



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 54/37 CANADA'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

An address by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Paul Martin, before the opening session of the Fifth International Congress on Mental Health, Toronto, August 14, 1954.

... The Government of Canada -- and I think that I can also speak for our ten provincial governments -- is keenly aware of the importance of this international gathering. In recognition of this fact, the federal Bureau of Statistics has produced its annual report on mental health statistics some months in advance of the normal publication date so that valuable current information on mental illness in this country will be available to the delegates to this Congress.

I am happy to announce, also, that the Department of National Health and Welfare has just completed a comprehensive monograph on Mental Health Services in Canada specifically for this Congress. This publication -- which, like the Bureau of Statistics report, will be available to delegates at the respective exhibits of the two Departments -- was compiled by the Federal Government, with the full co-operation of provincial health authorities across Canada. The report, which will form a part of a larger publication on health services and resources in Canada, provides a survey of the development of mental health services in this country and indicates the scope and nature of our mental health problem.

As in most countries represented at this gathering, mental illness in Canada is a health problem of the first magnitude. The report to which I have referred reveals a number of disturbing facts. At the same time, it indicates certain very encouraging features. On this debit side, we find these facts:

- The number of patients on the books of Canada's mental hospitals reached a record high last year of 65,827;
- In the past five years, the case load of our public mental hospitals has increased by more than 6,500 patients and operating costs have risen from \$35 to \$60 millions;