

What Is Social Security?

Canadians have made a commitment to help those in need, to provide them "social security."

The Department of Finance defines **social security** as:

"Society's commitment to take care of its most vulnerable citizens (e.g., people without work, lone parents with limited means struggling to raise a family, children in poverty, and people who face barriers to employment due to disability or chronic illness). The "social safety net" comprises a wide range of federal, provincial and joint federal-provincial programs: Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, the Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, and the National Child Benefit."

~ Department of Finance Canada, Glossary: <www.fin.gc.ca/gloss/employ>



Late 19 th century - early 20 th century	Increased industrialization brings changing conditions in the workplace. Trade unions emerge to represent and defend workers on issues of working conditions and wages.
1914	Workmen's Compensation in Act is passed in Ontario, assuring injured workers a regular cash income. This is soon followed in other provinces.
1916	Manitoba is the first province to pass a Mothers' Pensions Act to provide a small but assured income to widows and divorced or deserted wives with children to support, deemed the "worthy poor." Within five years, all provinces from Ontario west pass similar legislation.
1927	The first old age pension is introduced for the "worthy poor" (senior citizens must prove that they need support).
1937	Pensions for the blind are introduced (subject to proof that the applicants are in need of support).
1930s (Depression)	Assistance is provided by municipal aid and charity agencies in the form of grocery, fuel, and clothing tokens to unemployed "worthy poor." Single unemployed men are given work in Unemployment Relief Camps.
1940	The federal government introduces the Unemployment Insurance Act, Canada's first national social security program.

Social Security Timeline in Canada

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1945	Family Allowance is introduced, a monthly allowance paid to families with children to help cover the costs of child maintenance. This is Canada's first <i>universal</i> /social security program (not subject to proving there is a need).
1945	Saskatchewan launches the first hospital insurance plan for all residents of the province. It is highly successful and other provinces begin seeking a similar plan.
1957	The federal government agrees to share in the cost of provincial hospital insurance programs. By 1961 all 10 provinces are providing hospital care under this agreement, doing away with the need for "charity wards."
1962	The Saskatchewan government introduces a universal, tax-supported, publicly run medical care insurance plan.
1965	The federal government passes the Canada Pension Plan to provide income for retirement, disability, and survivors' benefits. This plan improves on the old age pensions, since most workers lack pension plans from their work.
1966	In 1966, the federal government passes the Medical Care Act, agreeing to contribute to provincial medical-care insurance plans provided that such plans meet the goal of ensuring equal coverage for a wide range of health services, available to all regardless of age, condition, or ability to pay. By 1971 all provinces are participating under the terms of this act (now the Canada Health Act). The federal government also introduces the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), agreeing to share costs with the provinces for social assistance programs.

