

## 5.4 Federal health services

The national health and welfare department is the principal federal agency in health matters. It is responsible for the overall promotion, preservation, and restoration of the health of Canadians, and for their social security and social welfare. The department acts in conjunction with other federal agencies and with provincial and local services. The provincial governments actually administer health services. Although the patterns of health services are similar, their organization and administration vary from province to province.

Other federal agencies which carry out specialized health functions include, for example, the health division, Statistics Canada, which gathers health and vital statistics, the veterans affairs department, which administers hospitals and health services for war veterans, and the agriculture department, which has certain responsibilities for health aspects of food production.

Branches of the national health and welfare department are responsible for health protection, medical services, health programs, long-range health planning and fitness and amateur sport. The Medical Research Council supports research in health sciences in Canadian universities and affiliated institutions.

In the health and welfare department, an integrated program protects the public against unsafe foods, drugs, cosmetics, medical and radiation-emitting devices, harmful microbial agents and technological and social environments, environmental pollutants and contaminants of all kinds, and fraudulent drugs and devices.

Medical services include health care and public health services for registered Indians, Inuit and all residents of the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, as well as quarantine and regulatory services, immigration medical services, public service health, a national prosthetics service, civil aviation medicine, disability assessment and emergency health and welfare services. Long-range health planning assesses the orientation of health services and the organization of resources.

The fitness and amateur sport branch encourages excellence in Canada's athletes and participation of all Canadians in activities oriented toward fitness and recreation. 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.

### 5.4.1 Health care

**Medical care.** Before the establishment of government-administered medical insurance, voluntary prepayment arrangements to cover the cost of physicians' services had developed in public and private sectors. By the end of 1968, basic medical or surgical coverage, or both, were being provided to about 17.2 million Canadians, 82% of the population. Voluntary plans in the private sector covered about 10.9 million, or 52%, and public plans covered 6.3 million, or 30%. By 1972 all 10 provinces and the two territories had met the criteria stipulated under the Medical Care Act as conditions for federal cost-sharing, and virtually the entire eligible population was insured for all required medical services plus a limited range of oral surgery. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and inmates of federal penitentiaries whose medical care requirements are met under alternative provisions are excluded. Services by physicians that are not medically required, such as examinations for life insurance, services covered under other legislation, such as immunization where available through organized public health services, and services to treat work-related conditions already covered by worker compensation legislation are not covered.

Comprehensive coverage must be provided for all medically required services rendered by a physician or surgeon. There can be no dollar limit or exclusion except on the ground that the service was not medically required. The federal program includes not only those services that have been traditionally covered as benefits by the health insurance industry, but also those preventive and curative services that have been traditionally covered through the public sector in each province, such as medical care of