

Chapter 5

Health

5.1 Federal health services

Under the British North America Act, responsibility for administration of health services is the direct concern of provincial governments, with municipalities sometimes exercising considerable influence over matters delegated to them by provincial legislatures. Although patterns of health services in different provinces are similar, their organization, system of financing, and administration vary from province to province.

On the national level, the Department of National Health and Welfare is the chief federal agency responsible for the promotion, preservation, and restoration of the health of Canadians, and for social security and social welfare, in conjunction with other federal agencies and with provincial and local services. The health side of the Department, under the Deputy Minister of National Health, is organized into five branches: Health Protection, Medical Services, Health Programs, Long Range Health Planning, and Fitness and Amateur Sport. In addition, there is the Medical Research Council, which reports to Parliament through the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

The Health Protection Branch provides services to protect the Canadian public from health hazards of all types. It is composed of eight organizational units: Foods, Drugs, Environmental Health, Non-medical Use of Drugs, Laboratory Centre for Disease Control, Field Operations, Planning and Evaluation, and Administration.

The Health Programs Branch administers federal aspects of Canada's two major health programs, hospital and medical insurance; supports health-care-delivery-system and resource development; undertakes health promotion; and both supports and conducts research. This Branch is made up of the following units: Program Development and Evaluation, Health Insurance, Research Programs, Health Manpower, Health Facilities Design, Health Systems, Health Standards and Consultants, Community Health, and Health Economics and Management Services.

The Medical Services Branch has direct responsibility for the health care and public health services of Indians and Inuit and of all residents of the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, as well as for quarantine and immigration medical services, public service health, a national prosthetics service, and civil aviation medicine.

The purpose of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch is to encourage, promote, and develop fitness and amateur sport by enhancing the competitive excellence of Canada's athletes and by encouraging participation in activities oriented to fitness and recreation.

The Long Range Health Planning Branch is concerned with assessing the orientation of health services and the organization of resources.

Other federal agencies carry out specialized health functions; for example, Statistics Canada is responsible for gathering vital and other health statistics, the Department of Veterans Affairs administers hospitals and health services for war veterans, and the Canada Department of Agriculture has certain responsibilities connected with health aspects of food production.

In April 1974 the Department of National Health and Welfare produced a working document entitled *A new perspective on the health of Canadians*. While underlining the high level of development of our health care system, this document stressed the tremendous amount of work that remains to be done to protect and improve the health of Canadians and to prevent the principal causes of morbidity and mortality in our times, such as lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, traffic accidents, etc. The analysis contained in the document also emphasized man's social and physical environments and his lifestyle as important areas of concern in promoting health. In January 1975 the health ministers of the federal and provincial governments decided to set up a committee to define priorities for action.

5.1.1 Health care

Public medical care. The Medical Care Act was passed by Parliament in December 1966 and federal contributions to participating provinces became payable from July 1, 1968. As at April