

A number of important developments took place or were under consideration in this area during 1965-66. With the April 1965 Throne Speech, Canada embarked on its "War on Poverty", a program for the full utilization of human resources and the elimination of poverty; planned measures included an expansion of the Area Development Program (ADA) and the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Program (ARDA), measures to assist the re-employment, relocation and retraining of workers, urban renewal measures, the establishment of a Company of Young Canadians to undertake projects for economic and social development in Canada and abroad, and the establishment of a Canada Assistance Plan. These measures and related matters were discussed at the federal-provincial conference on poverty and opportunity held in Ottawa in December 1965 and several of them were later formally undertaken.

The first Canadian Conference on Aging, sponsored by the Canadian Welfare Council and held in Toronto in January 1966, sought ways and means of improving the life of older people. Delegates represented labour, management, professional organizations, voluntary organizations and the churches. The report of the Special Committee of the Senate on Aging, released in February 1966, recommended a guaranteed income for older people, improvements in housing, health and institutional care, social services, community participation, recreation programs, and the establishment of a national commission on aging.

The Act to establish the Canada Pension Plan (SC 1964-65, c. 51), which was given Royal Assent on Apr. 3, 1965 and became operational on Jan. 1, 1966, established for the first time in Canada a comprehensive social insurance program of contributory, old age, disability and survivors' pensions. The legislation provides an earnings-related old age pension and adjusts the existing tax-financed flat-rate old age security pension so that the two programs form an integrated system. It also provides a program of supplementary pensions and benefits for disabled contributors and their dependent children, and survivors of contributors.

The Province of Quebec established the Quebec Pension Plan, which came into operation on Jan. 1, 1966. The Canada Pension Plan does not operate in Quebec because the legislation provides that the plan will not be operative in a province that establishes its own comparable program. It is significant that both the Parliament of Canada and that of Quebec have passed almost identical legislation in this field. The two plans are to be so closely co-ordinated that a person may contribute under one plan or the other, or to both plans interchangeably, during his contributory period and receive the same benefits as if he had contributed to one plan throughout this period. The introduction of the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans emphasized the need for uniform private pension legislation across Canada. Ontario amended the Ontario Pension Benefits Act with effect from July 30, 1965, and in Quebec the Supplemental Pension Plans Act was given Royal Assent on July 15, 1965. Both Acts regulate private pension plans, ensure portability and solvency of the private plans and require the provision of information to the members of the plan.

An amendment to the Old Age Security Act lowered the eligible age, provided for adjustment of the amount of the pension for increases in the cost of living, and eased residence requirements.

The Canada Assistance Act, which was given Royal Assent on July 14, 1966, provides for a comprehensive welfare system to replace the categorical programs of old age assistance, blind and disabled persons' allowances and unemployment assistance; extends existing social assistance and welfare coverage; and substitutes a needs test for a test of means as a qualification for assistance. Provincial programs for persons in need, including health care services, will be financially supported by federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangements.

In the health field, the federal Medical Care Act providing for the setting up of a comprehensive medical care insurance program was given first reading on July 12, 1966; further debate was postponed until October. On Sept. 1, 1965, the British Columbia Medical Plan