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50th Anniversary Celebrations!

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Looking Back, Stepping Forward

The slogan for the Edmonton Social Planning Council's anniversary year, "Fifty Years of Commitment to Community", reflects the true vision of the Council's work. The sense of accomplishment coupled with the sense of what remains to be done echoed throughout the Council's 50th Anniversary celebration.

The Council's Anniversary Dinner at the Westin Hotel on October 17, 1990 was a remarkable, well attended event. A report of the celebration, as well as the keynote address by guest speaker, Jack London, and the 50th Anniversary Award winners, is included in this issue. The evening also marked the launching of **A Wealth of Voices - The History of the Edmonton Social Planning Council** and

As part of retrospection we decided to present a special edition of First Reading. In October, 1982 the Edmonton Social Planning Council printed the introductory issue of First Reading entitled "Decentralization of Alberta Social Services". Since that time 52 issues have been printed. Through First Reading the Council has endeavoured to address timely topics directly and accurately. This special edition of First Reading examines the Council's commitment as well as some of the issues which remain vital to our community.

We decided to look at four issues that have been addressed over the years to see what progress we've made. These four issues are **Daycare, Poverty, Community Development and Mental Health**. First Reading approached knowledgeable representatives in the community to review what has previously appeared in First Reading on these subjects and asked them to comment on where we were, where we are and where we should be. First Reading appreciates the time and effort on the part of those who responded to our request for submissions. We hope you find

their articles enlightening.

Also in this issue is a summary of an article written by Brian Wharf entitled "From Social Planning to Social Reform" which challenges Social Planning Councils to concentrate their efforts on mediation and advocacy.

October, 1990 is a time of change for the Edmonton Social Planning Council. As the Council celebrates 50 years of commitment to the community and as First Reading celebrates 8 years of reporting social policies and social realities locally, provincially and nationally, we are also marking the departure of the Council's longest serving Executive Director, Peter Faid.

After a decade of exemplary leadership in the community Peter is leaving the Council but, fortunately, he is not leaving the community. We will miss Peter's immeasurable contributions and the Board of Directors and staff of the Edmonton Social Planning Council would like to thank him and to wish him continued success.

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From Social Planning to Social Reform

Brian Wharf is the Dean of the faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. The article was originally presented as the keynote address at the National Meeting of Social Planning Councils in October, 1989.

What are the functions that Social Planning Councils (SPCs) should engage in? How can these functions serve the central mission of the SPC?

What should the central mission of SPCs be anyway?

These are the questions that Brian Wharf seeks to address in the context of the experiences of SPCs in the past two decades. In his keynote address at a recent national meeting of Social Planning Councils he discusses possibilities for success and acknowledges the persisting problems that limit the effectiveness of SPCs. Although not presently as closely involved in social planning as he was in the 1970s, Wharf's contact with SPC directors allows him to set the present activities of planning councils in historical context with the intention of charting a clear and focused future.

A Focus on Social Reform

Wharf suggests that the central mission of SPCs should focus away from allegedly "value-free" social planning and toward "social reform" as the underlying objective. Wharf rejects the social planning approach which does not necessarily link the mandate to implement as an intrinsic part of the planning process. Rather, he embraces the "to plan is to govern" dictum. According to this definition staff of social planning councils do not merely plan. They prepare studies and research reports and await the actions of others for implementation. An explicit recognition of the absence of mandate would force SPCs to confront the

these problems." Given this socially circumspect viewpoint, the primary concern of SPCs, nonetheless, should be narrowed to the poor and the powerless in society.

A Hierarchy of Functions

Toward this end, Wharf outlines a hierarchy of functions for SPCs. Of lowest priority are the functions of promoting inter-agency collaboration and locality development. He does not view these functions to be unproductive rather, "the reasons for the low ranking include the recognition that these activities can and are being performed by other organizations." These efforts contribute to the legitimacy and status of SPCs, especially in the early stage of the history of a council. However, often these collaborations exceed the actual outcomes.

In contrast, the needs assessment and research function provided by councils can prove to be valuable in providing social profiles of neighbourhoods and municipal areas which can provide useful information for a variety of social agencies. Research is not only a necessary function in its own right, but also constitutes the base for other functions. Thus the research undertaken to determine the adequacy of income and housing programs is essential for the advocacy work of councils. "Such research makes possible the advocacy function of the council," which is considered by Wharf to be a most commendable recent development, and one that should be occurring at national, provincial, and local levels. Although councils may feel occasionally that advocacy brings them "nothing but trouble" from funders, in the long term responsible advocacy is respected and rewarded. Wharf notes that even though some advocacy may seem radical politically, the negative repercussion do not necessarily follow. Politicians have come to recognize the role of such organizations and respect their unique viewpoint.

The Importance of Community

Citing a number of sources, Wharf argues that there is a consensus around the importance of "community" in social planning. "We seem to be witnessing a surge of interest in community by federal and provincial politicians. Institutions have and are being emptied, services have and are being privatized and the statements of the federal government call for community-based strategies as key components in the campaign for health for all". Nonetheless, he warns that this rebirth of community is not necessarily being accompanied by a clear understanding of "how communities can collaborate in these

" . . . the primary concern of SPCs, nonetheless, should be narrowed to the poor and the powerless in society."

reality that they can either "present plans in a passive fashion without attempting to influence implementation or they can engage in campaigns which strive for implementation". He replaces the passive connotation associated with planning in favour of the active idea of reform.

Wharf argues in favour of the SPCs' inclusive definition of 'social' which includes health, recreation, law enforcement, crime prevention, environmental matters, community economic development, and traditional social services. It "has allowed councils to gain knowledge of the connections between social problems and equally pertinent, the lack of connections between programs established to respond to

federal and provincial designs". He calls for working toward a better understanding of the dynamics of social planning and in particular how provincial ministries, organizations, and communities can cooperate effectively in implementing social plans.

Councils as Mediators and Advocates

Wharf suggests a mediating role between different levels of government and the community that councils could play in a variety of instances. Thus, Wharf regards the highest function of the SPC as that of acting as an advocate for the social well-being of communities, with the "poor and powerless as being their primary constituency." This is the most important and, according to Wharf, the most difficult of the functions of SPCs. It requires that councils address the challenge of promoting the social, economic, and environmental well-being of individuals and communities. They should seek to act as an advocate strong on the principles of justice, equality, and the dignity of all people in society. The utopian vision implicit in this role has been certainly difficult to achieve for at least two reasons. First, the existence of socially powerful interest groups that tend to look after themselves. Even in countries such as Canada, ways of life that protect the interests of certain groups of people ensure the cycle of success for them at the cost of the continuation of the cycle of poverty for others. Second, the enormity of the task is often so daunting that even small steps toward the goal of reform may be considered futile ones. Wharf suggests that more manageable goals than "saving the world" are necessary if the larger cause of utopia is to be advanced.

One of the main features of a reform perspective of social planning is the attempt to transform issues seen as essentially private to those that are seen as public: from an issue restricted to a "relatively small group of people and one relatively unaffected by social conditions" to one that is seen to affect "more people and is directly affected by social conditions".

Poverty and the Social Policy Agenda

Wharf encourages SPCs to ascertain how the issue of poverty and its effect on children can be placed on the social policy agenda. The detailed research and demographic profiles produced by the SPCs give them useful information on the needs of a given community. The intimate experience of SPCs with the conditions of low income and poor families can add a sense of urgency to reports and studies often missing from the perceptions of governmental bureaucrats. The SPCs' commitment to reform entails that board members should be similarly committed.

As a strategy of prevention at a secondary level, Wharf believes SPCs should take a leadership role in developing programs that will enhance the competence of caregivers. For example competence of children, youth, and parents could be enhanced through support of sex education and birth control in schools, courses on child development and the establishment of discussion and support groups for new parents.

Programs that would enhance changes to the environment might include the establishment of safer neighbourhoods, the development of improved day-care facilities, and affordable housing for all families. While these strategies are desirable "to offset or mitigate the crippling effects of poverty and poor housing", programs of both types offer opportunities for residents of neighbourhoods and for consumers of social programs to participate in the governance of institutions which affect them.

Acting as an Independent Body

Among society's institutions, Wharf sees SPCs as uniquely situated to take on the mission of social reform. Because of their funding sources, they are in a position to act as an independent body. Their re-

" the mission of social reform means that Councils are dedicated to improving the social well being of communities by improving conditions for those who are now neglected if not abandoned."

cruitment of board members from a wide variety of backgrounds gives a wide base of representation and an inclusive approach to social planning that enables councils to place research in a comprehensive and integrated context. Moreover, because to the enduring tradition that most SPCs enjoy within their communities, their legitimate standing in the public eye has earned them the right to participate in the debates in social policy and to propose and implement social reform.

In Wharf's view, "the mission of social reform means that Councils are dedicated to improving the social well being of communities by improving conditions for those who are now neglected if not abandoned." While SPCs may not be able to alter the national condition of poverty, they can engage in the mission of changing local level environments, and in so doing, can develop support for changes at the national level.◊

Current Projects

In addition to the 50th Anniversary the staff remained active with the "regular" work of the Council. Some of the current projects are outlined below.

Teen Sexuality Survey

In conjunction with the United Way, the City of Edmonton, and the Board of Health the Council has been involved in a comprehensive community consultation on the issues of teenage sexuality. A complete set of rationales and recommendations for action from teen and parent groups, and from focus groups held for professionals and other community agencies' staff is forthcoming.

Over 200 people were consulted throughout the project. The information will be compiled into a final report by the end of November.

Child Poverty Action Group

The "Action on Child Poverty" conference on October 12, 1990 called for an immediate increase in social allowance rates and in the minimum wage, so that all of Alberta's families can at least live at the poverty line.

The final resolution called on each agency or organization represented at the conference to issue a public statement within a month against child poverty and for a 'living wage', not just a minimum wage. This is considered the minimum action required to meet the basic needs of Edmonton's children and to eradicate child poverty.

The Child Poverty Action Group, sponsor of the conference, pledged to initiate a comprehensive public education campaign against child poverty. It will focus on challenging the policies that force children to live in poverty, and on changing public attitudes that continue to blame the victims of poverty.

Address to the New Democrats Task Force on Healthy Children for a Healthy Future

Michael Phair, Papiya Das and Jennifer Hyndman recently presented a brief to the Task Force which called for existing resources and services to be integrated and coordinated to reflect the needs of modern day families.

The need to address the stigma of poverty was also highlighted. "There is convincing evidence that the stigma of poverty is as much an obstacle

for poor families as the objective conditions of living in poverty. The stigma of poverty has been referred to as 'povertyism' and alludes to both prejudice and discrimination against poor people. Akin to racism and sexism, the effects of this kind of discrimination are particularly adverse for children.

As a general proposition, social welfare and housing are stigmatized services whereas health and education are not. This reason for this is that social allowance and subsidized housing are means-tested whereas health care and basic schooling are provided equally to all socioeconomic groups. The stigma of welfare must be eradicated in any comprehensive strategy to promote healthy children."

Income Security Action Committee Updates

Research on Working Poor Families:

This outreach-oriented research involving focus groups is well underway. The United Way has provided full financial support. The research is the first of its kind in identifying distinctive needs of poor families who are in the work force. It will address the myth that any Albertans who work hard will not be poor.

Cooperation with Career Development

ISAC will also be meeting with Career Development and Employment minister, Norm Weiss, to discuss the urgent need for a comprehensive employment strategy for the 90s.

Staff members of the department of Career Development and Employment will visit the Social Planning Council's office, on a half day per week basis until mid December, as part of a collaborative effort to share information and gain a better understanding of the issues community agencies face.

Community Advocates Network Update

The Community Advocates Network has drafted a group letter to Family and Social Services minister, John Oldring, asking that Social Allowance Rates be raised immediately. Marjorie Bencz, the Executive Director of the Edmonton Food Bank states, "We have waited far too long."◊

Stepping Back, Looking Forward

By Peter Faid, Executive Director - Edmonton Social Planning Council

Looking Back

It's important for any community organization to look back; to pause and reflect on the paths it has tread, the victories it has won, the lessons it has learnt and the lives it has touched. The Council's 50th anniversary celebration dinner in October offered us all this moment for proud reflection.

We have learnt from our history that to disturb the status quo with suggestions that we, as a community, must do more to address social problems in our midst can bring into question our very existence. We have come to understand the value of solid, dependable research that successfully blends meaningful statistics with powerful anecdotes of personal suffering. We appreciate that social change is only possible when those who seldom speak are heard by those who seldom listen. We have seen for ourselves that citizens can, and must, play a part in decisions that so vitally affect their everyday lives.

Stepping Forward

As the Council steps forward into its second fifty years we know that the careful lessons we have learnt will hold us in good stead. Our relevance in the community has sprung from our ability to remain in touch with, or even ahead of, current social issues, while remaining faithful to the principles of quality research, community action and social justice. In his reflections on social planning across the country Brian Wharf, writing in this edition of *First Reading*, reminds us that Councils of the future must accept as their highest calling advocacy for the poor and the powerless. The Edmonton Social Planning Council recognizes this future.

In eight years and 52 editions of *First Reading* the Council has tried hard to stimulate awareness and even controversy among those who care about social policy and programs in this province. We have hopefully demonstrated that it is possible to make complex social legislation, tax credits and

clawbacks simpler and more easily understood. We should think nationally and act locally on many social issues of the day. We have a tremendous job left to tackle in the years ahead as we battle to change those powerful community attitudes that see to it that the poor who deserve our help the most actually receive the least. We must continue to struggle to change a pernicious welfare system that serves to perpetuate the very condition it was expected to eliminate.

Stepping Back

It seems no time since I came to join the Edmonton Social Planning Council in 1981, fresh with the ideas of LSE, to help to do my part to build upon the Council's proud reputation. Now its time for me to be "stepping back", ending a decade of wonderful opportunities and lasting friendships. A time to hand the Council's torch of social justice onto others. The board members, the staff members and the volunteers with whom I have had the privi-



lege of working over the past ten years have offered me more than I could possibly return. How many times I have reminded myself of my good fortune to have a job that I would delight in doing even if I wasn't being paid to do it!

Looking Forward

I will miss so much about the Council and its work which has been a significant part of my life for the past decade, yet in looking forward, I know I have much to treasure from my time as Executive Director. As well, I appreciate that in my next endeavour I will never be far from the social issues that will continue to occupy the time and attention of the Council. So please keep me on the mailing list. Keep *First Reading* and *Alberta Facts* coming to my door. And by the way, here are a few social issues in the community that I think the Edmonton Social Planning Council needs to know about. . . ♦

First Reading is published 6 times a year by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. We invite your comments:

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The Director for the Oliver School Center for Children, Avril Pike provided First Reading with her views on the progress or lack of progress involving daycare in the 90s.

At present, we have 62% of Canadian mothers with pre-school children as part of our labour force. There are an estimated two million children up to age 12 in need of some form of daycare and afterschool care. There are fewer the 250,000 licensed child care spaces in Canada. This is hardly enough to fill 10% of the present demand.

Federally, child care falls under the auspices of the federal government's Canada Assistance Plan. This program, however, falls short in its attempt to address the needs of Canadian families. The Canada Assistance Plan was established back in 1966 to provide joint Federal/Provincial funding for child care for families which are "in need" or "likely to become in need". Well, the definition of need has changed over the last twenty three years. The needs of Canadian families are not being met, and the statistics we have are realistic and demon-

It seems the only time child care becomes a government issue is at election time. The problems



Canadian families face are not just experienced during election campaigns. Childcare is not a political, seasonal issue. It is a difficulty Canadian parents struggle with every day generating anxiety, worry, and stress for thousands of Canadian parents.

To date, the government's response to the problem has been to fix it by giving more tax credits and pouring millions of dollars into the Child Care Initiatives Fund. I won't argue and say any financial help in this direction is not good, but it is merely a stalling tactic. Child tax credits are positive but what is the percentage of families that get to use this? In addition, under the present Canada Assistance Plan, families with low incomes are eligible for subsidized child care. Middle income families are at the greatest disadvantage. The child care tax credit is only available if they can provide receipts. Since many Canadian parents rely on individuals to care for their children, receipts are not always available.

The Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF) was established in 1988 to assist in the development and demonstration of services to enhance the quality of child care in Canada. This fund is supposed to support projects that meet the child care needs of families in unique circumstances or under-served areas. Children in rural communities, Indian and Inuit children, school age children and children with special needs would most likely fall into the above category. This fund will operate until 1995. While the fund is wonderful to help projects get going, the project(s) must be self sufficient within three years. The CCIF certainly is not meeting the needs of most Canadian families at this point in time.

Quality child care is expensive. Families that are not eligible for subsidy in regulated care must seek it elsewhere. They often have no choice but to place their child with unreliable babysitters or in inadequate, unlicensed child care settings where care may not be good, and in some cases even dangerous for a child. Many Canadian children are in this situation daily.

The question of quality care and what constitutes quality is yet another stumbling block. Since the 'provinces and territories' are responsible for regulations governing child care services, not only are regulations distinct and different from province to province, but so too are the goals (adopted) by these various provincial governments.

For this reason alone, a National Child Care Strategy is warranted. One that lays down national objectives and standards to ensure our children do not fall prey to regional disparities.

Under the present situation we have caregivers who do not possess any formal training in child development. Despite the variations in staff qualifications, and despite the high costs of child care, the wages paid to child care workers is low. Child care workers in Canada earn 30% less than the average industrial wage, 50% less than a teacher at the elementary level, and 30% less than animal care workers on government farms! Given the long hours, low pay, and responsibility that is so much a part of being a child care worker today in Canada, it is not surprising to discover the turnover rate is high. Child care workers in Canada are locked into poverty and cannot afford to stay, and as a result, we are losing very valuable people from this profession.

I can't emphasize enough the need for a National Child Care Strategy, one that has national goals, standards and objectives, one that offers our families a choice, a real choice, child care facilities that are affordable, available, accessible, and have a quality of care that our children need and deserve.

The Provincial Level

The provincial government of Alberta has declared its desire to assist more Albertan families receive quality care and a commitment to help more families receive subsidy. This is a gradual phase in over the next 5 years. The biggest break through for this province has come in the recognition of qualified staff. Any new program opening November 1, 1990 must have a Director that has a minimum of two years E.C.E. One in every four workers must have one year E.C.E., and all other staff members must take a 50 hour orientation course. The remainder of the standards offer no significant changes to current regulations.

There has been concern expressed by parents about the cuts in operating allowance, and if this loss to the centre will be passed on to them. Even with qualified staff, it is possible to run a quality program for the children without great monetary increases to the parents. Of course, time will tell if the subsidy increases balance out with the operating allowances cuts. The main factors to be viewed is that all of the upgraded standards still fall short of affordable, accessible, available, quality child care and that the new standards should be viewed as the starting rung on a tall ladder.

The Municipal Level

In the City of Edmonton, we have 11,830 licensed day spaces in 261 day cares. Only 37 of these day cares are non-profit. Of these centres, 86% are commercially owned. There are 11 Family Day home agencies offer care in 780 homes with an average of 2.6 children in each home for an approximate total of 2,000 children. There are 147 centres with only 37 of those being non-profit.

The city is to be commended in its commitment to quality child care. It currently deficit funds 18 pre-school programs to a level that they can operate as model programs - all qualified staff, low staff/child ratios, and support staff. If the

"Child care workers in Canada earn 30% less than the average industrial wage, 50% less than a teacher at the elementary level, and 30% less than animal care workers at government farms!"

government of Canada used Edmonton's municipal program as an example of how to offer affordable, accessible, available, quality child care, families and children would certainly be helped to eliminate many frustrations and worries that they now face on a daily basis.

Canada falls behind many countries when it comes to child care. Unlike other countries, we as a nation, have not placed children at the centre. Instead, we have chosen to keep them on the periphery of national priorities, and of national policies. Have we maintained the old saying, "Children should be seen and not heard?" Is that how we live? Child care serves as a means toward the development of a people, a society, a nation.

In conclusion, how far has child care come in the last 20, 15, 10 years? Child care has not come very far politically, but at last there seems to be an awareness of parents as to what constitutes affordable, accessible, quality child care. Parents are now demanding more from their governments in the form of subsidies and a commitment to standards that will provide for all of their child's developmental needs. When their voices can rise collectively, and they can use the power of the vote as a tool to inform politicians of their needs, then I hope that the politicians will see this as an issue concerning the family and our country's development, not just as a 'women's issue'.0

The Voice Behind "A Wealth of Voices"

Recently the author of A Wealth of Voices, Marsha Mildon spent some time with First Reading discussing the experience of writing the Council's history. We are pleased to share her thoughts with you.

First Reading: What events led up to you writing the Edmonton Social Planning Council's 50 year history?

Marsha Mildon: In some ways it began in 1969 when I moved to Edmonton. The very first person I met when I moved here was Bettie Hewes. I went to see her about a job which had been advertised and she referred me to some people she knew and thus I began working with Lynn Hannley and Joe Donohue over in Boyle Street and, eventually, for the Council itself. In the fall of last year Bettie and the anniversary committee were looking for someone to write the book. Bettie asked if I would be interested and I jumped at the chance because I love history. I was 21 when I worked at the Council and an enormous amount of my views got started, if not solidified, there. The Council has been an important part of my life and it seemed like an important thing to do.

FR: When I read *A Wealth of Voices* I found several recurring themes. Issues that involved the Council in 1940 continue to be of concern to the Council today. Can you comment on these themes?

MM: Well, I started working in the middle of the Council's history and worked toward each end, having some awareness of what was happening in the 1970s. We thought that we were breaking fresh ground and I was surprised to discover that it had been broken again and again in the forties and

possible human group throughout the province. It has not spent a great deal of time with the 'Pocklingtons' of the town but, even then, the Council has worked with business and with matters such as the river valley and transit which certainly touches on business and the economy of the city as well as people who are less advantaged. I guess the Council in many ways has been the voice for the voiceless whoever that was at a particular time. Certainly, the era of the late sixties and seventies was one of working with the most disadvantaged so that they might take their voice into the mainstream. I think, to a great extent, that happened in ways that a lot of people might not have expected or wanted, but it definitely happened. We are still seeing that.

FR: What approach did you use to capture the Council's vital work in and its many struggles for survival?

MM: I started by reading through 50 years of annual reports and I decided that to make some sort of sense I would read it in terms of the people, the philosophy and the projects. I made index cards in three different colors so while going through each annual report I noted which projects they were involved in, who the people were, and any clue as to what the dominant philosophy was at the time. Many annual reports don't provide this. My own bias is that philosophical ideas are often the strongest motivating factors. Certainly with the Council that seemed to be the case. I went through a list of all the Presidents of the Council and after 1953 it was easier to find them. Before that people either died or disappeared so that I couldn't track them or had so little memory of the events that it was difficult to get much from them. I did talk to two or three people, Bill Pettigrew and Doug Smith for instance, who had been really, deeply involved with the Council in the forties and who had considerable memory of it which was a great blessing for me. One of the questions I asked everyone I interviewed was what they thought were the most important things that had gone on while they were with the Council. That added another layer onto what was in the annual reports as a guide to what people thought was important. I talked to most of the Executive Directors and the planning staff who had been at

"I guess the Council has been a voice for the voiceless whoever that was at a particular time."

fifties.

The questions of the forties addressed whether social service agencies in the province were doing what they should, were they professionally staffed and did they have a professional workload as well as looking at the needs of seniors and preschoolers. Those concerns are the problem now, or part of the problem. The Council has touched every

(Interview continued on page 13)

50th Anniversary Dinner

On October 17, 1990 the Edmonton Social Planning Council celebrated 50 years of commitment to the community with an Anniversary Dinner at the Westin Hotel. The following four pages include highlights of, to quote from the Council's history book, another "great day for Edmonton."



Co-hosts for the evening were Bettie Hewes, MLA for Edmonton Gold Bar and a Past President and Executive Director with the Council and Michael Phair, the current Council President.



Bettie Hewes and Michael Phair



John Oldring

Greetings from the Province

John Oldring minister of Family and Social Services brought congratulatory greetings from the Province of Alberta and presented the Council with a plaque which states " Commemorating the Edmonton Social Planning Council for 50 years of dedicated and committed service to the community."



Mayor Jan Reimer

Accepting the Challenge of Change: The Future of Social Policy

Jack London, Dean of Law of the University of Manitoba, attended the Edmonton Social Planning Council's 50th anniversary dinner with only 48 hours notice. Mr. London graciously agreed to be the guest speaker due to the unfortunate fall suffered by Stephen Lewis. Mr. Lewis sent a telegram congratulating the Council and stating his confidence in Mr. London as a substitute speaker. Mr. London's address was inspiring and the following excerpts are from his thought provoking, action oriented speech.

Periodically one wonders if the progress we have made is sufficient to justify the energy expended. I am here to say resoundingly that it is.



Jack London

This evening we are going to focus on the notion of progress by taking a look at the social climate through the past four decades.

Reflections of the 1950s include the rights of individuals, an unbridled market place, and the strong sense of competition.

The 1960s focused on the development of expanded human rights and social assistance legislation, domestically and in other parts of the world, and the human and economic rights entitlement of the formerly subservient. There was also the emergence of "systemic discrimination illness" which included the symptoms of ignorance, fear of loss of status, essential greed, and ambition of one's own kind. Collective rights, human rights and economic equality was the "radical chic".

The 1970s saw the full bloom of human rights legislation and rights statutes, however, there were warning signs as fundamentalism was on the rise. Conservatism and materialism took its place on the pedestal of human fantasy and the tasks of educators and community workers was made more difficult. The federal government began to withdraw from long term funding of social programs and the provinces began to use undesignated federal funds for the benefit of the more af-

fluent.

The 1980s brought Canada the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Pay equity began to emerge in the public and private sector but we also saw tax reform without equity of ability to

"The richest one-fifth of Canadians received nearly one-half of all its income. The poorest one-fifth, only 3.2% of that income."

pay and fewer funds for social programs.

In the 1990s we face a mind boggling set of problems. The government is eroding the safety net. We continue to ignore over one million children living in misery and hardship. We make grand noises but do very little about the state of our centres of education or the need to compete in a global economy. There is a real threat to the universality of benefits in our social programs. We are failing to do nearly enough for the millions of Canadians caught in the welfare trap or suffering inadequate incomes from low paying jobs.

We need a new vision of social policy that includes universally acceptable and accessible quality child care, employment equity, a fairer tax system, aboriginal justice both at the economic and cultural levels, gender equality, better housing, proper re-training programs and increased environmental protection.

Whatever the precise shape of the new income security system it must provide an adequate survival level of income support to those who cannot be expected to work. The causes are right and virtuous; the need is great and the means are available.

It is only through attitudinal change and structural reform that fear of the unknown will be overcome. Knowledge will triumph over ignorance and your efforts and education will fall on fertile and open ground.

I salute your efforts and your dedication on this your 50th Anniversary.◊

50th Anniversary Awards

The Board of Directors of the Council presented Awards, resulting from 13 nominations, to recognize the common themes, approaches, and values that have influenced the Council's work over the past 50 years. The Board noted that the awards, presented by Michael Phair and Gordon Fearn, would seek to celebrate exemplary past efforts, current results, and future visions that support and advance changes in policies, attitudes, and actions consistent with the Council's mission.

Category: Framework Legislation

The Council honours the preventive social service concept underlying **Alberta Preventive Social Services** originally passed in 1966. This program aimed at prevention, yet sensitive to local needs and service priorities (including local social planning), thus gained a foothold throughout Alberta.

Category: Human Services

The Council honours the **United Way of Edmonton and Area**, for inspiring and coordinating the funding for a large and vital portion of Edmonton's voluntary sector.

Also in the area of human services, the Council honours three inner-city agencies whose extraordinary efforts have so influenced the continuing development of Edmonton's inner-city community: **Bissell Centre, Boyle Street Community Services Cooperative, and Edmonton Inner City Housing Society**. In singling out these three agencies, the Social Planning Council acknowledges these and many other agencies, in the inner city and elsewhere throughout Edmonton, committed to providing imaginative leadership to human services.

Category: Education

In the category of education the Edmonton Social Planning Council honours the following:

Catalyst Theatre for its exemplary work in community-based social animation. "Catalyst's commitment is to those whose voice is suppressed or ignored by the dominant power structures. Always Catalyst's aim is to work with communities to create theatre which illuminates issues, challenges the status quo, offers alternative, and most importantly, which celebrates the extraordinary stories of ordinary people."

Grant MacEwan Community College for its dedication to training programs in social services, including Child and Youth Care, and Social Work.

Income Security Action Committee, a coalition of more than 20 social service agencies, for its advocacy toward improving Alberta's welfare policies and programs affecting Edmonton's poor.

Category: Individual Merit

The Edmonton Social Planning Council honours five individuals, listed in alphabetical order, whose extraordinary voices have so influenced the continuing development of this community.

Marjorie Bowker - for her exemplary contributions to social justice, including her innovative development of family conciliation services.

Fil Fraser - for his lifelong dedication to the promotion of inter-cultural harmony in Alberta, including his exemplary leadership as Commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

Alice Hanson - for exemplary leadership through her contributions to the Boyle Street Community Services Cooperative, the Boyle McCauley Health Centre, the Food Bank, Distinctive Employment Counselling Services of Alberta and, most recently, as the chair of the Edmonton Board of Health.

Bettie Hewes for her dedication both as a volunteer worker and as an elected official, for exemplary leadership and effective advocacy in seeking policy changes favoring social justice.

Gayle Gilchrist James for her leadership as a social work educator and practitioner, including her courageous service as the immediate past chair of the National Council of Welfare.

In addition to the parchments awarded this evening, the Edmonton Social Planning Council will permanently display a plaque commemorating these special 50th Anniversary Awards.◊

50th Anniversary Dinner

Three hundred and sixty-five people attended the celebration and some of those in attendance were past Presidents and Executive Directors or members of their immediate family.



Past Presidents and Executive Directors

His Honour, Judge W. Mustard, son of
W.J. Wilson, President 1948-49
William Pettigrew, President 1955-56
Bill Nicholls, Executive Director 1954-63
Stewart Bishop, President 1957,
Executive Director 1964-70
Mary Hyndman, wife of Lou Hyndman
President - 1966
George Levine, President 1967-68
Gerry Wright, President - 1969 and 1972-73
Joe Donahue, President - 1970
Lois Soderstrom, wife of Roger Soderstrom
(deceased) President - 1971
Ron Mossman, President - 1972
Peter Boothroyd, Executive Director 1972-74



Staff members: Laurie Kolada, Jennifer Hyndman, Peter Faid, Diane Goodall, Kathie Sutherland and Stu Hemerling.



50th Anniversary Award Winners



Peter Faid

The Edmonton Social Planning Council acknowledges and sincerely thanks the following businesses whose generosity contributed to the success of our 50th Anniversary celebration dinner on October 17, 1990.

Canadian Airlines
 Halkier & Dutton Design
 Northern Alberta
 Institute of Technology
 The Westin Hotel
 Scade Photography
 Resource Printers Ltd.
 Country Lane Flower Market
 Graham & Lane Florists
 Sunwapta Broadcasting
 Johnson Office Products

Interview with Marsha Mildon
(continued from page 8)

the Council over the years. It was a matter of getting the viewpoints of these three or four different places and a little bit from newspaper articles. The Council office has fifty years of Board minutes. I'd imagine people sitting around a table and what arguments they were having to get to the single line decision that you get in the minutes. You could follow certain stories through the years as people fought out bits of philosophies or how to deal with some particular thing.

FR: How did you determine what to use from the minutes, city archives information and individual interviews?

MM: Wherever I could I wanted to use the actual voices that were there, rather than my own, so there are a lot of quotes from the minutes and the interviews as well as letters. Whenever there was a good quote, it got in. Regarding the issues, I tried to pick out what were the most critical things from the variety of sources that I had and I tried not to miss too much. There were certainly places where I had to skip ideas, issues, particular projects or I would have ended up with just a list three hundred pages long which would not be very interesting.

FR: Although much of the book addresses very critical issues, there are also some very comical anecdotes. Do you feel that the combination of dedication to social reform, combined with humour, is reflective of the Council?

MM: Yes, there is something about being involved in very intense activities of the sometimes really desperate sort that the Council was, in terms of the people that they were working with and for, that I think really promotes humour as the other side of it. Throughout, there were always great, funny stories. I thought it was really important to show that side of the Council. I think often there is a tendency to assume that people who care a great deal about human and social issues don't have a sense of humour and I think it is important to have indicated, in this case at least, they certainly did have a sense of humour.

FR: I am interested in your thoughts as the author, as a former Council employee, and as someone who cares about social issues, on the significance of the publication of *A Wealth of*

Voices and fifty years of social history.

MM: As a writer I have enormous bias that the telling of story is an absolutely critical human activity. Joe Donahue, who was Council President in 1970, used to say that we tell stories because they tell us who we are. I think having the book will give the people working there now, volunteers and staff, an incredible sense of depth and understanding of who they are, and a lot of courage just from seeing where they've come from and, beyond that, I think for all Albertans who are concerned about human issues, it has the potential to let those people know

they are not isolated. Sometimes, in a province where 'free market' and 'econo



Marsha Mildon and her cat, Yuri.

mics' seem to be the key words, people whose main concern is social welfare or human problems feel as though they are isolated. In fact that is not really true in this province. However, the stories that are told about Alberta are stories of rugged independence and a free market economy. They aren't stories of caring and struggling toward a better human place. I think it is important to get some of those stories told.◊

An Invitation
The Board and Staff of the
Edmonton Social Planning Council
invite you to attend a farewell
reception in honour of Peter Faid on

November 14, 1990
4:00-7:00 p. m.

Sheraton Plaza Hotel
10010 - 104 Street

Please call the office at 423-2031 for
further details.

Advocacy and Poverty

Margaret Duncan is the Executive Director of the Alberta Association of Social Workers and is a former Senior Planner with the Edmonton Social Planning Council. Margaret's commitment to combating child poverty and establishing welfare advocacy is widely acknowledged.

The Alberta Scene in the 1980s

The 1980s saw severe cuts in real terms in our vital social allowance program, as much as an 81% decrease in benefits available for housing. People earning the minimum wage also saw their actual earnings decline by 43% since 1980. Many middle class families were able to maintain their lifestyle only by having both parents engage in paid work outside the home. Between 1980 and 1989 average wages fell 21%. These events occurred as unemployment rates gradually became accepted as 'normal' at higher and higher levels. (The latest figures show unemployment rates standing at 7.5% for both Edmonton and Calgary.)

The last increase in Social Allowance rates for shelter occurred in 1981. In 1982, drastic cutbacks reduced these rates to less than those of 1981. Since then there have been further shelter cutbacks, notably in 1987 when rates were slashed for "single employables".

ble tool for transferring information to individuals throughout the province.

Welfare Advocacy Training Workshops have also succeeded in delivering advocacy techniques and knowledge. The Community Advocates Network, formed by the Council, provides peer support for advocates working together in the community.

At the policy level, the Council continues to make policy recommendations to Alberta Family and Social Services as part of the Income Security Action Committee an inter-agency community group. The Council recognizes that appropriate training programs and work experience are important in securing meaningful long-term employment for Albertans.

An on-going link has been established between ISAC and the provincial department of Career Development and Employment. The purpose of this liaison is to share information and for community agencies to provide feedback on existing programs and new initiatives on a continual basis.

Advocacy is an on-going action. The Council aims to recommend improvements in income security policy and to ensure that the system is responsive to people's needs. Much work remains to be done.

Advocacy for the 1990s

One of the major questions advocates addressing poverty must consider as our work progresses into the 1990s is "who will pay?"

Poverty is a community issue with human consequences. There must be cooperation among governments, the private sector, community agencies and citizens-at-large to address the question of how to pay the costs of eradicating poverty.

It is a reality in Alberta that there are children who are going to school hungry and without warm winter clothing. Poor children in Canada die at twice the rate of other children and Native

"Currently, 50% of the children living with single parents live well below the poverty line."

In addition, family breakdown has contributed to the number of single parents. This trend has plunged more women and children into poverty. Currently 50% of the children living with single mothers live well below the poverty line.

The Council's Role in the 1980s

In the mid 1980s the Edmonton Social Planning Council developed the Welfare Advocacy Support Project in response to the unmet needs and gaps in the Social Allowance program faced by Albertans.

The first of a number of Council initiatives was the publication of *The Other Welfare Manual*, a user-friendly guide to the social allowance system. Available across the province, it has proved to be a valua-

Poverty and Advocacy in the 1990s (continued from page 14)

children die at a rate 4.5 times greater than other Canadian children.

Albertans have not lost their compassion and they do come forth with help when the need is demonstrated to them. When people see a direct connection between their actions and an improvement in the status of people who are suffering they are willing to help. We witness this through generous donations to the Food Bank and to Emergency Relief Services when the call goes out.

It is true, however, that Albertans do question their government's willingness and ability to act on their behalf with the tax money that is paid. Confidence in government must be restored through active participation of citizens and through mechanisms by which citizens can hold their governments accountable for their actions between elections.

Universality

Some very compelling economic arguments are being made against universality in social programs. On the balance sheet in the short term, these arguments seem to make a great deal of sense. In reality, when programs become means or income tested, benefits decline over time. Not only do those who are supposed to be served by

such programs experience greater hardship, they become objects of derision and suspicion.

We all hear, "Aren't they just being lazy and ripping of the system?" Even children are not exempt from this labelling, suffering being called "welfare bum" in the school yard.

The ABCs

Finally, we must not forget the ABCs of doing our vital advocacy

work. We must research and plan thoroughly prior to acting. We must look for timely oppor-

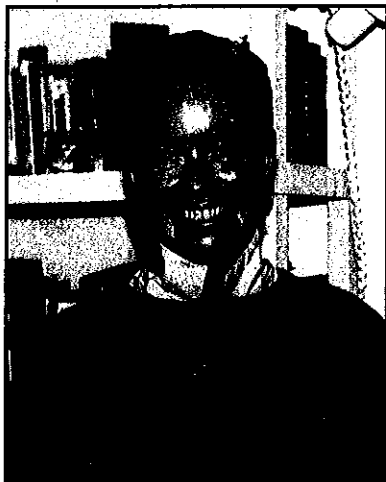
tunities and influential allies in making the case for our cause. We must involve those who are affected by the problems in formulating

"Poverty is a community issue with human consequences."

solutions.

Above all, we must not fail to do the very best job we can in keeping issues of poverty at the forefront. Our constituents have little political power and are frequently so overwhelmed with trying to cope with their immediate circumstances it is difficult to help them organize effectively.

The voices of Albertans who are poor are often not heard. Advocating change is a shared responsibility.◊



Margaret Duncan

50th Anniversary Commemorative Mugs



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Community Withered Thou Art

Tom Grauman is a Community Development Manager at the Mennonite Centre for New-comers is a former social planner with the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Having worked on issues related to community development (CD) at the Edmonton Social Planning Council in the late 1980s, I was asked to write an article for this issue of First Reading on the current state of the art. In preparation for writing this article, I read through several 1987 issues of this journal in which the topic of CD was broached (selections from one such article appear in this issue). The articles themselves make it patently clear that little consensus existed about the role of community in society, not to mention the role CD might play.

In my view, little has changed. One observation which appeared in the 1987 article really stuck in my craw. A commentator announced that "rumours of the demise of community are very much exaggerated. " I couldn't agree less.

Remarkably, the same commentator went on to say that the quest for community "arises out of a sense of our frailties; if it is me against the world, the world will win." I couldn't agree more. Moreover, I sense that the world is "winning" . . . hands down.

Well, what about CD? I'm not convinced that we can talk coherently about it. Why? Because we aren't very coherent when we refer to this magical thing which we call community. Like our blind allegiance to the magical flag which we call "culture", we unflinchingly salute community wherever (or whatever) it may wave. What a community

(Continued on next page)

Can Small be Ugly?

by Patricia Marchak

First Reading Sept/Oct. 1987

In a world of enormous buildings, densely packed urban centres, complex technologies and vast transnational corporations, there is great appeal in the ideas of creating small, self-sufficient communities using what are called "appropriate technologies" for relatively small-scale production.

The appeal increases as we suffer through periods of inflation, depression, dislocations, shut-downs and other economic consequences of a dependence on the export of staples (such as oil, mineral, timber) and an international economy controlled by large pools of capital without local roots.

There is, I believe, a good, solid argument in favour of smaller scale technologies and more self-sufficient communities. These are both possible and attractive for some regions with certain kinds of resource endowments and fairly stable populations. There is good reason to examine the potentiality of alternative energy sources, for example, and to abandon the practice of damming great rivers, flooding fertile valleys and building nuclear plants to feed mass production industries centrally located in ever larger urban areas.

But I worry about some of the romantic versions of this argument, and the tendency to cast small as the ultimate solution to all the world's ills.

There are serious arguments against "small" that need to be grappled with by those of us who recognize the very real problems of "big."

One is the problem of equity. While some regions have resources, others do not; some could survive very well on their own, but some could not. To overcome unequal endowments, there has to be a combinations of small and large political units to distribute the benefits. This is related to global, and not just a provincial or national reality; there are nations with too many people, and nations with very few.

To cope with the global situation we need to devise rather large political organizations to redistribute wealth. This brings us to the paramount fact of modern existence ---the global marketplace.

We may condemn it, and its contemporary custodians --- the transnational corporations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and even the United Nations organizations --- but there it is, something that will not go away and which, whether we will it or not, deeply affects our lives. If we want to work toward transformation of our social world, I think we have to deal with a world economy --- we certainly cannot wish it away.

The basic argument in favour of small really is that people should have more control over their own destinies. The belief is that communities would create more equitable, more humane and more human-sized outcomes for themselves if they determined, collectively, what they were going to produce, how they were going to produce it and what they were going to do with both their produce and any surplus they could create.

Small can be ugly when it constricts human talent and diversity, and there are plenty of historical and contemporary examples of small communities that do that. Life at a subsistence level may be virtuous by the idealist standards of sated urbanites, but subsistence communities are frequently harsh and sparse because they really cannot afford to be otherwise; there is little room in them for the vast range of human characteristics that urban centres can afford to support. Somewhere between the gross materialism of contemporary urban life and the confines of puritanical villages, unnecessarily limiting their skills to simple technologies and bounded social encounter, might be a more appropriate objective than small for its own sake.

What I would argue, then, is that the objective of progressive social policy should be to devise strategies that will enable communities to become more self-sustaining. This may involve downscaling technology and choosing smaller forms of production, or it may involve upscaling technology and choosing smaller forms of production, or it may involve upscaling technology and planning larger production units. Small is neither beautiful nor ugly by itself. What matters is increasing the control people have over the conditions of their lives, by whichever means turns out to be most appropriate for their particular region, and tempering this concern with a wider concern for the welfare of other communities and other nations with whom we share the earth.◊

Patricia Marchak is a Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of British Columbia

(Community Withered Thou Art continued)

is and could be in an urban 1990 environment, however, is a subject never seriously defined.

I would posit that for most of us urbanites, community is a hollow experience or it exists not at all. Consider Professor Marlene Brant Castellano's four-part definition of community: a group of persons engaged in reciprocal relationships, sharing a common culture, having a capacity to act collectively, over a period of time. Just how much of all this is possible in our present circumstances?

Yes, I consider Castellano's vision of community to be desirable. In the scenario of me against the world, we much have some buffers between the individual and the world. "Me" must also refer to us as collective beings, as family, group, community. It is in constructing "me" as a collective identity, in addition to our individual identities, that CD has its place.

As Castellano intimates, CD's role is to maximize the opportunities for reciprocal relationships, for share cultural identity and for collective action over a meaningful period of time. Furthermore, this means creating encounters between the megastructures which so largely determine our lives and ourselves as individuals and collective beings. It means subscribing to goals other than efficiency and cost containment.

I interpret the spontaneous world-wide emergence of cultural nationalism as a plea for identity, not so much identity as an individual of which we have more than we can tolerate, but identity as a member of a community. Whether we achieve community identity through CD initiatives or whether it comes about through eruptions of frustration, I believe community identity is an indomitable human social characteristic.◊

Mental Health Care Trends of the Past Decade

Lynn Jones, the Public Relations Director with Alberta Hospital Edmonton, provided the following overview of advancements and unmet challenges in mental health care in Alberta.

Considerable changes have occurred in the field of medicine over the past 10 years. These include the development of new technologies and an increased emphasis on outpatient services and wellness programs. In Alberta a number of significant new facilities have been built.

As part of the health care system, mental health has followed some of the same trends although the changes have been less extensive. New technologies assist with the diagnosis of particular illnesses, for example the CT scanner has been used increasingly to look for structural abnormalities of the brain, and lab and EEG tests to determine physiological abnormalities. Outpatient services are recognized as a significant need, but are supported very little through funding, and wellness programs have been developed on a small scale through the mental health professions and support groups. Few new facilities have been built in comparison to those for physical medicine.

A significant development for Alberta's two psychiatric hospitals was their placement under Alberta Health in 1982 with individual boards of directors. The board structure has given the hospitals a distinct voice in the health care field, helping to bring them closer to the community and to other health care facilities.

The Drewry report of 1983 recommended that more hospitals across Alberta be designated as care facilities for mentally ill patients who need to be admitted involuntarily. This was supported in 1985 by a government policy paper and became reality in 1988.

A number of city hospitals in Alberta's large urban areas already had psychiatric units and therefore the change required only a broadening of their admission criteria and some adaptation of physical environment. For other hospitals, designation meant considerable planning and preparation before being able to accept the new challenge.

There is little question that treatment in the facility that's close to home is beneficial for patients. Prior to 1988 only Alberta Hospital Ponoka and Alberta Hospital Edmonton could certify and admit individuals as involuntary patients. This meant patients might be transported hundreds of miles away from their homes to receive medi-

cal care. Family visits and coordination of care between community and hospital services was very difficult.

Although some patients still require the specialized care only provided at Alberta's two psychiatric hospitals, more individuals with mental disorders are now able to be treated closer to home. Not only is this more comforting for the patient, family and friends, but clinical care before and after discharge is enhanced.

The move to decentralize care for the mentally ill is a trend which has its roots in the late 1960s.

At that time, Alberta followed a world wide trend of de-institutionalization, moving as many patients as possible out of hospitals and into the community. Unfortunately, community resources were insufficient to handle the influx and care was not well-coordinated between hospital and community services; a "revolving door syndrome" resulted. This syndrome saw dysfunctional individuals enter hospital, undergo treatment and be discharged without adequate support in the community. Many would slowly deteriorate until the illness became severe enough to require re-hospitalization and the cycle would begin again.

Mental health care professionals agree closer coordination of services is needed to ensure good continuity of care and to properly align resources. At the moment, a myriad of agencies and organizations deliver mental health care services. Gaps in service have developed because of a lack of communication, coordination or understanding between agencies.

Recently the government reorganized the majority of its mental health services under Alberta Health thus permitting a single voice for most government funded programs and services. Mental health professionals play a major role in the reorganization, leading to the evolution of a comprehensive mental health care system, and look to this development to demonstrate efficiencies and effectiveness of service delivery.

Funding of health care in general has become increasingly tight over the last few years. This is evidenced by the budget deficits and subsequent reduction of services in some institutions and agencies. General hospitals in the Edmonton area are currently working together as part of a regional

planning process to rationalize the provision of health care services and to define individual institutional roles. Alberta Hospital Edmonton is taking an active part in that process. A similar planning a rationalization process needs to take place between hospital and community agencies in order to provide better coordinated care.

The new Mental Health Act came into effect on January 1 of this year. While its impact has yet to be evaluated completely, there is growing evidence that it is a boon to patients. Patients are becoming better informed about why they have been detained in hospital, and are included in the decision-making process associated with their treatment programs. Because they are better informed, patients are more aware of their rights. At the same time, some families are distressed by difficulties they face in obtaining help for their loved ones when those loved ones are too sick to realize or accept they are in need of treatment.

Despite the efforts of community and support groups and hospitals to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness, there is a great deal of work yet to be done. The move to community based care and increased community involvement in mental health care will only be successful if attitudes change. All of us have a role to play here --- we need to help each other understand our prejudices about mental illness and the mentally ill before we can dispel the myths associated with them. This surely must be a continuing theme through the 90s.◊

New in the Library

Profiles of Volunteer Activity in Canada
Department of the Secretary of State/Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, March 1990. This series of 34 studies by Canadian researchers/writers examines the survey findings from specific perspectives.

Healthy Children for a Healthy Future: A Discussion Paper. Leader's Task Force, New Democrat Official Opposition, Alberta Legislature. August, 1990. This paper presents questions about the factors preventing the healthy development of whole children, and is written to generate issues which need to be investigated with respect to children and poverty.

The Alberta Environmental Directory, Third Edition. August 1989: An annotated guide to Alberta's environmental organizations and agencies. A project of The Alberta Environmental Network. Compiled and published by the Pembina Institutes.

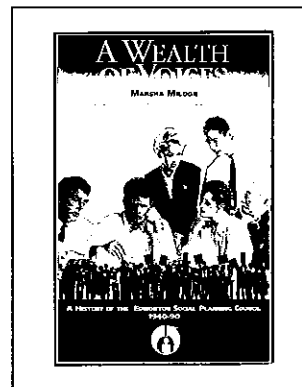
Teenage Sexuality in Edmonton: The Issues and Community Initiatives. Community and Family Services May, 1990. This study provides major statistical information and a listing of some government and non-government services available in Edmonton. It also highlights a number of initiatives that have been successfully introduced here and in other communities.

A Wealth of Voices

by
Marsha Mildon

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Council Briefs

The Next Fifty Years

The November/December issue of First Reading will include the latest Alberta Fact entitled Poverty in our Province: Myths and Realities. As well, we plan to include a profile of the Council's new Executive Director who, at the time of printing, has yet to be named.

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