

Health Dept. Legislation Is Outlined By MacEachen

By KEN KELLY
OTTAWA (CP) — Legislation on the welfare package called the Canada Assistance Plan and to set up a \$500,000,000 health resources fund are the only major items for Parliament in the health and welfare field.

Health Minister MacEachen, making his debut as head of a big spending department, says he does not expect legislative action on medical care insurance in the early part of the parliamentary session which starts Jan. 18.

Main reason for this is that the provinces have not yet formally notified the federal government of their views on Ottawa's offer to pay half the costs of provincial medical care insurance plans which meet certain conditions.

Mr. MacEachen, who moved to health and welfare from the labor department just before Christmas, is considering whether to write the provinces a reminder that they had promised to give a reply to the federal medical care offer by the end of 1965.

Health and welfare, third biggest spending department behind national defence and finance, likely will get into the \$1,500,000,000 bracket in the 1966-67 fiscal year with additional welfare costs and health resources spending.

But prospects are slim for any increase in the old age pension of \$75 a month paid to all at age 65. Mr. MacEachen says he does not want to comment now on this question, a tough one politically with the Conservatives and New Democrats pressing for a boost to \$100 a month.

During last fall's federal election campaign, Liberal spokesmen took the stand that needy old age pensioners who require more than the \$75-a-month old age pension will be able to get additional amounts through the Canada Assistance Plan.

The old age pension is paid entirely out of federal funds. Canada Assistance Plan benefits will be paid through provincial programs with Ottawa picking up half the cost.

The health department's budget in the current fiscal year ending March 31 is about \$1,400,000,000, of which welfare payments totalled more than \$800,000,000.

The Canada Assistance Plan lumps into one a number of existing welfare programs, such as unemployment assistance paid to the needy unemployed, and several new programs. It was agreed on at a federal provincial conference last week, the first presided over by Mr. MacEachen as health minister.

WILL PAY MORE
The legislation to be introduced in Parliament will empower the federal government to pay half the costs of certain provincial welfare programs. Ottawa now pays half the cost of some of them and some are new, such as mothers allowances and medical care for welfare recipients.

Depending on the various optional programs which the provinces may include under the plan, its annual cost to the federal government will range between \$185,000,000 and \$250,000,000.

The health resources fund is aimed at boosting the facilities available, including doctors and nurses, against the day when a national medical care insurance program goes into effect.

Mr. MacEachen has called a federal-provincial conference of health ministers for the end of this month to make a final allocation of the \$500,000,000 offered by Ottawa over the next 15 years.

MEDICARE PLAN HOLDS
While medical care insurance is nowhere near the top of the legislative list for the forthcoming session, Mr. MacEachen says the government has not altered its announced policy of a national medical care insurance program by July 1, 1967.

He says he considers it possible to fit that date but whether it is probable depends on the speed with which the provinces make known their intentions and act on them.

With provincial co-operation essential, he says he plans to take no premature action which might antagonize the provinces. "Our position is clear—we've stated that we propose to move ahead, not in five or seven years, but now," he says with respect to the argument that health resources are insufficient now to carry a national program.

Dorion Probe Key Witness Is Sentenced

MONTREAL (IP)—Eddie Lechasseur, 33, a key witness in the Dorion inquiry has been sentenced to seven months in jail and fined \$1,000 for a fraudulent bankruptcy involving \$40,000.

Judge Armand Cloutier ruled that if the fine is not paid, Lechasseur will have to spend another three months in jail.

Lechasseur also was sentenced to seven months on a second charge of failure to keep books, but the two sentences were made concurrent.

The charges were brought following the bankruptcy of Les Emeublements du Plateau, an east-end Montreal furniture store.

Defence lawyer Leo Rene Maranda said that, when Lechasseur pleaded guilty recently the accused made restitution to the amount of \$7,500, or 15 per cent.

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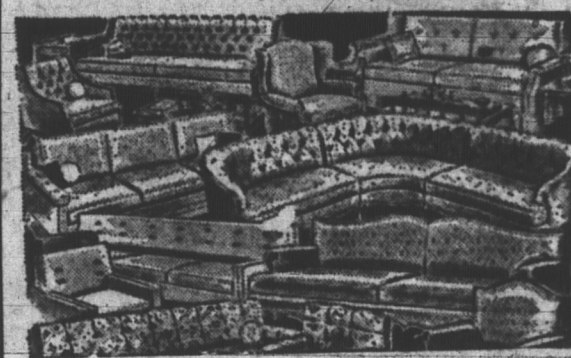
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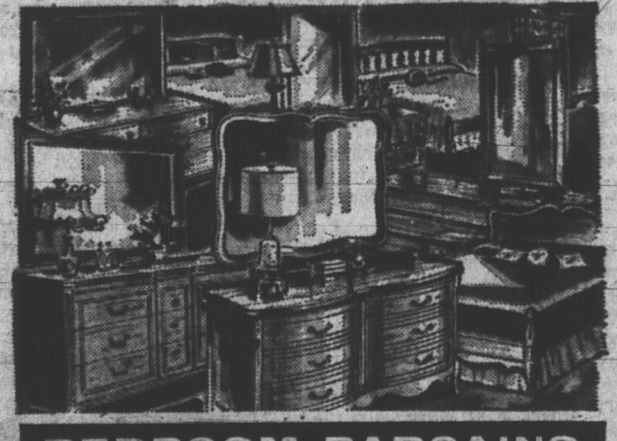
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