

both spouses during their life together are divided equally between them. This division is mandatory as soon as the Minister of National Health and Welfare receives the information necessary to take this action unless a spousal agreement was drawn up in a province which has a law that allows spouses to contract out of a division of CPP pension credits and such a waiver is included in the spousal agreement. (At present, no province has such a law.)

If a legal marriage ends in separation and if the separation has lasted one year, either spouse may apply for a division of pension credits. There is no time limit for making application for a division of credits following separation, except in the event of the death of one of the separated spouses.

Former partners in a common-law relationship may apply for a division of pension credits within four years after they have separated, if they have been living apart for one year. (In the case of divorce or annulment prior to January 1, 1987, application for a division of pension credits must be made within three years of the finalized divorce and marriage must have been of 36 months' duration.)

Spouses in a continuing marriage and partners in a common-law relationship may apply to receive an equal share of the retirement pension earned by both parties during their life together. Both spouses must be at least 60 years of age and have applied for the retirement pensions to which they are entitled under the plan. The Quebec Pension Plan does not provide for the assignment of pensions. An assignment of pensions may be precluded by an explicit prior agreement between the parties provided that surrender of this right to pension assignment is explicitly permitted under provincial legislation. (At present, no such provision exists in provincial family laws.)

An assignment under the CPP will be denied if one spouse is receiving a pension under the Quebec Pension Plan which does not provide for assignment of pensions between spouses.

### 6.3.3 Federal social service programs

In addition to the programs providing direct financial benefits, the federal government administers and funds a wide range of service and support programs, health programs, and grants and contributions to a variety of individuals and organizations for research or program delivery, employment programs and others. Health and employment programs are described in Chapters 3 and 5, respectively. The social service components under CAP were described in section 6.2.1. Following are a few other social support programs administered

by the Department of National Health and Welfare; they are intended as examples and do not constitute a complete listing.

**The Seniors Independence Program** which began in 1988 provides financial support for health, education or social welfare projects designed to improve the quality of life for seniors. The emphasis of the program is on community-based projects that significantly involve seniors and promote independent living. The program includes projects of a multi-year nature as well as short term activities such as conferences and workshops. Projects may be local, regional or national in scope.

**The New Horizons program** was established in 1972 with the objective of helping to alleviate feelings of social isolation or loneliness often experienced by the elderly. Grants are available to senior citizens' groups to assist them in helping themselves, other Canadians and the community. In 1986-87, there were over 2,000 projects funded by New Horizons; program expenditures for the year were over \$10 million.

**The National Welfare Grants program** was implemented in 1962 to help develop and strengthen social services and to provide funds for social welfare research. Grants may be given to provincial or municipal social service departments, non-governmental organizations and universities. Fellowships are provided to individuals seeking advanced training in social welfare. In 1986-87, the program expenditure was over \$6 million.

**Under the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons program (VRDP)**, the federal government contributes 50% of the costs incurred by provinces in providing vocational rehabilitation services to physically and mentally disabled persons. Services include counselling, assessment, restorative services, provision of certain technical aids and the provision of maintenance allowances on an individual need basis. Programs may be administered directly by provincial governments or through provincially supported agencies. In 1986-87, the federal government provided over \$88 million to the VRDP program.

**Family Violence Initiative.** In 1988, the federal government announced a family violence initiative designed to enhance assistance to Canadian families affected by violence, in particular battered women and their children. The new funds will be allocated to six departments to modify and expand their existing activities in this area.

**Numerous other grant and contribution programs** provide funding for family planning, health