



Council elects new board in April

A 15-member board of directors was elected at the Edmonton Social Planning Council's annual meeting.

Returning to the board are: **Al Harris**, senior consultant for the Alexander Consulting Group; **Terry Lind**, project supervisor with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission; **Pat Hagey**, Enersystems Limited; **Joan Munro**, sessional lecturer at the University of Alberta; **Bev Downing**, Grant MacEwan Community College's Consumer Education Project; **Alyson Lavers**, child welfare consultant for Alberta Social Services.

Board members beginning a second term are: **Elvira Leibovitz**, an extremely active volunteer for numerous Edmonton area social service agencies; **Jeffrey Pearson**, manager in the Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs; and **Beverley Decore**, a volunteer with the Junior League and the Alberta Foundation for Research and Education in Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

New board members are: **Michael Phair**, manager of settlement services with Alberta Career Development and Employment; **Iris M. Sulyma**, of Price Waterhouse; **Gordon F. N. Fearn**, professor of sociology at the University of Alberta; **Meg Hagerty**, social worker at the Grey Nuns Hospital; **John Copoc**, of Creative Management Limited; and **Carolyn Pettifer**, executive director of the Metis Children's Services Society.

The board will elect its executive at its organizational meeting in May.

What role does media play in public policy?

Most reporters and editors don't think very much about the role of the media in public policy, *Edmonton Journal* Editor Linda Hughes told those attending the Edmonton Social Planning Council's annual meeting April 19.

"Producing a newspaper every day is a hectic proposition. Every evening, in an eight-hour shift, we produce the equivalent of a short novel with information from every corner of the world. We don't have the luxury of time to reflect on the policy implications of every story we write. We don't see that as our role and frankly we are not the ones best able to judge the impact we may have on public policy," said Hughes.

Hughes went on to talk about some of the complexities involved in a newspaper's coverage of public policy. "The first and simple point is that the media doesn't always know that much about what's going on in the community. It sounds like a terrible admission to make but it's true. . . The public tends to think we know everything that's going on in the city and we only choose to print a tiny bit. We really don't...we only know what people tell us and there's an awful lot they don't tell us in this city."

"Once we know about stories, we don't always have the time or the resources or sometimes the inclination to report them in the depth that some readers or interested parties would like."

"What a good reporter has to be able to do is a quick study of an issue and be able to write about it in a way that will be fair, accurate, and understandable to the vast majority of newspaper readers who know even less than the reporter... Very seldom do reporters ever actually dig up raw information themselves. When they do it's usually a pretty good story, but the media generally rely

(continued on page 11)

Editorial

Celebrate Council's past, envision its future

This issue of *First Reading* departs from the usual practice of looking outward at pressing social issues. Instead, we look inward at the Edmonton Social Planning Council itself and the work it does.

This seems appropriate as the Council begins its 50th year of influencing Edmonton's social fabric. Celebrating anniversaries means looking back at past accomplishments, but—and perhaps most importantly—also capturing a vision for moving forward.

“Celebrating anniversaries means looking back at past accomplishments, but—and perhaps most importantly—also capturing a vision for moving forward.”

In this issue, we share the Council's vision through articles on the Council's role as change agent and a look at its varied projects. And we look at members and their importance, and how it's all funded. It's a way of answering questions often directed at the Council by members and others alike.

As the new editor of *First Reading*, I have a vision for a dynamic, exciting, and varied publication on social issues that is a “good read.” The best publications are those whose editors know what good marketers know: how to “stay close to the customers.” I want to know more about you, our readers, and what you look for in *First Reading*. So I implore you to take a few minutes to complete the readership survey on Pages 9 and 10. And I encourage you to submit letters to the editor—which will become a standing feature of *First Reading*—and suggestions for topics and issues you would like *First Reading* to explore. *First Reading* can become a vibrant interchange between its readers and the social issues of the day.

By this fall, you can expect a whole new look for *First Reading*. This new look will reflect and

contribute to a readable, timely, provocative publication on social issues. And if you think *First Reading* is NOT readable, timely, and provocative, I want to hear from you! I'm an editor who believes there's nothing that can't be improved, and I'm always seeking new ideas.

Beckie Garber-Conrad, ABC

First Reading (ISSN 0824-197X) is an Edmonton newsletter on current social issues published six times a year by the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is an independent, non-profit, social action agency which seeks social justice through applied research, policy analysis, community development, and organizational training.

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Contributions on current social issues are welcomed. When submitting manuscripts, please type them, double-spaced, and provide a brief biography. If you want the manuscript returned, please enclose an addressed, stamped envelope.

The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions to conform to space and style restrictions. *First Reading* adheres to a clear, concise reporting style and the specifics outlined in *The Canadian Style, A Guide to Writing and Editing*, published by The Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Edmonton Social Planning Council or of its funding bodies.

Publisher: Peter Faid, Executive Director
Editor: Beckie Garber-Conrad, ABC

A United Way Member Agency



Edmonton Social Planning Council serves as community change agent

"The principle of people having the right and opportunity to speak up on the issues affecting them drives the work of the Edmonton Social Planning Council," says Executive Director Peter Faid.

Today the Council is primarily concerned with the social consequences of public policies. What happens to people, their ability to cope, their quality of life, because of policies and policy changes? What can be done to improve matters? How can those affected most become involved in the process to change things?

Because it looks at issues from a community-wide

"The Council is considered an honest broker of information on social policy," said Vice-President Terry Lind. "People know they can come to us and get a considered opinion based on solid research and the principles of positive action and community involvement." Her view is supported by the average of 15-20 daily inquiry calls and Peter Faid's average of a call a day from the media.

"I think the Council has become a very credible social conscience in the community," says President Harvey Krahn. "It's expected to comment on the social issues of the day after looking for the facts, making some kind of analysis, and taking a position. The research the Council does is directed at a policy or issue with a clear, underlying goal to use what's discovered, to lobby it, move on it.

"The Council is tied into an incredible number of community agencies and often speaks with a very common voice," said Krahn. "Over time, it has developed a very strong network."

The Council tells the community what's happening and has proactively gone out and advocated on behalf of social services, said Hillel Boroditsky, executive director of the United Way of Edmonton and Area.

"As a product of the voluntary sector, not of government, it's responsible to the community rather than to any one funder. Doing it right and doing good is a great strength."

"The Council is playing a leadership role in pulling

"The principle of people having the right and opportunity to speak up on the issues affecting them drives the work of the Edmonton Social Planning Council."

perspective, the Council draws in a wide cross-section of people. It deals with issues that touch all of us in an atmosphere of constructive public debate. More and more, the Council has become (and is seen as) an agency that can represent the socio-economically deprived. The Council has developed as an advocate, a voice, for those unable to organize and to represent themselves and their needs to government.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council serves as an agent of community change, a social action agency. As a social activist, the Council plays many roles: researcher, community worker, educator, lobbyist.

As an independent, non-profit, community organization, it provides a unique perspective on the life of the total community. The Council does its work by:

- conducting applied research
- providing policy analysis
- facilitating community development
- offering training and consultation.

Research at the council draws people in to talk about the issues affecting them. It involves them in a therapeutic, empowering experience as they come to see what can be done. The Council does much of its research out of a community base, and then leads from the front and from behind (nudging and support) as community groups develop lives of their own.

And, as Faid says emphatically, "It is important to have community groups putting forth alternative points of view. The Council often becomes involved in acting as the messenger to government. It needs to get these messages to government in an effective way and work closely with government without being co-opted by it."

Beliefs and values guide Council's work

The Edmonton Social Planning Council states its mission:

The Edmonton Social Planning Council believes that all people should have the social rights and freedoms to live and work in an environment that enhances individual, family and community growth without restricting the same rights and freedoms for others.

The Council seeks to create, to advocate, and to support changes in policies, attitudes, and actions in order to enhance these social rights and freedoms.

together a broad number of government and community agencies, said John Lackey, General Manager of Edmonton Social Services.

"Its outward reaching, cooperative, and collaborative approach has touched very many people and organizations. And it has acted responsibly and with integrity."

As people often say, the Council serves as the "voice of the voiceless." As an advocate for those who cannot—through lack of information or ability—speak for themselves, the Council involves them. Through consulting and organizing people, the Council enables them.

"It helps them figure out the system," said Krahn, "And it also organizes them and helps them do it themselves—through training, prodding, leading, and cajoling."

The Council's impetus for work comes in different ways. Partly, it seeks to identify gaps in services and find some strategy for filling them. The Council is sometimes the catalyst, sometimes the support, but is never the lone carrier of the ball.

Some projects, many of them long-term ones, grow out of its own commitment to issues of poverty, employment and unemployment, and the provision or abandonment of services. Others start with a request for assistance from an agency or community group. Still others originate as a proposal on some research contract that will also earn money to help the Council meet its budget. If the varied projects ever seem scattered or nebulous, the underlying goal remains clear: to change things.

"The fiscal worries of governments will put more pressure on social programs," predicts Krahn. "And the types of issues facing the Council are likely to be classic: the poor and down-trodden rather than fine-tuning legislation."

An organization some call the "best kept secret in

What ESPC sets out to do

The Council's goals are to:

- *undertake research* into the nature and magnitude of social issues in the community
- *increase* public awareness and understanding of current social issues and to exercise an independent voice in the community
- *encourage* greater public participation in the development of social policies and in the implementation of programs.

Edmonton," the Council has demonstrated an ability to bring people together who might not come together otherwise.

Such skills, and the Council's reputation for being impartial and helpful may be increasingly crucial as governments fiscal concerns put more pressure on social programs.

"...the underlying goal remains clear: to change things."

Council has "vision" that clarifies action

At a retreat last spring, ESPC board and staff wrestled with the question of what shared vision should mould the Council's work as it moves into the next decade. The themes emerged into a vision statement, which Executive Director Peter Faid says often serves as a reference point during board deliberations.

- The Edmonton Social Planning Council in the 1990s will be the leading non-political social policy organization in the Edmonton area, with a reputation for commitment to the facilitation of social, economic, and environmental improvement in the community, through increased understanding and constructive public debate.
- We will be critics, facilitators, catalysts, instigators, researchers, advocates, and publicists.
- Individuals and groups who influence and/or are impacted by social policy will seek our services as a community partner.
- Government will look to us as the voice of the community conscience.
- The Edmonton Social Planning Council will take a strong stand on current social issues.
- We will therefore seek and gain respect for our honesty and thorough research rather than acceptance of our position.
- The Edmonton Social Planning Council will be a leader in the community, not a follower.

Council's pursuit of social justice varied

In its pursuit of social justice, the Edmonton Social Planning Council undertakes varied projects, many of which fall into the general areas of poverty issues, the provision or abandonment of services, and unemployment and employment.

Tackling poverty on many fronts

Much of the Council's work takes a community development approach to people's problems. It brings people with common problems together and enables them to take positive action.

Last year, forty-five people participated in three Welfare Advocacy Training Workshops to help recipients and non-profit agency staff advocate effectively with the social allowance system. Out of these workshops grew the Community Advocates Network (CAN), which seeks to ensure that social allowance recipients receive maximum benefits under the current system.

The Council participates in an interagency Income Security Action Committee. Through its efforts, the food allowance rate increased in the 1988 provincial budget and people receiving social allowance were allowed to keep 100 percent of their low income federal sales tax credit. This committee seeks a full public review of Alberta's social allowance system and social allowance rates based on actual cost of living. It also encourages people on social allowance to advocate for themselves.

The Council also participates in the Food Policy Committee, another interagency group, which will identify who has difficulty getting nutritious food and why, and then make recommendations to governments, communities, and business.

In 1988, the Council published a down-to-earth guide called *The Other Welfare Manual*. Alberta Social Services has since purchased 30,000 copies for distribution through their offices and is negotiating a contract for another 75,000. The success of this guide has led the Council to investigate the feasibility of similar manuals on such programs as unemployment insurance, native social allowance, and child care.

This year, the Council is researching child poverty in Edmonton, with plans to educate others, make recommendations, and establish child poverty action groups. It has just released an issue of Alberta Facts on Children and Poverty and plans two more issues this year on poverty-related topics.

Through Council support and research, a lobby group Disabilities Unlimited developed. This issue was raised in 1987 when a man receiving social allowance and Canada Pension Plan disability benefits approached the council. He was living below the poverty line because the Alberta government deducted dollar for dollar the amounts he received from the Canada Pension Plan from his provincial welfare payments. Research showed that this also happened to those receiving money from Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped and the Widow's Pension Plan.

Related work is under way with another lobby group, Pensions Unlimited.

The business of briefs and studies

Initiated by the United Way, the Community Needs Assessment Project will produce a five-year cycle of reports on community trends.

The first section will deal with such broad trends as income, employment, population, families, and health.

The second will identify present and future trends that have impact on services for youth and for seniors. In the years ahead, part two will deal with different sets of client groups.

Promised to be accessible and readable, the first document is scheduled for June. The Council joins with the City of Edmonton Social Services, Alberta Family and Social Services, the Edmonton Board of Health, Alberta Mental Health Services, and the United Way on this project.

The Council also participates in the Edmonton Inter-Agency Youth Services Association aimed at working cooperatively towards promoting improved services to street youth and youth at risk between the ages of 10 and 18. One of this year's projects is a directory of available youth services.

The Council presented a brief on the future of health care in Alberta to the Premier's Commission called "Health Care for Albertans: Making a Good Health Care System Better." In working with other concerned groups and associations, the Council cultivated contacts with whom it will continue to work for innovative changes in the health care system.

Often the Council is contracted by governments for research and other projects. Some such work is "Volunteering in Alberta" and "Rural-Urban Differences in Volunteering," two monographs being prepared for the Secretary of State.

To work or not to work—and the consequences

The Unemployed People's Support Project (UPS) began last spring to bring unemployed people together to better cope with life without work and to find work again. The ESPC, in conjunction with the Family Life Education Council and the City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation Department, coordinated seven groups.

Through eight sessions in four weeks, participants learned how to find help, maintain self-esteem, handle family and personal stress, and use job search techniques and recreation. Participants say they feel less alone. They report feeling encouraged by meeting others in the same situation and socializing with them, said Sidney Pollock of the Family Life Education Council, which has groups under way until June and hopes to continue the program.

After several years of research into unemployment and

its social implications, the Council became part of the Canadian Council on Social Development's **Work and Income in the Nineties** project. Focus groups across Canada were used to gather information that will be discussed in a national forum this month. A network has been established to develop strategies and projects to promote meaningful job creation.

Other projects for this year include efforts to:

- increase awareness among the public and among policy makers of the social and psychological costs of unemployment
- deal with the changing nature of work in Alberta and Canada, looking at such issues as unemployment, the working poor, low paying service sector jobs, and other work issues
- research changes in the labour force, growing inequalities and future trends for work in the next decade
- look at how legislation and the workplace can be modified to better integrate people's major roles of work and family
- investigate a community-based alternative investment fund for socially responsible investment.

"Sharing the wealth"

Every year, the Council provides training and consultation services to community agencies. This includes workshops for volunteers and staff, program evaluations, and confidential assistance to senior agency staff and executive members of agency boards.

In the past year, the Council:

- conducted board/staff planning workshops for Edmonton Women's Shelter Society and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
- made presentations and briefs on midwifery, work and the family, voluntarism, and privatization to the Canadian Cancer Society, the New Democratic Conference on the Family, and the Solicitor General of Canada and
- conducted program evaluations for Planned Parenthood Association of Edmonton and Family Service Association of Edmonton.

The Council continues to make the community more aware of current social issues through:

- its regular publications *First Reading* and *Alberta Facts*
- brown bag lunchtime forums on social issues and
- presentations to community groups on voluntarism, privatization, and work and the family.

For more details on the Edmonton Social Planning Council's work in 1988, contact Carmen Brady at 423-2031 for your copy of the annual report.

Council's library research haven

There's no shortage of information in our society, and that can be a problem in itself. Sometimes the distance between desperately needed information and its source can seem overwhelming. When it comes to information on social issues, however, help comes through the Edmonton Social Planning Council with its Roger Soderstrom Resource Library.

The library's over 2,000 items cover such social issues as social services, health, poverty, income security, pensions, family, children and child care, women, and seniors. In addition, it deals with non-profit organizations, transportation, housing, urban issues and community development, law and crime, employment and unemployment in the labour force, and research and methodology.

An especially valuable collection of local information, the library files periodicals from non-profit agencies and other social planning councils. It also maintains provincial and some federal government statistics and provincial and federal budget information. Open weekdays 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., the library provides limited workspace and photocopying at 10 cents a copy.

ESPC looks back 50 years

For over 50 years, the Edmonton Social Planning Council has been influencing the development of voluntary social services and community groups in Edmonton.

Councils were common throughout North America after the turn of the century. As with most of them, Edmonton's Council of Social Agencies helped existing agencies avoid service gaps and overlaps.

Generally, the councils also took action to establish new services to meet changing or emerging needs. Creators of the councils looked to them for centralized planning in the health and social services area. And the concern for centralized financial planning for private agencies saw community chests emerging to conduct joint funding campaigns.

Social planning councils developed differently around the continent. In Edmonton, the council's work emphasized applied research and planning by the 1960s. It tackled such issues as day care, the problems of aging, the juvenile court system, the needs of families, and social problems in the inner city.

By the 1970s, the Council became involved with community development projects, working with neighbourhood groups and advocacy organizations.

Among the legacy of the Edmonton Social Planning Council's 50 years of work are prominent community organizations it helped to establish: United Way of Edmonton and Area, Family Services Association of Edmonton, Christmas Bureau of Edmonton, Community Connections, Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre, Family Life Education Council, Boyle Street Co-op, Alberta Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled, and Sexual Assault Centre.

ALBERTA FACTS

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Children in Poverty: On the Outside Looking In

We live in a country where everyone's needs are met, at least those of children — right? **Wrong!** In Canada, one child in six lives in poverty. One child in six does not have basic needs met. In Alberta, one child in six means that 93,600 children live in poverty.



*One Child in Six
Lives in Poverty*

What does being poor mean to these children?

What being poor means to Jenny

The average girl living with her mom stands a 50-50 chance of being poor. Jenny's mom doesn't make much money: she earns minimum wage. She can't always afford nutritious meals, so Jenny gets sick a lot.

Jenny and her mom move around often, and Jenny feels she's always changing schools. She finds it hard to have to make new friends all the time.

Jenny has one pair of jeans, and she doesn't have a bike or get birthday presents or have neat snacks to take to school. Sometimes Jenny finds it embarrassing.

But what Jenny finds hardest about being poor is that *she feels different* from all the other children.

What is a poor family?

According to Statistics Canada, a family is considered "a low income family" if they spend more than an average of about 60 per cent of their income on food, clothing and shelter (depending on where they live and the size of family). According to The National Council of Welfare, these families "live in poverty."

For example, in an Albertan city, the poverty line for a family of four is \$23,521 (before deductions); for a family of three, the poverty line is \$20,411 (before deductions).

Poverty Line in Alberta

<i>Family size</i>	<i>Income before deductions</i>
Family of four	\$23,521
Family of three	\$20,411

SOURCE: 1988 Poverty Lines,
National Council of Welfare

Families of Poor Children

Female-headed single parent families	1 in 2
Families with parents under 25 years old	1 in 4
Families with three or more children	1 in 3

SOURCE: Poverty Profile 1988,
National Council of Welfare

Poor families mean poor children

Poor children are most likely to live in families:

- headed by female single parents
- headed by a parent under 25 years old
- with three or more children
- of Native people

Most low-income families are the "working poor." Although these parents have jobs, they and their families just manage to get by.

For example, a single parent with one child who earns minimum wage has an income more than \$6,000 below the poverty line. *This means this parent would have to work 68 hours per week to support a child at the poverty line.*

The Working Poor

Minimum wage = \$4.50 per hour

x 40 hours per week = \$180 per week

x 50 weeks = \$9,000 (gross) per year

\$15,258 (poverty line, 2 person family)

-9,000 (income at minimum wage)

\$6,258 BELOW the poverty line

Poor children often are sick children

Babies from poor families die at almost twice the rate that babies from wealthy families do. For babies from Indian families the picture is much worse. They die at a rate almost 4 1/2 times greater than other Alberta babies.

And, poor children suffer more from cancer, respiratory diseases, congenital anomalies and pneumonia than other children.

These higher disease and death rates are closely tied to nutrition, health care, and housing conditions.

Are housing costs really accommodating?

The average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Edmonton was \$482 in October, 1988. After paying rent, the single parent with two children, earning minimum wage, has \$238 left. With this money, she must pay utilities, household, laundry, child care, prescriptions, and travel expenses PLUS buy food and clothing for her children.

This family qualifies for a social allowance subsidy of about \$500 per month. Often people are unaware of this subsidy. Others, who may be aware of the subsidy, wish to avoid the social allowance system because of the stigma attached.

Does money affect education?

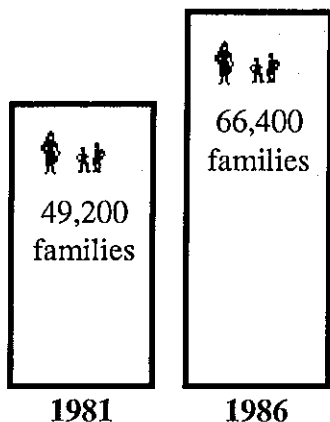
Children from wealthy families are far more likely to finish high school and continue their education than children from poor families. Children from poor families skip school twice as much as children from other families.

Studies point out that family income affects how well children do in school and how much they join school activities.

While no figures exist for all Native people, only 20% of Indian students finish high school—compared to a national average of 70%.

What does this mean for children? People with less education have a greater chance of being out of work and therefore a greater chance of being poor. In other words, poor children are more likely to become poor adults.

Alberta's Poor Families Increase



SOURCE: Poverty Profile 1988,
National Council of Welfare

Are families a priority for the Alberta Government?

The typical cost of feeding and clothing two boys, aged 10 and 11, was about \$310 a month in December, 1988, according to Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Social allowance provides about \$225 for food and clothing for these two children. Foster care provides about \$415. Why do parents living on social allowance and caring for their own children receive less than the estimated cost for food and clothing? (And nothing for toys, books, or Christmas and birthday presents.)

Why is there such a gap between what natural parents receive for their children and what foster parents receive for other people's children?

The Alberta Government says it believes in families and wants to help them. How are they supporting poor families?

"It is our belief that the dollars supplied for food allowance are sufficient and that if families have a problem managing within that amount, they should seek the counselling that's available to them."

— Hon. Connie Osterman

When a school lunch program was suggested in the Legislature in April, 1988, the then Social Services Minister Connie Osterman said, "It is our belief that the dollars supplied for food allowance are sufficient and that if families have a problem managing within that amount, they should seek the counselling that's available to them."

Average Family Incomes

\$49,797

Married

\$37,869

Male Single Parent

\$23,108

Female Single Parent

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, Income Distributions by Size in Canada #13-207, 1987

The future: more than a family affair

The number of single parent families grew by almost 50 per cent in the 10 years from 1971 to 1981. Single parent families represented 13 per cent of all families by 1986. The number of two-parent families also increased, but only by 22 per cent.

If these trends continue, it is likely that more and more children will grow up poor.

What responsibility do we share for all Alberta's children?

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the future consequences of providing less than minimum care for Alberta's children?
2. The Alberta Government says it wants to help families. How do you think it can best do this?
3. Who will advocate for Alberta's poor children?
4. How would we all benefit if fewer children grew up poor?

What can you do?

- Support raising social allowance benefits to ensure that children can be adequately fed and clothed.
 - Support equalizing wages between men and women so single mothers can support their children.
 - Write letters to your Member of Parliament (MP) and your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to encourage the above changes.
-

Recommended Reading

Baum, Gregory. *Ethics in Economics*. Toronto: Lorimer, 1984.

Campbell, C.C., et al. *Hunger, Poverty and Malnutrition: The Nutritional Implications of Food Insecurity in Canada*. Toronto: Food Advocacy Coalition of Toronto, 1986.

Canadian Child Welfare Association, Canadian Council on Children and Youth, Canadian Council on Social Development, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Child Poverty Action Group, Family Service Canada, and Vanier Institute of the Family. *A Choice of Futures: Canada's Commitment to Its Children* [a series of five fact sheets]. Toronto, 1988.

Canadian Council on Social Development. *Not Enough: The Meaning and Measurement of Poverty in Canada*. Ottawa, 1984.

Clarke, Michelle. *Wasting our Future: The Effects of Poverty on Child Development*. Ottawa: The Canadian Council on Children and Youth, 1988.

Deroo, Remy. *Witness of Justice*. Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.

The Child Poverty Action Group. *A Fair Chance for all Children: the Declaration on Child Poverty*. Toronto, 1986.

Waxman, Chaim I., *The Stigma of Poverty*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1983.

Children in Poverty: On the Outside Looking In is one of a series of fact sheets on social issues produced by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. This edition was produced with financial support from the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation. Copies are available in bulk for classes and study groups.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is an independent, non-profit social action agency which seeks social justice through policy analysis, applied research, community development, and training and consultation.

For more information about the Council, its regular publications ***First Reading*** and ***Alberta Facts***, or other publications, please contact:



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Council's publications worth adding to library

Often, although not always, the Edmonton Social Planning Council's research finds its way into print.

The Other Welfare Manual uses a compact 50 pages to lead clients and helping professionals through the social allowance maze. This manual helps people understand their rights and responsibilities, deal with the system, and receive the maximum benefits available to them.

The tone throughout this guide is "stand up for yourself." It shows how to become actively involved in the process: ask for your entitlements, know that you can appeal, keep records.

Copies are available for \$4, but are free to social allowance recipients. Organizations requesting multiple copies for use with clients should check with Carmen Brady for details.

Another recent publication *Doing it right!* is a practical workbook on needs assessment. Designed especially for social service agencies and community organizations, *Doing it right!* provides practical, straight-forward information.

It helps readers understand how a needs assessment can benefit an agency or group as it plans. Then it asks the reader questions designed to help him determine whether a needs assessment is needed.

Finally, it uses a workbook approach for a learn-by-doing approach to actually conducting a needs assessment.

For your copy, send \$9.95, plus \$2 for shipping and handling.

If you're a social researcher, have we got the book for you!

The *1989 Social Research Directory* contains detailed listings for eighty libraries, resources centres, and similar collections of social information in the Edmonton Area.

This guide is useful to both those doing indepth research and those needing concise, current information quickly. Its intended users include community organizations, public servants, librarians, individuals, educators, and students.

The libraries included meet three criteria:

- all collect information about the individuals and groups that make up society, their welfare, and their interactions
- the public has access to the collection, although material may not circulate and hours and service are limited
- all are located in Edmonton.

Each copy costs \$9.95, plus \$2 for shipping and handling.

Other recent reports by the Edmonton Social Planning Council include *Health Care for Albertans: Making A Good Health Care System Better* and *Facing the Future: The Economic and Political Realities of Voluntarism in the 1990s*. Each publication costs \$2, plus \$2 for shipping and handling.

"Tracking the Trends: Future Directions for Human Services in Edmonton" will be available this summer. It is the first report of the Community Needs Assessment Project undertaken by the Council, the United Way, City of Edmonton Social Services, Alberta Family and Social Services, Edmonton Board of Health, and Alberta Mental Health Services.

Be up to date! Order your publications from the Edmonton Social Planning Council today.

Edmonton Social Planning Council Order Form

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 Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1C5

Members crucial to Council's work

People working together to make better lives, better communities, is at the heart of the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The Council gets people involved in many ways—one of which is through membership. Nearly 200 individuals and groups belong, and there's room for more!

Joining the Council is a way to:

- support its work
- receive *First Reading* and *Alberta Facts*
- receive notice of new publications (and get a 15 per cent discount on purchases) and
- connect with other socially conscious people.

Who joins? A recent survey showed that the average individual member is 35 to 44 years old, has a masters degree, and works in social or related agencies. Members belong to a wide range of other organizations and professional associations and participate in a wide range of activities.

The single most important reason they gave for joining

is support for the Council's work. Secondly, they wanted social planning information, *First Reading*, and *Alberta Facts*. For organizational members, the desire for information outranks even their stated strong support of the Council's work.

Perhaps the least developed aspect of membership is networking. "I would like to hear more from members," said Carmen Brady, Publications and Membership Secretary. She encourages members to drop in for coffee, to use the library, to talk about their expectations of membership. Brown bag lunch forums, scheduled to start again this fall, give members and guests a chance to deal with current social issues.

Part of the Council's strength is its solid base of members. If you aren't a member, please consider joining. If you already are a member, please renew when the time comes. And, in the meantime, pass this along to someone else you feel may wish to join. For more information about membership, contact Carmen Brady at 423-2031.

Donations support essential community work

The Edmonton Social Planning Council's status as an independent, non-profit organization lends something to its widespread credibility.

Unlike many other community agencies steeped in service delivery, the Council can devote its time to researching community needs. Unlike government research units, the Council can criticize social policies and programs. Unlike research units, the Council can use its research as a basis for advocacy and community development.

It has a unique track record in working successfully with diverse groups, for taking an impartial and informed viewpoint, and fostering debate without creating animosity.

Not only is this an unending challenge in itself, but also the Executive Director faces the perpetual puzzle of putting together enough funds each year. Half the Council's money comes from the United Way of Edmonton and Area with the rest coming from municipal, provincial, federal, and foundation grants, combined with donations, membership fees, and fees for service. Approximately 40 percent of the Council's \$290,000 budget comes from contracts, grants, fee for service work, and private donations.

Can you turn your support of the Edmonton Social Planning Council into a donation this year? Send your cheque or money order right away. You can expect your tax deductible receipt by mail.

YES, I want to help the Edmonton Social Planning Council!	
Here is my cheque or money order for:	
\$50	\$100 \$150 \$250 Other_____
Name _____	
Address _____	
City _____	Province _____
Postal Code _____	
Member _____	Non-member _____
Return to: Edmonton Social Planning Council #41, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 1C5	

Tell us what you think about *First Reading*

Dear Reader,

You receive *First Reading* from the Edmonton Social Planning Council six times a year. *First Reading* is part of the Council's efforts to increase public awareness and understanding of current social issues.

Please help make *First Reading* the kind of publication you want and need by taking a few minutes to complete this brief questionnaire. **Do it now**, and mail it so that your views are part of the planning for the "new, improved" *First Reading*!

1. When *First Reading* arrives, I usually read it:

- Immediately
- Within a week
- Within a month
- Eventually
- I don't read it at all

2. *First Reading* provides me with information that is:

- Very useful
- Generally useful
- Somewhat useful
- Useless

3. The language and writing style in *First Reading* is:

- Very difficult to read and understand
- Difficult to read and understand
- Easy to read and understand

4. The articles in *First Reading* tend to be:

- Too long
- Too short
- About right

5. For me, *First Reading* is:

- A primary source of information about social issues
- One of a few sources of information about social issues
- One of many sources of information about social issues

6. *First Reading's* coverage of social issues tends to contain:

- Too much detail
- About the right amount of detail
- Too little detail

7. *First Reading* contains about the right type and mix of information.

- Yes (Please skip questions 8 and 9)
 No (Please answer questions 8 and 9)

8. *First Reading* needs more information about:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edmonton Social Planning Council activities | <input type="checkbox"/> taking action on social issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> poverty and unemployment in Alberta | <input type="checkbox"/> other. Please specify _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> government social policy | |

9. *First Reading* needs less information about:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edmonton Social Planning Council activities | <input type="checkbox"/> taking action on social issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> poverty and unemployment in Alberta | <input type="checkbox"/> other. Please specify _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> government social policy | |

10. Who should receive *First Reading*? (Check as many categories as you feel apply.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edmonton aldermen | <input type="checkbox"/> educational institutions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MLAs | <input type="checkbox"/> human service organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MPs | <input type="checkbox"/> human service professionals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> business leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> media | <input type="checkbox"/> other. Please specify _____ |

11. Please add any comments you wish to make about *First Reading* and how it might be improved.

Thank you for participating and for providing your stamp and envelope.

Return your completed questionnaire to:

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

What role does media play in public policy?

(continued from page 1)

on institutions to tell us what is new.

"I have often said that newspapers don't print the truth. We print what people tell us. And it's often not true. Walter Lippman, a great American journalist said this long before I did and said it more eloquently. 'The function of news,' he said, 'is to signalize an event; the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act.'"

Lippman suggested that news could be expected to coincide with truth in only a few limited areas: the fact of a hockey score or an election result. In the complex and ambiguous areas of public policies and politics, news stories cannot be expected to present a full and true picture.

"A simple example may be a new piece of legislation; let's say it's social service legislation. The reporter gets a copy of the bill and goes to the minister responsible and the minister says this will mean wonderful progressive changes in the system. Then the reporter goes to the opposition MLAs and they say, 'no this is terrible.' Then we go to the social planning council and they say, 'well, this part is good but that part is bad' and then we go to the Chamber of Commerce and they say, 'No, that part is good and this part is bad.' And the reporter writes the story quoting everyone.

"If you know something about the subject, you can probably wade through all the remarks and draw some conclusions. If you are an average reader, I'm not sure the story has been very helpful."

"The greatest concern I have is not whether the media plays an appropriate role in public policy issues, but, rather, whether anyone really cares very much any more."

Even when the media has great information and understanding of the issue, our readers may not be very interested, said Hughes. "We have to constantly weigh what we think is important with what we think our readers will find interesting and relevant." She said it's a balancing act between what is in the public interest to know and what the public is interested in knowing about.

"Nevertheless, the media obviously plays a crucial role in public policy debate. In the simplest terms, there often wouldn't be any debate if it weren't for the media." She said governments consider the media part of the process in making policy decisions and announcements, but the media is much more than simply a forum for announcements. "We also disclose and expose policies that government and institutions would prefer not

to see in the public limelight."

Hughes called the media a sounding board for information and for public opinion, but said its greatest role in a democratic society is not simply to report what those in power have done and what those with vested interests have to say, but to be a public watchdog.

"When the media goes beyond the 'he said, she said' of news reporting and digs into the real effects of public policy on real people, that's when the media can have its greatest impact on public policy.

"You may remember the story of Richard Cardinal, the native teenager who spent his life in more than 20 different foster homes. He committed suicide and left a diary which was given to the *Journal*. The stories we wrote about Cardinal led to a public inquiry into his death. On the basis of the inquiry's findings, significant changes were made to the Child Welfare Act in an effort to ensure other children should not suffer the same fate as Richard Cardinal.

"More recently, and partly in response to the Cardinal case, the social services department began a policy of repatriating native foster children back to their reserves. But that policy has had mixed results and the *Journal* and other media have again focused attention on the problem by writing about the tragic and traumatic stories of children taken out of happy foster homes and placed in new and frightening environments. The stories have again sparked a re-examination of department policy."

Hughes noted many examples where the media has brought injustices and inequities, or perceived injustices, into public focus. "It's not that the media forces policy change but it can push the public into paying attention and if the public cares, the policy change will come."

"The greatest concern I have is not whether the media plays an appropriate role in public policy issues, but, rather, whether anyone really cares very much anymore."

Hughes cited declining newspaper readership across North America. In the United States, 54 per cent of adults read a daily paper—down from 73 per cent 20 years ago. Among 18 to 30 year olds, 33 per cent read daily newspapers, down from 60 per cent 20 years ago. She cites readership surveys which give a sense that younger people care little about politics, the economy, and what's going on around them. They want things short and quick, easy to read, and easy to understand. For them radio, television, and tabloid journalism suffice. Add in the problem of illiteracy—the one in five Canadians (one in four Edmontonians) considered functionally illiterate.

"All in all, we can paint a pretty dismal picture for the future of journalism, at least more thoughtful journalism. Without thoughtful journalism, we will not have an enlightened electorate. Without an enlightened electorate, we cannot have a functioning democracy.

"So our greatest concern in the future may not be how the media affects public policy, but whether the media can make the general public care at all about that public policy."

On the Council Agenda...

- Casino, July 12–13, ABS Casino, 10161 – 112 Street
- Watch for brown bag lunch time forums this fall!
- Watch for **50th Anniversary** plans!!

• SOCIAL SHORTS •

Edmonton volunteers

Edmonton's Volunteer Action Centre recruited nearly 2,500 volunteers in 1988. Although most volunteers fall between the ages of 21 and 40, 95 young teenagers (aged 13-17) volunteer as well as about 90 people over 61.

The Centre's own 95 volunteers accumulated approximately 7,700 hours as referral counsellors, office support staff, special projects staff, and board trainers for other agencies.

For more information—or to volunteer!—contact the Volunteer Action Centre, 9844 – 110 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 1J2, phone: 482-6431.

Know your rights

Know Your Rights! A Handbook for Women in the Alberta Workforce is a new handbook available from Edmonton Working Women. It covers employment standards, discrimination, sexual harassment, and remedies for workplace problems.

For a copy, mail \$1 (for postage) to Edmonton Working Women, #30, 9930 – 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 1C7.

About children...

Numerous publications for and about children are available from the

Canadian Council on Children and Youth. For more details, request the brochure *Publications* from the Council, Suite 14, 2211 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1H 7X5.

Family violence defined

Family violence is in the news, but how is it defined? Ontario social worker David Rivard calls family violence a “generic term” referring to any threat or use of physical force on one of several members of a person's family. This is often combined with acts of coercion, manipulation, exploitation, and control tactics. In essence, abuse involves a perpetrator, typically male, who does something against the wishes of more vulnerable family members. Abusive behaviors fall into four categories:

- physical: hitting, kicking, slapping, punching, and physical play that hurts
- emotional: name calling and verbal abuse often including derogatory remarks
- sexual: exposure, sexual touching, attempted or actual sexual acts (including marital rape)
- psychological: threats of suicide or fear of violence.

Second Class
Mail
Registration
Number
6390

i.d.06/89

Edmonton Social Planning Council
#41, 9912-106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1C5
Phone: (403) 423-2031

From:

To: