work at the present time, the ultimate effect will be to lessen this particular phase of the Department's work, as the Land Transfer system is a much more satisfactory one to work under than the Deeds Registration system.

INSPECTIONS.

74. With the extension of the organization, the steady increase in the work, and the development of a scheme of decentralization, it is necessary that the Public Trustee should have the means of co-ordinating the various units of organization and of readily ascertaining whether the work of the Department throughout the Dominion is being performed in a satisfactory manner. For this there has been in operation for a number of years past a scheme of systematic inspections which has been maintained throughout the past year. This system includes—

(a) General inspections conducted by the Chief Inspector and the Assistant Chief Inspector:
(b) The review of the administration of estates by the Reviewing Inspectors:
(c) Inspection of various accounting matters and systems and internal audit controlled by the Chief Auditor.

(a) *General Inspections.*—The general inspections deal mainly with the conduct of the work generally, and therefore, whilst, of course, all matters affecting the operations of the Office are scrutinized, attention is particularly directed to questions of staffing, organization, accommodation, records, and the various office systems and the like. Inspections of all the branch offices are made at suitable intervals according as the volume of business and the other incidental circumstances of each particular branch render it necessary. The inspecting officers are able to give considerable assistance in matters of organization, method, and system, and to discuss with district officers difficulties arising out of the administration of estates. During the year eighteen of the nineteen District Public Trustee offices and eleven out of the twelve District Manager Offices were inspected by the Chief Inspector or Assistant Chief Inspector, and all necessary action arising out of these inspections taken. The agencies at the smaller towns, which are conducted on a commission basis by outside local business men, are periodically inspected by the controlling District Public Trustees, who submit full reports to the Public Trustee.

(b) *Review of Administration of Estates.*—In addition to the general inspections, there has been instituted a system whereby the administration of estates in the various branch offices is regularly reviewed by Reviewing Inspectors who are experienced in administration and accounting work. The various district offices are so grouped that a Reviewing Inspector can economically work a certain area. When the scheme of decentralization was first put into force there was a great deal of incidental work which required careful watching, but now that it has been in operation for some years, and officers have become accustomed to it, during the year it has been found possible to reduce the number of Reviewing Inspectors by one without in any way impairing the efficiency of the work.

Practically every estate of an active nature has been inspected during the year by the Reviewing Inspectors or by the Chief Inspector or Assistant Chief Inspector on their special visits. As a result of these inspections I am satisfied that the work of the Office is being well performed, and that all the branch offices are sufficiently staffed for present requirements. Besides being of considerable assistance in maintaining the standard of efficiency, this system of reviewing is an additional safeguard for the good administration of the estates, and no doubt the fact that such a check is continuously operating will afford a feeling of satisfaction and security to those whose affairs are controlled by the Public Trustee.

In the year under review 5,920 investigations of estates were made.

(c) *Internal Audit.*—During the year the internal audit of the books and accounts at both the Head Office and all branch offices has been well maintained. As the result of the experience derived during the previous year from the detailed audit of the branch offices quarterly it was considered during the year that the system could be safely modified, thus considerably reducing the cost of the work, without impairing the efficiency of the audit. It was therefore decided to co-ordinate the various checks carried out by the branch checking officers, the officers of the Audit Department, the Chief Inspector and his staff, and the Chief Auditor, and to extend the audit periods from quarterly to half-yearly.