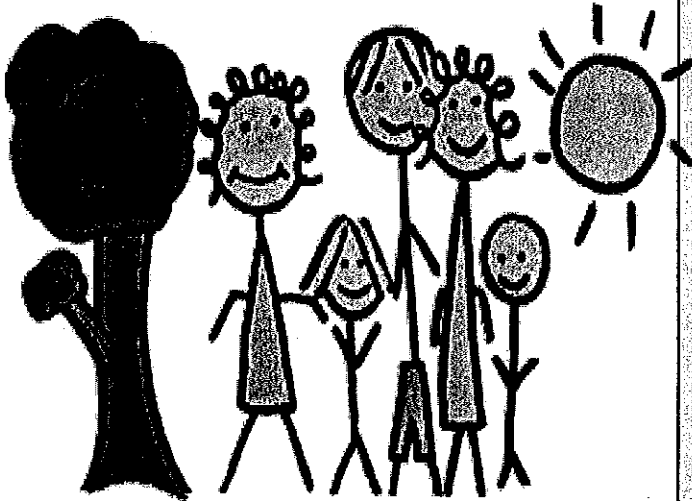


ESPC Vision:

A community in which all people have a commitment to social justice and shared responsibility as the foundation for community well-being.



ESPC Mission:

- ◆ Identify trends and emerging social issues;
- ◆ Create opportunities to debate and address social issues; and
- ◆ Initiate and support community action through research, coordination and advocacy.

Message from the Executive Director United Action Required

Minister Dunford's disregard for most of the recommendations from the Review of Low-Income Programs, means thousands of Albertans will continue to struggle for survival in one of the richest provinces in the country. The rates and benefits for SFI have not significantly changed since they were *reduced* in 1993. However, the Minister announced there would be no increases this fiscal year and no commitment was made as to next year, even though government surpluses are forecasted to be higher than originally thought. Throughout the consultation process, people told the MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs what changes they would like to see (the complete list of recommendations were listed in our last *fACTivist* - fall 2001).

Here are a few recommendations:

- Ensure availability of safe, affordable housing
- Raise the social assistance rates
- Better training programs and access to jobs
- A higher minimum wage
- Follow-up support to ease the transition from low-income programs to full employment.
- Better programs for preventing and treating addictions of all kinds.
- More value placed on parenting including better education and support for parents
- High-quality, affordable childcare
- Better training and staffing in social service delivery, health care and other agencies

Even with universal agreement among service providers and recipients that rates are too low, we believe government will not adjust the rates without additional political pressure to do so. We urge all Albertans to make three calls: one to the Premier's office at 427-2251, one to Pat Nelson, Treasury, 427-8809 and one to your local MLA to ask for an increase in program support levels.

See page #7 for more on this issue.

Message from the Board of Directors

Submitted by Joan Welch, President

On behalf of the new 2002-2003 Board, I congratulate the ESPC staff on the most recent issue of *the fACTivist*, highlighting research on social issues in our community.

ESPC strives to build awareness and knowledge of the nature and scope of social problems faced by many of our fellow citizens. We hope that understanding and compassion by those who enjoy some of the advantages of our society for those who do not will drive change.

A key concern for members, Board and staff of ESPC is the plight of children in poverty, and the damage poverty does to their health, educational opportunities, and spirit. Please join our efforts in creating a better community by using ESPC research and becoming an ESPC member and donor.



The UN Special Session on Children: Putting Promises Into Action

Campaign 2000

Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada coalition of over 85 national and community organizations united in securing the implementation of the 1989 House of Commons resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000.

“That this House express its concern for the more than one million Canadian children currently living in poverty and seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.”

- All Party resolution passed with unanimous consent by the House of Commons on November 24, 1989.

ESPC Board of Directors 2002/03

Shirley Clement

Wanda Dannelly

Jacqueline Devlin

Margaret Dewhurst

Marilyn Hooper

Shelley Jodoin

Darren Keast

Marcel Labbe

Bryan Sandilands

Sarah Wall

Joan Welch

What has happened to Child Poverty in Canada?

(Statistics taken from the May 2002 Report issued by Campaign 2000)

- ✘ Number of poor children (1989-1999) up by 39%
- ✘ Number of poor children in two parent families (1989-1999) up by 33%
- ✘ Number of poor children in female lone-parent families (1989-1999) up by 44%
- ✘ Total number of visits to food banks (1989-2000) up by 90%

Please visit www.campaign2000.ca to obtain a complete copy of the *Report on a Decade of Child and Family Poverty in Canada*, May 2002.

Children's Services

Since the fall of 2001, the Children's Services budget has been cut by seven per cent. Many of the questions raised focused on the impact of the cuts to the quality and delivery of services for children around the province. Many of the examples provided illustrated a failure on the part of the government to implement recommendations that have been put forth over the past two decades.

A sampling of comments made by Iris Evans, Minister of Children's Services during Oral Question Period are as follows:

☛ In actual fact cost-containment strategies were only effected in the last part of the latter part of this past government fiscal year, and my information would in fact deny that the draconian cuts that have been suggested were actually made. We made some alterations to programs. (March 6, 2002)

☛ Let's come back to the fundamental reason that we have been faced with cost containment in the first place. That's because we have had a number of youth who are 11 years of age and older who have been, in my view, abandoned by their parents in terms of child welfare delivery and have placed an inordinate strain on this government to provide where parents have failed. (March 19, 2002)

☛ In the Korvette Crier case this was clearly a place where the worker assignment to an unaccredited foster placement was in error and done without full communication and knowledge. (May 1, 2002)

☛ But let's not try and blame this government for the deaths of children in care - we're doing our level best... (May 1, 2002)

To access transcripts from the spring sitting of the Alberta Legislature visit:

<http://www.assembly.ab.ca/pro/han-sim.asp>

The Impact of Poverty on Women's Health

The Women's Health Clinic (WHC) in Manitoba recently issued a study entitled *Women, Income and Health in Manitoba: An Overview for Ideas and Action*. This report was part of a yearlong awareness project funded by the Women's Health Clinic (WHC) and the federal government.

This report explores the link between income and health, recognizing that this link is of particular importance for women. This study looks at the disparity between men's' and women's' poverty and how income inequality affects the health not only of women living in poverty but also of everyone in our society.

The report, executive summary, brochure, and two fact sheets giving background and questions and answers about the report can all be found on the WHC website:
http://www.womenshealthclinic.org/whats_new.html

The material can also be ordered from the WHC at 3rd floor, 419 Graham Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0M3.

TRACKING THE TRENDS

The ESPC is pleased to announce that the 2002 Edition of *Tracking the Trends* is now available. This is the eighth edition of *Tracking the Trends*.

This edition features new data on social and economic trends and an updated Edmonton Social Health Index. The Index rates Edmonton's overall social health from 1993 (100.00) top 2000 (95.07). It also gives us a close-up look at individual indicators, such as food bank use and bankruptcies.

Call the ESPC at (780) 423-2031 to purchase your copy.

Regular Price \$10 per copy
Member Price \$8 per copy

“Spouse in the house” rule struck down by an Ontario Court of Appeal may impact Alberta welfare rules

On May 13, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that welfare recipients form a protected category under the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As a result, it has been determined that the “spouse in the house” rule, which governs single mothers and their live-in boyfriends, contravenes the Charter.

The “spouse in the house” rule was established in 1995 and treats households as a family unit as soon as an income-earning boyfriend moves into the home of a single mother collecting social assistance. Prior to this rule, a couple became a common-law family unit for social assistance purposes only after living together for three years.

The court ruling was the result of a lawsuit launched in response to the “spouse in the house” rule by four Ontario women on social assistance. The court said that the rule strips women of their dignity by forcing them to turn to a man, rather than the state, for help. Ontario statistics showed that the rule disproportionately hurt women and single mothers.

☉ 54.2% of persons on social assistance in Ontario are women, but 88.8% of those whose benefits were terminated by the new definition of spouse were women.

☉ Single mothers constituted 27.7% of persons on social assistance, but represented 76% of persons whose benefits were terminated by the definition of spouse.

The “spouse in the house” rule is the model across Canada and the Ontario decision is likely to have major implications for welfare policies across the country.

The *Edmonton Journal* interviewed Arlene about this issue and ran an article on this decision on May 15. Some of Arlene’s comments included in the article are as follows:

☉ Arlene agreed that women are being discriminated against.

☉ Arlene indicated that she knows of women who have been charged with fraud and now have a criminal record because of the rule.

☉ “There’s definitely a case to be made here to further the protection of human dignity. If you have children from a previous marriage and a boyfriend moves in, maybe he can’t support the children. Maybe he’s making minimum wage. Not all the boyfriends are in the six figure category here.”

☉ Children need to have support and women should not have to worry about feeding their kids.”

In Alberta, policy in both the AISH and SFI programs outlines conditions that determine whether a relationship can be considered common-law. These conditions include, but are not limited to, joint bank accounts, joint Alberta Health Care registration, or the relationship of the couple is generally viewed by the community as being one of husband and wife.

In the absence of a declaration by a client or substantial proof, Alberta Human Resources and Employment staff cannot automatically deem a relationship as common-law. All clients are offered the opportunity to sign a Denial of Common-Law Spouse Declaration and/or appeal any decision made by AHRE in respect to the determination that their situation is a common-law relationship.

The Alberta Government is reviewing this case.

Check the next issue of *the fACTivist* for an update.

Phone (780) 415-4800 to obtain a copy of the 2002-2005 Business Plan for Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

Status of Bills from the Spring Sitting of the Alberta Legislature

- **Bill 1** *Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Recognition Act* – passed
- **Bill 2** *Child and Family Services Authorities Amendment Act* – passed
- **Bill 3** *Irrigation Districts Amendment Act* – passed
- **Bill 4** *Public Health Amendment Act* – passed
- **Bill 5** *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act* – passed
- **Bill 6** *Student Financial Assistance Act* – passed
- **Bill 7** *Agriculture Financial Services Amendment Act* – passed
- **Bill 8** *Appropriation (Supplementary Supply Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 9** *Child Welfare Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 10** *Public Works Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 11** *Energy Information Statutes Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 12** *Education Services Settlement Act* – passed
- **Bill 13** *Administrative Penalties and Related Matters Statutes Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 14** *Gaming and Liquor Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 15** *Dairy Industry Omnibus Act, 2002* - passed
- **Bill 16** *Racing Corporation Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 17** *Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 18** *Social Care Facilities Review Committee Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 19** *Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 20** *Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 21** *Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 22** *Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 23** *Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 24** *Child Welfare Amendment Act, 2002 (No. 2)* – passed
- **Bill 25** *Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2002* - Second Reading (passed)
- **Bill 26** *Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002* - awaiting Royal Assent
- **Bill 27** *Appropriation Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 28** *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 29** *Intestate Succession Amendment Act, 2002* – passed
- **Bill 30** *Adult Interdependent Relationships Act* - First Reading
- **Bill 31** *Security Management Statutes Amendment Act* - First Reading

For additional details about the above Bills and Private Members' Bills (not listed here) please visit:

www.assembly.ab.ca/pro/bills/statusreport.asp

COE Edmonton

How do we make our communities more child-friendly? What are the factors that affect the health and well-being of children and youth? How do these factors affect children? What are we doing in Edmonton to help mitigate the negative affects of these factors?

These are the big questions being explored in the first phase of the Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth-Centred Prairie Communities, a five-year research initiative funded by Health Canada. The ESPC administers COE Edmonton, which is one of the six sites that make up the Centre's Prairie Network. Over the summer, the Council will be conducting a review of community-based literature, a content analysis of local periodicals and conducting key informant interviews. A network of community partners and a research committee are being formed to help direct the process.

For more information on the Centre, contact Phil O'Hara at 423-2031 or philohara@interbaun.com

City of Edmonton releases low-income and special needs housing strategy

The City of Edmonton conducted an extensive consultation process involving community, government and industry representatives and all City departments. The purpose of the consultation was to determine the role of the City of Edmonton in meeting housing and homeless needs and changing public policy in partnership with other levels of government, industry and the community.

The report *Building Together, the City of Edmonton Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Strategy 2001 – 2011* discusses the principles and strategies that emerged that define the City's role in low-income and special needs housing over the next decade.

To obtain a copy of this report, please contact:

Housing Services
Community Services Department
City of Edmonton
E-mail: housingservices@gov.edmonton.ab.ca
Fax: (780) 496-2607
Phone: (780) 496-6029

Edmonton LIFE - local indicators for excellence

Edmonton LIFE is a collaborative, ongoing project that has established a shared definition of quality of life in Edmonton.

The project provides an accessible and comprehensive report of health, environmental, economic and social indicators. By monitoring results, the project will provide an opportunity to review existing strategies, target priority areas for improvement and demonstrate the city's commitment to excellence. The 2002 edition continues to identify emerging trends by reporting comparative data for the indicators first introduced and measured in 1997.

Call the ESPC at (780) 423-2031 to purchase your copy of Edmonton LIFE.

Regular Price \$20 per copy

Member Price \$16 per copy

Please Note: A summary of the report is available in poster format and is available free of charge at the ESPC. If you would like a copy mailed to you, postage costs will apply.

Low-Income Programs Review

The purpose of the low-income programs review was to ensure that programs were in place to assist low-income Albertans in dealing with their challenge. Issues raised during the consultation process included the differences in cost of living across the province, the lack of safe, affordable housing, food security, and affordable day-care programs. Participants pointed out that the current benefit levels fall far short of providing for basic needs.

Minister Dunford acknowledged that participants raised the issue of benefit levels throughout the review process. Despite that, he has announced that no immediate changes will be made, leaving low-income Albertans to continue to face hardship and challenges on their own.

"I'm disappointed that the results of this review process will not have an immediate impact on Albertans who were counting on this review to ease their suffering. Instead, the government is opting to delay action once again."

- Arlene Chapman

The MLA Review Committee's main recommendation was to develop a single, integrated low-income support program.

This will mean designing a new system of AHRE supports for low-income Albertans that will include a range of income support options from a single, integrated program. This program will eventually replace Supports for Independence (SFI), Widows' Pension (WP), and Skills Development Program (SDP) student living allowances.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council was relieved to hear that AISH would continue as a separate program rather than being consolidated into the new program. Including AISH in the new program would make AISH very vulnerable.

The government has identified a set of principles to guide the development of the new program.

- **Fairness**
 - One set of simple, clear eligibility criteria for all clients.
 - One core benefit for basic needs.
- **Based on need**
 - Setting benefit levels as a percentage of the Market Basket Measure (MBM).
 - Providing additional benefits based on individual needs (e.g. child care costs, medical benefits, shelter costs).
- **Personal responsibility**
 - Ensuring benefit levels support the smooth transition into the workforce.
 - Providing additional supports to enable low-income Albertans to find and keep employment.
 - Monitoring progress toward workforce attachment and independence.
- **Protect those with long-term needs by issuing benefits on ongoing basis.**
- **Sustainability**
 - Ensuring low-income Albertans have the supports to remain financially independent and that the program is fiscally responsible.

A copy of the news release issued by the Edmonton Social Planning Council is included with this issue of **the fACTivist**.

To access copies of the government's report please visit:

<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/lir/>



Edmonton Social Planning Council

Join us! Membership has its privileges!

edmonton
Social Planning
council

41, 9912 – 106 Street
Edmonton AB T5K 1C5
Tel: (780) 423-2031
Fax: (780) 425-6244
edmspc@interbaun.com
<http://www.edmspc.com>

Arlene Chapman
Executive Director
Voicemail Box #109
arlenechapman@interbaun.com

Dianne Henshaw
Executive Assistant
Voicemail Box #103
diannehenshaw@interbaun.com

Ronda Baxter
Researcher
Voicemail Box #107
rondabaxter@interbaun.com

Phil O'Hara
Research Manager, Centre of
Excellence (Edmonton)
Voicemail Box # 104
philohara@interbaun.com

Deborah Weisberg
Administrative Assistant
Voicemail Box #101
edmspc@interbaun.com

The fACTivist is published by
the Edmonton Social Planning
Council.



United Way
Alberta Capital Region

The Edmonton Social
Planning Council is an agency
of the United Way of the
Alberta Capital Region

- Receive our newsletter, **the fACTivist**
- 20% discount on ESPC publications
- Keep informed about upcoming events and current issues
- Stay updated about our work
- Attend ESPC Brown Bag Lunches
- Enjoy the Annual Seasonal Open House
- Vote at the Annual General Meeting
- Serve as a member of the Board of Directors
- Attend Council Board meetings (as non-voting member)

Annual Membership Fees:

Organization	\$45	Family	\$25
Associate*	\$20	Individual	\$15
Limited Income	\$5	Student	\$5

* Associate members do not receive a vote or discount

Membership Application:

Name _____

Organization _____

Position _____

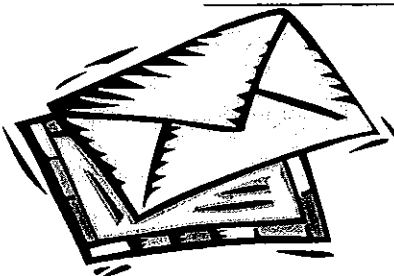
Address _____

City/Town and Postal Code _____

Phone Number with Area Code _____

Fax Number with Area Code _____

E-mail address _____



Please send completed form with a
cheque or money order payable to:
Edmonton Social Planning Council
41, 9912 – 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 1C5

Donations welcome, may include with cheque or money order for membership