



REFERENCE PAPERS

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No. 83 MENTAL HEALTH IN CANADA - A PROGRESS REPORT

Based on an address by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Paul Martin, to the Rotary Club of Montreal, inaugurating the Institute on Recreation and Mental Health, Montreal, April 24, 1956.

Seven years ago I stood before the members of this Club and made my first national report on the impact of the new federal health grants on provincial mental health programs. Only ten months earlier, in May 1948, the then Prime Minister had announced the federal Mental Health Grant as part of the National Health Program under which the Federal Government placed more than \$30,000,000 at the disposal of the provinces to assist them in surveying their health needs, in building additional hospitals and other facilities, and in strengthening their health services generally.

In my remarks at that time, I emphasized that while the provinces are primarily responsible for the health of their citizens, the Federal Government recognized the need for providing some financial assistance to help strengthen their endeavours to keep abreast of the advancing tide of mental illness in Canada. I pledged the Federal Government's interest in this major health problem in these words:

"For Canadians as for all the world's citizens mental illness is of urgent concern. More can be done to meet the challenge of today's high rate of mental illness. To ensure success more must be done. We have resolved to match the magnitude of this problem by the magnitude of our efforts to solve it."

And what has happened in the intervening seven years? First of all, the annual sums available to the provinces under the Mental Health Grant have been increased from an initial figure of \$4,000,000 in 1948 to more than \$7,000,000 this year. This federal grant represents one dollar out of every ten dollars now spent on mental health services in Canada.

I am happy to report that, out of a total of \$44,774,000 in federal funds available over the past eight years, the provinces have been able to utilize more than \$36,000,000 for the improvement of services in this important field. Of this amount, more than half has been allocated for assistance to the provincial mental hospitals in order that they might strengthen still further their treatment facilities by providing additional professional personnel, special equipment and so on. In addition to support for mental institutions themselves, federal grants have been used for the extension of community mental health services, the training of personnel, research, and the establishment of psychiatric services in general hospitals.