

Illness - Programmes to protect the individual against the costs of illness include public medicare programmes and programmes of voluntary medical and health insurance and hospital insurance. Health services are provided for recipients of public assistance with costs shareable under the Canada Assistance Plan.

The federal Medical Care Act passed in 1966 permits federal contributions totalling half the costs of physicians' services in programmes administered by provinces. All doctors licensed to practise are eligible to offer insured services. To qualify, a provincial programme must cover at least 90 per cent of the population and provide comprehensive medical benefits, must be portable, so that residents remain covered as they move from province to province, and must be non-profit. Two provinces entered the programme from July 1, 1968, and others have indicated their intention to enter in 1969.

Meanwhile, three of the remaining eight provinces administer comprehensive physicians' services programmes which residents can join. Residents in need in two of these can apply for provincial assistance in paying premiums. Voluntary insurance continues to protect a large number of persons in some provinces where government plans are not as yet wholly developed.

All provinces have for many years been part of the national hospital insurance programme, under which 98 per cent of the population is protected against the cost of medically-required care whether as in-patients or out-patients. Services insured, for which the Federal Government pays half the cost, include standard ward accommodation, drugs, dressings, nursing care and virtually all other medically-necessary services.

The Federal Government provides medical and hospital services to veterans with disabilities attributable to military service.

Old age - A number of public and voluntary welfare programmes serve the elderly and the aged. There are three federal programmes of major importance in the economic protection of the elderly: the universal programme of old age security pensions payable without a means test to all persons aged 67⁽²⁾ and over who meet the ten years' residence requirement; the contributory programme of retirement benefits related to previous earnings introduced by the Canada Pension Plan, with benefits beginning in 1967; and the guaranteed income supplement programme, effective January 1967, which provides for a supplement payable to recipients of an old age security pension who are unable to benefit from the Canada Pension Plan in its first ten years and whose incomes, as determined by the income tax authorities, fall below a specified amount.

The federal-provincial programme of old age assistance, under which an allowance is payable by the provinces under conditions set by the federal Government, and originally payable to persons 65 to 69 years of age, is decreasing in importance and will disappear in 1970 when the qualifying age for old age security pensions is lowered to age 65. Care in homes for the aged and infirm for persons unable to care for themselves is provided in all provinces and may be under provincial, municipal or voluntary auspices.

(2) Originally, 70 years or over but, through a progressive lowering of the qualifying age, will be set at 65 years in 1970.