

# CHC2P Unit 4: 1960s-1980s: A Nation's Challenges

## Activity 1: Canadian Identity: Social Programs

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### Overview

In this activity, you will explore the development of social welfare programs in Canada, such as Medicare and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) as well as Family Assistance.

### Lesson

#### *Social Welfare Programs under Lester Pearson*



By 1963, the government of John Diefenbaker faced problems from high unemployment to internal party wrangling. In that year, the government was defeated and replaced by a Liberal government under Lester Pearson.

The Liberal government was a minority government, meaning that it did not have more than half of the seats in the House of Commons.

The Liberals, however, received support from the newly created New Democratic Party. This party, formed in 1961 from labour unionists and former members of the CCF, was committed to creating more economic equality. Government programs that attempt to help the less advantaged members of society are often called social programs, or social welfare programs.

#### *Tommy Douglas*



The first leader of the federal New Democratic Party was Tommy Douglas. He had been elected premier of Saskatchewan in 1944 and, in that province, he introduced universal hospitalization at a fee of \$5 per year per person.

In this way, the burden of hospital bills, instead of falling on sick people, was spread over all the people. For his ground-breaking work in providing health care for all Canadians, Tommy Douglas is known as the “Father of Medicare.”

#### *A More Equal Society*

The Liberal Party, often pushed by the CCF, has a history of making Canada a more equal society. Under Prime Minister Mackenzie King, the party introduced old age pensions (1927), unemployment insurance (1940), and family allowances (1944). Each of these programs provides aid to those members of society most in need.

In the 1960s, Lester Pearson's Liberal government, backed by Tommy Douglas' New Democrats, passed a number of bills that made Canada a more equitable society.

### ***The Reforms***

A Canada-wide system of Medicare was established (1968). This meant that every Canadian had access to medical and hospital care and the cost would be carried by the governments of the country.

The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) was born in 1966. Each employed Canadian automatically contributes to the plan (you will notice CPP deductions on your pay cheque when you have a job). The CPP money goes into a large fund that provides protection for Canadians who experience income loss due to retirement, disability and death.

Pearson's government also provided the first interest free loans for university students, and increased government assistance to families, war veterans, and seniors.

## **Assignment**

1. Explain how each of the following programs is considered a "social program" or a program that aids those in society who are most in need:
  - a) Old Age Pensions:
  - b) Unemployment Insurance:
  - c) Family Allowance (under this program a family received \$5.00 from the government for each child – the amount was later raised):
  - d) Canada Pension Plan:
  - e) Medicare:
2. In a 2004 CBC television contest in which 1.2 million votes were cast, Tommy Douglas was selected "the Greatest Canadian." Conduct further research on Tommy Douglas. You may go to <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/parties-leaders/tommy-douglas-and-the-ndp/tc-douglas-politician.html> or some other Internet sites to find information. Write your information in your own words in a 250 word paragraph. Using the proper citation method you have learned, indicate the source(s) of your information.