

80 YEARS

of Community Building



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Our Major Funders



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Introduction

The impact that the Edmonton Social Planning Council has had on different communities in Edmonton, Alberta, and even to some extent Canada, is so extensive that it could fill up an entire library. In fact, it has filled up more than 30 boxes worth of material housed at the City of Edmonton Archives! This 80th anniversary year provided a great opportunity to research an extensive and storied history.

This is our best attempt to share that history. The story of the Edmonton Social Planning Council is also partly a story of Edmonton as a city. It records the times that social agencies, community groups, and passionate citizens with diverse experiences joined together to build a community that now prioritizes the common good—seeking to uplift marginalized populations for the benefit of everyone.

Our organization (referred to as “the Council” throughout this document) has gone by a number of different names over the years. In the 1940s it was the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies; in the 1950s it was called the Edmonton Council of Community Services; then in 1963, the Edmonton Welfare Council; and the Edmonton Social Planning council in 1967. These changes generated an evolution in focus areas, function, and objectives. During these 80 years, the Council has seen incredible growth, shifts in priorities, and has re-calibrated itself to address the city’s needs and concerns, adapting to the times and social habits. It has tackled issues such as child welfare, urban planning, newcomer integration, community development, mental health, public transportation, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, women’s shelters, participatory democracy, homelessness, poverty reduction, food security, and affordable housing through contributions of research, administrative or consultative support, and advocacy.

To process 80 years’ worth of these achievements can be dizzying and overwhelming, but can also be a source of great pride and inspiration. Remembering our history can provide direction to chart a path towards the next 80 years of building a community in which all people are full and valued participants.

Pre-History:

1920s



Although the agency that would become known as the Edmonton Social Planning Council officially began operations in 1940, its origins go back more than a decade further.

In the aftermath of the First World War, there was greater awareness and need for child welfare services. A movement for greater planning and coordination of social services took hold across Canada. As early as 1927, the idea of a social planning agency to coordinate social service work for Edmonton came about after the Social Services Council of Canada, concerned citizens, and church organizations formed a Social Services Council for Northern Alberta. There was a strong desire for Edmonton to know what others were doing and to be part of a national movement.

The structure of social services at the time meant numerous groups were working on different aspects of family welfare separately. There was, however, widespread recognition of inefficiencies and overlapping services. In order to address this, coordination and co-operation between existing services would be necessary. Increased spending on social services by public and private agencies meant that standard principles were needed to effectively allocate resources. It was evident that the needs of a community evolved over time and any response would need to be dynamic. Activities that may be necessary at one point in time would perhaps not be necessary a decade later—methods and techniques would require adaptability to meet the changing needs and concerns of the community.

The movement for a social planning agency led to the establishment of a committee, composed of diverse voices including religious organizations, service clubs, trade Boards, the Salvation Army, women's organizations, and others. This committee met frequently throughout 1928 and 1929.

Alongside the idea for a council, there was great interest in developing a community chest to coordinate a pool of money set aside for social service agencies, allocated to meet the various needs of these organizations.

J. Howard T. Falk, Executive Director of the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, came to Edmonton in May 1929 to speak to the committee about the importance of setting up an agency based on the true nature of social work, as opposed to mere "relief." For Falk, social work was not simply the clothing, feeding, and housing of a neglected child. The child must be educated and developed, "so he will become an independent citizen rather than a burden."¹

In addition, he stressed the need for care and planning before forming any sort of coordinating body. Careful consideration of every factor, and analysis on social service work and public sentiment would be required before making changes to the administration of charity.

With that, the decision was made to do a survey of social services in the city in order to determine what was already in place, what was needed, and how to move forward. The survey's motive was to act as a fact-finding mission (with no pre-determined bias or conclusion), leaving it up to agencies to decide next steps.

¹ Mildon, Marsha. (1990). *A Wealth of Voices: A History of the Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1940-1990*. (p. 5)

1929 Survey of Social Services in Edmonton

In the summer of 1929, a committee was formed with Bishop H. A. Gray, vice president of the Social Services Council for Northern Alberta serving as the chairman, and John Blue from the Chamber of Commerce serving as secretary. They agreed to put together a survey with Falk's assistant from Montreal, Marjorie Bradford, who would conduct the survey under his supervision.

The scope of the survey was broad, focusing on “the dependent family, the dependent individual, the homeless transient, the dependent child or children, the unmarried mother and child, the dependent sick and convalescent sick, and the insane.”² It also examined the state of public health services offered in the city in areas that intersected with child and family welfare, as well as services offered for recreation, summer camps, and community centres.

At the time, there were 32 organizations or churches engaged to some extent in helping poor families. Some expressed interest in the centralization of services (for example, collapsing 30 or 40 groups into one), but this was an undesirable option as it would quickly dry up material support and services. Co-operation and coordination would be the best way forward.

The survey results indicated that social agencies were in need of trained social workers, which could save a great deal of time for these agencies and help achieve better results in casework for dependent families and delinquent children. Finding social workers engaged in family case work was an urgent need for many agencies. Their role would not be considered a replacement of existing private and church organizations, but rather a way to help strengthen ongoing work in the spirit of co-operation between public and private groups.

Additionally, gaps in child care, services for unmarried mothers, and the health and hygiene of dependent children were identified by the survey. Social problems connected to health care were also discovered: overwhelming rates of tuberculosis cases in an unprepared system, a shortage in elder care accommodation, gaps in the types of social services offered in hospitals, and limited mental health services for youth.

For recreation, securing land for playgrounds in anticipation of the city's growth was important. Community league members were considered indispensable representatives for the council to aid in these efforts.

With the survey completed by August 1929, the results found many instances of overlapping and duplication, as well as gaps in services—especially due to problems in understaffing. A recommendation was made to set up a council of community services, a social service exchange, and a family welfare bureau; the exchange and

2 Mildon, Marsha. (1990). *A Wealth of Voices: A History of the Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1940–1990*. (p. 5)

welfare bureau would operate as departments within the council. With so many organizations working across the city, and ongoing social problems addressed by a number of different organizations, it was apparent that groups needed to work together in a collaborative and efficient manner.

The purpose of the council would be to plan the development of social work in the community, facilitate co-operation, develop plans for social improvement, and engage in activities by a collaborative body rather than by any single social agency.

The committee accepted the survey report and was ready to proceed with the development of a social planning agency. However, the Great Depression, triggered by the stock market crash on October 26, 1929, put a halt to any plans to move forward. As a result, the plans were abandoned and wouldn't be revived for another 10 years.

Renewed Efforts to Form the Council: 1939 Report

While initial efforts to form a social planning agency and associated services fell through in 1929 due to unfortunate circumstances, the idea had stayed in the hearts and minds of concerned Edmontonians, and eventually gained traction once again.

For instance, the idea for a community chest frequently came up during the Great Depression, as individual agencies had difficulty raising money for their operations. There was a great deal of interest from the Junior Chamber of Commerce, viewing it as a solution for their financial troubles. However, it became abundantly clear that the idea of a community chest would only be one part of a successful welfare program. Any initiative would have to be incorporated into a larger and more comprehensive collaborative to stimulate the social services sector.

John Imrie, then-managing editor of the *Edmonton Journal*, spent much of 1939 meeting with various social agencies and became a major player in seeing the idea of a coordinated social planning agency through to the finish line. He was passionate about the need for an agency but also aware of the difficulties, as evidenced by the previous failed attempts to launch the program a decade before.

Imrie, with the invaluable advice and guidance from Marjorie Bradford, was able to incite enthusiasm and co-operation among major stakeholders for the establishment of a Council of Social Agencies, a Family Welfare Bureau, and a Social Service Exchange. In June 1939, a unanimous vote across 50 social agencies approved the creation of the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies, which was met with great enthusiasm. With that, the process began, starting with a committee to raise the necessary funds for its operations, and a committee to conduct a survey of needs

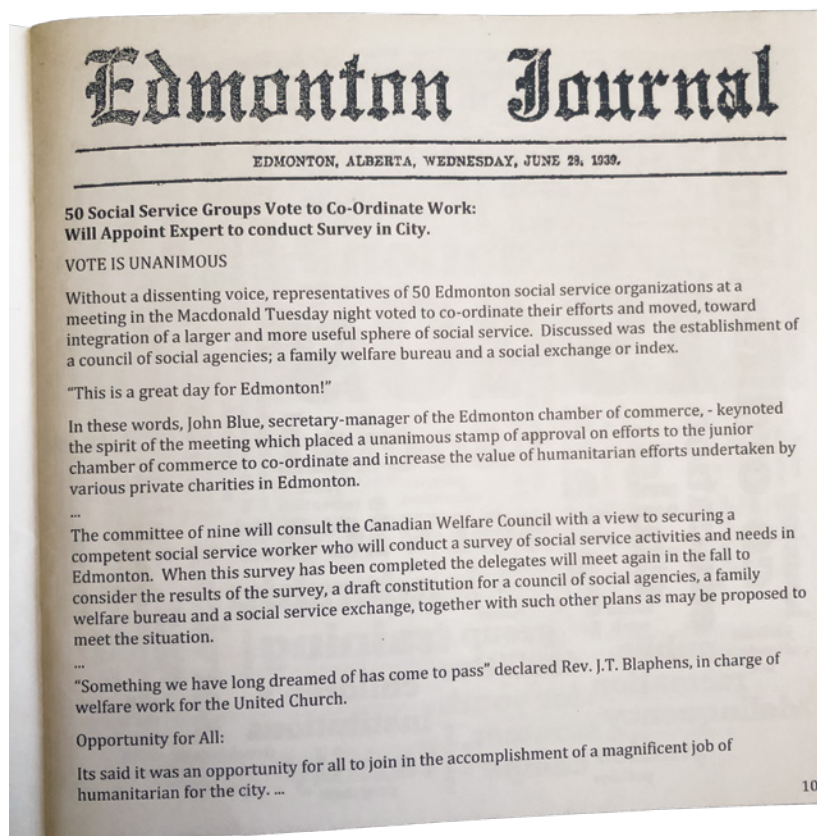
to create an outline of how best to launch the organization. This survey would serve as a follow-up to the original comprehensive survey conducted 10 years earlier, in 1929. Laura Holland, Secretary of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, was hired to conduct the study that September, and submitted her final report December 1939.

Holland's report painted a landscape of social services that had rapidly changed over the years, particularly in terms of the complexities of an urban centre like Edmonton. Fallout from the First World War and the Great Depression led to more distressed families in need, beyond the capacity of private charities, who would need public assistance from governments to survive. The needs that were apparent in the original 1929 survey were in even greater need 10 years on.

The Edmonton Council of Social Agencies was composed of delegates from member groups involved in social improvement, along with certain individuals who were especially interested in community welfare problems. They met regularly to study social issues, develop community social programs (with an emphasis to fill gaps and eliminate duplication), facilitate social reform (by legislation or other means), and raise the standards of social services through co-operation.

Holland's report demonstrated Edmonton's strong potential in the social services field. It recognized the generosity of citizens, reliable health services for the underprivileged, an appreciation for leisure time and recreation, and the variety of local agencies that sought to assist distressed families. These conditions would benefit the newly formed Edmonton Council of Social Agencies to help strengthen the systems already in place.

The formation of various committees helped to get the organization up and running. These then oversaw leadership appointments to sub-committees, banking arrangements, and application intake for new social workers—among other necessary details. They also oversaw the appointment of Lillian Thomson as the new Council's first Executive Director. She was previously the Assistant Director for the Council of Social Agencies in Vancouver, and had a strong background in family case work.



1939

Announcement from June 1939 that social service groups voted unanimously to form the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies.

1940s

Lillian Thomson arrived in Edmonton at the end of January 1940 to take up her new position as Executive Director. She and the chairman of the Council were able to quickly secure and furnish office space on the 3rd floor of the Tegler Building (located at 102nd Avenue and 101st Street).



1941

The Council began operations on the third floor of the Tegler building (which was located on 102 Avenue and 101 Street).

While the primary purpose of the Council was to improve the efficiency of relief services through co-operation and coordination, there was greater urgency to the work in that it took place at the start of the Second World War. Its purpose was viewed as an integral aspect of democracy—appealing to the common good, reducing demoralization, and creating a more just society. These values informed the Council's ongoing work.

The newly formed Council was composed of four divisions: Family Welfare, Child Welfare, Health, and Group Work. These divisions brought together representatives from agencies across these sectors. They were each tasked with studying and gathering data on issues within their respective fields, and asked to report on matters referred to them by the Executive Committee. Studies and reports started flowing in from these divisions in short order.

The issues covered by these divisions were extensive. They included classes for new mothers on pre-natal care, child care, and nutrition; concerns over insufficient, unaffordable, and substandard housing; child and juvenile delinquency; Christmas hampers; the need for social services in hospitals; library services; educational organizations (which included parent councils); and community leadership training.

In addition to the four divisions mentioned, three sub-agencies were included as part of the Council: the Social Service Exchange, the Christmas Exchange, and the Family Welfare Bureau.

The Social Service Exchange was a card index file in which each member agency registered the names of the families they were assisting. If two or more agencies registered the same family, the Exchange staff would inform them of their mutual interest, which helped to avoid duplication of services. In the first year of operation, 25 organizations were using the Exchange, with nearly 5,500 families registered.

The Christmas Exchange was concerned with the distribution of Christmas hampers (which brought Christmas cheer in the form of gifts and food), seeking to reduce duplication and encourage consistency in hamper content. In its first year, it worked with 54 organizations and responded to requests from over 1,400 families during the Christmas season.

The Family Welfare Bureau sought to address family case work, identified in the 1929 and 1939 surveys as a critical need. At first, Lillian Thomson counselled families under the direction of an informal Board of 10 members. In the first year, she met with 83 families; 59 of them signed on for extended counselling work. Counselling sessions addressed issues such as finances, dissolution of family ties, unmarried parenthood, mental health, death, imprisonment, and intellectual disabilities. There was growing concern that the war was creating new anxieties for families, which could threaten the war effort, and the aftermath would be that much more challenging.

While a community chest was not anticipated until a few years into the Council's formation, the process was accelerated by an increase in appeals for funds based on the ability for agencies to work well together and the effects of the war. In January 1941, a resolution was unanimously passed approving the formation of the Community Chest of Greater Edmonton. This would facilitate the collection of funds for various social agencies belonging to the Council. Its first successful fundraising campaign ran in October on behalf of 28 organizations.

Before the Council's formation—in the years of the Great Depression and before the Second World War—social service programs were considered primitive in nature and training was limited. Recruits for social work primarily consisted of veterans, church ministers, or people of good will, but who lacked social work qualifications. The field of social work became increasingly professionalized with the emergence of targeted schools and programs throughout the country.



SECOND ANNUAL REPORT
(1941)


The Second World War served as a catalyst to re-think social welfare issues and administration. This included working out relationships between all levels of government, private social agencies, and charities. The federal government created programs for unemployment insurance and family allowances, and a universal old age pension, while the provincial government set up a public welfare department. With so many interested parties increasingly involved in an expanding field, tensions grew over who should be involved and the role of each group. Throughout the 1940s the Council worked to determine responsibilities between public and private groups, to identify gaps in the system, and to assist in filling them. With this work, it became instrumental not only in helping to support existing organizations, but in leading new initiatives and organizations that would go on to have a lasting impact on the community development of Edmonton.

For example, the Group Work division created In-the-City camps, which organized summer day camps for children in less-fortunate neighbourhoods. These types of group activities were seen as a way to develop leadership training and reduce juvenile delinquency. In August 1943, six camps were operating in the city. More than 350 children attended these camps, which were deemed a success in agency co-operation, by assisting children make good use of their time during summer vacation.

In another example, the Health division identified the need for a social services unit in the Royal Alexandra Hospital, citing that it would improve patient care and be financially efficient—that is, ensuring a patient's recovery would be complete in order to reduce the chances of relapse and re-admission. Lillian Thomson presented this proposal to the hospital Board, which resulted in the hiring of a fully trained and experienced social worker in February 1944. This was the first hospital in Alberta to have a trained medical social worker on staff.

In 1944, Lillian Thomson resigned as Executive Director. Hazeldine Bishop took over as the second Executive Director, and with that a shift in focus. Where Thomson had been interested in the development of social agencies and promoting the case work method, Bishop placed a greater emphasis on research and planning, with an interest in widening the scope of the Council. By attending national conferences and making connections with other social planning agencies in the country, the Council would strengthen its community work.

Under Bishop's leadership, the Council began to concern itself with issues on the welfare of the whole community, rather than just the poor. This was implemented through a number of "smaller" projects such as developing facilities for delinquent teenage girls, reviewing Alberta's Juvenile Offenders Act, strengthening working relationships with public welfare departments, researching housing and its effects on low-income households, and studying the importance of education for a healthy family life.



Studies on recreational programming also increased in importance, along with support for the development of publicly financed, properly supervised playgrounds and neighbourhood centres. In order to get a sense of the city's recreational needs and planning priorities, 16,000 questionnaires were distributed throughout the public and private school systems between 1945 and 1946. The survey was successful in identifying priorities for future recreational planning.

The Council was also involved in the creation of two new organizations during this time. One of these was the Emergency Housekeeper Service in 1946, which provided temporary assistance in homes where illness or other emergencies would make help imperative. This was initially operated by the Junior Hospital League and later became a part of the Family Service Bureau.

The other new organization, and perhaps the most significant, was an Edmonton branch of the John Howard Society. In response to community concerns over the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners, the Council hosted a special gathering in September 1947, that brought together the mayor, chief of police, delegates from the legal profession, various church leaders, social agency representatives, and others. Due to the high level of interest, a committee tasked the Council with investigating capacity to form a local branch. By April 1948, the John Howard Society in Edmonton was made official, and in operation with an executive secretary/caseworker by mid-August.

Initiatives like these became a standard routine for the Council: bringing together concerned agencies or groups, identifying and analyzing problems, preparing information and recommendations for appropriate authorities, and providing staff and consultation support to local groups or agencies to fill an identified gap. Providing this kind of professional support to newly established services became a staple of the Council's work, and played an important role in the development of the social welfare network in Edmonton.

In its first decade, the Council was noted for its intense activity, acting as a driving force behind the increased support for social welfare issues—both from the public and the government. By identifying gaps in the system, developing new services, providing professional support to new agencies, and expanding research services, the Council accomplished a lot within a short period of time.

1950s

The 1950s saw a shift in focus for the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies. The discovery of oil in Leduc in the late 1940s encouraged rapid economic growth in Edmonton and required a new approach to community services. In order to reflect the growing needs of the city, the Council changed its name in 1950 to the Edmonton Council of Community Services. The Council then expanded its membership base to include service clubs, educational associations, and ethnic and cultural societies. This shift signified an expansion of its work—from coordinating the work of social service agencies to addressing community-based concerns aimed to improve human welfare services.



1950s

Archival photo of Edmonton's inner city during the 1950s/60s.

In 1951, Hazeldine Bishop resigned as Executive Director. Her assistant, A. C. Ashby, was appointed Acting Director until Jack Anguish was officially hired in 1952. Anguish prompted a major reworking of the Council's approach and structure, adopting a democratic model in an attempt to draw a broad range of participants from community organizations. Divisions were abandoned in favour of ad-hoc project committees, and staff from the Community Chest and Council merged to improve co-operation between the organization's social planning and financing operations. More staff were hired to assist with these functions.

The Council's role in helping to form new organizations continued through the decade, which included establishing the Coordinating Council for Crippled Children in Alberta, and merging three small societies into one group, called Edmonton's Physically Handicapped. The Council was taking a greater interest in people with disabilities, particularly children. These efforts were meant to streamline and increase capacities for fundraising and support for children with disabilities throughout the province. The Council conducted surveys and studies with a

number of rehabilitative services, which explored voting rights for homebound or hospitalized people, resources for those in need of prosthetic limbs, and placement and employment services.

In response to increased immigration following the end of the Second World War, the Council started to focus on integration supports for immigrants arriving in Edmonton. New agencies were formed, such as the Edmonton Citizenship Council, to provide supports to these newcomers (mostly from Europe). The Council was tasked with coordinating the work, which was particularly notable during the Hungarian refugee crisis in 1956 when it took a role in evaluating best practices for long-term social welfare planning for refugees.

The Council also addressed the need for mental health services. Though there were improvements in the newer mental hospitals, there was a lack of preventive work being done. The Council therefore recommended the establishment of an Edmonton branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, with the hopes that it would bring about a better understanding of mental health issues.

The economic boom during this time resulted in associated social problems. For example, an influx of seasonally employed men would come to Edmonton in the winter months from jobs in mines or oil fields, with limited amounts of money that would quickly run out. Identifying this particular issue, a Central Registration Bureau, with funding from the province and the City of Edmonton, was formed and overseen by the Salvation Army for an experimental period in 1953. Efforts to accommodate this transient population helped get a better sense of the situation and reduced service duplication. However, due to a large volume of applications, there weren't enough accommodations to assist everyone in need. At the end of the experimental period, the Salvation Army had to withdraw, and operations were taken over by the provincial welfare department. While it proved to be an overwhelming initiative for a single agency, the strong co-operation between agencies and groups was an inspiring example of communities working together to address a pressing need.

Date.....

Social Service Exchange

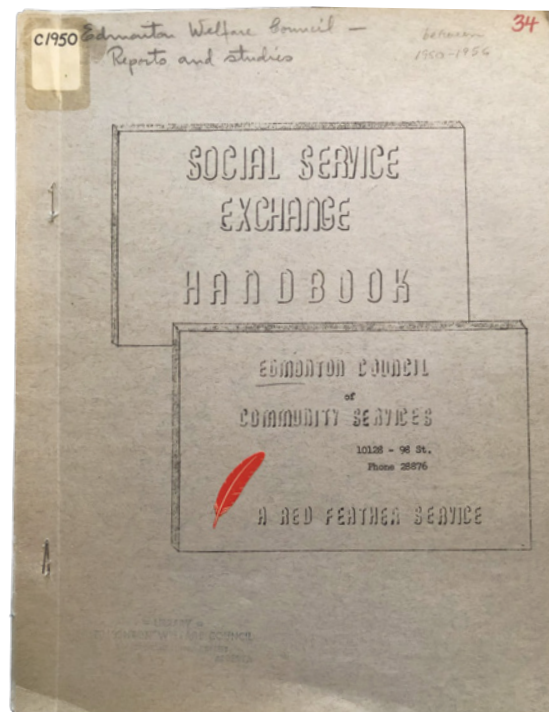
PHONE 27378 709 TEGLER BUILDING

Surname	Man's First Name	Date of Birth	Maiden Name	Birth Place	Occupation
Woman's First Name Date of Birth Birth Place Occupation					
Address					
Previous Addresses.....					
Aliases Surname.....					
Man's First Name.....			Woman's First Name.....		
Previous Marriages.....					
Man	Woman		Kinship		
Relatives	Address				
Children's Names Date of Birth Birth Place					
Agency Reporting Case:.....					

APPENDIX

A. **SAMPLE:** Registration slip used by agency in registering new clients

B. **SAMPLE:** Registration card used in Social Service Exchange file.



1950

Social Service Exchange Handbook and registration slip. This service, operated by the Council during the 1940s and 1950s, helped to facilitate more efficient and better coordinated assistance for agencies to better serve the families they came into contact with.

During this period, the Council also undertook a major study on aging: a comprehensive multi-year project on seniors that showed the growth of Edmonton's older population and gaps in services. Over 700 interviews with seniors were conducted, taking stock of issues such as well-being (health, finance, housing, family), public attitudes towards older adults, and considerations for the future. The study was praised as a comprehensive source of information on the aged, which provided a better understanding of a particular segment of the population. Due to a lack of resources, analysis and reporting were delayed until 1964, but the data helped to inform decision-making in the areas of housing, health, income and retirement, as well as recreation and auxiliary services for seniors.

Meanwhile, a Youth Services committee was created in 1956, after two years of exploration, at the suggestion of the chief of police and Mayor William Hawrelak. The group focused on the welfare of youth aged 0 to 20. Formed as a preventative tool in response to concerns over gang activity, it acted as a semi-autonomous arm of the Council. It hosted a number of leadership training sessions, held meetings with youth workers, created directories listing youth services, and provided a voice for the city's young population.

In 1958, a Standing Committee on Rehabilitation was established for more effective coordination, and which conducted extensive research on services, voting rights, and employment and vocational training for people with disabilities.

Along with the dramatic expansion of projects and topics that the Council took on during the 1950s, it was also a time to review longstanding initiatives against the changing social landscape. While the Social Service Exchange had been in place since the Council's inception, it saw a significant decline in participating agencies and families served throughout the decade. This was due to factors such as confidentiality concerns, a lack of understanding and purpose of the Exchange, as well as staff turnover and limited resources. After a 1956 self-study, the service was suspended.

A broader and more comprehensive information and referral service was needed in response to growing concerns over child protection issues. In October 1959, the Edmonton Council of Community Services was put in charge of the Welfare Information and Referral Service. This provided prompt and accurate welfare information and referrals in the Edmonton area, tracked the nature of information and referral requests, and promoted the service. It began operations in June 1960 and was accompanied by an extensive publicity campaign. The service operated under the Council until the 1970s when it became an independent group.

Enhancing public education and awareness on social welfare issues was also identified as a priority for the Council. The more the public understood the work of social agencies and their associated sectors, the more the work of the Council would be valued. The Council took part in developing and encouraging social welfare courses through the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension, and was involved in radio plays (which aired on CJCA and CFRN) informing the public about the work of different social agencies—most notably the Institute for the Blind. The Council also held three annual conferences, starting in 1956, to encourage greater community participation and engagement within the wider social welfare sector. These conferences featured guest speakers and workshops related to the key issues of the day, such as delinquent youth, unwed mothers, transiency, the social effects of industrial expansion, and others. These events drew a diverse audience, including representatives from labour, family welfare, health care, recreation, and religious groups.

All of these efforts represented a period of growth for the Council: from its early years coordinating activities between various social agencies to working with community groups to address emerging and evolving social issues.

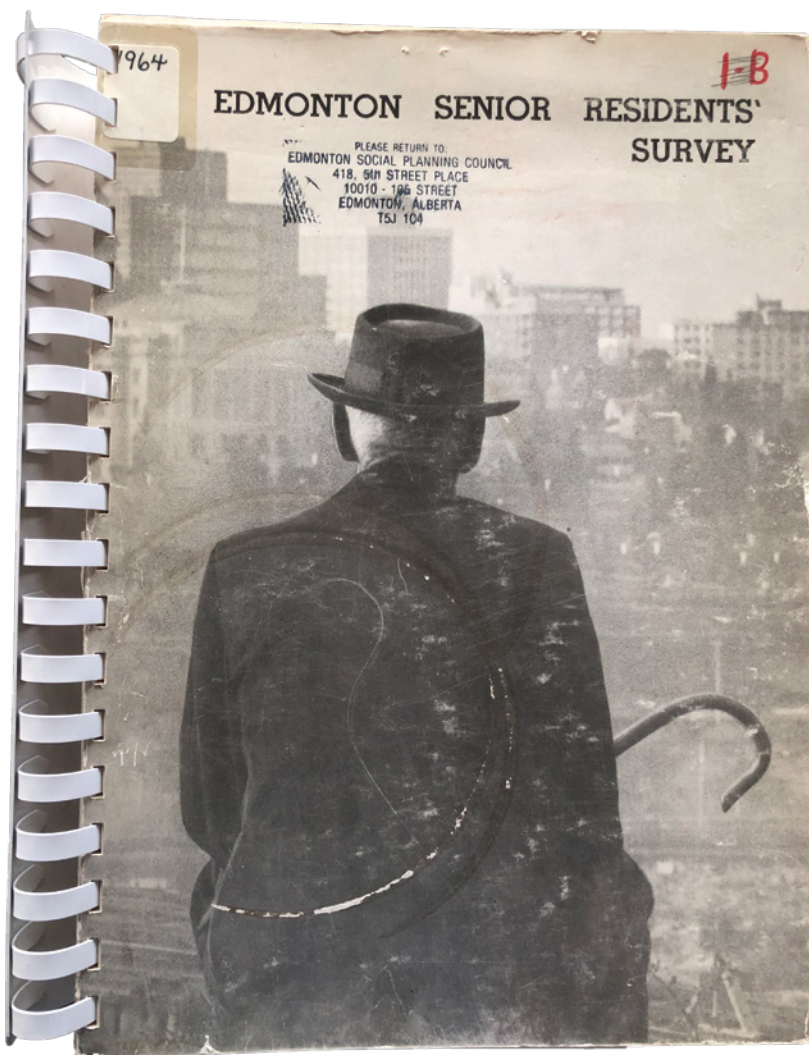


1950s

*Archival photo of
Edmonton's inner city
during the 1950s/60s.*

1960s

Twenty years in operation and the Edmonton Council of Community Services continued to adapt its focus. In 1960 the Community Chest became the United Community Fund of Greater Edmonton, and as a result separated from the Council to become an independent group once again. This significantly changed the Council's bylaws and objectives. The new bylaws reinforced the evolving nature of the social sector, giving the Council capacity and power to move on particular social problems, rather than protecting the status quo.



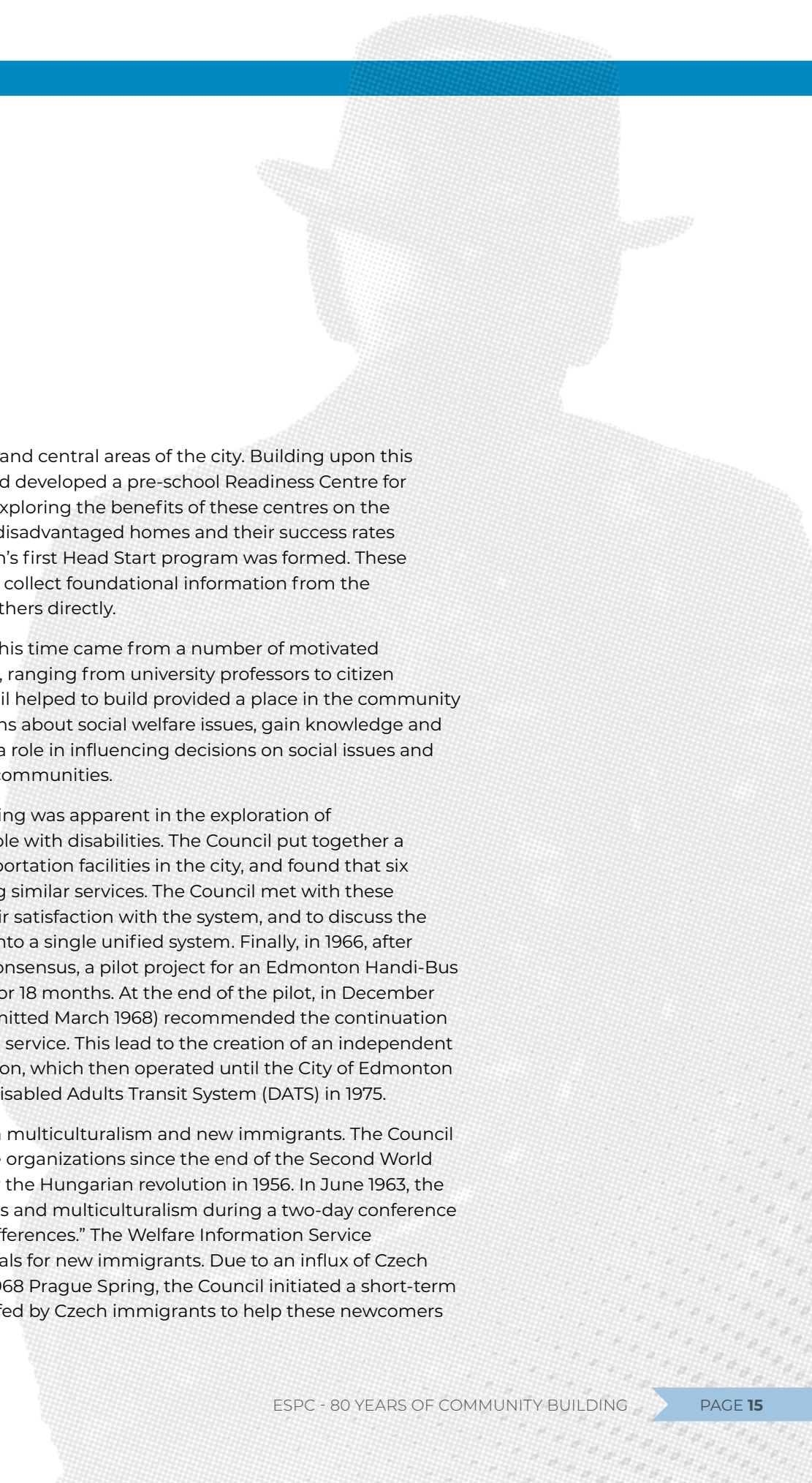
In 1963, the Council changed its name to the Edmonton Welfare Council to better reflect its focus on caring for those who were marginalized and facing unaddressed needs. Rather than a council of social agencies, this new focus was on community development—uniting people from various backgrounds and disciplines to identify problems and solutions in a democratic way.

Research and planning were even more integral to the Council's mandate, which was reflected in a number of studies it conducted. These included topics on aging, Northeast Edmonton, Indigenous issues, Juvenile Court, transient men, and day care. There was also greater involvement in physical planning, such as the use of Edmonton's river valley, the City of Edmonton's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and public housing. In addition, the Council was involved in studying Meals on Wheels as a need for seniors—a program which was then implemented by the Victorian Order of Nurses (with the assistance of the Council).

The Council's research in the area of day care served to improve standards for facilities as well as increase the availability

1964

*Final report of the **Edmonton Senior Residents' Survey**. Starting in 1956, this project was considered one of the most comprehensive studies of the seniors population during this time period.*



of day care spaces in suburban and central areas of the city. Building upon this success, the Council studied and developed a pre-school Readiness Centre for children in the Norwood area, exploring the benefits of these centres on the well-being of children living in disadvantaged homes and their success rates in schools. With that, Edmonton's first Head Start program was formed. These research projects also served to collect foundational information from the perspective of children and mothers directly.

The strength of the Council at this time came from a number of motivated volunteers from various sectors, ranging from university professors to citizen groups. The network the Council helped to build provided a place in the community for people to voice their concerns about social welfare issues, gain knowledge and a sense of fulfillment, and play a role in influencing decisions on social issues and programs that impacted their communities.

This influence on decision-making was apparent in the exploration of transportation services for people with disabilities. The Council put together a report surveying existing transportation facilities in the city, and found that six different agencies were running similar services. The Council met with these organizations to determine their satisfaction with the system, and to discuss the possibility of pooling resource into a single unified system. Finally, in 1966, after years of discussion and failed consensus, a pilot project for an Edmonton Handi-Bus was put in place, which lasted for 18 months. At the end of the pilot, in December 1967, an evaluation report (submitted March 1968) recommended the continuation and expansion of a coordinated service. This led to the creation of an independent Edmonton Handi-Bus Association, which then operated until the City of Edmonton took over and renamed it the Disabled Adults Transit System (DATS) in 1975.

The 1960s also focused more on multiculturalism and new immigrants. The Council had been working with refugee organizations since the end of the Second World War, efforts that increased after the Hungarian revolution in 1956. In June 1963, the Council promoted human rights and multiculturalism during a two-day conference called "Insights into Cultural Differences." The Welfare Information Service continued to make many referrals for new immigrants. Due to an influx of Czech and Slovak refugees after the 1968 Prague Spring, the Council initiated a short-term special information service staffed by Czech immigrants to help these newcomers settle into Edmonton.

Indigenous issues were explored with more interest during the decade due to an increase in the number of First Nations and Métis peoples who had moved to the city. A report in 1962 by the Indian and Métis Study Committee recommended more appropriate foster and adoptive homes for Indigenous children, an examination of negative stereotypes in textbooks, and anti-discrimination legislation. It also recommended that the Council support the creation of a cultural centre in Edmonton to help bridge culture and western urbanization. With Council assistance and consultation, the Canadian Native Friendship Centre was established. This work was tied closely to other areas of recent interest for the Council, such as unemployment, transiency, urban renewal, and community development.

As the decade progressed, the Council continued to shift from an organization of agencies to an organization of the community, emphasizing social action and change. To reflect this shift, the Council updated its objectives and developed a new constitution to focus on community-based research and planning. Institutional memberships to the organization were eliminated and all memberships reverted to individual affiliations.

In 1967, the Edmonton Welfare Council changed its name to the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The staff and Board of Directors focused more on activism—with an eye on shaking up the status quo—and egalitarianism. Formal titles and roles were maintained, but staff, Board members, volunteers, and project partners were all considered equal in their contributions. With this, there was a commitment to work directly with “the people” and obtain information “from the street,” rather than relying on other agencies. It was also a time of emerging philosophies on community development and organization that influenced the Council and its work. This was all especially pronounced with its work with the Boyle Street/McCauley area of the city—an inner city neighbourhood at the epicentre of the Council’s overall efforts.

A focus on youth also reflected the progressive idealism of the later half of the 1960s, with the Council involved in helping youth lobby for the opening of a teen centre in the downtown area. Although a short-lived experiment, the centre supported a number of activities, such as crafts and counselling, and a safe place for “hanging out.” However, this work caused some controversy when the Council released a Bluebook on legal rights for transient youth. It was criticized in some sectors for being subversive, especially its opinions of the law on matters such as marijuana use, questioning its harm.

The end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s further saw the Council involved in the establishment of key organizations that would have a major impact on the city's history of social development.

Building on its work with urban renewal, Indigenous issues, and transiency in the Boyle Street area, the Council helped guide the formation of the Boyle Street Community Services Co-operative. The Co-operative formed when it became clear that services in the area were considered disorganized and difficult to access. The Council coordinated agency meetings and applied for—and secured—funding from the federal Department of Health and Welfare for a 3-year pilot project. The Boyle Street Co-Op centralized all major services in the area under one roof, run by a co-operative society made up of neighbourhood residents. It has provided a central core of information, counselling, and advocacy for the neighbourhood ever since.

The Council was also responsive to the need for women's shelters. These were seen as a way to address homelessness among women and the lack of emergency beds. Many women faced being turned away from facilities if they were not sober, even if they were considered at risk. As a result, the Women's Overnight Emergency Shelter Project was established and first run by the YWCA, and later the Council. The Council was instrumental in providing intensive staff support to this project, particularly in the area of training volunteers. This effort was the first of its kind, and pioneered the low-barrier approach in which any woman in need would be able to access shelter, even if they were self-medicating. Though the practice was controversial at the time, it is now accepted as best practice. These efforts laid the foundation for what would become WIN House, which has created a legacy of helping women and girls in need for over 50 years in Edmonton.

The growth and change of the Council—two name changes, heavier reliance on the voices of the disadvantaged, and the expansion of community engagement—reflected the rapid progress and transformation of social movements worldwide throughout the 1960s.

1970s

The Edmonton Social Planning Council formalized its image as an agent for social change in the 1970s, adopting a new constitution and new objectives in 1972. Its focus was now to develop and maintain a voluntary, non-governmental group for informed decision-making and action, and to provide resources to initiate and support community-based projects.



In 1972, Peter Boothroyd became Executive Director, replacing Bettie Hewes who had been serving as Acting Director since 1970. At this time, Boothroyd took the title of Co-Ordinator (instead of Executive Director) in keeping with the egalitarian shift of the Council, and reflected in recent constitutional changes. Boothroyd came to the Council with a very different background. People in these roles often had a background in social work, but Boothroyd was an urban sociologist. As a result, he expanded the Council's focus to include urban planning, urban environment, and participatory democracy.

In line with the Council's change in approach, four Citizens' Commissions were formed and tasked with the exploration of social policies, recommendations on social objectives, and an evaluation of this progress. The four commissions were titled Participatory Democracy (looking into access to public information), Decent Standard of Living (looking at the patchwork of welfare programs, gaps in health care, and issues of low wages), Humane Social Controls (looking into management of criminal offenders, addictions, transient people, mental illness, and children), and Humane Urban Environment (looking at urban transportation, neighbourhood design, and housing standards). The commissions conducted research on these issues and wrote reports to guide citizen action.

1972

*Illustration taken from the Council's landmark 1974 publication, **Rape of the Block or Everyperson's Guide to Neighbourhood Defense**. This guide to citizen involvement and community organizing was extremely popular with community groups across Canada.*

1975

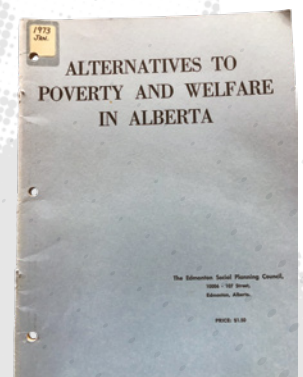
To Be Poor in Canada highlighted experiences of those living in poverty, and the challenges faced due to government policies in the 1970s. The document proposed a number of solutions to help the most marginalized.



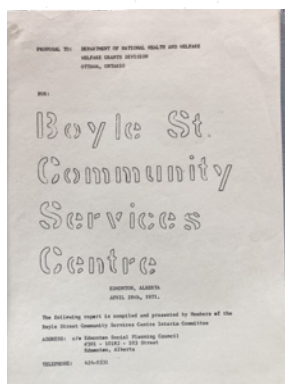
With the election of Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservative party in 1971, the Council recognized a prime opportunity to engage with the new provincial government on proposals to change policy for poverty and social assistance programs. In 1972, the Council published a major research project, *Alternatives to Poverty and Welfare in Alberta*. The report presented statistics on poverty, the effects of social and economic policies on the poor, current income security programs, the welfare system in Alberta, and recommended a Guaranteed Annual Income with work incentives. The economic landscape meant that those employed were earning high incomes, while those on fixed incomes or public assistance were becoming poorer. The Council's work therefore focused on promoting the Guaranteed Annual Income as a way of redistributing the wealth.

The commissions also provided research and commentary on other social policy issues of the day, such as public assistance, food allowances, policy proposals to alleviate poor nutrition and reduce poverty, alternatives to the current justice system, community councils and citizen participation, and urban transportation.

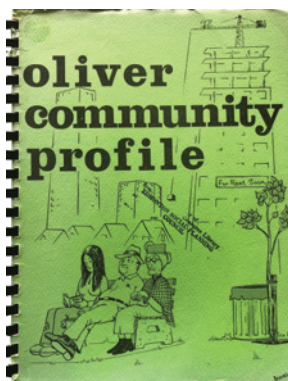
Perhaps the biggest impact during this time came out of the contributions from the Humane Urban Environment commission to the development of Edmonton's river valley parks and trail systems. Funded by the Alberta Environmental Research Trust, *An Approach to Planning River Valley Trails* proposed the development of mini-parks throughout the area.



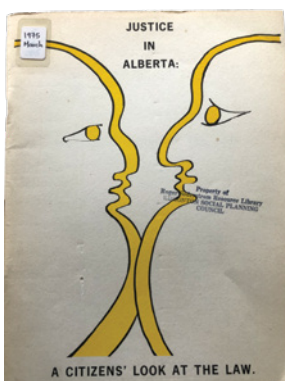
(1973)



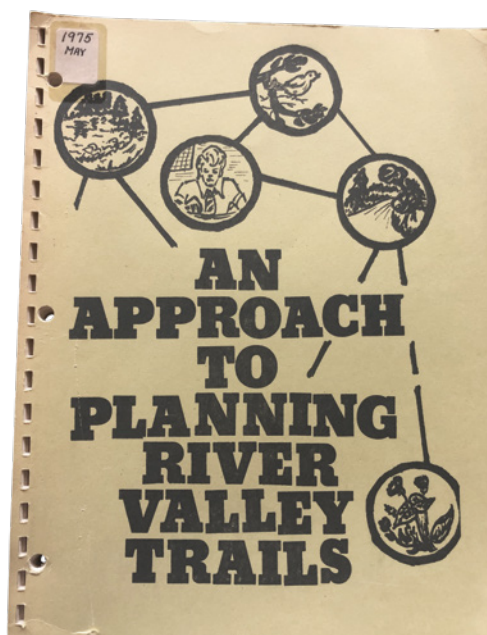
BOYLE STREET
PROPOSAL
(1971)



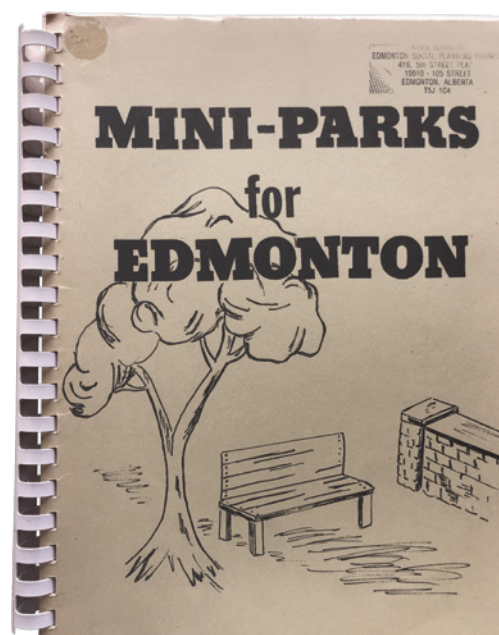
(1974)



JUSTICE IN ALBERTA
(1975)



(1975)



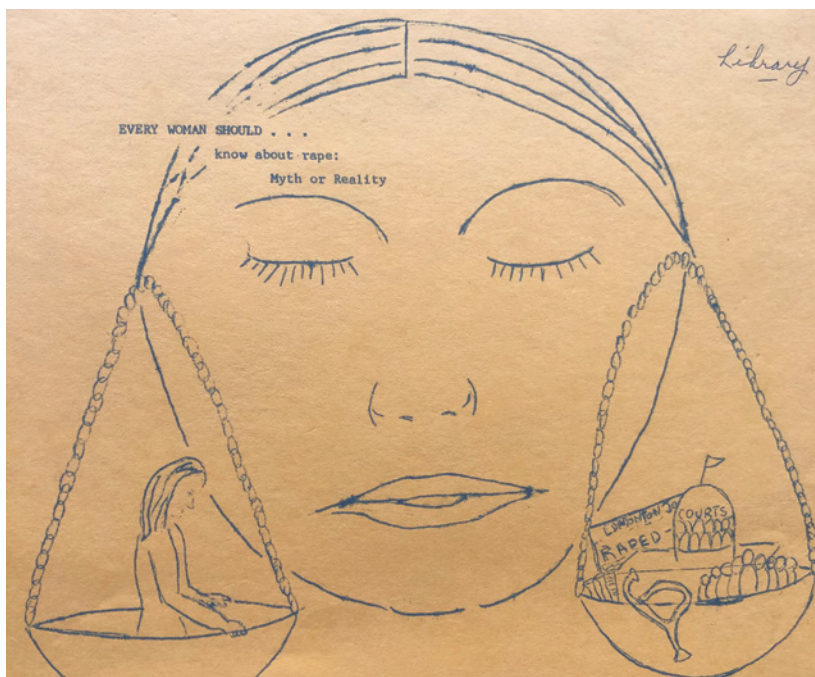
(1976)

During this time, the obvious political nature of some of the Council's activities and projects became a source of concern and tension with the United Community Fund—which, in 1973, changed its name to the United Way of Edmonton and Area (more commonly known as the United Way). In 1974, citizen donors expressed concern to the United Way on whether the Council should continue to receive funding. A study was conducted that demonstrated the Council's high quality research and support to community groups, but the fact that the Council maintained a high profile in areas that did not directly concern the United Way resulted in questions from funders. The report recommended the United Way continue its core funding to the Council, with the condition that it restructure the four commissions back into a traditional Board of Directors, with broader representation from business, labour, and more established service agencies.

By the mid-1970s, the Council had further strengthened its work with women's groups, which included a 1975 study called *Rape: Myth or Reality*, which looked at the legal, medical, and social aspects of rape, and concluded with recommendations for change and self-protection—both in terms of reforms to federal laws, and actions individual women could take. Building upon this work, the Council was involved with the formation of the Edmonton Rape Crisis Centre (now the Sexual Assault Centre), providing support with funding applications to the province and city, as well as organizational and legal backup.

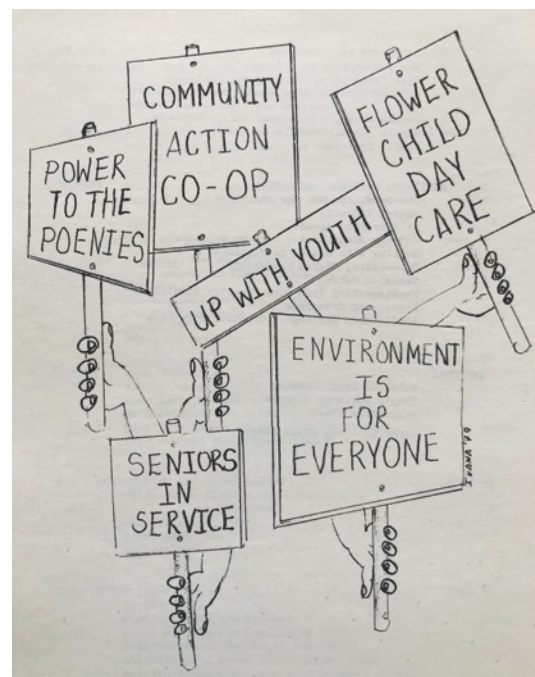
The Council was also heavily involved with neighbourhood groups during this time, helping advocate for communities while the city was under intense development pressure, and included efforts such as the opposition of freeways through the Oliver neighbourhood. With this work, the Council helped to lobby the provincial government to make the historic Le Marchand Mansion a designated historic building after learning that new ownership had demolition plans.

Though the work of the Council during the last half of the 1970s was valuable for increasing citizen participation and advancing community development, it also created uncertainty. Funding sources were unstable and there was a high degree of turnover among Executive Directors. The earlier tension with funders had been smoothed over, but the Council had to be strategic in order to continue operation into the next decade.



1975

*Building off of the Council's work establishing the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, the publication **Rape: Myth or Reality** explored law reforms around sexual assault, and outlined ways to empower women through self-protection.*

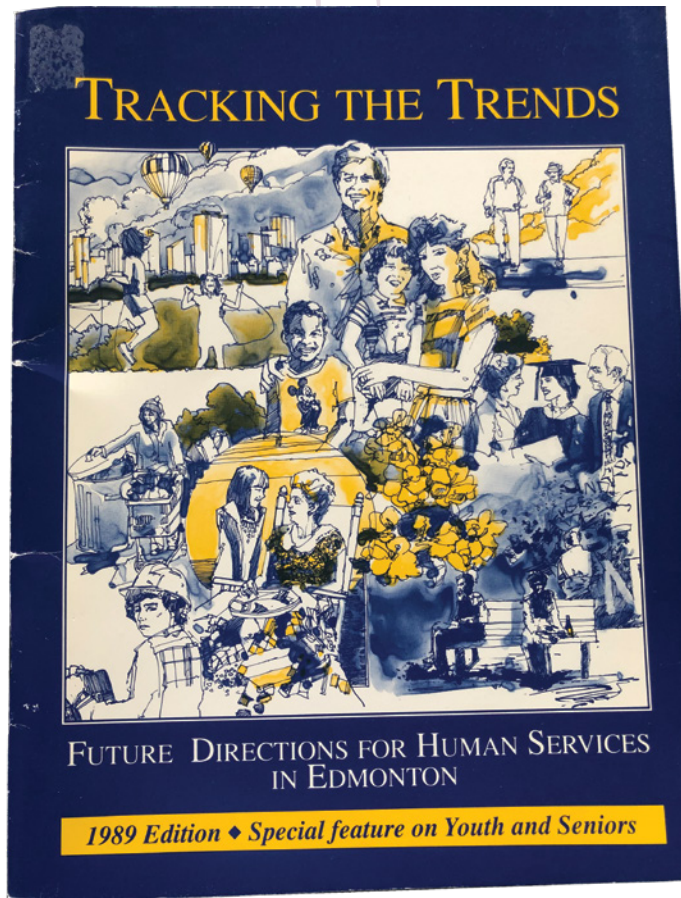


1979

Illustration from a publication by the Council on best practices for non-profit Boards to capture the spirit and advocacy efforts of the time.

1980s

The high turnover in leadership during the late 1970s and early 1980s created challenges in continuity and relationships between staff. It was clear that stability was necessary for the Council to continue.



1989

Tracking the Trends, first released in 1989, is the flagship publication of the Edmonton Social Planning Council. It reflects the need for policy makers, researchers, and the general public to measure Edmonton's social well-being using the most recent data available.

In 1981, Peter Faid was hired as Executive Director, with a background in research on unemployment and a master's degree from the London School of Economics. Faid's hiring helped stabilize the Council and facilitated another shift—from community/neighbourhood development to a focus on broader social policy analysis.

The Council broadened its membership base by reinstating organizational memberships alongside individual memberships, which increased representation from businesses. It also enhanced engagement with members by immediately sharing publications so that members were regularly updated on Council activities. Brown Bag lunch seminars were initiated to increase Board involvement and education, as well as a broader public awareness of major social issues of the day. These seminars looked into topics such as homelessness, welfare programs, child poverty, and midwifery.

Although the Council gained a reputation in the 1960s and 1970s for being radical or far-left from the more traditional provincial and municipal governments, it shifted to a more moderate position in the 1980s—one that would receive support from both sides of the political aisle, and that would be considered more credible between government levels. This shift allowed for more well-rounded discussions on social issues, which influenced various sectors of the community. In this, the Council struck the right balance between its role as an agent for social change, and in its expertise in analysis and research.

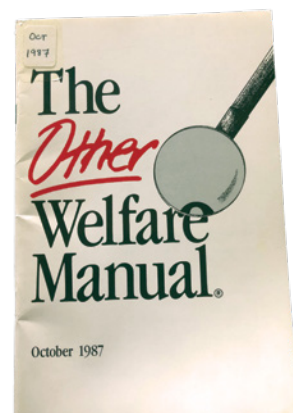
Work on urban planning issues, from Boothroyd's term as director, continued to dominate the Council's work throughout the 1980s with resources devoted to training volunteers, facilitating community planning, evaluating programs, and managing non-profits. The Council's social policy analysis became instrumental in providing basic social and economic information to the public. In 1982, the Council launched a newsletter, *First Reading*, which served as a news digest to inform members and the public about social policies under consideration by the government, and their potential impacts. This newsletter, along with its insert *Alberta Facts*, was an invaluable opportunity to present detailed, local, information on these issues. It provided a forum for assessing these policies and responding to them during a period when a lot of social safety nets supported and co-founded by the Council were seeing limitations due to cutbacks and the privatization of social services. The Council used its research and policy expertise to critique these changes.

Advocating for quality health care was another focus for the Council during the decade, in which it provided organizational support to Friends of Medicare along with research, reports, and briefs. It advocated for community health initiatives that would shift focus from an institution-based system that prioritized treatment to a health care system that promoted the physical, mental, and social well-being of people.

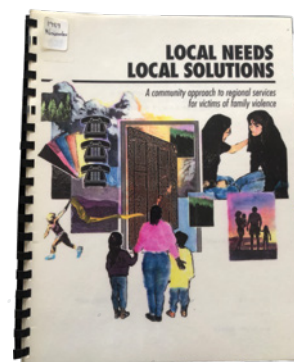
The issue of unemployment was another major issue the Council took on, conducting extensive research on its social and psychological impacts, and proposing alternatives. In 1986, the Council published *Unemployment – Reaping the Costs*, an examination of lost provincial revenue as a result of unemployment, noting that health indicators such as stress-related illnesses, suicide, and child abuse all increased with the presence of unemployment.

The Council also enjoyed significant success in welfare advocacy. In 1985, it conducted surveys with social allowance recipients to assess their satisfaction and knowledge of different programs. This led to the publication of *The Other Welfare Manual*, which pointed out gaps in what welfare policies stated and how they were interpreted. This resulted in the province adopting response measures to address these gaps, and created opportunities for the Council to offer training on welfare advocacy—either personal or representational.

Other issues the Council worked on during this time included food policy, suicide prevention, child poverty, and child care standards. It also took on a great deal of statistical analysis of social trends, which would influence its work in the following decades. A new type of research document, *Tracking the Trends*, presented social and economic statistics, along with current and future needs. First released in 1989, later editions would be published roughly every other year.



(1987)



LOCAL NEEDS LOCAL SOLUTIONS
(1989)

1990s

The Edmonton Social Planning Council began the 1990s with a good reputation for strong research and ongoing support from the community to lead social policy and community development.



1990

Bettie Hewes (pictured at the podium) speaking at the Council's 50th anniversary milestone event in 1990.

The key issues at this time included urban Indigenous inclusion, the LGBTQ community, along with the elimination of racism, child poverty, and public education strategies for the Council to use.

Peter Faid resigned as Executive Director in the fall of 1990 and was replaced by Jonathan Murphy, who served until 1995. Murphy's term was noted for quiet advocacy—working behind the scenes while advocating for policy change. When Brian Bechtel took over as Executive Director in 1995, the Council shifted to become a more outspoken voice on community issues. This became particularly evident when the Council's work caused tensions with the provincial government over different approaches to social policy issues, such as the use of food banks, programs for persons with disabilities, and child poverty.

This was also an era that saw cuts to social services and programs, and the Council played a key role in challenging these measures with research reports and advocacy. Efforts included speaking out on welfare reforms that would transfer welfare recipients to training and employment programs, not taking into account their circumstances. A 1997 study on these welfare reforms, conducted by the Council, showed that low-income families with children in Edmonton were becoming poorer, and that the labour market would be incapable of replacing household income lost through the cuts to income support programs. In fact, children in single

parent families living in Alberta received less government support than the average Canadian child. These conclusions were a source of controversy for the Minister of Family and Social Services, Lyle Oberg, and set the tone for a touchy relationship between the Council and the government.

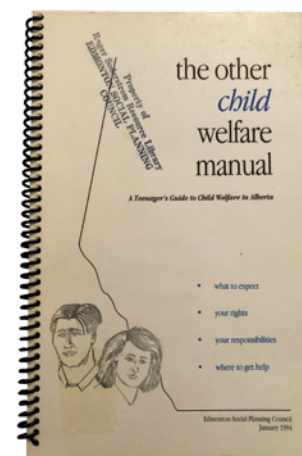
The Council also spoke out as part of a coalition to fight welfare cuts to AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) support, which would have disqualified many AISH recipients. The campaign successfully persuaded Minister Oberg to reverse his decision and got assurance that AISH would be maintained at the same levels with the same number of recipients.

The Council's work on child poverty focused on the creation of a universal system of child benefits, challenged the stigmatization of benefit recipients, and advocated for better employment options for parents. In addition, the Council advocated for the idea that a family's low-income status should not be a barrier for children to fully participate in society, stressing access to shelter, food, clothing, and recreation as a way to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. The Council was also involved with the pilot project Success by Six in 1994, which became an independent United Way member agency with a mission to ensure all Edmonton children aged 0 to 6 had supports for a lifetime of healthy growth and development.

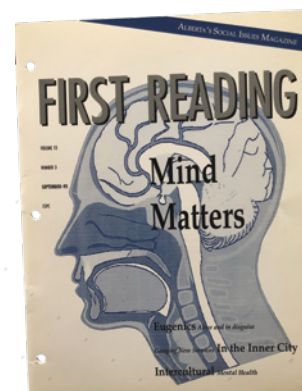
Some of this work created further tension with the provincial government towards the end of the 1990s when the Alberta Children's Forum, despite the Council sitting on the steering committee, failed to produce any substantial recommendations for taking action on child poverty. In response, the Council published *The OTHER Children's Forum Report*, which focused on recommendations and actions to address poverty and the physical needs of children.

In addition to all this work, the Council advanced the conversation around health issues by contributing research and analysis to matters such as mental health needs assessments and services, the development of community health indicators to set goals and to measure progress, and early intervention and health education programs to address teen pregnancy and reduce the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, among many other issues.

A long and rewarding partnership with Edmonton's Food Bank began in the 1990s, which resulted in a landmark study in 1996 called *Two Paycheques Away: Social Policy and Hunger in Edmonton*. This was one of the first and largest studies of its kind, with over 800 food bank recipients interviewed, and which revealed serious problems with government income support programs. Follow-up studies found



(1994)



NEWSLETTER
(1995)



1992

A gathering of Indigenous peoples at Edmonton's Sacred Heart Parish in 1992, reflecting on the Council's renewed emphasis on social policies inclusive to urban Indigenous communities.

that more than half of the families who accessed the Food Bank lived on less than \$1,000 per month and had a single female parent. More than one-quarter had been homeless at some point in time, and three-quarters had been late with their rent payments. These findings received national attention and resulted in talks with the Minister of Family and Social Services in an effort to amend policies.

The Council also focused more on Indigenous issues in response to the emerging trend of First Nations and Métis families moving to larger urban centres, making note of the above-average unemployment rates and below-average income levels for Indigenous individuals in the city. To address the needs of inner city Indigenous community members, a report in 1992 provided recommendations on housing, the legal system, support for Indigenous professionals, and substance abuse services.

Immigration, multiculturalism, and race relations were of particular interest for the Council's work too. With an increase in newcomers to Edmonton, coupled with a slumping economy, there were increasing issues of targeted immigrant and cultural intolerance. The Council worked to dispel myths on these issues, and helped form the Intercultural and Race Relations Committee of Northeast Edmonton to share ideas and resources with the goal to promote cultural understanding and fight racism. The Council also conducted studies on racial tension in the city, and made recommendations to form an anti-racism task force, promote diversity among organizations and service providers, and provide sensitivity training for officials in law enforcement and the education system.

1995

Ben Calf Robe Food Co-op



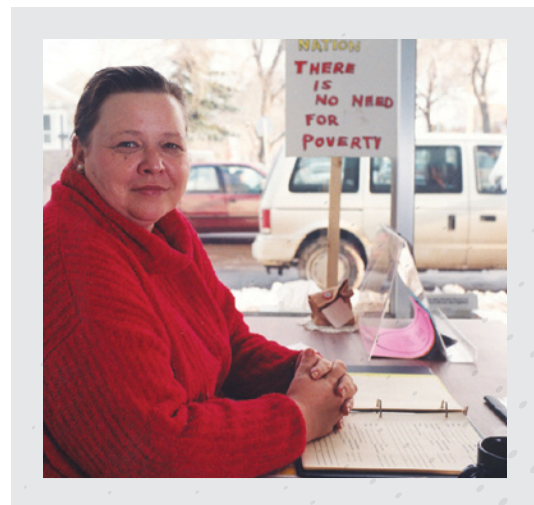
The Council's strong research expertise was channeled into setting quality of life indicators for the City of Edmonton, and determining how future efforts could be measured for building a more vibrant community. This resulted in the launch of the Edmonton LIFE (Local Indicators for Excellence) project in 1996. Representatives from business, academic, environmental, and social organizations joined together to establish standard definitions for future statistical measurement. The quality of life index tracked information such as labour force participation, food bank use, and rates of underweight newborns. These LIFE reports, which ran every two years until 2002, provided updates on the evaluation of the city's efforts.

Although good work and strong advocacy efforts were notable achievements for the Council, internal turmoil would challenge its operations into the next century.



1990s

Edmonton's Food Bank in 1993 (left) and 1995 (right). The Council worked extensively with the food bank during this time period as food security was a pressing issue. This included a number of studies on food bank use and who their clients were.



1998

*Photo from a story on poverty in the **First Reading** newsletter.*

2000s

The Edmonton Social Planning Council dealt with internal challenges at the start of the decade, when Executive Director Brian Bechtel left the Council in 2000 and Board Chair Arlene Chapman took over his duties. Nicola Fairbrother was then hired as Executive Director in 2003. These challenges stemmed from personality differences within Council leadership—those who provided quiet and effective leadership versus those who wished to see the Council take a more outspoken approach. The instability caused the United Way to put its funding to the Council under review once again, indicating a vote of non-confidence. Despite the Council producing valuable work for the community, these conflicts undermined some of its credibility.



In an effort to improve circumstances and encourage new perspectives within the organization, the Board initiated a strategic reorganization which included recruiting Indigenous representation—something that had been missing from the Council for some time. Then in 2005 Susan Morrissey was hired as the new Executive Director (and remains in this position to the present day), and set to work on rebuilding the organization. Following these changes, representatives met with the United Way to re-establish good relations with this important partner. Although the Council's public profile may have fluctuated over the years, its place as an important advocate for progressive social policies remained constant.

2008

Habitat for Humanity Day.

Despite internal challenges at the start of the 21st century, the Council continued to advocate for people living on low-income in new and important ways, such as identifying gaps in access to legal services, accessing empty school spaces for community use, and exploring the social determinants of health.

Gaps in access to legal services among low-income Edmontonians was discovered in a 1999 report the Council published,

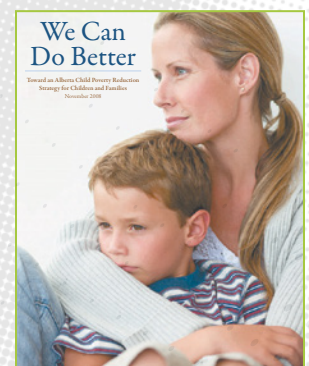
The Legal Needs of Low Income Edmontonians: A Needs Assessment. The report noted that only 15% of low-income Edmontonians received the legal help they needed, and identified financial barriers to accessing legal counsel. One recommendation was to create a legal clinic to empower people through rights education, and would improve their access to legal services. In 2002, the Council helped to create the Edmonton Centre for Equal Justice, which provided pro bono legal assistance, outreach, and education services to people living with low-income. The centre provided assistance to over 500 clients in its first year, dealing with issues such as landlord and tenant disputes, income security, human rights, debtor/creditor conflict, and immigration. In 2005, the Centre separated from the Council and in 2007 changed its name to the Edmonton Community Legal Centre.

The Council also operated as a coordinating body for the Sacred Heart Collective, a group of seven non-profit agencies that were housed together, along with the Council, in the former Sacred Heart School. This initiative was inspired by conversations on how communities could adapt empty spaces following the closure of several inner city schools. The Council took on an administrative role by leasing space from the Edmonton Catholic School Board and sub-letting it to groups at a low cost, organizing resource sharing, and providing research assistance to groups within the collective. It operated through to 2006 when the school board requested the space back. The Council published reports that examined shared community spaces, and highlighted the need for low-cost facilities in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood.

Engagement with health issues meant a renewed interest in social determinants of health as contributing factors to the health and well-being of Albertans. Publications on the topics throughout 2005 and 2006 echoed earlier work on quality of life indicators with the Edmonton LIFE project. Research looked into the idea that eliminating poverty would remove a number of burdens placed on the public health care system. The Council's flagship publication, *Tracking the Trends*,



NOT JUST A ROOF
OVER OUR HEADS
(2008)



(2008)

tracking the **TRENDS**

Social Health in Edmonton



SPECIAL FEATURE:
*The Cost of
Healthy Living*

2000 Edition

2000

Tracking the Trends represents the importance of research on the social determinants of health, and informs much of the Council's work.

included several health-related features, incorporating social health statistics to its analysis in tying access to housing, education, and financial supports (among other factors) to a community's overall health and well-being.

The Council also started to work closely with a new political advocacy group, Public Interest Alberta, to provide research on living wage and child poverty. The aim of the living wage work was to ensure that anyone working full-time would be able to earn enough income to maintain a safe and healthy standard of living. In 2007 the Council published *Working Poor or Making a Living*, a report that revealed data demonstrating that Alberta's minimum wage had not kept pace with inflation, which made it difficult for many low-income Albertans to keep up with the cost of living.

In 2008, Public Interest Alberta and the Edmonton Social Planning Council teamed up to produce annual reports on child poverty along with the Campaign 2000 National Report Card on Child Poverty project. These reports tracked the current state of child poverty using data, and made recommendations for government action to reduce and eliminate child poverty—calling on provincial and federal governments to adopt a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Due to an economic boom in the oil fields mid-decade and the resulting rental housing crisis, the Council turned to a renewed urgency for affordable housing. In 2007, 40% of Edmontonians lived in rental housing, yet the number of rental housing units available had been declining since 2003. The cost of rental housing had also increased by 47% between 1998 and 2007. As a result of these conditions, the

Council hosted two renter listening forums in collaboration with City Councillors Michael Phair and Dave Thiele. These forums lead to the publication of *A Roof Over Their Heads*. The report drew upon concerns raised during these events and highlighted the fact that individuals working full-time for low wages were unable to pay rent, worsened by a lack of available affordable housing units. The situation was further complicated for other vulnerable populations, such as seniors, immigrants, and persons with disabilities. Follow-up reports in 2008 showed that the rental housing problems were getting worse. Major concerns identified were increased rent, lower quality of rental housing, and reduced stability of housing. The Council advocated for rent controls that would limit the frequency and rate of rent increase, while advocating for more affordable housing units and an increase to the minimum wage. As a result of this work rent increases were limited to once per calendar year, but no caps were placed on the rate.



2000s

The former Sacred Heart School, located in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood, was used in this time period for the Sacred Heart Collective. The Council was the coordinating body for this endeavor, which operated with seven other non-profit organizations. It served as an example of ways groups can make use of vacant spaces for the betterment of the community.

2010s

The 2010s brought the Council into its eighth decade as an organization, in which it continued its work on poverty reduction with community partners, such as communications support for the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. The Council started working with Homeward Trust Edmonton, taking part in the Homeless Count and assisting with Homeless Connect—an event that brings a broad range of community partners and service providers together twice a year for people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton to access centralized supports.



2010

John Kolkman, longtime Research Coordinator for the Council, speaks at a Lunch and Learn event at the Edmonton Public Library.

A new internal strategic plan was developed for 2010-2013, which refined the Council's mission. This plan renewed its commitment to provide leadership to the community by addressing and researching social issues, informing public discussion, and influencing social policy. The major goals identified for the Council included inspiring a vision for a more livable city, recognition as an independent and progressive voice on social issues, and a broad and diverse network of members, friends, and volunteers.

In addition to these goals, the Council enhanced its mission by contributing to some important digital initiatives that helped improve research on social issues. One contribution was the launch of its library in a new digital format, called *threeSOURCE: an information hub for Alberta's third sector*. The database contained research reports that focused on social services, social issues, and the non-profit sector. The Council also played a key role in developing a social return on investment (SROI) database, which aimed to measure the impacts and effectiveness of social policy initiatives.

Efforts continued to advance the conversation on the development of thorough social policies that governments could implement. In 2012, the provincial government gathered feedback from

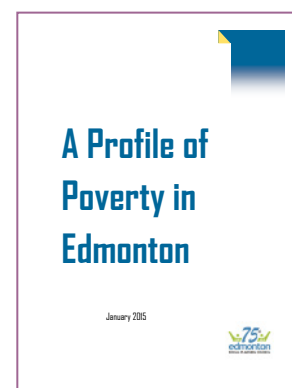
Albertans to design a social policy framework that would inform priority setting and decision-making to address social challenges. The Council held eight focused discussions with over 100 individuals living in low-income situation, and submitted eight reports to the government based on participants' input and words.

New publications further reflected the Council's strong research expertise, policy analysis, and collaboration with community partners. In 2013, the Council partnered with the Edmonton Community Foundation to produce *Vital Signs*. These annual publications serve as local report cards to measure quality of life factors among local communities across the country. The Edmonton reports provide statistics on demographic trends, food bank use, community gardens, health, and other factors. Each year focuses on a different topic, such as Indigenous peoples, women, or sexual and gender minorities.

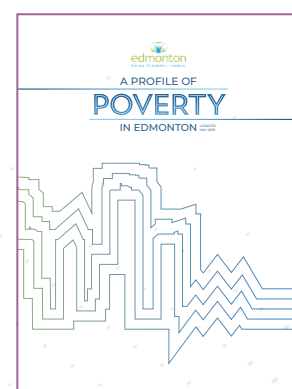
In response to the Mayor's 2015 Task Force on Poverty Elimination, the Council produced *A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton*. This report focused on the growing depth of poverty among low-income working Albertans, and proposed ways to reduce and eliminate poverty. It is updated with new data and progress reports every two years, most recently in 2017 and 2019. These reports influenced the provincial government's poverty reduction initiatives when the Alberta Child Benefit and an enhanced Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit were implemented in 2016.

The Council increased general awareness on the issue of a living wage with its annual *Living Wage Report*, which also started in 2015. These reports measure the value of a living wage (the hourly wage required for two parents working full-time with two children at home to afford the basic necessities of life and to participate in recreational activities), and applies them to the cost of living in Edmonton. Each year the report is updated to reflect changes to the cost of living, child benefits, and other social programs from provincial and federal governments.

The Council began to advocate on LGBTQ issues when the subject of gay-straight alliances (GSAs) in schools was being disputed across Alberta. In response to Bill 10, which would allow school boards to reject student requests to create these peer-support groups, the Council co-hosted "We Are Listening – Sparking Public



(2015)



A PROFILE OF POVERTY
IN EDMONTON: UPDATED
(2019)



2010

Executive Director Susan Morrissey speaking in front of Canada Place in support of ending homelessness.

Conversation on GSAs,” alongside the City of Edmonton Youth Council, Pride Centre of Edmonton, and Public Interest Alberta. The event, and its summary report, provided space for teachers, students, parents, and social workers to speak out about their lived experiences and the positive impacts that a GSA would bring to their schools and communities. The report was sent to every MLA in the province, and helped guide the government’s decision to amend Bill 10 to require all schools to support the formation of GSAs on school property.

Advocacy for public transportation for low-income Edmontonians was yet another success story. Based on a position statement by the Council on the benefits of reduced fares for low-income public transit users, the City of Edmonton implemented a low-income transit pass in 2016, which launched in September 2017.

2015

The “We Are Listening – Sparking Conversation on GSAs” forum was hosted by the Council in response to Bill 10, which would have allowed schools to reject student requests to create peer-support groups known as Gay-Straight Alliances.

As the Council closed out the 2010s, the scope of its work broadened to a provincial level due to an increase in collaboration with agencies across Alberta on various unifying issues. This included participation in the Keep Alberta Strong coalition, calling on the newly elected United Conservative Party government to maintain key investments in social programs in the lead-up to their first provincial budget in 2019. The Council also played a part in the establishment of the Alberta Living Wage Network—an advocacy group aimed at building awareness, and encouraging the adoption, of living wage policies across the province.



Looking to the Next 80 Years

The growth and evolution of the Council has undergone a lot of transformations. With multiple name changes, as well as shifting priorities and objectives, its journey has been an eventful one to say the least. While priorities have changed with the times and political landscape, one thing remains consistent: our commitment to making Edmonton a vibrant community where the most vulnerable in society can not only survive, but thrive.

As the Edmonton Social Planning Council looks ahead to the next 80 years, we remain committed to leveraging our strong research expertise towards social policy issues. We will continue to contribute positively towards initiatives that create a strong and vibrant community, and that advance opportunities to educate the broader community on our work, spreading awareness of the issues.

Notable Reports

P. 7 SECOND ANNUAL REPORT (1941)

An early annual report from the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies.

P. 19 BOYLE STREET PROPOSAL (1971)

Submission made by the Edmonton Social Planning Council to the federal Department of National Health and Welfare in support of funding and establishing the Boyle Street Community Service Centre.

P. 20 ALTERNATIVES TO POVERTY AND WELFARE IN ALBERTA (1973)

This publication was the first major report on poverty by the Council after the election of Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservative government. Notably, the report endorsed the idea of a Guaranteed Annual Income as a way to combat poverty and bridge the wealth gap.

P. 20 OLIVER COMMUNITY PROFILE (1974)

The *Oliver Community Profile* is an example of the Council's interest in urban development during this time, where they would work with neighbourhood groups on advocating for their community and its sustainable development.

P. 20 AN APPROACH TO RIVER VALLEY PLANNING TRAILS (1975)

The Council's interest in urban planning during this time also extended into development for public use and enjoyment of river valley trails, as illustrated by this publication.

P. 20 JUSTICE IN ALBERTA (1975)

The Council encouraged citizen participation in various facets of society, including the justice system. *Justice in Alberta: A Citizens' Look at the Law* took a critical look at the judicial process, highlighted its disparities, and recommended ways to reform the system.

P. 20 MINI-PARKS FOR EDMONTON (1976)

As part of the Council's work in urban planning, *Mini-Parks for Edmonton* made the case for more small parks being available in the city and made recommendations for best practices.

P. 23 THE OTHER WELFARE MANUAL (1987)

The Other Welfare Manual was a famous publication that highlighted gaps and deficiencies in the welfare system of the day, particularly in the way information was shared and interpreted. As a result, the province adopted measures to be more responsive to these gaps.

P. 23 LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL SOLUTIONS (1989)

The Council has a history of supporting the creation of women's shelters as well as providing support to their operations. *Local Needs, Local Solutions* provided a framework for how women's shelters in rural areas of the province could plan services based on identifying needs, addressing barriers, and making their services more inclusive to the communities served.

P. 25 OTHER CHILD WELFARE MANUAL (1994)

Building off the previous work of *The Other Welfare Manual*, this publication does a similar service for the child welfare sector, with teenagers in the system as the target audience.

P. 25 FIRST READING NEWSLETTER (1995)

Cover of an issue of *First Reading*, the Council's newsletter that began in 1982 as a communication tool to provide timely information and policy analysis on a number of social issues of interest to their supporters.

P. 29 NOT JUST A ROOF OVER OUR HEADS (2008)

The challenges faced by renters during the 2000s was a concern for the Council at this time. *Not Just A Roof Over Our Heads* was part of a series of publications that resulted from a listening forum about concerns over rent affordability.

P. 29 WE CAN DO BETTER (2008)

The first in a series of annual Alberta Child Poverty reports produced in partnership with Public Interest Alberta and the Alberta College of Social Workers. The reports shine a light on the current state of child poverty and make recommendations to governments on ways to reduce and eliminate the issue.

P. 33 A PROFILE OF POVERTY IN EDMONTON (2015)

The Council's commitment to poverty alleviation solutions, driven by data and evidence, has been ongoing with *A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton*. This report offers detailed statistics on who is living in poverty in the city, and what measures can be taken to improve their situation.

P. 33 A PROFILE OF POVERTY IN EDMONTON: UPDATED (2019)

The updated 2019 edition of *A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton* offered a progress report on the state of poverty in the city and assessed the impacts of federal and provincial programs on poverty reduction.

