

## The Impact of Regulation 17 on the study of District Schools: Some Methodological Considerations

**Françoise Noël**

Nipissing University

### ABSTRACT

Three sets of documents which might be used to study Ontario District schools in the early twentieth century are examined: *Schools and Teachers*, the Inspection Summary Registers, and *The Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Condition of the Schools Attended by French-Speaking Pupils* (Merchant Report). Using data created from these for a sample area in the Nipissing District, some of the methodological difficulties with using each of these sources are shown, particularly the gap in information in *Schools and Teachers* between 1914 and 1926. That the boundaries between public and separate schools were permeable at this time and that both must be studied to view the impact of Regulation 17 on District schools is emphasized.

### RÉSUMÉ

Pour mener notre étude sur les écoles de district au vingtième siècle, nous utilisons trois séries de documents : la revue *Schools and Teachers*, les résumés des rapports annuels des inspecteurs d'écoles et *The Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Condition of the Schools Attended by French-Speaking Pupils* (le rapport Merchant). À partir des données tirées de ces trois sources pour une région témoin du district de Nipissing, nous démontrons certaines difficultés méthodologiques reliées à leur utilisation et plus particulièrement à la pauvreté de l'information de la revue *Schools and Teachers* entre 1914 et 1926. Nous insistons sur le fait que durant cette période la frontière entre les écoles publiques et les écoles séparées était perméable et pour cette raison, il faut étudier les deux types d'écoles pour comprendre les effets du Règlement 17 sur les écoles de District.

### Introduction

While a rich historiography surrounds the question of the development of a school system in Ontario in the nineteenth century, the history of the expansion of that system into northern Ontario or the Districts, has not received much scholarly attention. When the education system was under development, white settlement in

Ontario was largely limited to the peninsula in a band extending from the Quebec border to the limits of Essex County just south of Lake Huron. In this area municipal government and administration was provided at the level of the county. To the north of this area, settlement was limited and largely associated with resource exploitation. The lumber industry pushed into the area between Georgian Bay and the Ottawa River in the second half of the nineteenth century. New Ontario, the area to the north of Lake Nipissing, was first opened to settlement with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. The boundary of the province itself expanded northward in stages, reaching its current limits in 1912. The population density in these northern regions was insufficient to support county level municipal government; instead, Districts were created for electoral and administrative purposes and local municipal governments were formed as required. District boundaries were adjusted as required by changes to the territorial extent of the province and settlement.<sup>1</sup> The vast area covered by these districts can be seen in Figure 1.

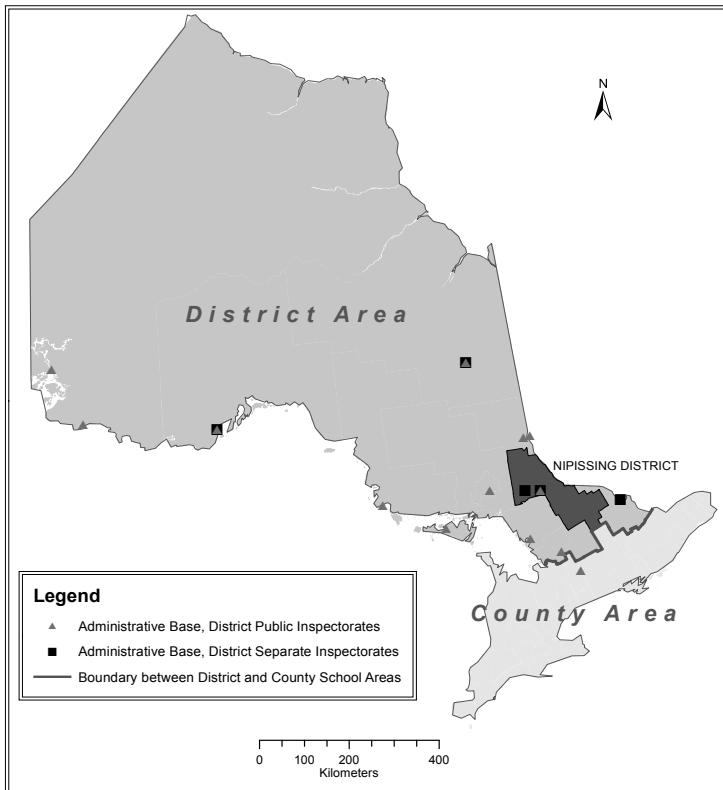


Figure 1. *Province of Ontario Showing the Area of District and County Schools, 1912 to 1927.* The administrative base of the Inspectorates shown here are the residence of the school inspectors in 1927. Renfrew County is shown within the District area because in the Separate sector it is included with District schools.

In 1877, there were only 142 schools in the Districts. By 1903 the number had increased sufficiently for three resident inspectors to be appointed. James B. MacDougall, then principal of North Bay High School, was one of them. His is one of the few accounts we have of the early years of school expansion into this region.<sup>2</sup> The rapid population growth that resulted from the silver boom in Cobalt was just one of the problems faced. He writes: "As a mark of the rapid growth in this inspectorate, the 106 schools in 1904 had increased by 83 in 1907, or in less than three years fifty-three rural sections were created and organized and thirty town departments added, making 189 in all. Only superhuman effort availed to keep up the pace with travel where few roads were, correspondence where few knew procedure, organization, oversight of buildings, supplying teachers and infinite details of so complex a situation."<sup>3</sup> School administrators suddenly faced problems related to the isolation of many communities, the higher rate of taxes required to support schools in areas of low population density, the need to integrate immigrants into the schools, and the difficulty of getting qualified teachers. Under such conditions, the one-room school proliferated. Progressive educators like MacDougall, however, felt that such schools were inferior to the larger graded schools that were emerging elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

The population of the north was more diverse than in "old" Ontario. As the cultural diversity of Ontario's population increased, schools were viewed as instruments of citizenship training and expected to assimilate recent immigrants and non-English-speaking Canadians to British values and culture.<sup>5</sup> With regard to schools, however, Catholics were in a strong minority position, separate schools for religious minorities having received constitutional protection in 1867. The system itself was a dual one in which two parallel administrative structures had emerged, one for the non-denominational "public" schools, and one for the Roman Catholic denominational schools, commonly referred to as the "separate" schools. Despite this terminology, both were publicly funded and subject to provincial regulation, thereby meeting the common definition of "public schools." They will therefore be referred to here as the two sectors of the public system. Language minorities, however, did not benefit from the same constitutional protection.

Ontario, at its inception as a British colony, had a small French Canadian Catholic population, concentrated in areas originally associated with the fur trade. In the late nineteenth century agricultural land and lumbering opportunities drew many Quebec migrants into Ontario and the French Canadian Catholic population increased, much of it concentrated in the Ottawa valley and eastern Ontario. French Canadians also joined the movement into New Ontario in large numbers. While a minority in Ontario, French Canadians maintained a strong voice in Canada overall, and in questions of schooling and culture, also had the support of the Catholic hierarchy in Quebec. In Ontario, however, an Irish Catholic hierarchy that increasingly shared the majority perspective with regard to language dominated the Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup> By the late nineteenth century, the Ontario government increasingly felt that the schools in which the language of instruction was French were not up to standard and that English should be taught in all schools. In 1912, in the face of considerable political pressure on this question, "Regulation 17" was imposed.<sup>7</sup>

This regulation mandated that all public schools in the province were to use English only as the language of instruction, allowing the use of French only in the first form where students did not yet master English well enough to function in that language. French could be taught as a subject of study in the upper forms only if the parents so directed, and not in excess of one hour a day per classroom.<sup>8</sup> From the perspective of the French Canadian communities of Ontario, Regulation 17 could not be allowed to stand. This was a major assault on their rights as a minority; their very survival as a community was at stake.

The reason for this is clear when one understands the important role of the school in these communities. In the French Canadian communities of Northeastern Ontario studied previously, the school, like the church, was a community institution.<sup>9</sup> The local community, through its trustees, hired teachers who were usually from the local area and shared their language and culture. In the relatively homogeneous communities of this area, schools functioned to reinforce community norms and culture. In less homogeneous communities, schools were used to integrate minority groups into the dominant one, in this case, French and Catholic culture. The school house was often the only public building and doubled as a community hall, a place for meetings, dances, and other social functions such as the Christmas concert which was a major social event. These findings apply equally to schools in the public and the separate sector.

In the Ontario context, Regulation 17 was simply impossible to enforce. Instead, it galvanized the French Canadian community into organizing to defend its rights. Welch concludes: "Unwittingly the anglophone government had helped to strengthen both the boundaries of the Franco-Ontarian community and the power and influence of the French-Canadian Catholic Church in matters of schooling."<sup>10</sup> The struggle over Regulation 17 took on epic battle proportions for a few years only. After a few years of relative calm, armed with the recommendations of the Merchant Report of 1927, the Ontario government backed away from applying Regulation 17; it was rescinded in 1944.

The colonization of New Ontario had much in common with the settlement of the prairie west and the development of British Columbia's interior, which occurred in the same period. In these regions, the view that schools were to be used as instruments of assimilation prevailed and the use of French was curtailed in the west, much as Regulation 17 attempted to do in Ontario. There was also a growing concern at the time, both in Canada and in the United States, over the "problem" of rural schools.<sup>11</sup> This was expressed primarily in terms of the shortage of qualified teachers. In northern Ontario, most of the teachers who made their way into isolated school houses every September were young, female, single, and had no teaching experience. Leslie A. Green, the Inspector for the District of Algoma, found that about half of the teachers in his District were under qualified in 1920. He justified his hiring choices with remarks such as: "Small school remote, lonely for teacher; one term enough" and "Only the bravest will go in here. Have been trying all year to get a teacher."<sup>12</sup> Stortz and Wilson found much the same conditions in a frontier region of British Columbia.<sup>13</sup> The concerns of progressive-minded school administrators focused on

the “efficiency” of rural schools, using urban schools as their norm and measuring students using standardized testing,<sup>14</sup> however, may not have been shared by the rural communities served by these “under qualified” teachers.<sup>15</sup> At the local level, having a teacher who shared community values was more important than the level of the certificate held.

Study of the expansion of the Ontario school system into New Ontario or the “District area” in the early twentieth century therefore has the potential to shed light on many interesting social questions. As there has been little work done on this topic to date, an overview of this expansion using information that can be quantified would be a useful starting point, and *Schools and Teachers*, the most likely source. From 1911 to 1966, except in 1933, the Government of Ontario issued a publication called *Schools and Teachers in the Province of Ontario* that not only served as a directory, but also provided basic information about each school and each teacher in the system. Because the same information was collected from all the schools over a long period, this data could be used to provide an overview of the evolution of the system over time and in space, particularly if it were available as a database.<sup>16</sup> A closer evaluation of this source, however, reveals that, as a result of the conflict over the use of French in the schools, *Schools and Teachers* does not contain information about English-French bilingual schools for the period 1914 to 1926.

Using information relating to schools in all of the subdivisions of the Nipissing District that had a high French Canadian population (see Appendix I), this paper assesses the significance of that gap in information. Two related sources, the Inspection Summary Registers, and the Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Condition of the Schools Attended by French-Speaking Pupils,<sup>17</sup> referred to here as the Merchant Report are also explored. While both these sources contain much interesting information, neither can be used to fill the gap in information found in *Schools and Teacher*. A critical evaluation of these three sources also reminds us of the need for caution when using bureaucratically generated sources in general. Finally, unlike the study of schooling in the Canadian west where a uniform public system was established or in places where special private language or religious schools were created to replace or supplement the public system, the study of schooling in Ontario requires an understanding of its dual sector system and acknowledgement that both sectors were indeed public schools. This is particularly crucial with regard to the period of expansion into New Ontario as the boundaries between the two sectors were in flux during this period.

### ***Schools and Teachers: Identifying the Gap***

Prior to Regulation 17, there were four categories of schools in Ontario. English-French bilingual schools were present in both the public and the separate school sector and had their own inspectors. When Regulation 17 was introduced in 1912, these schools technically ceased to exist. The government was aware, however, that change would not happen immediately, and special inspectors were named for these schools. Special registers (considered below) were created to record the results of their

inspection and follow the progress of these schools in their transition to English only schools. Information from this category of school was no longer included in *Schools and Teachers*. It was actually 1914 before they “disappeared” not to return fully until 1927 (Table 1). Of the schools that disappeared, eleven were in the public sector and twenty in the separate sector.<sup>18</sup> This is a very important finding as it indicates that more than a third of the bilingual schools in this area were in the public sector before the controversy over Regulation 17 began. Furthermore, four English Public schools moved over to the separate sector that year. The gap in the data in *Schools and Teachers* for 1914 is therefore significant: 67% of the schools in the system for this sample area were not reporting.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 1**  
**Schools, Teachers and Students in a Sample area of the Nipissing District, 1911–1931**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No of Schools*</b>	<b>No of Teachers#</b>	<b>No of Students**</b>
<b>1911</b>	44	59	1368
<b>1912</b>	42	57	1334
<b>1913</b>	46	64	1784
<b>1914</b>	15	26	619
<b>1920</b>	15	23	532
<b>1926</b>	24	49	1309
<b>1927</b>	50	106	3373
<b>1931</b>	55	122	3360

Source: *Schools and Teachers*

\*The larger of count of school buildings or the sum of the number of schools referred to for assessment purposes was used.

# This is a count of teacher names. Some schools were temporarily without a teacher.

\*\* This is the sum of the average attendance.

Between 1913 and 1927, there was a net growth of four schools in the sample area. This masks the fact that in two areas schools declined by three, whereas in other areas, they increased by seven. More significantly, the number of public schools declined by two, even though there were six new public schools. In six cases, the decrease in public schools was matched by an increase in the number of separate schools.<sup>20</sup> The net gain in the number of separate schools therefore appears to have been the result of a transfer of schools from the public to the separate sector. The aggregated data available in *Schools and Teachers* suggests that similar changes may have occurred elsewhere as well. To understand the changes that took place during this period it is therefore important to examine data at the local level for both the public and the separate sector.

### **The Ontario School System in 1911 and 1927**

*Schools and Teachers* provides aggregated data only on the number of teaching certificates by gender and the number of schools by inspectorate grouping. This

information can be used to compare the size and structure of the school system before and after Regulation 17 only by further aggregation.<sup>21</sup> The three categories available for comparison are “Public County and District”, “Public City” and “Catholic Separate.” Since schools varied from large urban schools to one-room rural schools, the relative size of each component of the system can best be seen using the number of teachers. Of the 10,906 teachers in the system in 1911, 72 percent were in the “Public County and District” schools, 17 percent in the “Public City” schools and 10 percent in the “Catholic Separate” schools. In 1927, there were 16,214 teachers in the system. Although the number in each category had grown, the proportion of teachers in County and District Public schools had declined to 62 percent. Teachers in City Public schools now made up 28 percent of the total and in the Catholic Separate schools, 14 percent.<sup>22</sup> These figures do not distinguish between growth and change, but they do confirm that on a wider scale some movement from the public school sector to the separate school sector may have occurred.

The bureaucratic system measured the qualification of teachers by the level or type of the certificate they held. First and Second Class certificate required Normal School Training and were the most desirable; all other certificates were much less so. The expansion of the school system into New Ontario put great pressure on the ability of the system to provide “qualified” teachers for that area, as did rapid population growth in the province overall. To meet the demand, four new Normal Schools were opened in 1908–09; the one in North Bay was specifically intended to provide more teachers for the North. These Normal Schools provided training only in English, however, reflecting the priorities of the center. French Canadian communities would have to wait until after 1927 to acquire a French Normal School. Nonetheless, a comparison of the proportion of certificate types held by teachers, in 1911 and 1927 shows that the number of less desirable certificates was declining (Figure 2). The proportion of First Class and Second Class certificates increased significantly whereas third class and District certificates almost disappeared. Temporary certificates also decreased. English-French certificates and English-French temporary certificates, however, rose from one to three percent of the total. For the system overall, therefore, the period can be seen as one of progress. A closer look at the 1927 data, however, shows that the gains were not uniform across the system.

Because only 14 percent of the teaching personnel were located in District schools in 1927, the characteristics of that region do not tend to be visible in data aggregated at the provincial level. When the information is separated in such a way as to make a comparison of northern and southern areas possible, however, differences between these can be seen. (See Appendix II, Table 3.) There were fewer First Class certificates in the Districts (9 percent of the total as compared to 17 percent in the south.) The proportion of Second class certificates was the same in both regions. English-French certificates were much more significant in the Districts. There, they represented 12 percent of the total as opposed to only 3.3 percent in the south. In both regions, teachers in the separate sector held almost all of these. Differences between the Separate and the Public schools can also be seen within each region. In the Districts, for example, teachers in the public sector held 85 percent of the

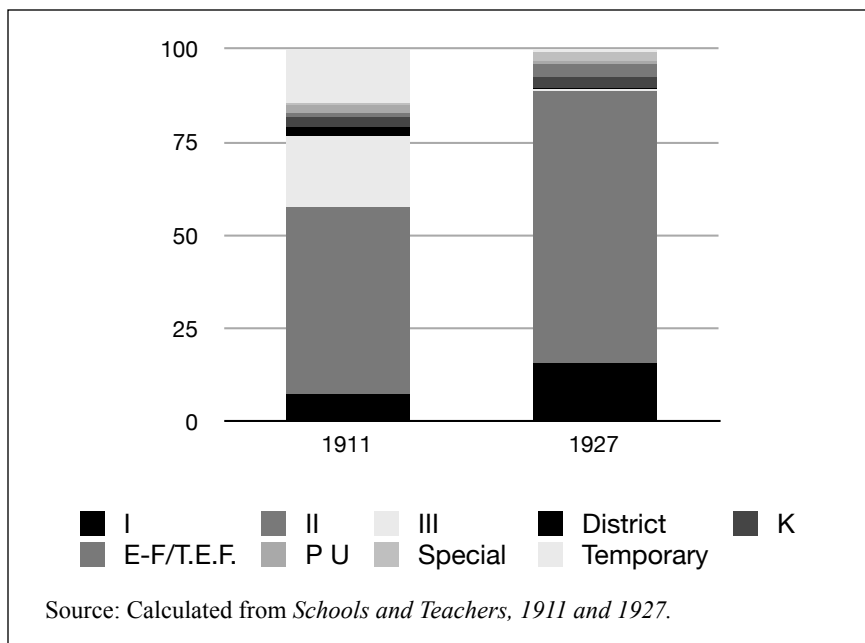


Figure 2. *Types of Certificates held by Ontario Teachers, 1911 and 1927*

First and Second class certificates whereas teachers in the separate sector held almost all of the Temporary English-French, the Permanent Ungraded and the Temporary Certificates.<sup>23</sup> In the south, only 8 percent of teachers in the Separate schools had First Class certificates, far less than the Public school teachers in the county (14 percent) or the city (26 percent) areas.

The structure of *Schools and Teachers*, therefore, is not neutral, but pushes us toward a comparison of the public and separate sector schools; it is much more difficult to obtain information on the difference between rural and urban schools and between northern and southern schools. The considerable difference between these deserves to be highlighted. Outside the period from 1914 to 1926, this problem could be addressed by regrouping the information available in common geographical boundaries at the level of the municipality.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, much of the growth in the Districts occurred during that period, and the gap in information with respect to the bilingual schools cannot be addressed by using the Inspection Summary Registers as I had initially hoped.

### **The English–French School Inspection Summary Register**

With the introduction of Regulation 17, the English–French schools of Ontario came under scrutiny. Inspectors visited more frequently and paid close attention to compliance with the new regulation. The correspondence kept with the Inspection



Summary Registers indicates that throughout the early years of Regulation 17 many schools in the Nipissing District continued to resist the attempt to force this change on them. In some cases, they simply refused to let inspectors inspect the schools. In others, they asked the pupils to leave when the inspector arrived. Some teachers continued much as before, except when the inspector came by.<sup>25</sup>

The appointment of English inspectors to visit these schools caused particular resentment and trustees generally refused to admit the authority of these inspectors. One of the French inspectors was asked repeatedly if Inspector White would try to visit these schools.<sup>26</sup> Even when trustees allowed inspectors into their schools, they did not always recognize their right to make suggestions. Saint Jacques was advised that his inspection was “useless” as the ratepayers would disregard his recommendations. They argued that since the government had not paid the previous year’s grant and was unlikely to pay the next, “we do not see what any of its officials may have to say in the organization or direction of our school.” As he wrote to Chief Inspector Waugh, “the efficiency of my work will be minimized to a certain extent unless the grants are paid.”<sup>27</sup> His point was a valid one. To simply alienate the schools and deny them their grants would not result in the changes anticipated with the adoption of Regulation 17.

A memorandum for the Deputy Minister in 1913 regarding Sturgeon Falls provided a similar message. The Training School there had been denied its grant for non-compliance with Regulation 17 the previous year, but it was now willing to follow the spirit of the regulations. The author suggests: “provision for some elasticity would appear reasonable.” The loss of the grant was penalty enough. He continues: “the conditions, as they appear to me, afford strong ground for avoiding an open breach with this Board and for continuing the Training School at Sturgeon Falls, quite irrespective of the noncompliance of the past year which is but one feature—and that not the most vital feature—of the entire situation.”<sup>28</sup> The school in question was one of four English-French Model Schools present in the province at the time. These schools prepared teachers at the third class level to teach in English–French schools. If the school lost that status, the problem of getting teachers who could teach in both French and English would only have gotten worse. For those in the field, the situation was not just black and white.

Between 1912 and 1927 the findings of the inspectors who visited English–French schools were recorded in three books of registers that display the concerns of the central authority. The information gathered related specifically to the question of compliance with Regulation 17. The willingness of school trustees to comply with the new regulation was key. The enrollment numbers were divided into four categories: French, English, Unable to Speak English, and Unable to Speak French. The amount of time devoted to French and English was noted as well as the “Organization of General English.” Inspectors also recorded the name of the teacher, the type of certificate he or she held, the name and address of the school, and the name of the secretary. Under “Remarks,” they noted the degree of compliance to Regulation 17 as well as comments on the teachers or problems with the school of another nature.<sup>29</sup>

The variety of situations faced by students and teachers is evident from the information provided in the Registers; the percentage of French students who could not

speak English ranged from 11 to 90 percent in the Nipissing sample schools. The school in Sturgeon Falls faced a considerable challenge in that it had both a large number of students who could not speak English and a large number who could not speak French. Some rural schools had no English students at all. In the first year of inspection, many of the schools in our Nipissing District sample refused the inspector admission and a few were closed. In the second year, only a few schools continued to refuse admission to the inspector, but there were problems in almost all the schools. By 1919–1920, there were fewer problems and a few schools were in compliance. By 1926–1927, almost all of the schools were in compliance. In this area, the basic goal of Regulation 17, the introduction of English into all Ontario schools, seems to have been met, at least at a minimal level (see Appendix III). Each community faced its own particular challenges in providing an education to all of its school-age population. While there was no opposition to the acquisition of English in this region, only a desire to also learn French, the isolation of the more homogeneous French communities worked against the easy acquisition of English.

While the Inspection Summary Registers are useful to trace the evolution of resistance or compliance with Regulation 17, the information within these was not collected systematically and does not provide a complete picture of all bilingual schools in any one year. They therefore cannot be used in the same way as Schools and Teachers, and remain more of a qualitative than quantitative source.

### **The Merchant Report**

In October 1925, G.H. Ferguson, Minister of Education, appointed F.W. Merchant, the Chief Director of Education, to head a committee of three whose task was to investigate the schools in the province “attended by pupils who speak the French language.” The committee was charged with “determining the efficiency of the schools, means for improving the instruction of, and plans for securing a more constant supply of qualified teachers for the schools.”<sup>30</sup> Their investigation included not just former English–French schools, but all schools in which “French is taught and used as a language of communication and instruction.” Located in 450 schools, 984 classrooms met this criterion, approximately 6 percent of all the classrooms in the province in 1927. Of these, 67 percent of the classrooms were in English–French Schools and 33 percent in ordinary schools.<sup>31</sup> The 367 District classrooms, 37 percent of the provincial total, were equally divided between bilingual and ordinary schools, but the vast majority of them (84 percent) were in the separate sector. For reasons of geography, the committee visited and based their Report on only 73 percent of these.<sup>32</sup>

In order to answer as to the efficiency of the schools studied the committee presented data on the French schools, divided as to region, in comparison to “all urban” and “all rural” schools. It noted that there was no great difference in the average age of pupils; students in French schools were only slightly older than in other schools. In the schools teaching French, however, fewer students stayed in school after Form II [grades 3–4] and only 10 percent of students were in Form IV [grades 7–8] (Figure 3). This problem was particularly acute in the District French schools where 50 percent

of students, on average, were in Form I. Since the Districts had only 14 percent of the teachers in Ontario in 1927 and the southern county schools had 62 percent of the teachers, however, the comparison with rural schools was essentially a comparison of French northern to southern schools. A comparison with English District schools might well have shown that they also faced the same problem.

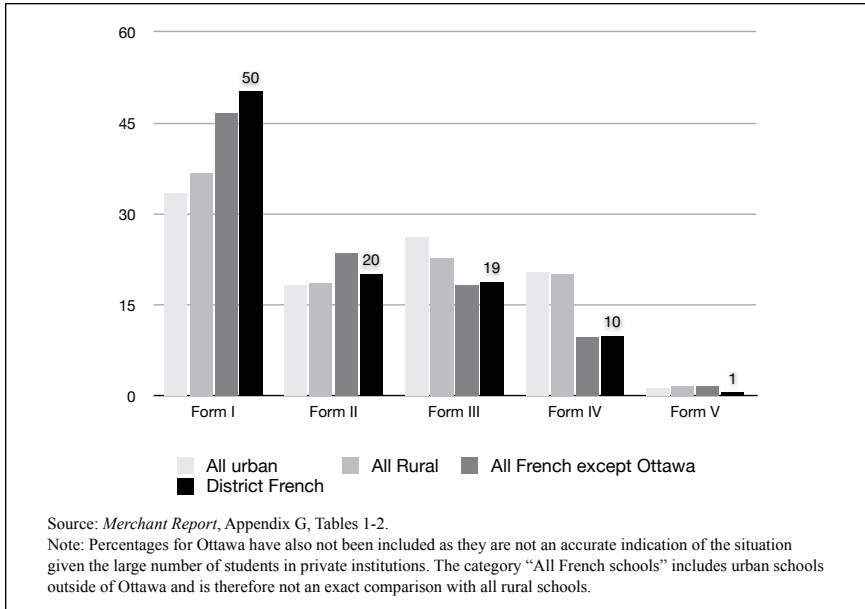


Figure 3. *Percentage of Total Attendance in Each Form*

In each school inspected, the Committee tested students in each form for their written and oral English skills, their French oral and written skills, for Arithmetic, and in Form IV and V, in Geography and History. The ranking was a simple scale where 1 was Excellent, 2, Good, 3, Fair, 4, Poor and 0, No ability. The results were tabulated for each school and summarized by region. The appendices of the report provide the actual results for each school, allowing us to look at results for the schools in our District sample. As the committee found generally, test results varied considerably, even within one township. (See Appendix IV, Table 3). The results also showed that there was little consistency in the amount of improvement shown between Form I and Form IV in either English or French reading. The ideal of the graded school with students progressing from a low level of understanding to a higher one seems far from having been reached. A comparison of rankings for French composition and English composition in Form III adds an interesting perspective to this question. In only eight schools was the ranking in French higher than for the ranking in English. In ten, it was the same, and in four, it was lower. That being the case, the "problem" of the French schools

in the Districts was clearly not just one of language of instruction. If that were the case, one would expect the scores in French to be much higher than those in English. Rankings in History and Geography in Form IV showed a similar range of scores.

That schools, located a few miles apart and with pupils from similar backgrounds and with similar resources, could vary so widely in their test results suggests that the ability of teachers varied considerably. The Merchant Report recognized the crucial role played by teachers in the process of educating the children of Ontario. While the Report's findings on teacher certificates is much the same as that provided by the 1927 School and Teachers' tabulations already discussed, the Report also provided information on the number of years of Ontario experience the teachers had. The 839 teachers in the schools inspected were about equally divided between those with four or less years of experience in Ontario and those with five or more. A more detailed breakdown of these figures (Figure 4) shows the rather surprising result that the Districts had fewer teachers with less than one-year experience in Ontario than any other region (5 percent). A full 33 percent of teachers in the Districts had five to nine years of experience, and only 9 percent had only one. The reason for this is not evident.

While only some of the results found in the Merchant Report are discussed here, it is evident that the conditions in the French schools varied considerably even within one District. A comparison with English District schools is not available from this source, but it seems likely that conditions in those schools varied as well. Having shown the great variety of conditions that existed in the schools investigated the committee concluded that, with regard to language of instruction, "no rule which prescribes the medium of instruction for different forms or grades of a system can

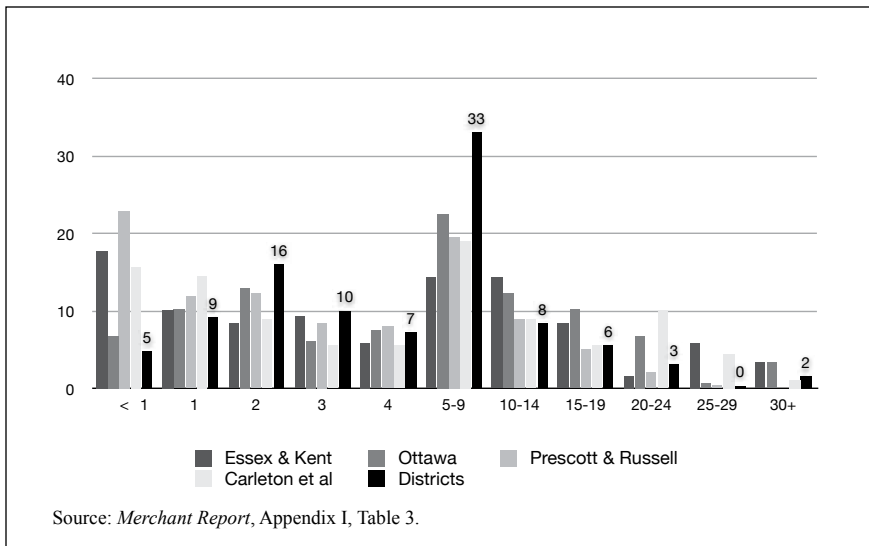


Figure 4. Teacher's Years of Experience by Region as a % of all Teachers in French Schools

be applied impartially to all schools within that system.” Teachers should not be left on their own to determine the language of instruction, lest they do little to introduce English, but change should be effected through “personal supervision and direction.”<sup>33</sup> Based on the recommendations of the Merchant Report, Regulation 17 was no longer enforced after 1927.

## Conclusion

Providing schools and teachers for all of the children in the vast new area of settlement that was northern Ontario in the early twentieth century was a challenge. Many school children lived in isolated communities with few resources. As children walked to school, the one-room school was the norm outside the cities. As the resource industries that provided the impetus for development drew both foreign immigrants and French Canadians into the area, schools were used as an instrument of assimilation in a society where the majority view was that Ontario and Canada was and should be British and English speaking. This led, in 1912, to the imposition of a ban on French language instruction in Ontario schools known as Regulation 17. While this ban was primarily in response to the situation in Eastern Ontario rather than the North, it was of major significance to all the French communities then emerging throughout the Districts. In order to preserve their cultural heritage, they were willing, if necessary, to fund their own schools. Administrators discovered that refusing to pay school grants was not the threat they thought it would be and that, instead of forcing compliance, it simply removed schools from their influence. While open conflict lasted only a few years, it took more than a decade for the school system to fully reintegrate these schools and to begin addressing other issues such as better training for French and bilingual teachers. This conflict demonstrates that, despite the growing centralization of authority in the school system, it could not function without the tacit approval of the local communities served.

The history of the expansion of Ontario's educational infrastructure into the Districts deserves further study. The conflict over Regulation 17, while it is but one aspect of this larger story, complicates an examination of that history. In particular, that conflict resulted in a major gap in the information published in the annual report *Schools and Teachers*, which does not include English–French schools for the entire period between 1914 and 1926. In the Districts, this represented an important number of the schools. There are no obvious sources to fill that gap. The *Inspection Summary Registers*, created for the express purpose of tracking compliance to Regulation 17, are incomplete and do not contain the same information. The *Merchant Report*, used to justify bringing Regulation 17 to an end, provides much interesting information on individual schools, but is also no substitute.

A close examination of schools in a sample area of the Nipissing District indicates that during the early twentieth century the boundary between the public and the separate sector of the school system was permeable. To examine one sector and neglect the other would therefore risk providing a partial or distorted image of the history of schools in any one community. Unfortunately, a deeply ingrained popular perception

exists in Ontario that the Public schools are the public system and that Separate schools can be ignored. Not only is that bias inherent in the words themselves, it is replicated in the structure of the documents created by the system and in the way our public archives has preserved them.<sup>34</sup> As historians, however, it is always part of our task to be critical of our documents, and to work with them accordingly. The logic by which data are aggregated and whether or not they meet our needs must be evaluated. Aggregation by Inspectorates, as in the case of Schools and Teachers, always results in a division of data into the public and the separate sector and, as their geographical boundaries were different, this makes it easy to study them separately, and difficult to study them as parts of a whole. Because City schools were treated separately in the public, but not in the separate sector, “City” schools can easily be shown to be progressive, but the information is partial as it omits the city schools of the separate sector which, receiving less funding and more often facing the challenge of providing instruction in more than one language, may have been less so. The aggregation provided is not conducive to the objective study of the school system. The advantage of Schools and Teachers as a source is that this limitation could be overcome by re-aggregating the information found therein by geographical area rather than, or as well as, by sector.<sup>35</sup> While this would still require working around the gap in the data that exists between 1914 and 1926, it would address the issue of the structural bias and would allow the study of schools from a community or geographical perspective at either the macro or the micro level.<sup>36</sup> Both would be of value, given that conditions in the schools were extremely variable, as the Merchant Report has demonstrated. Just as the establishment of schools in the Districts was fraught with challenges, so too is the exploration of that history.

## Appendices

### Appendix I. Nipissing Sample

The Nipissing District sample used in this paper consists of information on all of the schools located in the census subdistricts that, in 1921, had an absolute population greater than 500, and for which the population of French origin was more than 50 percent of the total population. Population figures for those subdistricts are provided in Table 2 below. In 1921 44 percent of the population and 64 percent of the French population of the District lived in these subdistricts. While in the District of Nipissing the French population was only half of the total population, in the sample area, it was 73 percent of the population. It is therefore in these areas that the introduction of Regulation 17 was likely to have the most impact. In 1931 the proportion of the population which was French in origin remained the same in the sample area overall with only some local changes.

**Table 2**  
**Nipissing District Sample Area Population, 1921 and 1931**

	1921			1931		
	Total	French	% French	Total	French	% French
Bonfield Village	421	326	77	493	418	85%
Cache Bay	926	549	59	1151	817	71%
Mattawa	1462	782	53	1631	930	57%
Sturgeon Falls	4125	2943	71	4234	3114	74%
Bonfield	1267	946	75	1158	846	73%
Caldwell	1544	1456	94	1509	1471	97%
Chisholm	1041	592	57	1404	831	59%
Ferris	1358	1036	76	2036	1220	60%
Field	1008	842	84	1004	875	87%
Papineau	606	412	68	568	366	64%
Springer	1431	1182	83	1356	1107	82%
<b>Sample Total</b>	<b>15189</b>	<b>11066</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>16544</b>	<b>11995</b>	<b>73%</b>
Nipissing District	34543	17195	50%	41207	19509	47%
Sample as % of District	44%	64%		40%	61%	

Source: Census of Canada, 1921, 1931.

## Appendix II. Teachers and their Certificates

**Table 3**  
**Type of Certificates held by all Teachers by Region and Sector in 1927**

	I	II	III	District	Kindergarten	Temporary Eng-Fr	Permanent Un-graded	Special	Temporary	All
<b>Northern</b>										
<b>Public District</b>	191 11%	1429 84%	14 1%	0 0%	43 3%	6 0%	0 0%	9 1%	2 0%	1694 100%
<b>Separate*</b>	25 4%	258 42%	5 1%	1 0%	1 0%	266 43%	14 2%	0 0%	43 7%	614 100%
<b>All Northern</b>	216 9%	1687 73%	19 1%	1 0%	44 2%	272 12%	14 1%	9 0%	45 2%	2308 100%
<b>Southern</b>										
<b>Public City</b>	989 26%	2290 59%	1 0%	0 0%	334 9%	0 0%	0 0%	267 7%	0 0%	3881 100%
<b>Public County</b>	1193 14%	6865 83%	28 0%	5 0%	136 2%	29 0%	1 0%	68 1%	1 0%	8326 100%
<b>Separate**</b>	132 8%	1028 61%	27 2%	8 1%	2 0%	241 14%	116 7%	52 3%	93 6%	1697 100%
<b>All Southern</b>	2314 17%	10183 73%	56 0%	13 0%	472 3%	270 2%	117 1%	387 3%	94 1%	13904 100%
<b>Ontario</b>										
<b>Northern</b>	216 9%	1687 14%	19 25%	1 7%	44 9%	272 50%	14 11%	9 2%	45 32%	2308 14%
<b>Southern</b>	2314 92%	10183 86%	56 75%	13 93%	472 92%	270 50%	117 89%	387 98%	94 68%	13904 86%
<b>Total</b>	2530 16%	11870 73%	75 1%	14 0%	516 3%	542 3%	131 1%	396 2%	139 1%	16212 100%

Source: Calculated from *Schools and Teachers*, 1927.

\*Divisions I - V. All of these are in the Districts except that Division V includes six schools in Renfrew County which would normally be included within the County area. For this reason, Renfrew County is included on the District side of the boundary in Figure 1.

\*\* Divisions VI - XVII. All of these are in the County area.



Appendix III. Compliance to Regulation 17

**Table 4**  
**Level of Compliance to Regulation 17 in Nipissing District**  
**Sample Area Schools Inspected or Where an Inspection was attempted**

Year:	1913/14					1914/15					1919/20					1926/27						
Scale:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
<b>Urban</b>																					1	
Bonfield Village			1					1					1									1
Cache Bay				1				1					1									1
Sturgeon Falls		2					1		1													
<b>Rural</b>																						
Bonfield	1	3	1					5			2	1			1							5
Caldwell	1	4	2					6	1			1	4		2		2					3
Chisholm			1	1				3					2									2
Ferris		2	1	3			1	5				1	1		3							5
Field	2							2			1		1			1						1
Papineau		1	1		1			2		1			1	2								3
Springer		3	1	4				5			1		4									4
<b>Total:</b>	4	15	8	9	1	0	2	29	3	1	4	3	16	2	6	1	2	0	0	0	26	
<b>All Schools:</b>			33					35					31								29	

Source: AO, *Inspection Summary Registers*.

Note: Some schools were listed but not inspected. The totals here are for those inspected. The compliance scale is as follows: 5 = full compliance; 4 = partial compliance or willing to comply; 3 = problems noted not related to compliance; 2 = open but refusing to admit the inspector; 1 = closed due to lack of funds or inability to get a teacher. In the absence of specific comments from the inspector the fact that English was used in Form III and IV was used as an indication of partial compliance. A five was reserved for schools for which the inspector noted compliance or where English only was noted in Forms II to IV.

**Table 5**  
**Test Results for Nipissing District Sample Schools in Selected Tests and Forms\***

School	English Reading		English Composition	French Reading		French Composition	French of to English Composition**	Arithmetic	Geography	History
	Form I	Form IV	Form III	Form I	Form IV	Form III		Form III	Form IV	Form IV
Bonfield Village	3	2-3	3-4	3-4	2-3	4	-1	3	2-3	2-3
Cache Bay	3	3	4	3	3	4	0	3-4	3-4	3-4
Sturgeon Falls	3	3-4	4	3-4	2-3	3-4	+1	3-4	2-3	2-3
<b>Rural</b>										
Bonfield S.S. # 1	3	...	4	3	...	4	0	4	...	...
Bonfield S.S. # 2A	2-3	2-3	4	3	3	4	0	3-4	4	4
Bonfield S.S. # 2B	0	4-0	0	3-4	...	4	+1	4	...	...
Bonfield S.S. # 4	3-4	2	4	3	2-3	...	...	...	2	2
Bonfield S.S. # 5	2-3	2	4	2-3	2-3	4	0	4	2	2-3
Caldwell P.S. # 2	4	4	4	3	3	4	0	3-4	4	4
Caldwell P.S. # 3	4	4	4-0	3	3	3-4	+1	3	3-4	3-4
Caldwell S.S. # 1	3	3-4	4-0	3	3	4	+1	3-4	3	3
Caldwell S.S. # 2	3-4	...	4	3	...	3-4	+1	2	...	...
Caldwell S.S. # 4	3-4	4-0		3-4	3	4	...	2	3	3
McPherson & Caldwell S.S. # 1	4-0	...	4-0	3	...	3	+1	4	...	...
Ferris S.S. # 2	4	...	4	3	2-3	3	+1	2-3	...	...
Ferris S.S. # 3	4	3	4-0	3-4	2-3	3-4	+1	4	3	3-4
Ferris S.S. # 4	2	2	2-3	2	2	2-3	0	1-2	2	2
Ferris (East) P.S. # 3	4	3-4	4-0	4	3	4-0	0	2	3-4	3-4
Field S.S. # 1	4	3	3	3	2-3	2-3		2-3	2-3	3
Field P.S. # 2	4	...	4	3	...	4	0	4	...	...
Papineau S.S. # 1	3	2-3	2-3	3	2-3	4-0	-1	2-3	4-0	4-0
Papineau S.S. # 2A	2-3	4	4	2-3	4	...	...	4	4-0	4-0
Papineau S.S. # 2B	4	2-3	4	3	2-3	4	0	1	3	3
Springer S.S. # 1	2-3	3	4	2-3	3	4	0	3	2-3	2-3
Springer S.S. # 2	3	3	3-4	3	2-3	4	-1	3	3-4	3-4
Springer S.S. # 5	4	3	4	3-4	3	4-0	-1	2-3	2-3	2-3

Source: *Merchant Report*, Appendix E, Table 8, 9 and Appendix D, table 8-9; Appendix C, table 8-9, Appendix B, Table 8-9.

\*This is a selection of schools only from those in the sample area. They were chosen from different geographical areas of the District but they may not be representative.

\*\*This is a simple indication of whether the score was lower (-1), the same (0), or higher (+1).

Note: 1= Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Fair; 4=Poor; 0=No Ability

## Notes

- 1 For maps showing the changing boundaries of Ontario, see the Archives of Ontario online exhibit, "The Changing Shape of Ontario" at <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/on-line-exhibits/maps/index.aspx>.
- 2 J.B. MacDougall, *Building the North* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), 51-5, 81-3, 87.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 99-100.
- 4 MacDougall spoke highly, for example, of an experiment to create a consolidated school in a township that was just being settled and noted its advantages over the one-room roadside school.
- 5 For a discussion of this question in the context of Manitoba, see Rosa Bruno-Jofré, "Citizenship and Schooling in Manitoba, 1918–1945," *Manitoba History*, no. 36 (1998): 26-36 and John C. Lehr and Brian McGregor, "The Geography of Bilingual Schools in Manitoba," *Manitoba History*, no. 61 (2009): 33-36. On Alberta, see Yvette Mahé, "Bilingual School District Trustees and Cultural Transmission: The Alberta Experience, 1892–1939," *Historical Studies in Education* 9, no. 1 (1997): 65-82.
- 6 The Ottawa Valley was the exception. Jurisdiction over these dioceses in that region lay in Quebec, giving the French-Canadian bishops more say. See D.G. Cartwright, "Ecclesiastical Territorial Organization and Institutional Conflict in Eastern and Northern Ontario, 1840 to 1910," *Historical Papers* 13, no. 1 (1978): 130-35.
- 7 A detailed examination of the origins of this controversy in Eastern Ontario can be found in Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French- Language Controversy in Ontario* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987). Other studies have looked at aspects of the conflict in Ottawa, Essex and Windsor. See Jack Cecillon, "Turbulent Times in the Diocese of London: Bishop Fallon and the French-Language Controversy, 1910–18," *Ontario History* 87, no. 4 (1995): 369-95 and "Early Struggles for Bilingual Schools and the French Language in the Windsor Border Region 1851–1910," *Historical Studies in Education* 21, no. 1 (2009): 66-84; and, Frederick J. McEvoy, "'Naturally I Am Passionate, Ill-Tempered, and Arrogant...': Father Matthew J. Whelan and French-English Conflict in Ontario, 1881–1922," *Historical Studies* 72 (2006): 54-70.
- 8 Forms predate grades. There were four forms in the elementary schools, each equivalent to two grades. For the full text of Regulation 17, see <http://www.crcfc.uottawa.ca/passeport/IV/IVD1a/IVD1a01-1.html>.
- 9 Françoise Noël, *Family and Community Life in Northeastern Ontario: The Interwar Years* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 134-55.
- 10 David Welch, "Early Franco-Ontarian Schooling as a Reflection and Creator of Community Identity," *Ontario History* 85, no. 4 (1993): 342-3. Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 153-79 shows how some communities responded by moving their support from the public to the separate school sector.
- 11 For examples of American concerns, see Scott Hanley, "The Rural School Problem: Teacher Shortages in Early Wyoming Education," *Annals of Wyoming: The Wyoming History Journal* (Wyoming State Historical Society) 68, no. 4 (1996): 2-11; James H. Madison, "John D. Rockefeller's General Education Board and the Rural School Problem in the Midwest, 1900–1930," *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1984): 181-99; Tracy L. Steffes, "Solving the 'Rural School Problem': New State Aid, Standards, and Supervision of Local Schools, 1900–1933," *ibid.* 48(2008): 181-220; and Kathleen Weiler, "Women and Rural School Reform: California, 1900–1940," *ibid.* 34, no. 1 (1994): 25-47. See J.D. Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, "'May the Lord Have Mercy on You': The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s," *BC Studies*, 79 (1988): 24-58; and J.D. Wilson, "I Am here to Help if You Need Me": British Columbia's Rural Teachers' Welfare Officer, 1928–1934" *Journal of Canadian*

- Studies* 25, 2 (Summer 1990): 94-118 for a discussion of the problem of rural schools in British Columbia.
- 12 Cited by John Abbott, "Accomplishing 'a Man's Task': Rural Women Teachers, Male Culture, and the School Inspectorate in Turn-of-the-Century Ontario," *Ontario History* 78, no. 4 (1986): 320.
  - 13 Paul J. Stortz and J. D. Wilson, "Education on the Frontier," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 26, no. 52 (1993): 265-90.
  - 14 Wilson and Stortz, "May the Lord have Mercy on You," discuss the perspective of Putnam and Weir, the creators of the 1925 Survey of the School System in British Columbia in these terms.
  - 15 In hindsight at least, students attending rural schools in the 1920s and 1930s in Northeastern Ontario seem to have been generally satisfied with the education they received. Noël, *Family and Community Life*, 139-141.
  - 16 Archives of Ontario Library Collection, Schools and Teachers in the Province of Ontario, available on microfilm. The school's building material, the school section's assessment, the teacher's salary, average attendance, the value of the school property and the value of school equipment are generally given. Tabulating this information would allow for comparison between regions and progress over time.
  - 17 Archives of Ontario, RG 2-102, English-French school correspondence files and inspection summary registers; and, Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Condition of the Schools Attended by French-Speaking Pupils (Ontario), Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Condition of the Schools Attended by French-Speaking Pupils. Toronto: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1927.
  - 18 *Schools and Teachers*, 1913, 1914.
  - 19 Because of the way the sample was constructed this represents the highest level of data loss likely to be found.
  - 20 Tabulation from *Schools and Teachers*, 1913, 1927.
  - 21 In 1911, the groupings were: the Public Schools of the County and District Inspectorates, the Public Schools of the City Inspectorates, the Roman Catholic Separate School Inspectorates, and the English-French Roman Catholic Separate School Inspectorates. English-French schools could be either Public or Separate schools but they were treated together as one group and placed under different inspectors prior to Regulation 17. In 1927, after the period of Regulation 17 was over, this separate status was eliminated and only two types of schools were retained, Public and Separate. For reporting purposes, however, summary data was provided in the following groupings: Public Schools of the City Inspectorates, Public Schools of the County Inspectorates, the Public Schools of the District Inspectorates, and the Roman Catholic Separate Schools. To compare this summary data we have therefore had to bring county and district schools together in 1927 and English-French and Separate Schools together in 1911.
  - 22 Calculated from *Schools and Teachers*, 1911, 1927.
  - 23 For an explanation of the various certificates, see the Merchant Report, 19.
  - 24 This could be done for small areas by hand as I have done here, but larger projects would require a major digitization project.
  - 25 AO, RG 2-102, English-French school correspondence files and inspection summary registers.
  - 26 Henri Saint Jacques, B.A., Inspector of English-French Schools, to John Waugh, Esq., D.Paed., Chief Inspector, Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, 30 Sept. 1913. AO, RG2-102-0-1, mf. MS6593.
  - 27 Henri Saint Jacques, B.A., Inspector of English-French Schools, to John Waugh, Esq., D.Paed., Chief Inspector, Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, 27 Sept. 1913. AO, RG2-102-0-1, mf. MS6593.

- 28 Toronto, 30 July 1913, Memorandum for Deputy Minister, AO, RG2-102-0-1, mf. MS6593, 833.
- 29 AO, RG 2-102, English-French school correspondence files and inspection summary registers.
- 30 *Merchant Report*, Appendix A, Letter of Instructions, 37.
- 31 *Merchant Report*, Appendix N, 140-149.
- 32 *Merchant Report*, 8.
- 33 *Merchant Report*, 28-9.
- 34 A very thorough search for material on District schools at the Archives of Ontario revealed that holdings for this area are minimal and limited to the public sector. The otherwise very delightful exhibition prepared by the Archives of Ontario on the history of education in the province, "Lessons Learned: The Evolution of Education in Ontario" gives the impression that only the "Public" schools were public schools and Separate schools are barely mentioned. See <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/online-exhibits/education/index.aspx>.
- 35 In my view, Schools and Teachers would be most useful if it could be entirely digitized and the information, currently spread through several inspectorates, reunited for each geographical unit.
- 36 While the focus here is on District schools, these conclusions would apply to other areas of Ontario where bilingual schools were present.