

As there is no specific welfare legislation respecting Indians in either the Indian Act or other federal statute, the Indian Affairs Branch must rely upon provincial welfare legislation and upon provincially-accredited welfare agencies for the enforcement of such legislation. The Federal Government has negotiated cost-sharing arrangements with various provincial governments and private welfare agencies for the extension of child welfare services and for rehabilitation programmes for handicapped Indians. Agreements with the governments of the Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia make provision for child welfare services to Indian reserves. In other provinces child welfare services are provided although formal agreements have not been negotiated. The Federal Government assumes responsibility for the maintenance of Indian children under the care and supervision of child welfare agencies (governmental and private); maintenance is paid for children placed in foster homes by Indian Affairs Branch field staff when the service of a child-caring agency is not available and also for children committed by the courts to training-schools and correctional institutions.

Care and maintenance in homes for the aged and other institutions are available to physically and socially handicapped adults who need such help because of senility or chronic illness but do not require active medical treatment.

The implementation of a federal-provincial statement of policy on social assistance and health services ensures that Indians living off reserves in British Columbia may secure aid when and where they need help. The Province of British Columbia shares with the Federal Government the costs of two continuing projects in the Prince Rupert and Babine areas designed to study and deal with specific welfare problems of Indians.

About half the Indian population of Ontario (35 Indian bands) assume municipal responsibilities by administering their own programmes under the terms of the General Welfare Assistance Act of Ontario. Provincial rehabilitation services are generally extended to handicapped Indians on the same basis as to non-Indians.

When in need, Indians who live on Indian reserves or in recognized Indian communities receive food, fuel, clothing, essential household equipment, shelter and supply and repair of prosthetic equipment from the Indian Affairs Branch. Indians who become stranded away from home in Canada may be given return transportation if they are unemployable or if employment is not available. It is expected that Indians living in non-Indian communities who need aid will be assisted by local municipal or provincial welfare agencies. Claims from such agencies for reimbursement on a charge-back basis are paid if persons so assisted have not established eligibility through residence.

Community Development

The Indian Affairs Branch conducts a comprehensive community development programme which is expected to be a major instrument for improving the economic, social and cultural life of Indians. This involves the use of trained persons to assist Indian groups to gain further skills and interest in dealing with community problems.