

first
reading

Vol. 6 No. 6



July/August 1988

a publication of the Edmonton Social Planning Council

As in previous years, this Summer edition of *First Reading* takes another look at a number of issues and subjects with which the publication has dealt in the recent past.

One of the articles inside provides an update on community development and some of the things which have been happening in this area since the "Nurturing Community" conference. As a companion to this community development article is a profile of Edmonton's Boyle-McCauley Health Centre, an example of not only community development, but of a new and creative approach to health care, the subject of the May/June 1988 edition of *First Reading*.

In another article, John Kolkman, of the Christian Farmers Federation, updates a *First Reading* piece which he wrote a little more than a year ago dealing with some of the issues and problems in the agricultural sector. A third article takes a look beyond the numbers and statistics used to describe or obfuscate the employment/unemployment situation in Alberta.

The last article included in this edition is the only one which doesn't update a subject previously dealt with by this publication. It has been just a little more than one year since parts of the city of Edmonton and surrounding area were devastated by a series of tornados. The article outlines some of what happened at the time, and what has been happening since, to deal with that tragedy and its effects on people's lives.

• • •

Included with this issue of *First Reading* is a Publications List and Order Form listing and describing the numerous publications available from the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Also, please note, the ESPC will be moving at the end of August. There is a notice inside telling you all about it.

Summer Review

borrowing from the province's Agricultural Development Corporation would be allowed to link their loan payments for the following three years to the price of the commodities they produce. The amounts deferred would be placed in a non-interest-bearing account, and be re-paid when commodity prices improve. For qualifying farmers producing commodities (i.e. grains and oilseeds) that have been devastated by the global agricultural trade war, this could result in substantial payment reductions, especially as the program is retroactive for the years 1986 and 1987.

The farm debt burden is slowly being written down to realistic levels, but at the expense of forcing out of agriculture many of the younger generation of farm families. After a farm has been re-possessed, the lender writes off the debt, and then either sells or leases the farm at today's values. Most of the repossessed farms are being bought by established farmers who feel that now is a favourable time to expand their land or asset base.

The Christian Farmers Federation, for one, welcomed the program, because it targets assistance to younger farmers with higher debt loads. It was noted, however, that farmers are not allowed to defer arrears, meaning that the program is of less benefit to those behind in their payments than to those who are up-to-date.

Drought

While central and northern Alberta have recently received ample rainfall, most of the major crop producing areas of North America are suffering under a prolonged drought. While the impact of the drought on crop yields will not be known with any certainty for some time, the damage already done has been enough to cause prices for major grains and oilseed crops to rise well above their extremely low levels of the past three years.

While this is good news for those Alberta farmers who will likely get a crop this year, it shows the inherent instability of agricultural

markets, and hence farmers' incomes. There is probably no economic activity as dependent on short-term weather conditions as farming. It is not unusual for prices on agricultural commodity markets to either double or be halved within a matter of weeks or months.

Let Farmers Decide

Historically, the Canadian government has allowed each commodity sector to decide how it wishes to market its products. Consequently, a whole spectrum of approaches exists. Some commodities (e.g. cattle, sheep, oilseeds) rely almost completely on so called market forces. With others (e.g. hogs, grains) attempts have been made to improve the market clout of farmers through "single desk selling" and the pooling of market returns. Still others (e.g. dairy and poultry) have used supply management to remove or minimize the impact of market forces on the price farmers receive. Though there are exceptions on all sides, small and medium-sized farmers have generally tended to favor some controls on market forces, while larger farmers tend to favor relying on them more.

Canada - U.S Free Trade Looms

If implemented, the Canada-U.S Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will undoubtedly have implications for the financial prospects of Canadian farmers over the longer term. Again, there is little consensus about whether these impacts are likely to be positive or negative.

Those in favour of the FTA argue that Canada's natural advantage in producing commodities such as grains, oilseeds, cattle and hogs will be enhanced. More exports to the U.S will result from the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, and from the establishment of a more impartial trade dispute settlement mechanism.

Critics of the FTA argue that Canada did not achieve the secure access to the American market it was seeking for its agricultural exports. Moreover, the Canadian agricultural sector is characterized by smaller production or processing units, exists in a harsher climate and faces more stringent health, safety and labour standards than its U.S. counterpart. Therefore, commodity sectors such as wine, fruits and vegetables, and much of the food processing industry, are likely to be hurt by



Edmonton Social Planning Council

From our bookshelf to yours...

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

*** The Nuts and Bolts of Community Based Economic Development**

Represents selected theme papers from a 1982 conference held in Edmonton. The papers are of special interest to readers concerned with community initiative and Community Development Corporations. (1982)

Free ESPC

*** From the Roots Up: Economic Development as if Community Mattered**

Explains the growing importance of an informal economy, as an alternative to our formal economy. The authors describe informal economic activities such as co-operative enterprises, small business, voluntary activity and barter, and explain the reasons why economists have overlooked this vital sector of all industrial societies.

\$10.95 CCSD

*** New Age Business: Community Corporations that Work**

Greg MacLeod

Through three case studies, New Dawn and J.A.L. in Canada and Mondragon in Northern Spain, MacLeod identifies the strengths and weaknesses of community development corporations.

\$10.00 CCSD

EMPLOYMENT

*** Unemployment: Reaping the Costs**

Using standard economic concepts, this report estimates that unemployment costs Albertans \$14 billion in 1983 and 1984 alone. If the social costs of unemployment were factored in, the total would be higher. An incomplete assessment of unemployment costs by government could be seen to result in misdirected and ineffective economic policies. (1986)

\$1.00 ESPC

*** Counting the Costs: A Literature Review of the Social and Psychological Costs of Unemployment**

This report documents the impact of unemployment on the family, on physical and mental health, and on the incidence of suicide and crime. (1985)

\$10.00 ESPC

*** Employment and Social Development in a Changing Economy**

The three papers presented in this publication provide an overview of the issues pursued at CCSD's Workshop '88. The focus of the workshop centered around the "existing scope for local measures to combat continuing high rates of unemployment."

\$4.95 CCSD

*** Policies for full employment**

The selections in this publication were initially presented at the Symposium for Policies for Full Employment, Fall 1985. These essays argue that full employment is essential and explain the policy options available to reduce unemployment.

\$15.00 CCSD

FAMILY

*** One in a World of Two's (1976)**

A report on one-parent families in Canada and the economic and social problems they face in the labour market, child care services, welfare, housing and social services.

Free NCW

*** Stepmothers: Exploring the Myth**

Kati Morrison, M.D., & Airdrie Thompson-Guppy, with Patricia Bell

This publication is a practical guide for stepmothers. It deals with issues of discipline, economic responsibility, custody and caring for the children of these extended families.

\$7.95 CCSD

*** What will tomorrow bring?**

Prepared by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, this publication looks at the thoughts and beliefs of adolescent women in the areas of education, work and their personal lives and relationships.

\$4.95 CCSD

*** Family Law in Canada: New Directions**

Sexual equality became a constitutionally guaranteed right for Canadian women this year. This volume examines family law from a feminist perspective. It addresses such issues as joint custody, legal treatment of common law spouses, and the implications of invitro fertilization. It also discusses the complicated structure of family law in Canada, defining the area under federal and provincial control and the many "grey areas" between the two. Published by The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. 1985

\$4.95 CCSD

HUMAN SERVICES

* Women and Housing: Changing Needs and the Failure of Policy

This report presents an analysis of consumer need drawn from a statistical profile of Canadian women constructed from the most recent national data sources available and placed in a social context. February 1984
\$7.95 CCSD

* Privatization and the Non-Profit Sector: How Should Community Agencies Respond?

The text of a speech given October 3, 1986 which examines the privatization of social services in the Alberta context. An exploration of underlying motivations and likely impacts is essayed in the speech. A concluding section suggests strategies which non-profit agencies can use to prepare for privatization.
\$2.00 ESPC

* Native Children and the Child Welfare System

An in-depth study on the treatment of Native children within the Canadian welfare system with a detailed description of past practices and current provincial and territorial policies. 1983 196 pp
\$9.95 CCSD

* Perspectives on Social Services and Social Issues

The selections in this volume were drawn from the proceedings of the Second Conference on Provincial Social Welfare Policy held at the University of Calgary in May 1985. Major categories include "Initiatives in Social Service Delivery", "Sex Related Social Issues", "Client groups and the Service Delivery System", and "Indian Child Welfare".
\$19.95 CCSD

* Community Multi-Service Centres

Examines community resource boards in B.C., local community service centres in Quebec, regional health centres in Manitoba and other Canadian systems for the delivery of health and social services at the local level. 1976 140 pp
\$5.50 CCSD



POVERTY

* Sixty-Five and Older (February 1984)

A comprehensive study of the economic situation of elderly Canadians. The report emphasizes the inferior economic status of elderly women, particularly the large and growing group living alone.
Free NCW

* Poverty and Unemployment: Assumptions, Responsibilities and Choices

Graham Riches presented this paper on poverty and unemployment at the 1987 Annual Meeting Workshop of the Family Service Association of Edmonton.
\$3.00 ESPC

* Surviving on Welfare - A No Frills Flight

A description of the practical consequences of living on welfare monies through the eyes and mouths of social allowance recipients. The report examines recipients' financial limitations, experiences with welfare officials, and treatment by the community. Nine recommendations directed at improving the social allowance system are tendered in the report's conclusion. (1986)
\$3.00 ESPC

* A Poverty Profile (Annual)

Tables and explanatory text on the most recent statistics on poverty, average income and income distribution in Canada. The report analyzes both recent and long-term trends, and highlights groups with an above-average risk of poverty.
Free NCW

* 1988 Poverty Lines

An explanation of Statistics Canada's low-income lines, with National Council of Welfare estimates for 1988.
Free NCW

* Welfare in Canada: A Tangled Safety Net

This publication is the "first comprehensive national analysis of social assistance programs operated by the provincial, territorial and municipal governments ..."
Free NCW

* The Other Welfare Manual (1987)

Presented in a short, concise, easy to understand format, this 48 page booklet outlines the rights and responsibilities of social assistance recipients in Alberta. Widely used by both recipients and social workers, this publication de-mystifies the Alberta Income Security Program.
\$4.00 ESPC
Free to people on social assistance

* Poor Kids (March 1975)

A report on the more than one million Canadian children living in poverty and the consequences for their health, education and life prospects.
Free NCW

* Food Banks and the Welfare Crisis

This new work documents the recent proliferation of emergency food services in Canada, and argues that food bank represent more than an upsurge of charity in tough times; they are the signposts of the collapse of the social safety net.
\$11.95 CCSD

TAX SYSTEM

* The Refundable Child Tax Credit:

What it Is...How it Works (Dec. 1978)
A background paper describing the newest part of Canada's income support system for families with children and how it assists low and middle-income families.
Free NCW

* Bearing the Burden/Sharing the Benefits (March 1978)

A study of taxation and income redistribution which describes how parts of Canada's existing tax system place their heaviest burden on the poor and how the tax system can be changed to benefit the poor.
Free NCW

* Family Allowance for All? (Mar. 1983)

An analysis of the costs and distributional effects of the family allowance child tax credit and children's tax exemption. An account of the arguments for and against universal family allowances, and a proposal to reform federal child benefits.
Free NCW

HEALTH

* Medicare: the public good and private practice (May 1982)

An account of the purposes, achievements and development of national health insurance, the health gap facing low-income Canadians, and the threat to Medicare posed by user charges and health premiums.
Free NCW

* Deinstitutionalization: Cost and Effects

The case for the cost-effectiveness of deinstitutionalization is most difficult to consider when community living is promoted as the only alternative. But in April 1984 researchers and advocates of deinstitutionalization met at an international symposium to try. Consumers and academics presented papers on deinstitutionalization, which affects the lives of persons who are physically, mentally or psychiatrically disabled. The revised and edited papers cover a spectrum of viewpoints on this complex subject. 1985
\$15.00 CCSD

* Community Based Health and Social Services

"This report outlines the central issues and themes to emerge from the three-day CCSD conference on Improving the Delivery of Community-based Health and Social Services held in Ottawa in November 1985. Also discussed is the future of these services as well as shared problems and goals."
\$4.95 CCSD

* Health and Home: Women as Health Guardians

This study examines one kind of work women do - guarding the health of their families. It has two aims: to record for public recognition what constitutes the women's health guardian role, and to point out the implications of this role for public policy. Published by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
\$4.95 CCSD

OTHER

* Ethical Investments: More Value for Your Money

This report analyzes the concept of investment in companies which feature products and business practices consistent with the investor's personal values and beliefs. Historical developments are highlighted in the report as is a summary of several successful U.S. ethical investment funds. (1986)
\$2.00 ESPC

* The Charter of Rights and Freedoms: A Guide for Canadians

Free

PENSIONS

* A Pension Primer (April 1984)

A description and critique of Canada's complex retirement income system. The study is geared to the lay reader with no specialized knowledge of the pension system.
Free NCW

* Financing the Canada Pension Plan (December 1982)

This report explains how the Canada Pension Plan is financed and the use of surplus funds to produce loans to the provinces. It examines future demands on the CPP and proposes a gradual increase in contribution rates and a move to pay-go financing.
Free NCW

* Pension Reform (April 1984)

A review of the three major approaches to pension reform - regulatory reform of private pension plans, mandatory private plans, and expansion of the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans.
Free NCW

* Better Pensions for Homemakers (May 1984)

A critique of the homemaker pension proposal of the Parliamentary Task Force on Pension Reform. The report explains the homemaker pension proposal and summarizes the arguments of its supporters.
Free NCW

* Future Directions for Pensions: An address by Crawford E. Laing

The text of a speech given April 16, 1986 which reviews developments in the pension reform process since 1979. Economic and political questions are raised about both public and private pension schemes. The author concludes with his speculation regarding future trends and innovations.
\$2.00 ESPC

ORGANIZATIONAL

*** The Board/Staff Workbook**

Explains the principles of effective organizational structure. The workbook offers self-discovery exercises suitable for organizational use. (no date)

\$6.00 ESPC

*** Bookkeeping Handbook for Low-Income Citizen Groups (October 1973)**

A guide for use by both new and advanced citizen groups, this report describes a bookkeeping system which can be used by groups and illustrates the system by tracing the bookkeeping history of a sample group.

Free NCW

*** Helping You Helps Me**

A practical guide to starting and maintaining a self-help group. Leadership, membership, recruitment, fund-raising, problem-solving and decision-making are among the more than twenty topics covered. 1983

80pp
\$3.50 CCSD

*** Access and the Policy Making Process**

Explores the traditional theories of participatory and representative democracy in relation to the Canadian political system. The report provides a careful review of the key federal decision-making structures.

\$4.00 CCSD

*** Organizing for Social Action (April 1975)**

A description of three successful organizing experiences and analysis by those who participated in them of why they were successful.

Free NCW

*** Voluntary Action: Provincial Policies and Practices**

Jean-Bernard Robichaud

Conducted in 1985, this study compares various provincial policies and practices which support voluntarism in the field of social services and community health throughout Canada.

\$8.95 CCSD

First Reading

First Reading is a bi-monthly publication produced by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. It addresses a wide range of current social issues through articles written by individuals in the community. Subscriptions to First Reading are free of charge.

Alberta Facts

Alberta Facts is a quarterly factsheet written in a concise, easy to read style. Available issues include

Poverty in our Province:

- #1 Telling it like it is
- #2 Income Distribution
- #3 The Working Poor
- #4 Taxing the Poor

#5 Child Care

Price \$15.00 per 100 copies

Postage and Handling Rates

- 1 - 3 books \$2.00**
- 4 - 6 books \$3.50**
- 7 - 10 books \$5.00**
- 11 + books \$6.50**

Edmonton Social Planning Council

#41 Commonwealth Building
9912 106 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1C5 (403) 423-2031

ORDER FORM

Publication Title	# copies	Price per copy	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	=	_____
			=	_____
Subtotal			=	_____
Less 15% for members			=	_____
Add postage and handling			=	_____
Total			=	_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

- Please send me information on the Edmonton Social Planning Council
- Please place my name on the First Reading Mailing list

American imports once tariffs and other barriers are removed. There is general agreement within the farming sector that the FTA will strengthen the hand of market forces and weaken the hand of government to regulate or otherwise control them. Predictably, there is no consensus on whether this is in fact a good or bad thing. My own assessment is that, considering the unpredictable nature of weather and markets, perhaps the pendulum is swinging too far in the direction of market freedom, and away from the political freedom to direct markets.

Conclusion

In responding to the debt crisis, federal and provincial governments continue to allow the excessive farm debt burden to be gradually written down through forced exits from farming, rather than through approaches that would allow more farmers to stay on the land. Moreover, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement will make it more difficult in the future for these governments to intervene to protect the income and livelihood of farmers, thereby exposing them more fully to global market forces.

John Kolkman is the Research and Policy Coordinator of the Christian Farmers Federation of Alberta.

THE SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL IS MOVING!!

as of August 27, 1988
we will be located at the

Commonwealth Building
41, 9912-106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1C5

The telephone number remains the same: 403/423-2031

As a result of the move, the Council will be disposing of various pieces of office furniture and equipment. If you or your organization are in need of such things please contact Linda at 423-2031.

UNEMPLOYMENT: CAN WE AFFORD IT?

Henry Dembicki

Every month, Alberta Career Development and Employment issues a package of selected Alberta labour force statistics. The package includes numbers on such things as the labour force participation rate, the numbers of employed, the unemployment rate and employment by occupation. There are comparisons by province and by economic regions within Alberta. Numbers are unadjusted and seasonally adjusted. Statistics are quoted in numbers of thousands, by percentage, by rate and by percentage change.

Included with this package is a news release. In dispassionate terms, the news release points out some of the month's highlights: "Unemployment is down from the last month, the participation rate is up, the male labour force participation rate rose x percent...." Some optimism is always thrown in for good measure: "Alberta's participation rate is the highest in Canada. Alberta's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was the third lowest in Canada."

What seems to be lost in this shuffle of numbers is that these figures are about people. It is easy for those of us who have a job to forget that almost one out of every 14 Albertans is unemployed.

In June, for example, 98 000 Albertans were unemployed. Edmonton, the "City of Champi-

ons," led the way with 31 000 unemployed; Calgary had 28 000 unemployed. If every unemployed Albertan stood up and stated his/her name, address, occupation and job desired, and that took one-minute per person, it would take more than 72 days to let everyone say their piece. It would take more than 1715 transit buses to transport these people to the podium.

Who is Unemployed?

98 000 unemployed may be a useful economic indicator, but in itself it says little about the people who are unemployed. There is no "typical" unemployed person. While there are differences in unemployment rates - based on categories such as age, sex and education - seven years of recession has meant there is no *safe* category to be in.

In 1981, unemployment for the 20-24 years of age group averaged 5.2 percent. In 1987 it was 14 percent. Prior to 1983 the number of unemployed over the age of 55 was too low to be included in the labour force statistics. In 1987, 9.1 percent of Albertans over the age of 55 were unemployed. Unemployment in the 25-44 years of age group increased from 2.8 percent in 1981 to 8.1 percent in 1987.

With respect to sex, over the past seven years unemployment has increased dramatically for both males and females across all age groups.

It is usually assumed that more education is a better guarantee of employment. The reality today is that the well educated are not immune from employment. In 1981, the unemployment rate for university graduates was zero percent. In 1987 it was 4.5 percent.

Unemployment Has Costs

The most obvious loss associated with unemployment (and frequently the most devastating one) is the loss of income. For the jobless, unemployment results in a substantial reduction in income and often means an inevitable decline in their standard of living. The loss of a job further

In 1981, unemployment for the 20-24 years of age group averaged 5.2 percent. In 1987 it was 14 percent. Prior to 1983 the number of unemployed over the age of 55 was too low to be included in the labour force statistics. In 1987, 9.1 percent of Albertans over the age of 55 were unemployed. Unemployment in the 25-44 years of age group increased from 2.8 percent in 1981 to 8.1 percent in 1987.

deprives people financially because associated benefits such as medical care, dental care and pension support are often lost when a job ends. It is not unusual for the unemployed to encounter difficulties in making mortgage payments, in buying clothing for themselves and their children, and in paying for even simple forms of entertainment.

Unemployment is not just a financial crisis however, it is also an emotional and social crisis. Loss of employment can be a major life trauma to the unemployed person. Work is central to personal identity in our culture. The response to the frequently asked question, "What do you do?" serves to establish where a person fits in the world. Being identified as unemployed is to be given a negative status. Besides giving a personal identity and status, work gives a structure to one's use of time, provides an outlet for creativity and skills, provides access to a variety of social contacts as well as to new experiences and ideas, and gives people a sense of purpose.

The stresses generated by financial hardship, changing family roles, loss of status and other related circumstances may well lead to unemployment being experienced as a major family crisis. Many families deal with such a crisis and remain intact. For others, the stress may be manifested either by family dissolution or by such behaviour as child or wife abuse.

Unemployment is devastating for the families of the jobless as well. The stresses generated by financial hardship, changing family roles, loss of status and other related circumstances may well lead to unemployment being experienced as a major family crisis. Many families deal with such a crisis and remain intact. For others, the stress may be manifested either by family dissolution or by such behaviour as child or wife abuse. Given the fragility of the nuclear family in today's society and the large proportion of families headed by single women, it is no wonder that so many families are unable to cope with the added burden of job loss.

In 1981, there were 32 000 families in which at least one member was unemployed. In 11 000 of these families, it was the family head that was unemployed. By 1987 the number of families with at least one unemployed member totalled 86 000. Of these, 36 000 were family heads.

We All Lose

Even those of us with jobs are not immune from the impacts of unemployment. The Edmonton Social Planning Council has calculated that from 1982 to 1986 unemployment cost Albertans \$31.5 billion in terms of lost production. Unemployment has been linked with increases in suicides, mental and physical health problems, alcoholism, family deterioration, and violence against women and children. If the costs to society of these social impacts were added in, the economic cost figure would be at least \$60 billion for Alberta alone in the 1982 to 1986 period.

At the same time there has been an increase in expenditures for social programs. In the same five-year period, UIC payments to Albertans have been more than \$4 billion and social allowance payments to employable persons more than \$640 million. These payments have had to be made by government in the face of potential lost tax revenues of more than \$7.5 billion. These increasing expenditures and lost tax revenues represent a burden to those who are working and paying taxes.

Does anyone really care whether we have the third lowest unemployment rate, and the highest participation rate compared to other provinces? Certainly the unemployed don't. They want jobs.

As the recession has continued in Alberta, government economic policies have been more concerned with reducing the size of the government deficit and maintaining the Heritage Savings Trust Fund than reducing the number of jobless. This preoccupation has, over the last five years, cost us an amount more than three times the value of our Heritage Trust Fund. Given the massive social and economic costs associated with unemployment, it is clear that government economic priorities and energies need to be directed toward getting unemployed Albertans back to work. The government cannot afford not to.

Henry Dembicki is a Planner with the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

TORNADO REVISITED

Don Milne

July 31, 1987 will go down in Edmonton's history as "Black Friday," the day of the tornado. By every measure it was the worst natural disaster ever experienced in this city of 576 000.

The storm, accompanied by winds estimated in excess of 431 miles per hour and heavy rainfall, created problems in many parts of Alberta. Problems, ranging from wind damage, loss of utility services and flooding, to injury and death in the path of the tornado itself. The funnel touched the ground south of the City of Edmonton, tore a path up the east side of the city, laying waste an industrial area, residences and a trailer park. In its wake it left 27 dead, 180 injured and property damage in excess of \$250 million.

A severe weather warning was received by the City of Edmonton at approximately 3:30 p.m. Within minutes the tornado had hit, emergency calls began flooding in and the City's emergency response system was activated. Primary response teams from the City of Edmonton's Ambulance Authority, Fire and Police Departments, Water and Sanitation, Transportation (Engineering and Transit), Power and Telephones responded. Surrounding municipalities such as Redwater and Hobbema provided ambulance units, and trained rescue teams were brought in from as far away as Grande Cache. The provincial helicopter ambulance service was also pressed into service.

Rescue operations continued into Saturday, tending to trapped persons, the injured and the dead. At the peak of emergency response efforts, the Fire Department alone had 396 people on duty. Off-duty City personnel from almost every department were called in or volunteered as the severity of the disaster became known.

Senior City departmental personnel were represented in the Emergency Operations Centre set up in City Hall. On site command centres were established by the Police Department at Millwoods, Strathcona Industrial Park, Clareview and the Evergreen Mobile Park.

Strong support was provided by Alberta Pub-

lic Safety Services and emergency response experts on a variety of fronts, including dangerous goods teams.

As the severity of the emergency became known, offers of assistance came from every quarter. Voluntary agencies including the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Emergency Relief Services, St. John Ambulance and many others provided services. Inquiries from all over the world came close to totally overloading the essential telephone communications system. Hundreds of offers for volunteer assistance came from Edmonton and its neighbouring municipalities.

Secondary support services including health and social services were in action from the outset, establishing a reception centre and ambulance staging centre at Bonnie Doon High School and later, a unique multi-service centre at M.E. LaZerte Composite High School.

Co-ordinated by Edmonton Social Services and Alberta Public Safety Services, the Victim Assistance Centre included the Red Cross (registration and inquiry), Edmonton Social Services (assessment, referral), Alberta Public Safety Services (property loss), Alberta Social Services (income support), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (housing units), Water and Sanitation (utilities and clearing), Workers' Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Salvation Army in association with the Emergency Relief Services, Edmonton Food Bank (food, clothing and furniture), Edmonton Board of Health (counselling) in association with Alberta Mental Health Services and the Alberta Psychologists Association, The Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Mennonite Disaster Relief Committee, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Health and Welfare Canada, and Canada Employment and Immigration. This unique, tri-government community one-stop service centre operated from August 3rd to 10th, following which a smaller centre was set up at Evergreen Trailer Court for two days. The M. E. LaZerte Centre serviced 842 families.

The Tornado Aftermath

The response to the tornado was, in every sense, a community collaboration. It is impossible to tally up the thousands of hours of unpaid volunteer service contributed to rescue operations, rebuilding, and personal and family support for survivors. Donations of food, clothing, furnishings and money were received from every corner of Canada and from outside the country. As of March 10, 1988 the Red Cross Relief Fund stood at \$2.34 million.

The physical and mental injuries suffered by some survivors will take time to heal. For others, because of severe physical injury or the death of loved ones, the tornado has meant radically changed lives.

The Edmonton Board of Health, in association with Alberta Mental Health Services and Edmonton Social Services, has established the Tornado Response and Co-ordinating Committee (TRACC) to oversee continuing inter-agency involvement in meeting the ongoing needs of survivors. A special seminar, addressed by leading disaster recovery experts, was attended by helping professionals from government and non-government health and counselling agencies.

Door to door contacts continue to be made by Public Health Nurses in the areas affected by the tornado to ensure that all survivors receive support, information and assistance, in accessing relevant community services. An inter-agency newsletter has been established with United Way funding to keep agencies informed of ongoing tornado recovery activities. Alberta Mental Health Services has provided ongoing therapeutic counselling and has conducted debriefings for service personnel, employee groups and the media. Community workers with Edmonton Social Services have been working with the affected communities to support the re-establishment of community. With the help of Red Cross and Rotary Club funding, a one-year youth project employing two youth workers has been active in Clareview and Evergreen. Citizen groups, such as the Mennonite Christian Public Service, have continued to provide volunteer labour for structural rebuilding, and The Christian Reformed Disaster Services Committee has worked with individuals and families to provide support, advocacy and referral.

Some survivors and businesses have still not been able to return to their normal lives due to delays in legal and insurance settlements, as well as shortages of workers skilled in certain types of rebuilding.

Lessons Learned

No plan can provide for every contingency. However, useful lessons have been learned that will assist Edmonton and other communities to prepare measures for future emergency responses.

The tornado emergency demonstrated the need for more effective means of utilizing non-governmental agencies and individual volunteers, as well as for channelling donated resources. A concerted effort must be made to negotiate roles and responsibilities so that people and organizations will know when, how and where they can make their maximum contribution.

Much has been learned about the ability of the media to generate and direct public response to disasters, and of the need for clear information to be disseminated to the public on a continuous basis. The media are a most important information system.

It was also learned that both the levels and lines of authority in a disaster response must be clear. Emergency response personnel must understand the flow of communication and know who is in charge at the various sites of emergency operations. Alternative systems of communication need to be explored and developed. During the initial stages of the disaster response, difficulty was experienced in obtaining accurate and up-to-date information about the situation at the incident sites.

At the scene of a disaster, police necessarily control entry to the site. Pre-authorized access of possible emergency response services could speed assessment and mobilization of support resources.

Overall, the response to the tornado demonstrated that organizations of varying sizes, mandates and auspices can come together and work effectively in a time of crisis. One year later, Edmonton is still remembering, recovering and learning.

Don Milne is the Manager of the Social Housing and Planning Branch, Edmonton Social Services.

FIRST READING is published six times per year by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. If you would like to receive the publication on a regular basis write to FIRST READING, #418, 10010 - 105 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 1C4, or telephone (403) 423-2031. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council. The editor of FIRST READING is Joseph Miller. The financial assistance of the United Way is gratefully acknowledged.

Second Class Mail
Registration No. 6390
i.d. 08/88

ISSN 0824-197X

COUNCIL NEWS



Shocking Pink Paper

For the third time, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has made available a "Shocking Pink Paper" prior to a federal election. Compact and concise, this paper provides a synopsis of issues that are of interest and concern to women. Included with each synopsis is one or more questions pertaining to issues that should be raised with each and every federal election candidate. Copies of the paper are available at the ESPC office.

Unemployed People's Support

The U.P.S. program, recently initiated by the Edmonton Social Planning Council in conjunction with the Family Life Education Council and the City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation Department, is pleased to announce that a second support group is now underway.

Monthly group sessions provide people who are unemployed with the opportunity to share their concerns, experiences and feelings about being unemployed. In addition, participants are assisted in recognizing and accessing community and recreation resources available to them.

There are no fees for participants, and qualified child care is available free of charge. If you know someone who would benefit from attending U.P.S. sessions, please have them contact the

U.P.S. office at 421-9570. The next group will be run Tuesdays and Thursdays, August 9 - September 1, from 9 a.m. to noon at the office of the Family Life Education Council.

Premier's Commission on Health Care

The Edmonton Social Planning Council will be presenting a brief to the Premier's Commission in September. If you have information you feel the Commission should be made aware of regarding the future of health care in Alberta please contact Henry Dembicki at the ESPC office.

Brown Bag Forums - 1988 Fall Series

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is pleased to invite you to attend the 1988 Fall Brown Bag Forum Series starting Wednesday, September 14th in the 3rd Floor Boardroom of the Commonwealth Building, 9912-106 Street. Beginning at 12:10 pm, this forum will look at the environmental and social impacts of the proposed Free Trade Agreement.

Other upcoming dates and topics include:

October 12 - Changes in Immigration Policy

November 9 - Health Care: Midwifery

December 14 - Changes to the Child Welfare Act