



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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## HEALTH PROGRESS IN CANADA'S CENTURY

An address by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Paul Martin, to a joint meeting of the Kiwanis Clubs of Ottawa, February 6, 1953.

The health of the nation is an important index of Canada's progress in this century. In global terms, I think it is no exaggeration to say that, during the lifetime of this audience, greater advances have been made in medical science than in all the previous centuries of mankind's history. Canada, as one of the world's healthiest nations, has been a leading beneficiary of this progress.

To appreciate the great forward sweep of medicine, we have only to think of such discoveries as insulin, the sulfa drugs, the antibiotics, the hormones, the local anaesthetics, the vitamin concentrates, and all the other powerful weapons that have been added to the armoury of health practice in this century. In the vast universe of medicine, many new worlds have been discovered in recent years. Who knows what secret ways of overcoming suffering and death lie just beyond the horizon of present medical knowledge?

For Canada, these unparalleled advances in medical science have won notable victories over suffering and ill-health. Many diseases like smallpox, once common in this country, now seldom claim a victim. Diphtheria, typhoid, and the communicable diseases of childhood, which formerly wrought such havoc, are no longer the uncontrollable scourges they once were. Other diseases, like tuberculosis and venereal disease, are daily giving ground under the weight of the determined attacks organized against them.

Let me give you a few brief statistics to indicate the extent of our progress in controlling our environment, in understanding and subjecting disease and in generally improving health:

- (1) Canada's death rate from all causes -- the best single index of a nation's health -- has been cut by more than 35 per cent during the past fifty years.
- (2) Reflecting this falling death rate, there has been a remarkable increase in life expectancy. Since the turn of the century, the average duration of human life has been extended by about 20 years.