

March 12

Hospitals Relieved Of Big Yearly Cost For Indigent Babies

**New Hospitals Act Shifts
Burden on Province and
Municipalities for Four-
teen-Day Period After
Birth—10,000 Are Born
Annually**

STIFF PENALTIES ARE PROVIDED

Upward of 10,000 "indigent" babies are born every year in the public general hospitals of Ontario. Treatment, clothing, food and other necessities of life, which the hospitals have had to provide for them, have necessitated an aggregate expenditure, annually, on the part of the institutions of approximately \$200,000. Heretofore the hospitals have had to assume the whole of the cost. The situation is to be changed immediately.

Patient and Resident.

By terms of the Province's new Hospitals Act, which was brought down to the Legislature yesterday by Hon. Dr. J. M. Robb, Minister of Health, it is provided that "when a baby is born in a hospital it shall, for the purposes of this act, be deemed to be a patient, and if the baby of an indigent person shall be deemed to be a resident in that municipality in which such indigent person is a resident, the municipality shall be liable for the treatment of a baby as the dependent of an indigent person at a rate of 90 cents per day for a period of not exceeding 14 days after the birth of such baby."

The Province's contribution to the arrangement will be 30 cents per day for the 14-day period.

3,000 Born in Toronto.

Of the 10,000 indigent babies brought into the world annually, at least 3,000 of them, it is understood, are born in Toronto.

While Dr. Robb's new act is primarily a consolidation of all the old hospital legislation that for years has been cluttering up the statute books, and accomplishing very little, it has many new teeth, that, if slightly hidden, can bite and bite strongly, it would appear, when a situation warrants.

Brand-new penalties are imposed under the act. Fifty dollars is the minimum fine, and \$500 the maximum, both recoverable under the Summary Convictions Act. While no informa-

tion was forthcoming last night as to what they aim at, it is reported they are being legislated for the purpose of maintaining a more adequate check on general hospital administration and institutional expenditures than has prevailed in the past.

Dr. McGhie in Charge.

Dr. B. T. McGhie, Director of the Provincial Mental Hospitals, is, it is understood, also to have full supervisory charge of the public general hospitals and homes for incurables when the new act comes into effect on Oct. 1 of this year.

Under the new act the municipality's and the Province's aid to indigent patients remains as before—namely, \$1.75 and 60 cents, respectively, per day.

A saving clause has, however, been inserted in the act by the Government so as to eliminate—if elimination is required—any undue burden which may be thrown on a "poor" municipality by reason of exactment of the regular indigent aid. The clause in question reads:

"Where, in the opinion of the Minister, liability under this section (indigent) would in any year unduly burden any municipality in a territorial district, other than a city, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, upon the recommendation of the Minister, may make special grants by way of Provincial aid to relieve, in whole or in part, such municipality from the burden."

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