

Local voluntary agencies and institutions are usually incorporated under provincial law. They may receive public grants, depending on the nature and standard of the services they render, although, with the exception of the semi-public children's aid societies, their main support may be from united funds or community chests, or from sponsoring organizations.

Welfare services, public and private, are hampered by the continued shortage of qualified social workers. Short university courses in social work, periodic study institutes, and a more formal approach than in the past to in-service training are being developed to improve staff qualifications. A number of provincial departments are granting education leave with pay or bursaries to enable selected staff to attend schools of social work.

General Assistance.—All provinces make legislative provision for general assistance on a means-test basis to needy persons and their dependants who cannot qualify for other forms of aid, and some provinces include those whose benefits under other programs are not adequate. This assistance, with some exceptions, is administered by the municipality with substantial financial support from the province. In most provinces assistance is given for food, clothing, shelter and utilities, but it may also include incapacitation or rehabilitation allowances, post-sanatorium allowances, maintenance costs of boarding or nursing home care, counselling, and homemaking services.

The provincial departments of public welfare usually have regulatory powers over municipal administration of general assistance. Several provinces recommend rates of assistance as a guide to municipalities, and some specify rates at which payments must be paid if a municipality is to qualify for provincial reimbursement. Specified standards of administration may also be a requirement. The province may take the responsibility for aid in unorganized areas and for the cost of aid to certain categories of persons, such as transients. With the introduction of reimbursement plans designed to equalize municipal responsibility, British Columbia and Saskatchewan have abolished municipal residence requirements. In other provinces the residence of the applicant, as defined by statute, determines the financially responsible authority.

The length-of-residence requirement for social assistance is variously calculated but, in general, it is one year. Under the Unemployment Assistance Act, however, all provinces have agreed that residence shall not be a condition of assistance for applicants who come from other provinces. For other types of assistance, a person without the required length of residence in a province may be given aid by the province or the municipality, for which a chargeback may or may not be made to the municipality of residence. On the other hand, the applicant, depending on individual circumstances and the policy of the province, may be returned to his place of residence.

Various financial arrangements are in effect for sharing the costs of general assistance between the province and the municipality. In Newfoundland, such assistance is the responsibility of the province and is administered by the Department of Public Welfare. In Prince Edward Island, the Department of Welfare and Labour provides direct social assistance in rural areas and assumes 75 p.c. of the cost of assistance granted by the City of Charlottetown and the incorporated towns and villages. The Department also operates a province-wide program of financial aid to families where the breadwinner is suffering from tuberculosis and is unable to support the family. In Nova Scotia, social assistance is administered by the municipality, which receives reimbursement from the Department of Public Welfare for two-thirds of the cost of assistance given and one-half of the cost of administration. In New Brunswick, relief to needy persons is a local responsibility and may be discharged through the provision of institutional aid, although individual relief is provided by an increasing number of municipalities.

In Quebec, assistance to indigent persons is frequently given in the form of institutional care but may also be provided through some municipal departments and private agencies. Costs are shared by the provincial Department of Social Welfare, the municipality and, where applicable, by the institution. Cities and towns bear 24 p.c. of the cost, rural municipalities 15 p.c., the institution 33½ p.c., and the province the remainder. In Ontario, the