1893, this Board adopted a resolution couched in the following terms: "that the Board in adopting its resolution of the 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1892, for the erection of a new building to replace the Russell St. Schools, did not intend to make any change respecting the appointment of teachers, but the purpose of the Board is to transfer to the proposed new buildings, the several departments and teachers who are now or may be at the time of removal, employed in the Russell St. Schools": And Whereas doubts have been expressed as to whether it was the intention of the Board that the provision as to teachers, embodied in the said resolution, was to apply only to such teachers as are now in the employ of the Board, or that such provision should apply also to teachers to be employed hereafter, and it is desirable that such doubts should be removed: Therefore Resolved that the intent and meaning of the Board, in passing the said resolution, were as they are now, that the said provision was to be a continuing one, and that the Board's resolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1876, respecting teachers in certain city schools, should apply to the new school erected by the Board on Young and Kaye Streets as fully as it did to the original Russell St. Schools, so called of which it is to be the successor on all respects not contrary to the educational law of the province or the rules of this Board.<sup>40</sup>

By reducing the Archbishop's role, the Board augmented its own responsibility and control. Catholic students would continue to be taught exclusively by Catholic teachers. But, with the Archbishop and the Church pushed further into the background the Board was freer to promote science in the City's Catholic schools, freer to encourage the perspectives McKay and the Board so passionately admired. Greater responsibility and control also fostered images of legitimacy and utility. Such images were crucial in the struggle to establish and maintain influence as various public bureaucracies and their middle class vanguards jostled for power, reputation and political spoils. Diminishing the Archbishop's role also won favor within the local Protestant community. Easing Catholic - Protestant hostilities was in the Board's interest; in particular it decreased the Board's chances of being hamstrung by emotionally charged legal wrangling. Such disputes had already divided too many

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<sup>40</sup>School Board Minutes, Vol. 9, pp. 153-154, April 7, 1894.



Canadian communities. The resolution made the separate school question a matter of administration and not a ticklish matter of law.

Taken together, the volatility of the separate school issue, and the growing faith in science and progress, help explain many of the weak fiscal decisions made prior to 1892. Public service bureaucracies such as the HBSC were created with a great deal of well intended Victorian enthusiasm. Reformers were sure that the intrinsic superiority of progress would eventually smooth out any rough spots. To a certain extent they were right. As the HBSC navigated through the political mine fields of denominational antagonism, wrangled with Halifax City Council over the rate, collection and distribution of school tax revenue, and negotiated the wording and interpretation of school legislation with Provincial authorities, it gained invaluable experience. That experience eventually furnished the Board with the influence necessary to realign its fiscal year, secure and regularize Council's payment of the school estimate and establish a sinking fund for the retirement of mature debentures. Such improvements suggested scientific efficiency and fiscal maturity. However, the fiscal policies of the HBSC have always been limited by the parameters of its funding methodology, and remains so today. The sources of school funding in Halifax and throughout Nova Scotia have remained essentially unchanged for the past 130 years. This enduring legacy of Victorian school reform is the object of discussion in the final chapter.

### Chapter Three

The first chapter was a detailed following of the fiscal policies implemented by the HBSC during the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In chapter two the context of Victorian progress was offered as an explanation for the shoddy financing used to support 19<sup>th</sup> century school reform. The final chapter will present the fiscal legacy of school reform in Victorian Halifax. As will be seen, debts incurred by Victorian school reformers were projected well into the 1950's and perhaps into the 1960's. More importantly, the tools used to collect school funds have not been augmented or replaced since 1865. Meanwhile, the public school system has experienced tremendous expansion, both in the scope of its operations and in the range of demands being placed upon it. Decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion supported by a funding methodology carried over from the Victorian period has resulted in a colossal debt. During the past ten years, many services offered by the HBSC have been restructured or rationalized. This has been partially due to the high cost of servicing the Board's massive debt. Moreover, Provincial efforts to reduce the huge weight of the overall public debt have also placed financial constraints upon the Board. Of course, parents and teachers have argued against changes to service delivery. However, the debate has failed to address the strength of the process used to collect school funds for the past 130 years, that is, property taxes and grants from general Provincial revenue. Evidence presented below confirms that these methods of school funding have never sustained public education without encouraging an unmanageable debt. We need to acknowledge this record in order to escape the negative aspects of our educational history, particularly, if we are serious about protecting and improving the fiscal mechanics that support our public schools and the quality of the education they provide.

#### **Lingering Victorian Debt**

In 1901 the HBSC issued debentures worth \$21,000 for repairs to the Alexandra School and for the site and building of the Manual Training School. In 1903 the Board issued debentures worth \$48,500 in order to purchase a site and to build the Quinpool Road School and to acquire the Barss lot at 7 Brunswick Court. In 1904 the Board issued \$29,000 worth of debentures. These funds were used to retire debentures issued in 1878 for the construction of the Academy. The total value of

debentures issued between 1901 and 1904 equaled \$99,000 and all were issued at an interest rate of 4%. In 1907 City Council henceforth assumed responsibility for the issue, repayment and administration of all school debentures.<sup>1</sup> However, on one occasion after 1907 the Board returned to the prior practice of issuing and managing its own debenture issue:

The only instance since 1905 of the Board having to issue its own bonds was in December, 1914, when an application was made for an amount of \$48,067.00 to provide for alteration and additions to LeMarchant and Oxford Schools. This was approved by the Governor-in-council and upon the City's refusal to carry out its obligation, the Board issued Twenty-five Year 4 1/2 % debentures for \$54,000.00 dated January 1, 1915, the interest thereon having since been included in the school estimate.<sup>2</sup>

The above debentures represent the final borrowings of the Victorian period. However, payments on Victorian school debt continued for at least another fifty years. In 1911 legislation provided that the \$99,000 worth of school debentures issued between 1901 and 1904 would be redeemed upon maturity with debentures issued by the City of Halifax.<sup>3</sup> According to the provisions of this legislation debentures for \$99,000 were issued between 1926 and 1929. Assuming the previous 25 year term and 4% interest rate these debentures matured between 1951 and 1954. By 1954 the original debt of \$99,000 had required \$198,000 in debt service or interest payments. Meanwhile, the principal sum of \$99,000 remained outstanding. In other words borrowings worth \$99,000 initiated by Victorian school reformers were serviced for decades by their children, only to have their grandchildren faced with the original principal debt fifty years later.

A complete accounting of the debentures issued by the Board in 1915 does not appear within the Board's annual reports. The reports continue to show the annual interest payments on these debentures until 1940. After that all mention of them disappears from the Board's reports. Perhaps they were retired by the City in 1940 with moneys from the sinking fund. Or perhaps the City reissued debentures for all or part of the principal in 1940. If the City was able to pay out the principal in 1940

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<sup>1</sup>As a result new debentures issued for school purposes after 1907 were initiated by the Board. But, there accounting did not appear in the Board's annual report. Moreover, from 1907 through to the 1950's the details of the Board's accumulated debt are only sporadically reported. During the Victorian period such details were annually reported, though as we have seen reporting was no deterrent to debt accumulation.

<sup>2</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1922-23, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

the total cost of interest would have been \$60,750. If the City was forced to reissue debentures for the entire amount the cost of interest would have climbed to \$114,000 and the original \$54,000 would have remained outstanding in 1965 on the one hundredth anniversary of the FSA.

In 1907 the total funded debt of the HBSC amounted to \$336,782. Of this figure \$99,000 has been accounted for. But, what of the remaining \$237,782? The debentures within this total matured in various years between 1907 and 1916. Debentures issued between 1901 and 1904 were redeemed upon maturity by reissuing debentures for the entire principal sum. The Board's debt load continued to climb during the first four decades of the 20th century. By 1938 the Board's total debt was \$2,647,418.06.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is likely that all debentures issued prior to 1907 were redeemed upon maturity with new debentures and that the Board of 1938 was still carrying a Victorian debt worth \$336,782, a debt that extended back to the 1870's.

Because the Board's debt administration became part of the City's overall debt administration in 1907, existing school records do not provide a clear and detailed accounting of the Board's indebtedness after 1907. Further research using the public accounts of the City and the Province is required in order to show the precise details of the City's public school debt after 1907. The Board's records are incomplete. However, they do confirm that the bill for Victorian school reform continued to linger for at least half a century. This lingering debt continued to siphon money away from the classroom and into the hands of financiers for at least fifty years and perhaps even into the 1960's. Further research is required in order to determine how this affected educational quality. Meanwhile, as debt incurred in the Victorian period lingered, so did the propensity to borrow. Victorian reformers used credit to build the foundation of our public school system, future generations inherited more than schoolhouses. They also inherited an appetite for deficit financing. As will be seen below, the overindulgence of that appetite has left contemporary schools bloated with debt. To be sure, school debt no longer encompasses payments on Victorian

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<sup>4</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax, 1938, p. 55.*

borrowings, however, the financial paradigm responsible for present-day debt was directly inherited from our Victorian school reformers.

### **Funding Tools**

Prior to the passage of the FSA in 1865 schools in Halifax and throughout Nova Scotia were funded on a pay-as-you-go basis. Schools were built and teachers were hired primarily with donations, subscriptions and tuition fees. The Province provided some funds through a grant system, primarily to assist with teachers' salaries and construction costs. Taxation was a legal option after 1811.<sup>5</sup> However, compulsory assessment did not have a broad base of support at the community level. Thus parents and school districts chose not to support schools with assessment rates. As a result the quantity and quality of education varied widely. As discussed in chapter two, progressive educators sought progress and standardization, they hoped for better schools equally available to all students throughout the province.

Expanding and improving the public education system required additional funds. Sections 19, 20 and 22 of the FSA provided the means or tools needed to gather additional funds for the purpose of education:

Sec. 19. A fixed sum granted for the construction and support of county Academies, and another fixed sum for Superior Schools; such schools to be located by the C.P.I.

Sec. 20. The Clerk of the Peace in each county...shall add to the sum annually voted and passed for the general county purposes at the general sessions, a sum sufficient, after deducting costs of collection and probable loss, to yield an amount equal to two-thirds of that granted by the legislature to each county...The sum so added by the Clerk of the Peace to the amount levied on any county shall form and be a portion of the county rates, and shall, without any deduction for costs of collection, or otherwise, be distributed to each school by an equal sum per pupil, according to the average attendance for the school half year, and be paid to teachers.

Sec. 23. Any sum voted at the annual school meeting as necessary for the leasing, purchase, or erection of school houses, or for the purchase or improvement of school grounds, and all interest on money borrowed by the section for the same, shall be a charge on the section, and shall be levied on the real and personal property of the section, according to the county rate-roll.<sup>6</sup>

With these three sections the FSA established the foundation of school funding not only for Halifax, but the entire province. The Act hoisted two pillars designed to bear the cost of public schooling. Provincial grants were not new. The Province had

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<sup>5</sup>Bingay, *op cit.* p. 36.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid* pp. 67-68.

been granting money to various groups for teachers' salaries and construction costs since the 1780's. The pioneering aspect of the FSA with respect to funding was contained within sections 20 and 23, which made school assessment mandatory; no longer was it a matter of parental or community choice. The idea of mandatory assessment for schools had been around for some time, but prior to 1865 the Provincial Government had been unable to muster the political will essential to the mandating of school assessment. Resistance stemmed from the ubiquitous public dislike for taxes, particularly imposed taxes, regardless of their beneficial provisions or effects. Moreover, education had traditionally been a locally-controlled community activity headed by various religious organizations who tied education to denominational allegiance. Protestant groups were resistant to the idea that their tax dollars could be used to support separate Catholic schools, particularly in Halifax where section 49(3) of the FSA in effect allowed separate denominational schools. On the other hand, the Catholic clergy were determined that the FSA would not threaten their ability to superintend the education of young Catholics. Despite denominational resistance Charles Tupper was able to convert his will into law. The FSA and its funding provisions received royal assent on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1865. Tupper and the FSA sanctioned municipal property taxes and provincial grants as the primary means of gathering financial support for public education in Nova Scotia.<sup>7</sup> Tupper was certainly aware of the political risk he incurred by mandating the public funding of common schools. Yet, he could hardly have understood the enduring effects of the funding provision he legislated.

The methodology used to fund public education remained unchanged into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1923 the books of the HBSC were audited by Price, Waterhouse & Co., who examined the Board's receipts and disbursements and found all to be in order. The auditors noted and accounted for funds provided to the Board by the Halifax Relief Commission for the reconstruction of schools lost or damaged in the Halifax Explosion. However, no new *permanent means* of school funding were reported by the auditors. In 1923 Provincial grants and municipal property taxes remained the backbone of educational funding as they always had been.

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<sup>7</sup>There was some support for mandatory assessment. See: Bingay, *op cit.* p. 63. The FSA mandated grants and assessment. But, it did not prevent donations, it merely removed the dependency upon donations.

The first page of the Chairman's report for 1932-33 charts the Board's finances for the fiscal year ending April 30th, 1933. The column of receipts shows that Halifax City Council paid the Board a total of \$488,766.85.<sup>8</sup> Provincial grants for that year totaled \$6,325.00.<sup>9</sup> the Board also received \$3,692.55 from "sundry receipts, fees, bank interest, etc." The key here is that no new funding tools are identified. Property assessments augmented by Provincial Grants continued to provide the financial foundation for the City's public schools.

Twenty years later the tools used to collect school funds remained essentially unchanged. In 1952 the Board's chairman identified the two levers of school funding and the process used by the Board to operate the lever of municipal school assessment:

There are two main sources of School Board revenue - Provincial Grants and revenue from City Council. There had been until recently a Municipal Grant but this is being abolished through a new agreement between the Provincial Government and the Municipalities.

During November and December, each department head prepares a list of the items required for the following year and takes them to Mr. Bezanson [secretary of the Board] for inclusion in the estimates...If the Department Head cannot, in fairness, reduce his requirements, he is told to be prepared to plead his case before the Finance Committee of the Board when dealing with estimates...They want also to be in a position so to state the case before City Council, which gives the final approval to the estimates.<sup>10</sup>

The Board continued to gather its revenue using assessments and grants, however, by 1952 these old gathering tools had been refitted. Provincial Grants had

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<sup>8</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1932-33, p. 1. The City paid two amounts to the Board, \$479,055.31 for the operation of the City's schools and \$9,711.54 for teachers pensions in accordance with the plan adopted by the Board on August 30th, 1906. Under this plan revenue was to be drawn from teachers salaries while the Board was to "...make up any deficiency necessary for the payment of all pensions." (Sec. 3 (c) of the Halifax Teachers' Pension System. See: appendix D of the Board's report for 1907) The figure of \$9,711.54 noted above was not broken down, i.e. teachers contributions versus contributions from the Board - if any. However, with the exception of donations and the interest earned on the permanent fund and its investments, all funds for pensions provided by the HBSC came from the assessment rates. Beginning in 1906 the Province also provided a teachers' pension plan (See: Bingay, *op. cit.* pp. 84-85.) However, its revenues appears to have been drawn from the Provincial grants, though no accounting of this process appears in the Board's report of 1932-33.

<sup>9</sup>This figure (only 1.2% of total revenue) represents the total Provincial Grant for operating expenses. The money was program specific. Science grants equaled \$2000, academy and highschool grants \$1950, art classes \$500, auxiliary classes \$1750 and music classes \$125. The method used to calculate these figures does not appear in the Board's report. The Province also provided money for teachers salaries and pensions, construction grants, teacher training, etc. which are not accounted for in the Board's report. There fore, the Provincial share of the Board's total revenue may in fact be higher than 1.2%.

<sup>10</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1952, pp. 16-17.

risen to 20.81% of the Board's total revenue. Moreover, in addition to funding teachers' salaries and specific programs, the Province was now funding some of the Board's administrative salaries. The \$1790 provided for administrative salaries was a small amount. However, it represented the overall increase in provincial funding and the rising complexity of the Provincial Grant system which was brought on by the greater number of categories being included within the Province's funding calculations. At the same time, the process of collecting school assessments was also becoming more sophisticated. However, at this point the school assessment rate continued to be set as well as collected by Council (more on this point later). By 1952 the tools of school funding had been polished and refined, but they had not been replaced.

The Board's total operating budget for 1952 was \$2,236,398.96.<sup>11</sup> By 1980 that figure had risen to \$46,803,806.<sup>12</sup> The City's municipal levy provided \$32,406,270 in 1980.<sup>13</sup> While the Provincial share of the Board's revenue came to \$11,018,037 or 23.5%.<sup>14</sup> As the level of Provincial funding continued to increase so did its complexity. A foundation program now provided over \$10,000,000 for the provision of core programs approved and cost shared by the Province. In addition to the foundation grant the HBSC got Provincial grant money for a variety of auxiliary programs such as Continuing education, French Immersion and Driver education. The formulas used to arrive at the specific level of Provincial funding for each category is not described in the Board's report. These formulas were developed and manipulated by the Province within its Department of Education. Details of their design and application were published by the Department. Current Provincial funding formulas will be described below. The objective here is not to examine the intricacies of school funding. Rather, it is to expose the continued use of the same sources of funding. By 1980 the funding sources of the HBSC were 115 years old. As we have seen funding had become much more complex over time. However, property taxes

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<sup>11</sup> *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax, 1952*, p. 80.

<sup>12</sup> *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax, 1981*, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* The Statement of Revenue for the year ending December 31, 1981 does not indicate any other Provincial funding. However, the Province may have reimbursed the City for some of the Board's expenses. Moreover, Provincial spending on teacher training curriculum development, pensions, debt service etc. does not appear in the Board's report. This suggests that the actual Provincial share of the Board's expenditures may have been higher than 23.5% or that if the Province failed to provide these services the Board's costs would be higher.



and provincial grants continued to be the principal elements of public school financing.

In 1982 the Provincial Grant system was restructured according to the recommendations of the Provincial Commission on Educational Finance:

The major impact of the Commission's Report in 1982 was the change in the method and basis of funding by the provincial government. Prior to the commission's report, the Board had received financial support from the province based on approved programs which were cost shared with the Municipal unit.

In 1982, the Board received provincial funding calculated on a grant structure based on the number of pupils in the schools system. This change in financing has had a significant impact on the Halifax school system, particularly on the methods of delivery of programs established and practiced in the Halifax school system which previously had been cost-shared by the province. The implementation of a financing formula structure which is identical to that of every other school system in the province has caused concern to this Board in that many of its services are of a high intensity nature, as required by a city population. As the new grant structure is based predominantly on the number of pupils in the school system, the amount of additional funds available from the provincial sources is diminishing with the result that the retention of the current intensity levels of programs and services which has been developed over the years is increasingly difficult.<sup>15</sup>

The Commission's decision to base funding levels on student attendance was not a new concept. For example, the practice of distributing the school tax to schools throughout the municipality based on attendance levels dates back to section 20 of the FSA. However, as the above comments suggest the practice had not previously been used to calculate Provincial grants. By 1982 enrollments had been in decline for some time. Basing the calculations for Provincial grants on student attendance was clearly intended to control Provincial spending on public education. The move reflected the broader fiscal crisis of the state, a crisis exacerbated by escalating demand for government services (particularly policies designed to shelter Canadians from the effects of raising energy costs and the economic recession of the early 1980's) and voter opposition to perennial tax increases.

During the late 1970's and the early 80's the debt of the Federal Government increased dramatically largely due to its National Energy Program which held oil and gas prices in Canada well below international levels. At the same time, Federal resources were being diminished by raising inflation and interest rates and the ability

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<sup>15</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1982, p. 7.

of provincial and municipal governments to gain control of 60% of the nations overall tax revenues. In response the Federal Government reduced spending, imposed wage and price controls and cut transfer payments to the provinces.<sup>16</sup> Despite the actions of the Federal Government and a weak provincial economy, the Government of Nova Scotia under Premier John Buchanan held power using high levels of patronage spending and concessions to corporate interests. "In one hundred years the province had accumulated a net debt of \$500 million; in six years [1978-84] Buchanan had more than quadrupled this figure."<sup>17</sup> Unable to secure an increase in transfer payments from a federal government in the midst of its own fiscal crisis, the Nova Scotia Government eventually cut spending in all areas (further reducing its spending on public education) in an effort to reduce the massive provincial debt.

The Board was right to be concerned. Since 1982 Provincial reductions to the Board's funding have steadily diminished the Board's teaching staff and the services offered to both teachers and students:

As mentioned earlier in this report, a high percentage of the Board's attention was concentrated on accommodating a dramatic decrease in the amount of additional funds which the Board would receive from Provincial and Municipal sources...It was necessary, however, for the Board to decide to discontinue some programs and, as a result, decisions were taken to discontinue instruction in swimming and piano at the end of the 1982-83 school year.

The Board also found it necessary to reduce the numbers of staff and, as a result, the Board will employ nearly one hundred fewer persons in the next school year. Sixty-seven of the staff reductions will be affected in the numbers of professional personnel employed.<sup>18</sup>

Fiscal restraint continues to be a fact of life and the Board has spent many hours in discussion and deliberation as it coped with the difficulties associated with the continuance of programs and services required by the pupils in a school system with limited financial resources. The utilization of consolidations and contractions in all areas of the school systems to achieve economies through a more efficient operation have nearly been exhausted and, in response to a continuing condition of restraint, the Board anticipates that the establishment of priorities may be required.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Thomas S. Axworthy and Pierre Elliott Trudeau Eds. *Towards A Just Society The Trudeau Years*. Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990. This book does not thoroughly analyze specific policies. However, it does provide a good overview of Federal Government initiatives and the economic, political and social context that formed those initiatives between 1968 to 1984.

<sup>17</sup>J. Murray Beck. *Politics Of Nova Scotia, Volume Two 1896-1988*. Tantallon, Nova Scotia: Four East Publications, 1988. p. 358.

<sup>18</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1983, p. 7-8.

<sup>19</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1984, p. 6-7.

The funding formula used to allocate school board funding is largely based on enrollment. Boards are facing serious financial difficulty because of declining enrollment in combination with factors such as fixed administration costs, increasing demands for programs and services, and meeting fiscal targets necessitated by the government expenditure control program to address the public debt situation.<sup>20</sup>

Despite resistance, the Province has continually cut educational spending since 1982. The Provincial Government declares educational spending cuts are necessary as part of its efforts to balance its budget and reduce the net provincial debt. Parents, teachers and Board officials claim cuts to educational spending threaten future social and economic well-being. The debate surrounding the connections between socio-economic well-being and cuts to educational spending cannot be resolved here. But, what can be determined here is that in the midst of this debate the process and basic levers of educational funding, the factors that determine the maximum level of educational spending, have been in use since 1865. Moreover, the Provincial Government appears to be satisfied with the current yield of traditional funding methodology<sup>21</sup>. *Education Horizons*, the latest Government white paper on restructuring the educational system, recognizes that school boards are financially strapped. However, its solutions focus on administrative restructuring in order to reduce costs. *Education Horizons* fails to inspect the condition of the machinery being used to gather school funds or to question its ability to provide an adequate level of financial support for public education.

In its 1995-96 fiscal year the HBSC is expected to spend \$71,935,184.<sup>22</sup> Of that total \$33,429,851 or 46.47% will come from the Province. Property assessment (the Education Tax) will contribute \$24,708,065 or 34.34%.<sup>23</sup> City Council will provide \$12, 466,268 (17.32%) through Supplementary Funding.<sup>24</sup> The remaining

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<sup>20</sup>Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Education Horizons*, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>The existing literature on school funding focuses primarily on how to work within existing limits. Authors examining the subject seem almost resigned to the status quo and fail to challenge the strength or equity of existing funding tools. See for example: Tim Sale. *An Analysis Of School Funding Across Canada*. Vancouver: EduServ Inc., 1993., Department Of Education And Culture. *Report Of The Educational Funding Review Work Group*. Halifax: Department Of Education And Culture, 1995., Stephen B Lawton. And Rouleen Wignall Eds. *Scrimping Or Squandering? Financing Of Canadian Schools*. Toronto: OISE Press, 1989. and Stephen B Lawton. *The Price Of Quality: The Public Finance Of Elementary And Secondary Education In Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1987.

<sup>22</sup>Halifax District School Board. *Revenue And Expenditure Estimates For The Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1996*. p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

\$1,331,000 (1.85%) will come from Other Board Revenue (fees, rents, trusts, etc.).<sup>25</sup> The process used to arrive at these figures is extremely complicated. Presenting and explaining the myriad details would be extremely time consuming. Moreover, it is the continued reliance on grants and property assessments that is of primary interest here, not the mathematical subtleties of calculating these figures. However, a brief outline of the process confirms some change. Though we continue to use the tools provided by Victorian reformers, contemporary school officials have worked hard to redesign and upgrade those tools so that they remain as serviceable as possible. The fact that old tools remain in use does not belie the fact that a great deal of effort has been and continues to be spent on the issue of public school funding .

The 1995-96 levels for Provincial Funding and the Education Tax rate were calculated in the following manner.<sup>26</sup> The Province grouped students into six categories; elementary, junior high, senior high, vocational, business education and intermediate industrial. For funding purposes the number of students in each category is calculated by averaging the actual number of students in each category during the second and third previous years. For example, the funding count for senior high students in 1995-96 is 3824, based on the average number of senior high students in 1992-93 and 1993-94, 3755 and 3893 respectively.<sup>27</sup> The funding count for each category is then multiplied by a weighting factor of one or more. The Province recognizes that some programs or categories are more expensive than others. For example, it costs more to educate senior high students than it does to educate elementary students. Therefore, the senior high category receives a weighting factor of 1.20 while the elementary category is weighted at 1.00.<sup>28</sup> The funding count for each category multiplied by its assigned weight produces a number

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.* The Federal Government provides money to school boards all across Canada for specific programs such as French Immersion and the development of teaching materials that are based on Canadian content. See: Canadian Education Association. *An Overview Of Canadian Education Third Edition*. Toronto: Omnigraphics, 1984. p. 9. The amount listed under Other Board Revenue may also include Federal grants for specific programs.

<sup>26</sup>See. Report Of The Educational Funding Review Work Group. *Department Of Education And Culture*, February 15, 1995.

<sup>27</sup>Nova Scotia Department Of Education And Culture Funding Formula. For the 12 month period April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1996.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

of student units for each category which together form the total number of student units. The total number of student units for 1995-96 is 15,905.<sup>29</sup>

The total number of student units is then considered against ten funding factors: gross square footage; uniform assessment; buses owned by the Board; buses contracted by the Board; adult population; salary weight; small board weight; designated Acadian school enrollment; and transportation drawing area factor. At the end of this process, known as the general funding formula, a level of general funding is established. The 1995-96 level of general funding for the HBSC is \$49,343,409.<sup>30</sup> To the general funding total amounts are added for transitional funding, property service, transportation (operating), special education, adult education, textbook credit allocation, capital equipment - repairs and renovations, funding allocation - NSTU agreement, and capital bus purchase. An amount is then subtracted in accordance with the Provincial Government's Fiscal Recovery Reduction Program.<sup>31</sup> The figure at the bottom line is the operational amount required by the Board according to Provincial funding rates and educational standards set by the Provincial Department of Education. The figure for 1995-96 is \$58,636,856.<sup>32</sup> The Province annually agrees to pay a portion of the operating figure it calculates, \$33,938,791 for 1995-96. The remainder is raised through the Education tax. The Education Tax rate can be determined by dividing the uniform assessment total (\$6,335,401,364 in Halifax for 1995-96) by 100 and then dividing that figure into the difference between the operational amount and the portion of it that is to be paid by the Province. The education Tax rate for 1995-95 is thus 39 cents per 100\$.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, the owner of a property in Halifax assessed at \$100,000 would pay \$390 toward the costs of the City's public schools for 1995-96.

The calculations done by the Province only state the amounts of money available to the Board from Provincial revenues and Education Tax receipts, they do

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>31</sup>This is a plan designed to reduce government program spending and has imposed budget cuts within all departments of the Provincial Government. See: *Government by Design*. Nova Scotia Department of Finance, 1995-96, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup>Nova Scotia Department Of Education And Culture Funding Formula. For the 12 month period April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1996..

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid* The Education Tax rate is set by the Province and is usually the same for every municipality.

not represent the official budget of the Board. The Board is free to manipulate its funds as it sees fit. For example, the Board can choose to put some of the money the Province provided for elementary students into its senior high program. Or, it may opt to put money the Province allocated for property service toward the cost of its special education programs. The Education Act also permits the Board to raise additional funds by compounding the Education Tax rate set by the Province. Of course such action would require the consent of Council and the Rate Payers Association; additional taxes for any purpose are always a tough sell. As noted above the Board is expected to spend \$71,935,184 in its 1995-96 fiscal year, \$13,298,328 above its operational cost as determined by the Province. Rather than raising this money through a compounded Educational Tax, the Board gathers additional funds through self-generated revenue and Supplementary Funding provided by Council. Supplementary Funds are provided by Council to cover the cost of specific programs that are either excluded from or only partially protected by the provincial funding formula. The level of Supplementary Funding is negotiated separately between the Board and Council. Supplementary funds are of course tax dollars drawn from Council's purse, but Supplementary Funding does not represent an additional tax levied by Council specifically for educational purposes.

The financial tools used to maintain our system of public education were forged by Sections 19, 20 and 23 of the FSA. For the past 130 years these tools have been the principal means used to gather financial support for our public schools. However, our continued reliance on grants and property taxes does not suggest public indifference toward the issue of educational funding. For the past 130 years school officials, parents, teachers and politicians have hotly debated both the level and distribution of educational spending. My intention was not to present that debate or choose sides. Rather, it has been simply to show that for 130 years, regardless of the existing public mood, whether educational spending has been seen as sparse or extravagant, the primary tools used to gather revenue for the Halifax public school system have not been complemented or altered since 1865.

#### **Continued expansion**

As we have seen by 1914 the HBSC was carrying a substantial debt. With the establishment of a sinking fund the Board was eventually able to address that debt.

Yet, that debt, accrued at the turn of the century, lingered into the 1950's. At the same time, despite a lingering debt and a deficient funding methodology, school Boards continued to expand operations, and in turn the City's debt for public schools.

By 1938 the debt of the HBSC had climbed to \$2,647,418.06,<sup>34</sup> almost all of which represented spending on the construction of new buildings and the maintenance of existing schools after 1910.<sup>35</sup> Between 1910 and 1938 the annual enrollment went from 8639 to 13,270.<sup>36</sup> An increasing student population encouraged the creation of additional classroom space. Aging Victorian school houses were repaired, replaced or accompanied by new buildings. Even with this expansion, the Board's Chairman noted that "...overcrowding is still very much in evidence, 18 classes being on part time and 16 Assembly rooms being used for teaching purposes."<sup>37</sup> More students resulted in more teachers. In 1910 the teaching staff numbered 173. By 1938 that figure stood at 315.<sup>38</sup> The expanding system also included more supporting personal. The estimate for janitorial services in 1910 was \$8500.<sup>39</sup> For the fiscal year ending April 30, 1938 janitorial service cost the Board \$31,485.66.<sup>40</sup> In 1910 the Board employed a Supervisor, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Caretaker, Truant Officer and a Messenger at a total cost of \$5700.<sup>41</sup> By 1938 the Board's administrative staff included a Supervisor, Secretary-Treasurer, two Stenographers, an Office Junior, a Superintendent, an Attendance Officer, two doctors, a dentist and four nurses. Administrative salaries now cost the Board \$20,705 per year.<sup>42</sup> Improvements to the physical plant and increased personnel costs multiplied the demands being placed upon existing funds and increased the

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<sup>34</sup>Secretary's report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1938, p. 55. The Secretary's report also shows a balance of \$1,559,475.29 in the Board's sinking fund. If all of the Board's debentures had been called in or cashed in 1938, the Board would have been short \$1,087,942.77. Such an occurrence was unlikely. The amount accrued in the sinking fund shows that the City was addressing its long term debt by putting money aside for the repayment of mature debentures. However, sinking funds could be diverted to other non-educational expenses. Such manipulation may explain the continued rise in total debt despite investments in a sinking fund.

<sup>35</sup>Debentures issued up to 1907 when the City assumed responsibility for issuing and retiring school debentures equaled \$336,782. Between 1907 and 1938 the Board borrowed a total of \$2,310,637.06. This entire amount was approved by the Governor-in-Council. All but \$54,000 of it was also approved by Halifax City Council.

<sup>36</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1957, p. 38.

<sup>37</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1938, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1910-11, p. 133.

<sup>40</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1938, p. 53.

<sup>41</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1910-11, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1937, p. 41.

need for additional resources. Moreover, the mounting debt suggests that existing funding arrangements were insufficient for widening obligations, or that the tax base was not expanding as quickly as the school system. It may also have been true that speedy retirement of the school debt was not a priority for Council.

From the figures above we can see that between 1907 and 1938 the number of children attending the City's public schools increased by 53.6%. The number of public school teachers increased by 82%. Meanwhile, the Board's funded debt increased by 686%, primarily due to borrowings for improvements to the physical plant. In 1946 G.S. Kinley Chairman of the HBSC deemed the City's public schools to be at a crossroads:

Speaking at the Rotary Club some weeks ago, I ventured the remark that Education in the City was at the cross-roads. Some criticism has been made that this was an unorthodox forum at which to tell the citizens the true condition of the affairs with regard to the School Plant of the City. I now reiterate that statement before this orthodox body and say without reservation we are at the cross-roads. One road leads us along the easy financial path of maintenance only for our present plant, and the same inequalities in educating our youth in comparison with other cities - the other road requires greater financial burdens to retire many of our antiquated buildings and replace them with newer buildings equipped with every facility to secure the highest standards in our Educational System from Kindergarten to grade twelve.<sup>43</sup>

Kinley was not alone in his assessment of the Halifax school plant. The year before J.E. Ahern, then Chairman of the Board, made the same observation. Ahern called for an expanded building program and blamed the deteriorated state of the school plant on City Council's failure to provide adequate funds for building maintenance:

The educational authorities prepared their figures, knowing the need; these were reduced by City Council which lacked full information and gave no specific indications to where economies were to be made. The result has been that repairs and other charges have been many times as great during the past two years what they might have been had a consistent maintenance policy been followed...The results of the failure to tell tax-payers what is happening to their school plant are most evident in the condition of the schools today and the unwillingness of [the] civic authority to make urgently needed expenditures.<sup>44</sup>

The words of Ahern and Kinley did not fall on deaf ears. In his report of 1949 Board Chairman C.F. Abbott noted that "during the past year this Board has entered

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<sup>43</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1946, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1945, p. 10&12.



upon the greatest building programme in its long history, and, on the completion of the buildings now under construction, the Board will have gone a long way in relieving overcrowding and lack of accommodation in many quarters."<sup>45</sup> Abbott also stated that even more expansion was needed to meet future requirements:

True, even this large Programme will not be the end. At a recent meeting the Board sent a request to City Council for another large borrowing to build a second Senior High School to relieve the congestion at the St. Patrick's Schools and for a building to replace the present College Street School now under lease from the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and which has outgrown its usefulness as a school building.<sup>46</sup>

Over the next twenty years the City's public school system followed the path urged by Ahern, Kinley and Abbott. In 1945 the Board had 315 classrooms and 13,504 students grouped into 358 classes.<sup>47</sup> A shortage of classroom space required 43 classes to be accommodated "...using assembly halls, basements, three barracks buildings and a series of part time classes."<sup>48</sup> By 1965 the Board had 602 classrooms and 75 special rooms housing a student body of 18,943.<sup>49</sup> There was still some overcrowding in the senior high schools. However, the problem was resolved by "...dividing and refinishing special rooms, [the] loss of which will not seriously interfere with the normal functioning of the schools."<sup>50</sup> Of course greater accommodation did not come without a price. By 1968 the public school debt for the City of Halifax stood at \$7,649,467.<sup>51</sup> Three years later in 1971 the debt total reached \$11,572,590.<sup>52</sup>

The total debt accumulated by the Halifax public school system has not been annually published by the Board since 1971. The current debt total for the Halifax public school system was not presented in *The Report Of The Education Funding Review Work Group* released on February 15, 1995. Neither the *Provincial Budget Address* for 1995 nor its supporting documents reported the City's current public school debt. The *Provincial Estimates* and *Public Accounts* give figures for the entire province. But they do not show figures specific to the city of Halifax. However, it is

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<sup>45</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1949, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>47</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1946, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>49</sup>Chairman's Report, *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1968, p. 90.

<sup>52</sup>*Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax*, 1971, p. 134.

possible to gain some sense of the current situation using what information the Board has made available. For most years between 1938 and 1987 the Board did publish the annual cost of servicing the City's public school debt. For various years between 1938 and 1971 the Board also published the total debt accumulated by the City's public school system. Cross calculations between these two data groups reveals that between 1938 and 1971 the Board's debt service expenditures typically represented between 4.8% and 6.5% of the City's total public school debt. In 1987 the Board spent \$294,122 on debt service.<sup>53</sup> Based on the previous calculations, the Board's annual report suggests that the City's public schools were approximately six million dollars in debt in 1987.

The Board's 1987 report suggests that the City's public school debt was reduced by approximately 50% between 1971 and 1987. However, after 1983 the City received 100% reimbursement from the Province for the costs of servicing the City's public school debt. During this time, and ever since, the Province has operated at a deficit. Some, or all, of the funds paid to the City for debt service costs were actually borrowed by the Province. In other words the school debt was not being paid off, but merely transferred from one debtor to another. The debts reflected in the Board's 1987 report seem to represent debentures issued by City Council on behalf of the Board up to 1979. After 1979 all of the Board's long term borrowings were handled by the Municipal Finance Corporation. The Board's 1987 report does not include the total debt financed through the Municipal Finance Corporation between 1979 and 1987, or any debt that may have been financed by the Province directly. Ambiguous accounting has been politically advantages at times. However, blurring the debt picture has distorted the view of taxpayers and politicians alike, prevented both groups from seeing the true cost of public education and the need to reexamine the manor in which our public schools are funded.

Nova Scotia has not been able to dramatically increase its overall economic performance during the past decade. During the past three years the Provincial

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<sup>53</sup> *Report of The Board of School Commissioners of The City of Halifax, 1986 & 1987*, p. 101. In 1987 the City also paid out \$2,414,622 as principal payments on mature debentures. After 1983 the City was reimbursed by the Province for all debt service expenditures. However, Council continued to be responsible for the administration of the City's school debt until 1993. After 1993 the financing and administration of all long term public school debt became the responsibility of the Provincial Department of Finance. However, regardless of who provides administration the debt continues to be generated by and to affect the public schools of Halifax.

Government has adopted a variety of fiscal restraint programs designed to control the mounting Provincial debt which is now in excess of eight billion dollars! By the next school year (1996-97) the Province plans to have amalgamated the HBSC, the Dartmouth School Board and the Halifax County School Board into one regional Board. Despite Provincial rhetoric regarding its efforts to improve educational quality, Provincial action is undoubtedly motivated by the fact that amalgamation, in conjunction with other changes, is projected to save the Province \$6,000,000 in administrative costs and \$5,000,000 in transportation and other costs.<sup>54</sup> Given these factors it is improbable that the City's public school debt has declined since 1971. In all likelihood it has continued to increase. Moreover, current funding practices appear unable to provide debt reduction while maintaining the current level of programs and services.

How has accumulated debt effected daily operations within the Halifax public school system? In an effort to deal with the overall public debt, which includes the City's public school debt, the Province has steadily decreased its contributions to the Board during the past ten years. According to the Board's current director of education, Gordon Young, funding cuts have necessitated the reduction of teaching staff (400 teachers), the consolidation of 18 junior high schools into 10 junior high schools, the reduction of administrative personnel and the contracting out of some managerial services. Young argues that changes necessitated by funding cuts have created a leaner more efficient operation and that the quality of the Board's programs and services has not been reduced.<sup>55</sup> The full impact of such dramatic changes and the strength of Young's argument can only be revealed by time.<sup>56</sup> What

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<sup>54</sup>The \$11,000,000 represents the projected overall or province-wide saving. The Province claims this money will be returned to the classroom in order to improve educational quality. However, there are no assurances that these savings will be realized nor are there any mechanisms in place to ensure that any potential or realized savings do not end up being returned to the Province and used for other purposes. See: *Education Horizons*.

<sup>55</sup>These comments are based on a meeting between Gordon Young and the author held April 10, 1996 at the Halifax School Board offices on Brunswick Street.

<sup>56</sup>Such changes effect student teacher ratio, class size, school size, competition between students for programs and services and the overall feeling of being at school. How these things relate to overall performance is not entirely clear. Moreover, the purpose of public education has never been clearly defined or schools assessed according to their ability to meet a plainly stated objective. Part of understanding the impact of the Board's actions and of developing better funding arrangements requires that we become clear about what we want from our public schools and that we become able to accurately assess the ability of our schools to give us what we want.

ever their result, it could be argued that the Board has faced these cuts primarily due to past Provincial over-spending and not due to its own indebtedness. To a certain extent this is true. At the same time it is also true that a solvent Board might have been exempted from wholesale provincial budget cuts. A soundly managed Board with its own source of truly adequate funding would definitely have been exempt. In future, changes to the Board's funding arrangements may become unavoidable if time shows us that Mr. Young was wrong.

As we have seen, the debt for Victorian school reform lingered for more than fifty years. The tendency to borrow heavily for educational purposes continued as well. The Halifax public school system has been steadily expanded, particularly in the post World War II era. However, the tools used to gather funds for the support of public education have not been similarly expanded. The City's debt for public education, though hidden from view, has grown so large that the existing tools of educational funding struggle to provide enough revenue for operating costs, let alone debt service. The record presented above confirms that debt retirement and solvency are not consistent with our traditional approach to public school funding, an approach that dates back 130 years to the Free School Act of 1865.

## Conclusion

In 1749 the city of Halifax was founded to offset the French Catholic majority of Nova Scotia. British Parliament viewed education as a means of protecting and expanding the English presence. As a result, representatives of the SPG were dispatched to Halifax, and eventually throughout Nova Scotia. The education provided by the SPG was of a proselytizing nature and rudimentary in content, primarily involving the three R's. Teachers received little financial support or direction and were forced to live a meager life, often in isolation. School attendance was voluntary at this time and the oversight of educational affairs belonged to local churches and their communities.

In 1766 the Nova Scotia Legislature made its initial foray into educational affairs. The scope of the first Education Act was very narrow. Its primary objective was to sanction Anglican control of education. This was done in part by outlawing Catholic schools and teachers. These restrictions remained in place only until 1786. However, once the state became involved in educational affairs it continued to expand its role. Between 1766 and 1865 numerous amendments were made to the Education Act. New entities such as Boards of School Commissioners, a Normal School for teacher training and a Council of Public Instruction were established. These actions reflected an effort to combat widespread illiteracy, a condition legislators viewed as a hindrance to overall social and economic advancement. However, collective levels of education remained low as the majority of people were more concerned with making a living, an activity that did not yet require a formal education. However, the average level of education in Halifax was somewhat higher due to the greater number and accessibility of schools.

In 1865 the Legislature introduced the FSA. The Act made public education mandatory. The Act also sanctioned property taxes and Provincial grants as the principal means of gathering funds in order to support the expansion of the public education system. In Halifax the operation of the FSA was initially hampered by Halifax City Council's refusal to collect the school tax. As a result of Council's actions, the HBSC was forced to borrow its operating funds. By 1867 the HBSC was \$30,000 in debt. Fiscal relations between the HBSC and Council remained strained for the next 22 years. Between 1881 and 1899 the Board was forced to spend

\$18,984.01 in interest on overdrafts owing to Council's delay in paying over the school estimates. The Board always had a good relationship with the Province which had the authority to correct Council's actions. Yet, the HBSC did not call upon the Province to settle the matter until 1899.

When the FSA was introduced in 1865 it included the 'Halifax Section'. The 'Halifax Section' allowed the Board and the City taxpayers to avoid the cost of building several new schools in order to comply with the provisions of the FSA. By allowing the Board to lease existing schools, primarily from the Catholic church, the need for many new buildings was averted. The practice of leasing schools from the Catholic church remained in operation until 1892. In 1892 the HBSC resolved to build all schools under its jurisdiction, and no longer to lease from the church. As a result of its expanded building program the Board's debt increased by \$102,082. Until a sinking fund was finally established in 1901, the Board had no means of paying off its construction debt. Section 23 of the FSA which required assessment for the repayment of principal debt had not been applied in Halifax. The Board was well aware of this fact when it chose to expand its building program. By 1907 the overall poor fiscal management of the Board resulted in a total debt of \$336,782 and operating losses of at least \$238,000. In an age that venerated scientific management and efficiency the Board's poor fiscal management seems paradoxical. Yet, the Victorian faith in science and inevitable progress largely explains the Board's actions.

The Board's actions were also guided by the specter of denominational conflict that characterized the Victorian era. Halifax had always been predominantly Protestant. Initially the Catholic congregation of Halifax was small and legally prevented from influencing the City's educational affairs. In 1801 Father Edmund Burke arrived in Halifax. By that time restrictions on Catholic schools and teachers had been lifted. However, lack of leadership and organization prevented Catholics from taking advantage of their freedom. Burke worked ardently to establish Catholic schools in Halifax. By 1818 Burke had established a Catholic seminary and common school for Catholic boys. He also was successful in separating the Halifax diocese from Quebec which eventually led to the appointment of an Archbishop solely responsible for the city of Halifax. The political power this provided to the Catholics of

Halifax allowed them to expand their educational interests. Lead by Burke's successors, Archbishop O'Brien and Archbishop Connolly, the Catholic congregation of Halifax rose to become a predominant force within the City's school system by the time the FSA was passed and they remained an active force amidst the City's educational affairs for the remainder of the Victorian era.

The Catholic church also became a dominant force within educational affairs throughout all of Canada. Education represented the perpetuation of the faith and the means of holding secure the place of the Catholic church within Canadian society. In Halifax Protestant reaction was bitter at times. However, the divisive social and legal conflicts that arose between Catholics and Protestants in other regions never materialized in Halifax. However, Board members were well aware of conflicts elsewhere and were concerned with the possibility of similar events occurring in Halifax.

At the root of the conflict between Catholics and Protestants was their differing views on science. The advancement of science and its concomitant technological production brought rapid and sweeping changes to Victorian society. These changes held out great promises for the possibilities of humankind and stimulated a great enthusiasm for progressive reform. Protestant churches incorporated scientific notions within their faith and supported and led the progressive movement. Meanwhile, the Catholic church largely rejected science and the educational reforms it fostered. The majority of Board members were Protestant and avid supporters of science and progressive reforms. Board members also represented an emergent middle class, which was eager to assert its social status and authority through progressive reforms. Alexander McKay, the Supervisor of Halifax Schools from 1883 to 1916, was untiring in his efforts to advance science and middle class perspectives within the City's schools and he was able to strongly impose these influences upon the Board. Moreover, both McKay and the Board were bolstered by the support of the City's Protestant majority.

The fiscal policies implemented by the HBSC during the later half of the 19th century become understandable when seen within the broader social and intellectual milieu of Victorian society. In the early years the Board was inexperienced with its

new responsibilities and overwhelming mandate, it was bound to make mistakes. The resolution of 1892 compounded the Board's fiscal problems, but by diminishing the role of the Catholic church in the City's educational affairs it offered proof to the Protestant majority that progress was forefront in the minds of the City's school officials. At the same time, assurances the Board made to the Archbishop regarding teachers in Catholic schools mitigated Catholic resistance. Satisfying both sides extricated the Board from potentially debilitating legal wrangling. The resolution also expanded the Board's authority and allowed it greater opportunity to implement progressive policies.

Despite their faith in progress, science and efficiency, the debts incurred by Victorian school reformers lingered for at least fifty years. Debentures issued in the Victorian period were later redeemed with new debenture issues which pushed responsibility for the principal onto future generations. Although the Victorian debt was eventually paid off, succeeding generations have continued the tendency to borrow heavily for educational purposes. As a result, the public school system of Halifax now carries a debt which is surly in the tens of millions of dollars.

The fiscal legacy of Victorian school reform encompasses more than a lingering debt and an appetite for deficit financing. Today we continue to gather funds for the support of public education in Halifax and throughout Nova Scotia with essentially the same processes and levers that were forged 130 years ago by the FSA. While our old machinery has been refined, no new sources of fund raising have been produced since 1865. This is the financial legacy of Victorian school reform, the continuation of a particular approach and mind-set toward the task of funding public education. Meanwhile, increasing demand for programs and services has lead to a tremendous expansion of the public school system, particularly in the post World War II period. However, our traditional funding practices have not been unable to generate sufficient revenue to pay for the tremendous growth of public education. A persistent tendency to borrow heavily and the limited capacity of our well-worn funding tools to meet the costs of public education have combined to produce a colossal debt.



This study has examined the financing of Victorian school reform and its enduring legacy. It has also exposed the limitations of fund-raising designed by Victorian school reformers and the continued application of those same practices over the past 130 years. If we are to provide our system of public education with a secure and adequate base of financial support then clearly some changes are necessary. This study does not offer any easy solutions, but does provide a solid basis from which to conduct much needed further research. Further research must examine the impact that our colossal educational debt has upon the quality of education in our public school system. We need to examine the overall significance of public schooling, who benefits most and who pays most for those benefits. This means going beyond an examination of funding tools to look at revenue sources, where public school funds actually come from. Here we need to look at individual and corporate income, and the way in which individuals and corporations benefit from public education. The Halifax public school system is carrying an enormous debt that must somehow be repaid and its programs and services are being diminished by a lack of financial resources. Perhaps corporate taxation for educational purposes is the answer. At any rate, a better funding methodology is clearly needed. We need to closely examine the sources of educational revenue: who bears the cost and who does not. Only with this information can we design new funding tools able to generate the greater level of financial resources needed to support and secure our system of public education now and in the future.

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Much of this thesis is supported by data gathered from primary historical sources. Primary source material relating to the history of public education in Halifax can be found within the collections of various public and private organizations. The Halifax School Board holds all of its annual reports, as well as the minutes of all Board meetings dating back to 1864. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia has a variety of newspaper collections, educational journals, and minutes from meetings held by the Council of Public Instruction. It also has individual school records, church documents, and the personal papers and writings of figures who were prominent within Halifax's educational history, particularly those of Charles Tupper and Archbishop Connolly. *The Journals of The House of Assembly* can be found at the Nova Scotia Legislature and at Dalhousie's Killam Library. Both collections date back to the 1850's. The papers of Archbishop O'Brien can be found in the archives at the home of Halifax's Catholic Archbishop. And, all minutes of Halifax City Council meetings are available at Halifax City Hall.

The annual reports and minute books of the Halifax School Board clearly document much of its financial record. Both also offer great insight into the educational views of the Board and how it went about conducting its affairs. Because public education was a high profile issue during the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Board's actions were often reported in local newspapers and occasional fervent educational commentary from various sources. The personal papers of Archbishop Connolly, Archbishop O'Brien and Charles Tupper all reflect their great interest in public education and the intimate connections between the Board and the political and religious leaders of Halifax. The contentious relationship between the Board and Halifax City Council is evident in the minutes of City Council meetings. Debates recorded within the *Journals of The House of Assembly* vividly display the conflict surrounding the question of separate schools and the denominational friction that heated educational affairs. These documents often quote, refer to, or debate with one another. This allowed much of the historical data within this study to be cross referenced.

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