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HOSPITAL INSURANCE AGREEMENT

What Health and Welfare Minister J. Walco Monteith termed "the first step in implementing the most significant development in the health field in Canadian history" took place in Ottawa last week when the first formal Hospital Insurance Agreement was signed with the Government of Ontario. The signing took place in the Parliament Buildings, with Mr. Monteith representing the Federal Government and Premier Leslie M. Frost signing for Ontario.

Under the Agreement the Provincial Government will operate a comprehensive hospital insurance programme available to all residents of Ontario. Costs of the programme will be shared, under the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act of 1957, between Federal and Provincial Governments.

The Agreement consists of several parts, the first of which contains the basic contractual arrangements between the two governments. This part of the Agreement is more or less standard and will be in the same form for all provinces. Attached to this are a number of schedules, prescribed in the Act, relating to the Ontario programme specifically. These schedules will differ from province to province, since the Act permits variations in provincial plans provided they meet the basic provisions contained in the federal legislation.

Under the Agreement as signed, residents of Ontario who enter the programme will be covered for a wide range of in-patient benefits including accommodation and meals at standard ward level; necessary nursing services; laboratory, radiological and other diagnostic services; drugs, biologicals and related preparations; use of operating room, case room and anaesthetic facilities; surgical supplies; and radiotherapy and physiotherapy facilities. The Ontario agreement also provides for out-patient services for accident cases on an emergency basis.

It is expected that the Ontario programme will begin to provide benefits on January 1, 1959. It will be administered in Ontario by the Ontario Hospital Services Commission and members of the Commission were present at the signing ceremonies. Also in attendance were senior federal officials who had worked on the details of the plan.

REACTOR REFUELS IN OPERATION

The NRU reactor at Chalk River is the first reactor in the world to be refuelled while in operation.

All other reactors have to be shut down before they can be refuelled. This causes interruption of experiments and isotope production in the case of research reactors and the stoppage of electricity generation in the case of power reactors.