

Full advantage has been taken of the provisions of the Public Trust Office Act under which the Public Trustee by filing an “election to administer” is enabled to administer estates not exceeding £400 in value without incurring the cost of obtaining probate or administration in the ordinary way. The total number of “elections” filed in the Supreme Court during the year was 873.

PAYMENT TO THE PUBLIC TRUSTEE OF COMPENSATION-MONEYS IN RESPECT OF THE DEATH OF A WORKER.

38. It is provided by section 9 of the Workers’ Compensation Amendment Act, 1913, that where the amount of the compensation-money due in respect of the death of a worker has been arrived at, the person liable to pay the same shall, unless the Court otherwise orders, pay the same to the Public Trustee. The moneys so paid are held by the Public Trustee until the Court directs the method of apportionment among the dependants.

The application for apportionment is usually made by the Public Trustee. In cases where it is made by a dependant a report is furnished by the Public Trustee for the guidance of the Court in directing the method of apportionment. A responsibility is cast upon the Public Trustee in making careful inquiries into the circumstances of each individual case, and in recommending what share of the moneys should be given to each dependant, and how each share or shares should be applied—*e.g.*, towards the purchase of a home, or advanced upon mortgage, or held upon trust for maintenance, or paid out in a lump sum. The Court places considerable reliance upon the Public Trustee’s recommendations in these matters.

During the past twelve months more than seventy such applications were dealt with by the Public Trustee.

WILLS DEPOSITED.

39. During the year additional wills numbering 3,136 were deposited by testators with the Public Trustee for safe custody. The following table gives detailed figures for the year:—

Wills on hand on 31st March, 1920	25,792
Add new wills deposited from 1st April, 1920, to 31st March, 1921	3,136
Deduct wills withdrawn from 1st April, 1920, to 31st March, 1921, through death of testator or otherwise	572
Net increase in number of wills on deposit	2,564
Total number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1921	28,356

There has been a remarkable increase in the number since 1914, when the total was 6,427 only.

One gratifying feature is that in many cases the wills are prepared and held in the Office as the result of acquaintance with the work of the Department in connection with estates already under administration.

The rapid increase in the number of wills deposited is perhaps the most outstanding feature of the Office work at the present time, and affords convincing evidence of the growing confidence on the part of testators of the appointment of the Public Trustee as executor and trustee of their estates. Although no estimate can, of course, be given of the value of estates of testators whose wills are deposited, it can be stated in a general way that the Office has no reason to be dissatisfied with the class of testators who are now availing themselves of its services. The flow of wills from new branches which have been established throughout the Dominion is especially marked.