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CANADA'S DOMESTIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The following is the text, somewhat abridged, of a speech by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. J. Waldo Monteith, to the St. George's United Church Men's Club, Ottawa, on February 8:

"...The term 'technical assistance', of course, enjoys wide usage today. In fact, in relation to international affairs, it has become almost a household word. The newspapers and magazines, television and radio, all are filled with stories regarding technical assistance programmes sponsored by the United Nations, the Colombo Plan, and by individual countries. And, as you know, Canada has taken an active part in many of these projects which are designed basically to raise living standards in the so-called under-developed areas of the world.

"In view of its prominence on the world scene, Canadians may be rather surprised to learn that we also carry out extensive technical assistance programmes right inside our own country. I am thinking of the health field, and particularly of my Department's services to the provinces and through them to local areas....

PROVINCIAL HEALTH RESOURCES

"One might ask immediately why this type of technical assistance is needed. Does it imply, for example, that the provinces are under-developed areas? Not at all. It is a fact, however, that health resources do vary considerably across the country. And since, ac-

cording to the British North America Act, the primary responsibility for health is assigned to the provinces, they find themselves in a position of having to make the most of what is at hand within their own jurisdictions. At the same time, they do benefit from the fact that the Dominion Government has long assumed that it also has a health responsibility. This is to ensure that all Canadians enjoy equal access to health services wherever they may live -- in large urban areas, in rural districts, and in isolated parts of the country like our vast Arctic region.

"In order to carry out this responsibility and yet avoid interfering with provincial and local affairs, the Dominion Government through my Department has developed a two-pronged approach -- financial grants to the provinces, and technical assistance. So this is how technical assistance fits into the picture.

HEALTH EXPERTS ON CALL

"And what exactly is involved in this technical assistance? Fundamentally, it involves having available experts in various health specialties who can serve as consultants whenever requested by the provinces. These consultants cover a wide range of disciplines. We have on our staff, for example, doctors, dentists, nurses, chemists, physicists, pharmacists, economists, engineers and lawyers. All these people and others are constantly at the disposal of the provinces to assist with any problems that may arise.

(Over)