



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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A NEW NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR CANADA

An address by Dr. G.D.W. Cameron, Deputy Minister of National Health, to the Health Officers' Section of The American Public Health Association, at Boston, on November 12, 1948.

One of the most important milestones in the history of health planning in Canada was passed in May of this year, with the announcement by the Prime Minister of the new National Health Program. Designed to effect general improvement in the nation's health services, and to prepare the way for a national scheme of health insurance, the program commits the federal government to an additional annual expenditure on health of more than \$30 million, through grants-in-aid to the provinces.

The new program continues the progressive extension of social security measures that has taken place in Canada during the war and post-war years. In 1940 the Unemployment Insurance Act was passed, followed by the National Physical Fitness Act of 1943, the Family Allowances Act of 1944 and the 1947 amendment to the Old Age Pensions Act which raised pensions for the aged and blind and increased the number to whom they might be paid. Comprehensive provision for the needs of veterans has also been made through development of the outstanding medical care and rehabilitation services administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and by the increased veterans' disability and survivors pensions which became effective in 1947. The same progressive trend has characterized provincial legislation; there has been a general expansion and strengthening of health and welfare activities in all provinces.

An important factor in this many-sided development was the establishment, in 1944, of the Department of National Health and Welfare to take over the general health functions of the former Department of Pensions and National Health, and to assume the leading federal role in welfare activity. One of the principal responsibilities of the Department is the advisory, co-ordinating and assistance service it renders to the provinces in health and welfare matters which, for the most part, are placed under provincial jurisdiction by the British North America Act of 1867.

In health matters the Department, which will administer the new program, works in close co-operation with the Dominion Council of Health, the principal advisory body to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the membership of the Council, which meets under the chairmanship of the Deputy Minister of National Health, includes the chief health officers of all provinces, the provincial health departments have been able to participate actively in the planning of the grants and in the administrative policies governing their distribution.

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