

Section 3.—Provincial Welfare Programs

Major welfare programs governed by provincial legislation include general assistance and social allowances, mothers' allowances, services for the aged, and child welfare services. Also, the Province of Quebec operates the Quebec Pension Plan, which is comparable to the Canada Pension Plan (see pp. 326-329), and has also enacted in 1967 its own family allowances program (see p. 342). In most provinces, responsibility for a number of the programs is shared by the provinces and their municipalities. Provincial administration is carried out through the department of public welfare in each province; several departments have established regional offices to facilitate administration and to provide consultative services to the municipalities.

The provincial departments of public welfare are placing increasing emphasis on standards of administration and on rehabilitative services for social assistance recipients. Several provinces recently have introduced legislation under which the province will share with the municipalities the costs of preventive and rehabilitative welfare services.

Public services are supplemented by those of voluntary agencies whose interests include the welfare of families and children and of groups with special needs, such as the aged, recent immigrants, youth groups, and released prisoners. Welfare councils and social planning councils contribute to the planning and co-ordinating of local welfare services. Local voluntary agencies and institutions may receive public grants, depending on the nature and standard of their services although their main support is usually from united funds or community chests, or from sponsoring organizations.

Subsection 1.—General Assistance

All provinces make legislative provision for general assistance on a means or needs 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. Where necessary, the aid may be for maintenance in homes for special care. In addition to financial aid for the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and utilities, some provinces provide incapacitation or rehabilitation allowances, counselling and homemaking services, and post-sanatorium care and some provide allowances to persons with long-term need: persons who are unable to support themselves because of mental or physical disability or because of their age, mothers with dependent children and, in two provinces (Ontario and Quebec), needy widows and unmarried women of 60 years of age or over. This assistance is administered by the province or by the municipalities with substantial financial support from the province, which, in turn, is reimbursed by the Federal Government under the Canada Assistance Plan for 50 p.c. of the provincial and municipal assistance given (see pp. 332-333).

The provincial departments of public welfare have regulatory and supervisory powers over municipal administration of general assistance and may require certain standards as a condition of provincial aid. Length of residence is not a condition of aid in any province, but in four provinces the residence of the applicant as defined by statute determines which municipality may be financially responsible for his aid. Municipal residence is not a factor in British Columbia and Saskatchewan which have equalized municipal payments, or in Quebec where municipalities may administer the general assistance program but are not required to contribute to the cost of allowances, or in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick where aid is administered provincially. The provincial authority takes responsibility for aid in unorganized areas within the province. Under the federal Unemployment Assistance Act and subsequently under the Canada Assistance Plan, all provinces have agreed that residence shall not be a condition of assistance for applicants who move from one province to another. For persons without provincial residence (usually a period of one year), aid may be given by the province or the municipality and a charge-back may be made to the province or municipality of residence.