

Subsection 2.—Allowances for the Blind

The Blind Persons Act (R.S.C. 1952, c. 17), effective January 1952, provides for financial aid to the provinces toward the provision of allowances not exceeding \$40 a month to blind persons aged 21 or over, subject to a residence qualification of at least 10 years. Within the limits of the federal Act, each province is free to fix the amount of the maximum allowance payable and the maximum income allowed. The Federal Government's contribution per recipient cannot exceed 75 p.c. of \$40 per month or of the allowance paid, whichever is less.

For an unmarried person, the total income allowed, including the allowance, cannot exceed \$840 a year; for an unmarried person with one or more dependent children, \$1,040; for a married couple, \$1,320 a year; where the spouse is also blind within the meaning of the Blind Persons Act, the total income of the couple cannot exceed \$1,440 a year. The exact allowance payable in each case depends on the amount of outside income and the resources of the applicant and his spouse. To be eligible for an allowance the applicant must not be in receipt of assistance under the Old Age Assistance Act, of an allowance under the War Veterans Allowance Act, of a pension under the Old Age Security Act or of a pension in respect of blindness under the Pensions Act. The applicant must have resided in Canada for at least 10 years immediately preceding the commencement of the allowance but may have certain temporary absences; where the applicant has not so resided for the 10 years, he must have been physically present in Canada, prior to the 10 years, for a total period equal to twice the total of the absences during the 10 years.

Implementation of the program in any province is contingent upon the province passing enabling legislation and signing an agreement with the Federal Government. The program became effective in January 1952 in all provinces and in the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Administrative responsibility for the program is vested in the province; the provincial plan for such administration must be approved by, and cannot be changed except with the consent of, the Governor in Council. The allowances are paid by the province with federal reimbursement made through the Department of National Health and Welfare. The Old Age Assistance Division of that Department administers the federal aspects of the program.

Certain provinces make supplementary payments to recipients of allowances for blind persons. In Saskatchewan a flat rate of \$2.50 a month is payable, without a means test, to recipients of allowances for the blind who fulfil certain residence requirements; in Alberta and British Columbia, a supplementary allowance of up to \$10 a month is payable to those who qualify under both a means and a residence test. The Yukon Territory makes supplementary payments up to \$10 monthly.