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Public Welfare Services



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THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

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ALBERTA

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This pamphlet is intended to give just a brief outline of the nature of the work undertaken by the Department of Public Welfare and its various branches.

As Government departments have the authority merely to carry out the wishes of the Legislature as set forth by statute, anyone desirous of making a more complete study of the welfare services provided in the Province would be well advised to obtain copies of the relative statutes. These may be obtained upon application to the Queen's Printer, Alberta Office Building, Edmonton.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

The Department of Public Welfare was set up on 1st April, 1944, under The Department of Public Welfare Act, Chapter 6 of the Statutes of Alberta, 1944, for the purpose of bringing under one department all Government activities dealing with public welfare.

At the time the Department was formed the following statutes were placed under its administration:

- The Bureau of Public Welfare Act
- The Metis Population Betterment Act
- The Child Welfare Act
- The Juvenile Offenders' Act
- The Relief Liability Act
- The Improvement Districts Act (Secs. 43, 44, 45)
- The Unemployment Relief Act.

Several changes have been made in the legislation since that time and the duties of the Department have been increased to the extent that it is now required to administer the following statutes:

- The Blind Persons Act (Chapter 8, 1952)
- The Child Welfare Act (Chapter 68, 1944)
- The Department of Public Welfare Act (Chapter 66, 1944)
- The Disabled Persons' Pensions Act (Chapter 33, 1953)
- The Home for Aged or Infirm Act (Chapter 14, 1945)
- The Improvement Districts Act (Chapter 9, 1947)
- The Maternal Welfare Act (Chapter 190, R.S.A. 1942)
- The Metis Population Betterment Act (Chapter 329, R.S.A. 1942)
- The Mothers' Allowance Act (Chapter 302, R.S.A. 1942)
- The Old Age Assistance Act (Chapter 66, 1952)
- The Public Contributions Act (Chapter 65, 1951)
- The Public Welfare Act (Chapter 21, R.S.A. 1942)
- The Public Welfare Assistance Act (Chapter 86, 1949)
- The Relief Liability Act (Chapter 170, R.S.A. 1942)

The Supplementary Allowances Act (Chapter 89,
1952)

The Widows Pensions Act (Chapter 102, 1952).

In order that these statutes may be administered in an appropriate manner the following Branches have been set up within the Department:

The Public Assistance Branch, with a Single Men's
Division

The Re-habilitation Branch

The Child Welfare Branch

The Pensions Branch

The Mothers' Allowance Branch

The Accounting Branch

The Inspection Branch

The Public Assistance Branch undertakes the following duties: It handles all matters pertaining to the granting of assistance in the form of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and/or medical and hospital services to indigent persons who have not acquired residence in any Municipality in the Province. Similar services are provided to indigent residents of Improvement Districts and Special Areas under an arrangement with the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Assistance to indigent residents of Municipalities whose affairs are conducted by an elected council (Cities, Towns, Villages, Municipal Districts and Counties) is granted directly by the Municipality concerned in the manner provided by the statutes under which the particular class of municipality operates.

Under The Public Welfare Assistance Act a municipality, upon making application therefor, may be eligible for the Provincial Grant up to 60% of the amount expended for whatever assistance is given. Under The Home for Aged or Infirm Act municipalities may be eligible for the Provincial Grant up to 50% of the costs incurred in paying for the maintenance of their indigent residents in homes that have been licensed by the Municipality. Any indigent resident who wishes to be main-

tained in such a home should make prior arrangements with his Municipality.

Applications for assistance under The Maternal Welfare Act should be made directly to the Public Assistance Branch and also applications for re-habilitation made by those suffering from the after-effects of poliomyelitis who contracted the illness subsequent to 1st Aril, 1938.

The Single Men's Division looks after the needs of single, homeless, unemployable men in hostels located at Edmonton and Calgary. Those found to be physically fit are invariably transferred to the Gunn Welfare Depot which, with the recent additions, has accommodation for over one hundred men. During the past two years ten new cottages, a recreation hall and a new kitchen have been built at this Depot. Each of the new cottages has four bedrooms and a common sitting room.

The Rehabilitation Branch deals principally with the training and rehabilitation of the Metis population. A number of colonies have been established in suitable localities, and the conditions under which the settlers live are regarded as ideal for this class of people, and can compare more than favourably with the situation with respect to those of our population whose occupations are of a similar nature.

Under the regulations set up, an applicant for settlement, if satisfactory, becomes a member of the association, and is granted a certificate of occupancy, which entitles him and his family, and also his heirs, to reside on, make use of, and receive benefits from the lands on which he settles, so long as he or they use such lands to the satisfaction of the Minister of Public Welfare and the Board of the Settlement Association. Any such person, however, who has for twelve consecutive months continuously resided away from the Area, without written consent, ceases to be a member of the Association and forfeits any right or interest he may have had as a member of the Association, including his right to occupy any land which may have been allotted to him, and he cannot

again become a member of the Association unless the consent of the Board of the Association is first obtained.

When the need is indicated, this Branch also deals with the rehabilitation of transient, employable families who are, through no fault of their own, unable to find regular employment.

The Veterans' Welfare Commission was created following the last World War for the purpose of assisting veterans to become re-established in civil life. Advice is also being given to widows and families of veterans, and in many cases the Commission acts as intermediary between such persons and the Federal authorities.

The Child Welfare Branch or what is now known as such was created in the year 1909 under the Department of the Attorney General for the purpose of administering an Act known as The Children's Protection Act of Alberta. This Act provided for the appointment of a Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children and his principal duties were to supervise the work that was being carried on at the time by voluntary organizations.

As time went on such organizations that existed became less interested in work of this nature and, in order that proper control might be exercised, the duties of the Superintendent were enlarged to enable him to assume actual guardianship over neglected and dependent children.

To permit of this, an Act named The Child Welfare Act was passed by the legislature in the year 1925 and this provided that a child, who, by order of a judge, had been committed to the care and custody of the Superintendent of Child Welfare, became a ward of the Government. This Act has now been replaced by The Child Welfare Act of 1944.

The responsibility for the apprehension of any child who is considered neglected and for presenting the case to the Court rests entirely with the duly appointed inspector or child welfare official of the municipality in which the child resides at the time of the apprehension. The

Child Welfare Commission is informed of all apprehensions and it invariably arranges to have its representative appear at all Court hearings to satisfy itself that the child's interests are fully considered.

Should a child be made a ward of the Government by the Courts, it immediately comes under the control of the Child Welfare Commission and is placed in the custody of the Superintendent of Child Welfare. From this it will be noted that the first actual contact between a neglected child and the Child Welfare Commission takes place at the time the child is made a ward of the Government either on a permanent or a temporary basis.

All children made permanent wards of the Government are available for adoption and it has always been the policy of the Child Welfare Commission to have such children placed as soon as possible in foster homes, where they may have the advantages of being brought up as members of a family group rather than in institutions which, although they have their place in the set-up, cannot be regarded as equal to a private home. No child, however, is placed in any home until such home has been approved by the Home Investigating Committee, which has quite rigid standards with respect to all homes and institutions.

The policy of placing children in private homes has also had the effect of providing permanent homes for such children, as it is frequently found that the foster parents become so attached to the children and the children to them, that the foster parents invariably express a desire to adopt the children legally.

The procedure with respect to the adoption of children is quite definitely set out in Part 3 of The Child Welfare Act. No deviation from this is permitted, as the Act is worded so that the interests of both the child and the parents are protected in every respect.

Before any adoption proceedings are even considered it is required that a child remain on a probationary basis in the home of the prospective adopting parents for at

least one year, unless otherwise ordered by a Judge of the District Court. During this probationary period reports are received at intervals from the departmental inspectors. These reports determine the advisability of the child becoming permanently attached to the home.

When the probationary period of one year has expired and it is the desire of the foster parents to adopt the child, a final inspection of the home is made and a copy of this report, along with the other necessary documents, is presented to a Judge of the District Court, who has absolute and final say as to whether an Order for Adoption shall be granted. The Juvenile Courts are not connected either directly or indirectly with the question of legal adoptions. Their duties are confined to dealing with and disposing of cases of neglect and delinquency. The decisions of such courts are not made public as is invariably done in the ordinary courts.

When an Order of Adoption has been granted by a Judge of the District Court, all documents relating thereto are kept by the Clerk of the Court in a sealed packet; all papers in the custody of the Child Welfare Commission relating to the adopted are also kept in a sealed packet, and neither packet can be opened without a special order of a Judge of the District Court.

Immediately after an Order for Adoption has been granted, a new birth certificate is issued for the child in the name chosen by its adopting parents and on this the names of the said parents are shown as if they had been the natural parents. The original registration of the child is kept by the Deputy Registrar General of Vital Statistics in a special register, and no person can obtain knowledge of any name appearing in this register except upon the production of a special order of a Judge of the District Court.

This procedure, it will be realized, is in the best interests of both the child and the new parents.

Owing to the nature of the work done by the Juvenile Courts, the Child Welfare authorities, both provincial

and municipal, naturally keep in close contact with these Courts. Juvenile Courts, however, are absolutely independent and brook no interference from any source.

The cost of the maintenance of all wards of the Government is paid directly by the Department of Public Welfare. This Department charges back to the municipality in which the child established residence forty per cent of this cost. This is the method used in issuing the grants provided by the Public Welfare Assistance Act.

The Pensions Branch handles the applications for:

- Old Age Assistance
- Blind Persons Allowances
- Widows' Pensions
- Disabled Persons' Pensions
- Supplementary Allowances

The former Old Age Pension scheme (including the Blind Pensions) was replaced on 1st January, 1952, by what are known as Old Age Security and Blind Persons Allowances while a new form of assistance known as Old Age Assistance was put into effect at the same time.

Old Age Security, in the form of a pension of \$40.00 a month, is paid by the Federal Government to all persons aged seventy years or over, regardless of the amount of their income, who have resided in Canada for a period of twenty years or its equivalent. Applications for this form of pension have to be made to the Regional Director of Old Age Security, Family Allowance Building, 100 Street and 102 Avenue, Edmonton.

Old Age Assistance up to a maximum of \$40.00 a month may be paid to a person who has attained the age of sixty-five years but who has not yet reached the age of seventy years and who has resided in Canada for a period of twenty years or its equivalent.

Under the Federal Statutes and Regulations this form of assistance is available only to persons whose income, including Old Age Assistance, is not in excess of:

- (a) for a single person \$720.00 a year
- (b) for a married person (including income of spouse) \$1,200.00 a year

The amount of assistance to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the difference between actual income and the amount shown herein.

This assistance is paid by the Province to approved applicants at the end of each calendar month and the Province in turn may recover from the Federal Government one half of the cost of the assistance granted to each person when approved by that Government.

The Province pays for the entire cost of administration.

Blind Persons Allowance. A person of the age of seventy years or over who is blind within the meaning of the Federal Statutes and who has resided in Canada for a period of twenty years or its equivalent may be paid a pension of \$40.00 a month under the Federal Old Age Security Act. Any other blind person who has reached the age of twenty-one years and who has resided in Canada for a period of ten years or its equivalent may be paid an allowance up to a maximum of \$40.00 a month if his income, including the Blind Persons Allowance, is not in excess of:

- (a) for a single person \$840.00 a year
- (b) for a single person with a dependent child or children \$1,040.00 a year
- (c) for a married person with a sighted spouse (including income of spouse) \$1,320.00 a year
- (d) for a married person with a blind spouse (including income of spouse) \$1,440.00 a year

The amount of allowance to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the difference between actual income and the amount shown herein.

This allowance is paid by the Province at the end of each calendar month and the Province in turn may re-

cover from the Federal Government seventy-five percent of the cost of the allowance granted to each person when approved by that Government.

The Province is required to pay for the entire cost of administration.

Widows' Pensions. A pension up to a maximum of \$40.00 a month may be paid to a widow, or to the wife of a person committed to a hospital under the provisions of The Mental Diseases Act and actually an inmate thereof, or to a married woman declared by the Board to have been deserted, without reasonable cause, by her husband for a period of three years or more immediately preceding the date of the declaration, who has attained the age of sixty years but not yet reached the age of sixty-five years, provided she has resided in Canada for a period of fifteen years or its equivalent prior to the date she attained the age of sixty years, and has continued to reside in Canada since that time, and who has lived in Alberta for the greater portion of the three years immediately preceding the date of the proposed commencement of payments.

The pension may be paid only to a person whose income, including the Widows' Pension, is not in excess of \$720.00 a year.

The amount of pension to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the difference between actual income and the amount shown herein.

The pension is not available to any person receiving the Mothers' Allowance or the Blind Persons Allowance.

Disabled Persons' Pension. A disabled person may receive a pension up to a maximum of \$40.00 a month if such person has attained the age of twenty-one years and has resided in Alberta for the ten years immediately preceding the date of application.

The pension is not available for a person in receipt of a pension, allowance or assistance under:

The Old Age Security Act, Canada,

The Old Age Assistance Act,
The Blind Persons Act,
The Widows' Pensions Act, or
The Mothers' Allowance Act

but is available to any other person whose income is not in excess of:

- (a) for a single person \$720.00 a year
- (b) for a married person (including the income of spouse) \$1,200.00 a year

The amount of pension to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the difference between the actual income and the amount shown herein.

A disabled person is one who is suffering from a chronic disability of at least one year's duration and, as a result, is physically unfit for gainful employment.

Supplementary Allowance. A person who was in receipt of an Old Age Pension or a Blind Pension as a responsibility of Alberta on 31st December, 1951, will continue to receive the maximum Supplementary Allowance of \$10.00 a month so long as he receives a pension under the Old Age Security Act, Canada, or an allowance under the Blind Persons Act, while a person who applied for and received a pension under the Old Age Security Act, Canada, on or after 1st January, 1952, and who has resided in Alberta for the greater portion of the three years immediately preceding the date of the commencement of payment of Old Age Security will be eligible for the Supplementary Allowance up to a maximum of \$10.00 a month if his income, together with the pension and Supplementary Allowance, is not in excess of:

- (a) for a single person \$840.00 a year
- (b) for a married person (including the income of spouse) \$1,320.00 a year

If the recipient is a married person receiving Old Age Security and the spouse is receiving Old Age Assistance, the amount of income is set at \$1,260.00 a year.

The amount of the allowance to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the differ-

ence between actual income and the amount shown herein.

A person in receipt of Old Age Assistance who has resided in Alberta for the greater portion of the three years immediately prior to the date he first received Old Age Assistance will be eligible for the Supplementary Allowance up to a maximum of \$10.00 a month if his income, including Old Age Assistance, is less than:

- (a) for a single person \$720.00 a year
- (b) for a married person (including the income of spouse) \$1,200.00 a year

In the case of one receiving Old Age Assistance and the spouse receiving Old Age Security the amount is \$1,260.00 a year.

The amount of pension to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the difference between actual income and the amount shown herein.

A person who applied for and received a Blind Persons Allowance on or after 1st January, 1952, and who has resided in the Province for the greater portion of the three years immediately preceding the date of the commencement of payment of the Blind Persons Allowance will be eligible for the Supplementary Allowance up to a maximum of \$10.00 a month, if his income, together with the Blind Persons Allowance, is not in excess of:

- (a) for a single person \$900.00 a year
- (b) for a single person with a dependent child or children \$1,100.00 a year
- (c) for a married person with a sighted spouse (including the income of spouse) \$1,320.00 a year
- (d) for a married person with a blind spouse (including the income of spouse) \$1,440.00 a year

The amount of allowance to be granted will, subject to the stated maximum, be equivalent to the difference between actual income and the amount shown herein.

The Supplementary Allowance may be paid to a person who moves to another province so long as he is eligible for the Allowance in the manner indicated herein. The Allowance, however, is not payable to any person who moves out of Canada.

Hospital and Medical Services. The Province may provide for part or all of the cost of necessary hospital and medical services for a person and his dependents residing in Alberta if a person qualifies as an Alberta resident and is in receipt of Old Age Assistance, the Supplementary Allowance or the Widows' Pension and is not, for the purposes of health and welfare services, the responsibility of the Government of Canada.

Provision is also made to extend these services to recipients of Old Age Security who are qualified residents of Alberta and whose income, including the pension, is not in excess of:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| (a) for a single person | \$1,000.00 a year |
| (b) for a married person | \$1,500.00 a year |

All applications for Old Age Assistance, Blind Persons Allowances, Widows' Pensions, Disabled Persons' Pensions or Supplementary Allowances and for Hospital and Medical Services for recipients of Old Age Security in the increased income brackets are to be made to the Pension Board, Room 204, Administration Building, Edmonton.

The Mothers' Allowance Branch. The Province of Alberta was amongst the first of the provinces to recognize the desirability of providing some form of assistance to the widows and families of deceased persons and in 1919 an Act, known as The Mothers' Allowance Act, was passed by the Legislature. This Act provides that any needy widow with dependent children, may obtain an allowance consistent with her requirements. The regular rates of such allowances compare more than favourably with those granted by any of the other provinces, while in addition to this, provision has been made for a special additional allowance where the need is apparent.

The municipality in which the widow and family had established residence at the time of the husband's death, desertion or committal to a mental hospital, is required to pay 20% of the regular allowance, while Province assumes 80% of the cost of the regular allowance and the entire cost of the special allowance.

An amendment to the Act passed in 1953 makes provision for the granting of the allowance to a woman who had lived in Alberta for a period of fifteen or more consecutive years and who thereafter made her home in another province and who, after the death of her husband, returned to Alberta and remained therein for a period of one year as a self-supporting person.

Those in receipt of a Mothers' Allowance and their dependents are, when sick, entitled to free hospitalization and treatment services, the cost of which is assumed entirely by the Province.

The Inspection Branch. The Province is divided into twelve zones, and in each zone there is an inspector whose duties are to investigate and report to the Department on all cases in which any Branch of the Department may be interested.

Each inspector is provided with lists of the names of all persons who are in contact with the Department and these lists are arranged according to the Post Office address within the particular zone. They are amended from day to day from master lists prepared by the Chief Inspector who has all the records and reports of the various branches up to date.

Apart from the regular daily routine of investigating new applications and inspecting homes where children may be placed, the inspectors are required to visit the home of each person appearing on these lists at least twice a year, and to submit reports on each case to the Chief Inspector. The latter, in turn, forwards these reports to the particular Branch interested.

In those districts where the scarcity of population does not justify the appointment of a full time inspector, this work is performed through special arrangements with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The Accounting Branch keeps a record of the transactions of the various branches of the Department. All accounts submitted for payment are handled by this Branch which makes out the necessary vouchers for payment. These, in turn, are forwarded to the Audit Department for approval. The Audit Department thereafter arranges to issue the necessary cheques in payment, forwarding them to the Treasury Department for completion and mailing to the payees.