



A Look at Welfare Reform

Welfare reform in Ontario: Will the momentum hold?

A combination of public consensus and political will have given Ontario's social assistance program a strong nudge towards reform. But will the process continue?

Ontario has already implemented a number of measures recommended as the first stage of major welfare reform--some of them as dramatic as the decision to abolish health care premiums and replacing them with a payroll tax. The province has added about \$450 million to its budget in order to finance this first phase of reform.

But the momentum towards a wholesale revamping of Ontario's social assistance system cannot yet be taken for granted.

The process of reform

In 1986, the Ontario government established the Social Assistance Review Committee to undertake a major review of the province's social assistance program.

The review was overdue. Ontario's program is governed by two pieces of legislation, the General Welfare Assistance Act and the Family Benefits Act, neither of which had been significantly changed in twenty years. Over the years, a cumbersome, two-tier system had evolved, that provided benefits in a complex and uneven manner.

The 12-member review committee included a broad cross-section of people, including people who had administered or received social assistance benefits. They launched into an extensive period of public consultation, receiving more than 1500 submissions during public hearings across Ontario.

The committee's final report contained 274 recommendations, ranging from relatively minor adjust-

ing of specific regulations to major re-drafting of legislation.

A fundamental shift in viewpoint

In broad terms, the committee concluded that Ontario's social assistance system should be one that "...views all social assistance recipients, like all members of society, as people in transition."

There must be "a fundamental shift" away from viewing social assistance in the traditional model of a gift or privilege to the needy. Instead, it has to be viewed as a right and as an essential investment by

Also in this issue:

Income Security Action Committee addresses access to the labour market page 4

An interview with John Oldring page 6

Tracking the Trends: A successful combined effort page 9

ESPC 50th Anniversary Celebration Plans page 11

Welfare reform in Ontario (continued from page 1)

society in its members.

"The effects of poverty go beyond the exclusion of individuals from society. The nurturing of human resources is critical in a service and knowledge based economy," says the summary report.

The review also concluded that social assistance has to be viewed in a broader context than simply that of providing adequate financial support.

Long-term change in broader social and economic opportunities outside the social assistance system, including education, health and housing. A broad integration of economic and social policy is essential.

"Some of the strongest barriers to self-reliance exist outside the sphere of the social assistance system. High levels of unemployment function as the greatest and most impenetrable barrier for recipients."

Recurring themes

A number of issues recurred in the submissions made to the committee and found their way into the final report and recommendations. Many bear a striking similarity to issues in Alberta.

Housing — Housing emerged again and again as a concern with the existing Ontario system. Inadequate benefits were almost invariably linked to the lack of affordable housing.

The problem will require a two-pronged attack, says the report: a formula for calculating benefits that reflects actual shelter costs more closely, and

"We strongly reject the argument that the "spur of poverty" is still essential in the drive to self-sufficiency."

creative programs to increase the supply of housing.

Child Poverty — "The method used to compile social assistance statistics also masks one startling fact: 37% of all beneficiaries of social assistance—205,000 people—are children under 18."

"Policing" the system — "The system currently places most of its emphasis on techniques designed to prevent abuse on the part of recipients.

"Despite this, little is known about the amount of fraud, the effectiveness (and cost-effectiveness) of measures taken against it, and whether the harm

done by these measures in some cases outweighs the good."

Focus of reform

A new social assistance program must overcome major problems in the existing system, says the summary report. Tinkering will not suffice; an extensive overhaul is needed. The problems include:

Lack of direction - Ontario's existing system is not guided by clear policy, and therefore its effectiveness can't be measured.

Inadequate benefits - "No logical or rational method of establishing benefit levels exists, resulting in benefits that fall well below any poverty line."

Disincentives to transition - The system presents major financial disincentives—such as the discontinuation of health benefits—for people who would wish to leave it. Services that would help recipients become independent are hard to find, if they are available at all.

One important mechanism to assist in transition recommended by the committee is the establishment of two distinct but complementary functions in a restructured social assistance system. The first would be similar to the income support and related services currently provided by the system.

The second would be "opportunity planning"—using skilled staff to help people identify the strategies that would enable them to leave social assistance or live more independently in the community.

Lack of co-ordination - ". . . programs intended to benefit social assistance recipients and other low income people often work at cross-purposes, and end up being ineffective and even counter-productive."

Complexity and unfairness — "The present social assistance system is highly complex, adversarial in its approach, stigmatizing and inequitable."

A surprising consensus

"I'd say the most interesting thing about this was the opinion that coalesced around the need for welfare reform," says George Thomson. Thomson, now deputy minister in Ontario's Department of Labour, chaired the review committee.

A variety of factors contributed to this wide acceptance, he says.

Welfare reform in Ontario (continued from page 2)

One had to do with how the need for reform was communicated, so that the messages were acceptable even in business circles.

"The 'transition' theme caught on and the business community picked it up," he says. According to Thomson the theme provided people with a new model for thinking about social assistance recipients.

The communication was strengthened by the pressure from strong advocacy groups throughout the province, who put a lot of work into lobbying the government.

Their efforts were helped by an unusual grant from the Laidlaw Foundation, which put up \$250,000 to fund advocacy advertising about the committee's recommendations. As Thomson points out, it's not often that welfare reform advocates can afford full-page ads in the *Globe and Mail*.

Another factor was that the problems of poverty had become suddenly more visible, even in prosperous Ontario. Evidence on the effects of child poverty was emerging; the homeless were more apparent in major cities; food banks had become common.

This awareness that poverty *is* real helped sensitize the public to the review committee's findings.

Finally, there was also a political motivation. There was a perception that the Liberal government had lost some of its early momentum, and the issue of welfare reform promised to fill a policy vacuum.

As well, says Thomson, the minister of community and social services had a deep personal commitment to the issue.

First phase of reform

The provincial government moved quite quickly after the review committee's report was released in 1988. Some of the measures already taken by the government include:

- establishment of a stronger, more independent appeal tribunal
- increases to the minimum wage, which have brought it now to \$5.40 an hour and will increase it by 2-3% a year above inflation until the 1975 purchasing level is restored.
- the abolition of health care premiums
- decreased tax-back rates to help the working poor. (Previous rates meant that for every dollar earned from income, a social assistance recipient lost more than a dollar in benefits.)

The first phase of changes, however, does not represent a commitment to overhauling the whole system. It simply removes some of the obvious inequities and disincentives in the existing system.

So far, the Ontario government has not moved

on to the subsequent phases. These would require the drafting and implementation of new legislation; a move to achieve full adequacy of benefits; and the institution of new income security programs, including a children's benefit.

The future of reform

Will the momentum hold?

"I don't know the answer," says Thomson.

Several factors could slow the process. For one, other issues could easily arise to demand the government's attention. Without continued public pressure, welfare reform could move to the back burner.

Another is the sheer difficulty of the task, and the fact that the issues cross jurisdictional lines. Thomson points out that the federal government's decision to put a ceiling on payments to provinces under the Canada Assistance Plan (the program that provides federal funds for social programs) has had a dampening effect on Ontario's efforts.

"Some of the next stages will require the feds," he says.

A major stumbling block is, of course, likely to be the sheer cost of implementing all the recommendations. Moving benefits to an adequate level is

"Seldom do advocates for welfare reform have the money for full-page ads in the *Globe and Mail*."

expected to cost approximately \$2.1 billion—a sum sure to make any provincial government nervous.

The committee's summary report addresses this issue of cost, pointing out that we must recognize that large amounts of money—\$60 billion in Canada overall—are already spent on social assistance.

"It is preferable to spend the money required to create a system that will work rather than continuing to spend large sums on one that does not."

The report goes on to point out that many experts in the field believe that social spending as a whole "is not inherently inconsistent or incompatible with economic growth and productivity."

"We are also encouraged by the results emerging from recent U.S. programs that suggest that programs to help recipients become employed can result in net long-term savings to the public purse."

Alberta has the public consensus that precipitated welfare reform in Ontario. We now require the political will. ♦

Labour Market Strategy in the '90s Must Include Opportunities for those on Welfare

Access to the labour market is one of three critical areas for success singled out by Career Development and Employment in order to develop Alberta's human resources to meet the demands of global competition.

The need to increase entry level skills, increase employability of laid-off workers and increase participation of groups with barriers to employment have been defined as goals the department needs to meet in order to succeed in this area.

The Income Security Action Committee (ISAC) has been meeting with planners in Alberta Career Development and Employment to consult on a new labour-market strategy. ISAC chair Margaret Duncan speaks highly of the process.

"One thing that ISAC brings to the process is our primary concern — people who have been excluded from the market and people only marginally involved," Duncan says. "We don't want to see people going through program after program with no results.

It causes people to blame themselves and others to blame them for going through the program and still not having a job."

She says one of the important points made by ISAC members is that people who have been excluded have learned not to trust social institutions as they have not been served well by them. A task of Career Development will be to develop that trust.

The chair of the inter-agency group could not say why programs have failed in the past. "We haven't seen any departmental evaluations," she says. "The only evaluation we can go on is the large number of people remaining on social allowance and the high rate of unemployment."

Service delivery

ISAC has also talked to Career Development and Employment about various ways the department might deliver services. One suggestion has been to assign staff people to offices in community agencies to deliver career counselling.

"People are already coming to the Bissell Centre and Boyle Street Co-op. These are not scary government offices," Duncan says. "It would be wonderful to have a career development person involved in the service delivery of an agency. They would quickly learn what works and what doesn't."

Career Development and Employment has also been invited to come out and consult with the clients of some of the organizations involved in ISAC. "They could talk to the women in the women's emer-

gency accommodation or the Boyle McCauley Health Centre and ask them what they need," Duncan suggests. "Planning of any sort is done well when people are consulted in the process."

High unemployment

ISAC believes any training, life skills development, skills upgrading, or work experience is good, but Duncan says it comes to nothing if the unemployment rate remains at eight per cent in Edmonton.

"Over the past 15 years we have accepted higher rates of unemployment as normal and at the same time blamed those people who are not working for some sort of personal failure," she says.

Eight per cent of the people surveyed said they are available for work, they're looking for a job and unable to find one, ISAC's chair explains. This leads to family difficulties, loss of feelings of self worth and competence, lower standards of living, how and whether they socialize with friends.

She noted that the unemployment rate in Calgary is lower — currently running at six per cent. This is due, she believes, to the higher number of professional people who have the wherewithal to find other jobs and sell their skills.

Partnership is critical

ISAC is concerned that Career Development and Employment cannot accomplish the employment of marginal people by themselves. Education, Family and Social Services, Health and Economic Development all have to be working together.

"As long as we have people who are significantly less healthy than the overall population, they will simply not be up to competing in the marketplace.

"As long as we have a 30 per cent drop out rate from high school, we know we're going to have labour market difficulties.

"As long as we feed and house children inadequately in the Social Allowance program, we are ensuring, from an early age, that they're not going to be able to compete on an equal footing," Duncan notes.

Other societies have taken these issues extremely seriously and made efforts to address them in a broad manner, Duncan says. She points to Sweden as a prime example with an unemployment rate of 1.8 per cent. "It can be done." ♦

Editorial Comment

A Government Without Shame?

*By Peter Faid, Executive Director
Edmonton Social Planning Council*

Why is it that those who need our help the most actually receive the least? Why is it that the very systems we have set up to support the poor help to perpetuate the very conditions that they are supposedly intended to solve? Why is it when the damaging consequences of poverty to our families and our communities is so readily apparent that our attitudes towards the poor tend to become even harsher? In the words of Martin Rein its the 'iron law of welfare' at work.

Despite frequent reassurances from the minister of Family and Social Services that the provincial government appreciates the need to reform our welfare system the economic plight of those on welfare in Alberta continues to worsen day by day. The failure of the government to respond reminds us that poverty is not a thing apart. It is a condition created and justified by the expectations imposed by an affluent society upon those whom it continues to deny the resources that are vital to their survival. Why must the poor wait for a substantial rise in the price of West Texas crude before welfare benefit levels are restored to at least their 1980 levels?

Since 1980 our consumer prices have risen by 61% while average earnings have increased by 40%. During the same time period MLA salaries and allowances have jumped by 112%. For those on welfare it has been the very opposite. When the rising cost of living is taken into account most welfare families are 30% worse off now than similar families in 1980, while single people have experienced a 70% decline in the value of their allowances. Of course welfare benefits have never been generous and most recipients are left with an income level that is about half of the official Statistics Canada poverty line!



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Surely the time for significant reform in the province's welfare system is long past due. The recent Ontario report *Transitions* prepared by the Social Assistance Review Committee clearly demonstrates that the first task in any reform is to challenge the underlying assumptions that the rest of society makes about those who are poor. Poverty is not a consequence of individual failings. Consequently we should never accept solutions under the guise of welfare reform that continue to limit already inadequate welfare benefits or propose short-term job creation on the mistaken belief that these proposals will somehow restore individual responsibility. The iron law of welfare must meet its match if social justice for the poor is to prevail.◊

An interview with the minister

Oldring questioned on Welfare Reform

An edition of First Reading concerning welfare reform would not be complete without a response from the Department of Alberta Family & Social Services. We are pleased to include a recent interview with John Oldring.

First Reading: What do you consider to be the most important issues facing you as minister of this department?

John Oldring: First and foremost would be poverty. The greatest resource that we have as a province are our people. I find it absolutely tragic that we have 150,000 Albertans who are reliant on the services of our social allowance program and I know for the most part, that's not where they want to be. I just see that as a tragic under-utilization of our greatest resource — our people.

Another tough issue that we face is family violence. I particularly feel badly about the children who are being abused. I see some very tragic, sad letters in my office from time to time, and I think that's been one of the hardest things for me to deal with. Of course we're all seeing the problems and we're all still struggling to find the solutions.

First Reading: When you conclude your term as minister, what legacy would you like to have left?

Oldring: Well, I'd like to think that we can start to shift some of the trends. In the last ten years, we've seen our caseloads almost triple. We know that with the structural poverty that we have to deal with today, the answers are a lot more complex than just finding a job opportunity and a prosperous economy. We have to look for new answers and be more creative.

First Reading: When you say structural poverty, what do you mean?



Oldring: Well it means recognizing that it's cyclical, recognizing some of the things that contribute to it. We know as an example that if people can

get at least a grade twelve education, the chances of living below the poverty line diminish considerably. We know that if there are two income earners in the family — that is if people who are married, stay married — the chances of living below the poverty line diminish considerably. Illiteracy is a problem and so is alcohol in a number of these situations.

I think that we've done a good job at flushing the family violence problem out into the open. It was a problem that society didn't want to admit that we had. It was easier to sweep it under the carpet and pretend that it didn't exist. I think that Albertans and Canadians are realizing that family violence is a very real, and a very serious problem and I guess that has to be step one.

Step two is how are we going to deal with it? We've started some of that progress here in Alberta. We have an office for Prevention of Family Violence and that was the first in Canada. We played a leading role in what is now known as the Rogers' report dealing with child abuse and family violence. Albertans were recognized for the expertise that we had in this province.

But there's more to be done and I think that what we're trying to do now is find out what are the solutions; what are the next steps. As a province, we're funding some demonstration projects, some education programs that relate to family violence and we're hoping there might be some answers there. We've worked very closely with our federal counterparts in the Rogers' report and we're anxious to see what role they're going to play in addressing this issue. We're also recognizing more and more that government can't do it all, that we don't have all the answers and it's important for us to be able to work with communities and community agencies. I'm encouraged by the response that I've seen from within communities across this province.

First Reading: A major issue during your term has been the social workers' strike. In your view, what impact has the strike had?

Oldring: I feel very badly about the social workers strike. Obviously, it's had an impact on all of us. There are wounds to heal. I feel badly for workers who both stayed on the job site and who crossed the picket lines, because it's been a very

Alberta Family and Social Services minister
John Oldring

Interview with the minister

(continued from page 6)

difficult issue for them. I'm just anxious to see it as far behind us as we can put it and anxious to get on with addressing the issues that were raised, certainly during the strike, but in my mind they were raised long before the strike. I've been in this office for just over a year now, and felt that we were making some real meaningful progress as it relates to those issues. I know that I personally had the opportunity to talk with front-line social workers from every office in our province in both the income security side and the child welfare side, and that gave me a lot of helpful information. Unfortunately it's sad but true that in a lot of ways the strike set us back in terms of the progress that was being made.

First Reading: When you say it's set progress back, what exactly do you mean by that?

Oldring: Well I think obviously there were some interruptions in the efforts that we were making as a department as a result of the strike in terms of where we had to focus our resources.

People have asked me who won and who lost, and of course, nobody wins, we all lose. I guess the challenge we all face is to put this thing behind us. Let's work together and get on with cooperative efforts, because it will take all of us working together. I'm going to have to do a better job of making sure that I understand their needs and their problems and I hope that they'll try to appreciate some of the challenges I face too and by having a better understanding of that, we'll be able to work together.

Hopefully, what's going to bring us all together is the Albertans we serve — the clients that need us. It's their interests that we're all going to have to put first and foremost and hopefully that will be the common bond.

First Reading: One of the things that came out of the strike is the department has announced the establishment of a committee to look into caseloads. How will the committee be set up, what authority will it have to make and implement recommendations?

Oldring: The committee is really there to help us implement some of the changes. They're there to help establish caseloads, although we've made considerable progress there. The Jones report will help us establish caseloads on the child welfare side. On the income security side we were making some progress there, looking at some new things. The

committee will have workers' representation and management and they'll be making recommendations directly to the deputy minister.

I think more than anything what the establishment of the committee is saying is that we are committed to working with them to resolve the caseload problem. I want to be a fair employer. I want them to have reasonable workloads and that's a real challenge for all of us, but I think that if we work together we can meet that challenge and see some very meaningful progress there.

First Reading: What kind of timelines are you looking at?

Oldring: I think that we're going to start to see some initiatives announced very quickly. Obviously we're not going to be able to resolve all the issues tomorrow, but we're certainly going to make a concerted effort to work towards resolutions as quickly and reasonably as humanly possible.

First Reading: You have said the government will be increasing social allowance rates. When is that going to happen?

Oldring: I'm very anxious to get on with that. What we're doing right now as a government is we're looking at the total picture. That is to say I'm looking at all our programs and delivery of services and although we recognize that there's a need to increase food and shelter rates, and I'm certainly committed to that, we also realize that there's got to be other changes. Obviously there's something we're not doing right and we've got to look at how we're delivering our programs. I want to take the necessary time to ensure those changes are the right ones and to be able to consult with a number of the advocacy groups and the users. I'm not going to compromise the integrity of the changes by rushing them through too quickly, and yet I'm trying to balance that with what I see as an urgency as it relates to food and shelter rates.

I'm working very closely with my cabinet and caucus colleagues who have also put a great deal of effort into this program. I'm at the point now where I'll be taking some of these thoughts and ideas to some of what I consider to be the stakeholders — some of the community agency groups — and hopefully we can get on with that very quickly and then we'll be in the position to make some announcements at the end of the summer or in the early part of fall.

First Reading: Supplementary to that, will the

Interview with the minister
(continued from page 7)

increases be in line with the Consumer Price Index?

Oldring: There's always a number of factors that we take into consideration when we're looking at increases and certainly that will be one of them. We're also evaluating shelter rates and vacancy rates across the province. We utilize the nutritional food basket as a guideline on the food rates.

First Reading: Are you predicting an end to the discrimination on the basis of "employable" or "unemployable" status?

Oldring: What we're looking at there is a number of changes in terms of how we categorize recipients. We're at a point where we think we know the direction we're going to go in. We know it's important to put a higher emphasis on independence and we're going to that, but before I finalize anything I want to make sure that we have the opportunity of input from Albertans.

First Reading: What do you mean by 'putting a higher emphasis on independence'?

Oldring: I think that, for the most part, we have people who want to be independent. We have people who don't want to be on social allowance, who want to be back in the mainstream of society. They want to be contributing members of society. What I'm saying is that we need to work a little harder at helping those individuals become independent again and we have to perhaps refocus our programs. And that's one of the focuses we're putting on our social reforms at this time.

First Reading: We hear there are some new initiatives being planned in terms of job creation. Can you tell us more about what's being considered and why you think it will be more successful now than in the past?

Oldring: I'm working very closely with the minister responsible for Career Development and Employment. I'm very pleased that Mr. Weiss carries into that portfolio some time spent as the associate minister of Family and Social Services — here long enough to at least have an appreciation for some of the challenges we face on this side.

We've had some success but not as much success as we'd like to have had, and again it tells us that there's something that we're not doing properly,

there's something that we can do better.

First Reading: In terms of details of the programs, can you tell us anything?

Oldring: I think we have to look at the overall delivery of services. Are the clients that we were referring to Career Development and Employment appropriate ones and were we properly matching up people for the jobs that were available? Did they have the necessary skills and were they ready for the transition? I think those are the things we'll hopefully be focussing the programs towards.

First Reading: One of the concerns is always loss of health benefits.

Oldring: That's a major stumbling block, particularly if you're a single parent mother and all of a sudden you're being told you have to give up medical benefits and dental benefits, that's a pretty big jump. I don't want to prejudge or pre-announce any changes that we will be making. Certainly it's a barrier that's there and I think there's something we can do to work around it and break it down.

First Reading: Is there any way of perhaps extending benefits?

Oldring: That's one of the things we're looking at. We recognize that one of the greatest disincentives to making that transition into the job force is fear of medical, dental, prescription, eye glasses, all those kinds of things. For a young mother to think her children might have to go without any of those things is a great fear and so certainly we're looking at perhaps being able to extend those benefits beyond their file on social allowance.

First Reading: Is there anything more you'd like to add regarding your role as minister?

Oldring: There are challenges that have been with us for many, many years, and although we've come a long way as a province and as a society, I recognize that there's still a long way to go. So, with some intrepidity, I actually look forward to working with Albertans and together, hopefully meeting the challenge. ♦

Tracking the Trends

Families With Children

The second edition of **Tracking the Trends**, a publication which identifies timely information on major social and economic trends affecting Edmonton and helps to anticipate changing needs, was distributed in the community in July. The publication is important to local providers of human services and their funders and is the combined effort of **Alberta Family and Social Services, United Way of Edmonton and Area, Edmonton Community and Family Social Services Alberta Mental Health Services, Edmonton Board of Health and the Edmonton Social Planning Council.**

The Community Trends Working Group was formed including representatives from each of the major organizations involved. The findings of this inter-agency group are based on statistical data as well as information obtained from questionnaires and focus group participants. Responding to a number of requests, the group included comparative information on the urban areas that surround Edmonton.

The organizations responsible for Tracking the Trends point out that although immediate answers are not available, the identification of trends is crucial to the planning of new programs and policy initiatives.

Nine major trends likely to have a significant influence on services for families with children have been defined by the Working Group.

Growing gap between rich and poor

The focus groups predict the next decade will see more families living in poverty. The number of families with marginal incomes is increasing and inter-generational dependency on welfare is growing.

"People employed in minimum wage types of jobs will fall further and further behind in their ability to provide for their families," said one focus group participant. "This will result in increased need for school feeding programs, subsidized recreational opportunities and medical care. When children grow up in such an impoverished environment, they have greater need for enrichment programs during their school years."

Service implications of this trend include an increasing demand for good quality, affordable housing and for support services for troubled families. Crisis intervention rather than prevention will characterize many of the services that are available for poorer families and their children.

Changing family structure

There will be a changing structure of families with more single-parent and blended families. At the same time, less support will be available from 'extended' family members, the report concludes. Fewer children will grow up with both of their natural parents in the same household.

"Society will recognize that what constitutes a 'family' has and will continue to change," commented one focus group participant.

The report suggests a need for public education to achieve a greater understanding and acceptance of the various family structures including gay and lesbian families. Service implications also include more outreach and self-help programs for families, programs to help children cope with divorce, courses which teach parenting skills and agencies which provide appropriate role models.

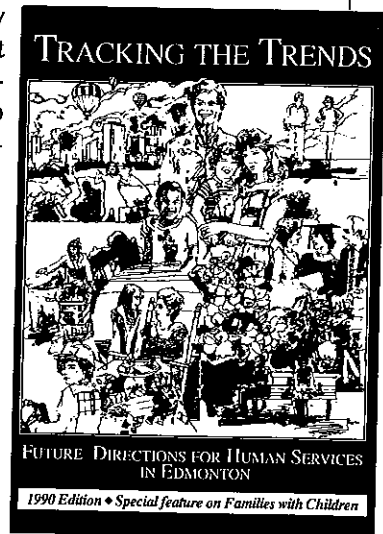
Changing patterns

The economic patterns of families with children will change significantly in the decade ahead as both parents, out of preference and necessity, enter the workforce.

There will be increasing pressure on young people to take on part-time jobs in order to help support the family.

"There will continue to be an increasing percentage of women in the work force, the majority because of economic need. Therefore they will not be as available to provide child care and support to extended family, to serve as volunteers, to provide informal networking and social support within neighbourhoods and communities," noted one focus group participant.

Service implications include a greater demand for affordable quality day care and a better balance between work and family responsibilities. Parental leave and flexible hours of work will need to be accepted by employers as essential conditions of work.



Greater individual responsibility

As government funding for social programs becomes more restricted, there will be increasing pressure on families with children to accept greater responsibility for their own welfare.

An increasing emphasis on a market-driven approach to human services will mean a declining commitment to universal sharing of the costs of essential services, the report predicts. Governments will pursue policies of privatization and fiscal restraint and will attempt to shift responsibility for meeting some human service needs to families without a corresponding shift in resources.

Privatized human services will mean less coordination and more competition among existing service providers and the eventual emergence of a two-tier system where families without financial resources will be left with non-existent or inferior services, according to the report. Cutbacks in resources received from governments will result in additional pressure upon community agencies to seek alternative funding and to become more reliant upon volunteers for the delivery of services.

Aging population

An aging population will shift the focus of many issues away from the family and children. An increasing anti-child sentiment is discernible, leading to concern about the obligation to contribute to the cost of services intended for families with children and an increasing expectation for those families to take responsibility for meeting their own economic and social needs.

"The large group of baby boomers will become more concerned with middle age issues. Legislators and funders will gradually become less interested in family issues and more concerned with the problems associated with aging," commented one focus group participant.

Other trends

There will be an increasing reliance on more formal means of intervention in attempting to resolve family differences and disputes, the report predicts. Native and Métis families will continue to move to larger urban areas in the province. New reproductive technologies and the increased ability to save the lives of children born with severe disabilities will have an important impact on families in the next decade.

Copies of Tracking the Trends are available at the ESPC office free of charge if picked up or for a \$2 handling fee if mailed. ♦

Recommended Reading

The resource library at the Edmonton Social Planning Council is open to the public during regular office hours.

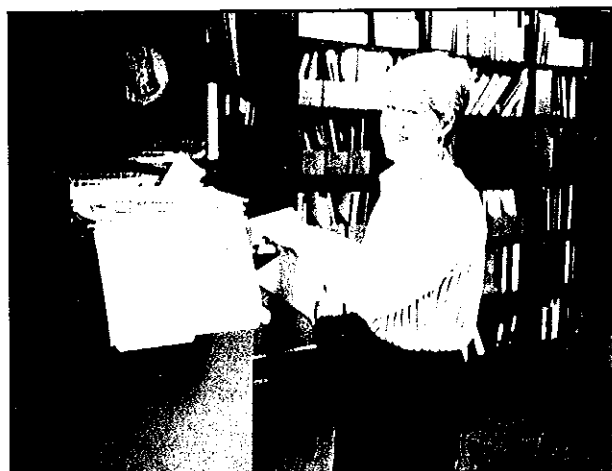
Transitions. Report of the Social Assistance Review Committee. September, 1988. The committee analysed the guiding principle and objectives of social assistance and related programs in Ontario.

Report of the Manitoba Task Force on Social Assistance. September, 1983. The task force provided a critique of the social assistance program and made recommendations to the Department of Community Services and Corrections.

Welfare in Canada. The Tangled Safety Net. A Report by the National Council of Welfare. November, 1987. The first comprehensive national analysis of social assistance programs operated by the provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

Report on the Task Force on Programs for Social Assistance Recipients. Department of Employment and Immigration's Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre. No date. The mandate of the task force was to examine the barriers that social assistance recipients face in making the transition from welfare to employment, and to make recommendations.

Social Allowance Comparisons Project. ESPC. February, 1990. Comparative statistics for social allowance, and **Poverty Income Eligibility and Earning Exemptions**, April, 1990 as compiled by Karen Potts, BSW student.



Office & Communications Assistant Kathie Sutherland maintains an up-to-date library.

Stephen Lewis Guest Speaker for Council's Celebration Dinner

In October the Edmonton Social Planning Council will celebrate 50 years of social planning, social action and social change.

Since 1940 ESPC has worked to improve social conditions by listening to people whose lives are affected by government programs and policies. Some main areas of the Council's involvement include applied research, policy review, community development and volunteer organization support.

Well known Edmontonian Bettie Hewes is chairperson for the anniversary committee and is also a past President and a former Executive Director of the Social Planning Council.

Anniversary Dinner

An anniversary dinner has been planned for October 17, 1990 at the Westin Hotel to celebrate the accomplishments of 50 years and to honour those involved.

Bev Decore, chairperson of the dinner committee, anticipates the attendance of many past Presidents and former members of the Board of Directors. An enormous amount of work has gone into locating people with ties to the Council and the members of the committee and the staff of ESPC have been quite successful. However, anyone who may have been missed still has time to contact the office if they would like to attend.

Stephen Lewis, the former ambassador to the

United Nations, will be the guest speaker for the 50th Anniversary Dinner. The theme of his speech will be: Accepting the Challenge of Change: Future of Social Policy.

Lewis has been a noted radio and television commentator on public issues, a prominent labour relations arbitrator, provincial leader of the Ontario NDP and head of the

ing a book on the UN and foreign policy.

Lewis continues to act, in a "personal capacity", as Special Advisor on Africa to the Secretary-General of the UN. Last February, he was appointed as Special Representative for UNICEF. In this capacity, he travels widely four months of the year, acting as an international spokesperson for UNICEF's passionate advocacy of the rights and needs of children — especially children of the developing world.

Commemorative Book

To mark the occasion, a commemorative book entitled A Wealth of Voices will soon be published.

It will provide individuals who have a past involvement with the Council an opportunity to reminisce and for newcomers it will serve as a wonderful introduction. The book will be available in September and can be purchased at the ESPC office.

Not only is the book an interesting chronicle of the Council's five decades it is also an enlightening, often comical, sometimes worrisome account of past social issues and road blocks which have an uncomfortable ring of familiarity.

It is noted that many of the concerns of the Edmonton Social Planning Council thirty and forty years ago remain issues of concern today. Ongoing funding concerns, the need for adequate, low income housing, and the hope to establish strong business connections continue to be part of the Council's agenda.

Coffee Mugs

Another item marking the anniversary are coffee mugs which have been designed for the Council by local potter, Noboru Kubo. They are available from the ESPC office at a cost of \$10 each.

Tickets

The reception at the Westin starts at 6:00 p.m. Dinner will follow at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$40 each and are available from the office of the ESPC. Call 423-2031 for further information. ♦



Stephen Lewis

Official Opposition in that province. He is currently in the process of writ-

To:

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Council Briefs

Board elects executive

On June 26th, 1990 the Board of Directors of the Edmonton Social Planning Council elected their new executive. Michael Phair will serve a second term as president of the Council. Bev Decore, Jeff Pearson and Elizabeth Massiah will act as vice-presidents. In addition, Jeff Pearson will chair the finance & administration committee and Elizabeth Massiah will chair the public education & membership committee. An ad hoc membership / fundraising drive committee has been formed and is reviewing procedures for a mail-out to increase membership and participation from the business and professional community.

Recommend a friend

A free Social Research Directory will be given to every ESPC member who recommends someone as a new member. Simply clip out the membership form below and fill in the name and address of the potential member. Include your own name and address, so we can send you your free copy of our Social Research Directory.

Membership Application

Membership Categories:

Individual	\$25.00
Family	\$35.00
Associate*	\$20.00
Organization	\$45.00
Limited Income	\$ 5.00

* Associate members don't have a vote or receive a discount on publications.

As a member you benefit by receiving:

- First Reading (a bi-monthly newsletter);
- Alberta Facts (a periodic fact sheet on poverty);
- notice of all ESPC public activities;
- a vote at the Annual General Meeting;
- a 15% discount on all publications distributed by the Council.

First Name

Last Name

Organization

Address

Postal Code

Home Telephone

Business Telephone

Social issues of interest

Please make cheque payable to:

Edmonton Social Planning Council
#41, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5
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SRD