

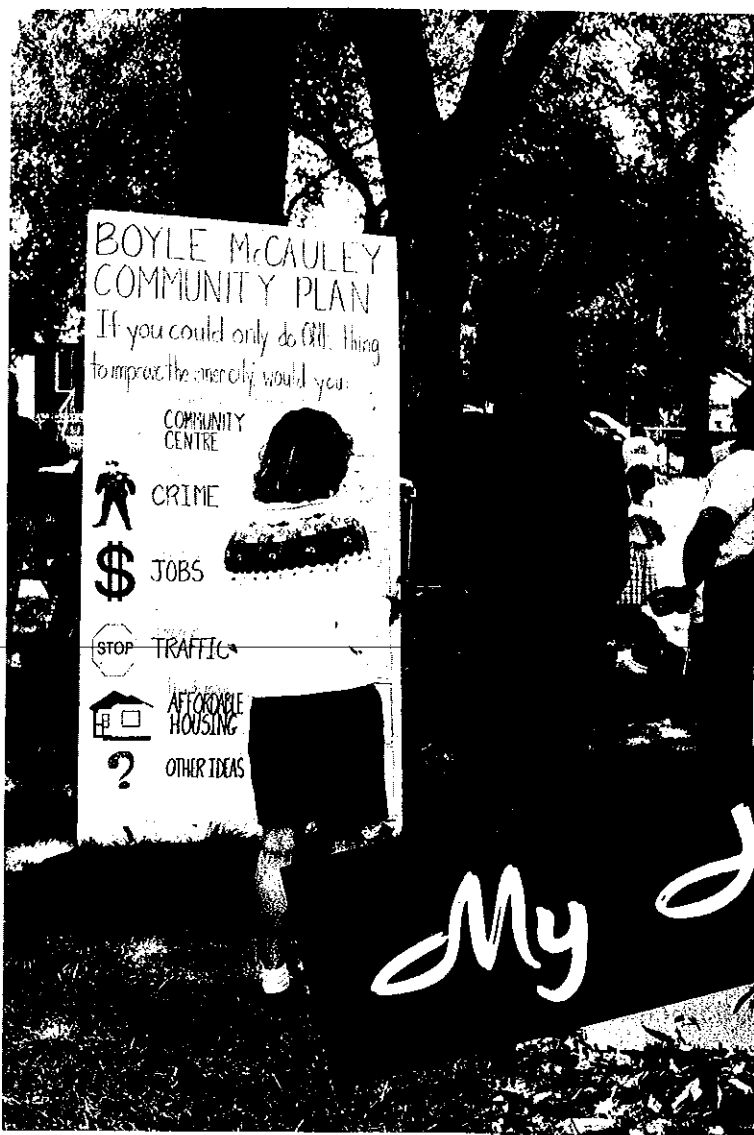
1992

# FIRST READING

Volume 10, Number 4

Edmonton Social Planning Council

October 1992



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WARD 2  
Richard  
**AWID**

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Re-elect  
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in Ward-3

*My Home Town*



**INSIDE:**  
Living with Northlands 4  
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City powers 15  
& more



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# Landing a landfill

...Is the problem really solved?

By Sheila Kushniruk

Thorhild eh. Well that takes care of that, or does it?

It's not a done deal yet and even if it was, we're not solving the problem, only passing it off temporarily. We still have to deal with the larger problem of commercial waste and construction waste, which together make up 68 per cent of what Edmontonians generate.

The city has no control over commercial and construction waste. Businesses pay their own way for garbage collection, they can't be forced to reduce. Their garbage is collected by waste companies which have won tenders to deal with it. They take the garbage and dump it, ridding businesses of the worry of finding a landfill. Generally, it is hauled to the site which offers the cheapest rates.

Edmonton's West End Landfill, which is privately operated by Waste Management of North America, takes most of our commercial waste, but it is getting close to full. Applications to recontour Cloverbar and the Westend Landfill are currently before the Edmonton Board of Health. If approved it would add a few years to both dumps; if rejected, both landfills are expected to close by late 1994 or early 1995. A decision is expected by the end of this year.

Thorhild has been chosen as a potential site for our residential garbage. It will be a minimum two years before we'll know if it is

approved, as it has to go through about 18 months of environmental testing and then be written into report form and submitted to the Sturgeon Board of Health. The board of health must then seek input from all groups concerned and render a decision. In the meantime people in Southeast Edmonton are holding their breath, praying nothing happens to botch the deal. The Southeast site (Colchester) was the only one not totally ruled out in the testing stage when, only a few months ago, three local sites were being studied. Accord-

**Canadians put out 1.6 kilograms of garbage daily (the most per capita in the world), compared to 1.5 kg in the United States, right down to China at 0.5 kg per day.**

ing to Bud Latta, the senior project engineer in the waste management branch of the city's public works department, the Southeast site has been put aside for the time being, "shelved", but the ground water levels will continue to be monitored and recorded in the event the Thorhild deal falls through.

The community of Colchester had opposed the site proposal each time it was put forward over the years. The site was ruled out for one reason or another several times and even in the latest proposal it was looking less feasible. The County of Strathcona had with-

drawn their consent on one-half of the Southeast site which was in their county. That only left half of the proposed site.

Landfills are today's method for dealing with garbage. It is not the same as a dump. A dump remains open where birds can pick it over and rain and snow can cover it; a landfill, in contrast, is covered with a layer of dirt daily to keep it more sanitary.

Landfills are not a desired item for a neighborhood. There are health concerns, but there is also the stigma of living near garbage. You get the 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY), or 'not in my term of office' (NIMTO) answers in quests for a site. But according to Nelson Fok, the senior adviser of the Edmonton Board of Health's health risk assessment department, landfills are easier to sell to the public than the alternative of incineration. Whereas landfills affect people in the immediate vicinity, incineration has the potential to affect the whole city with airborne pollutants. Even with incineration you still need a landfill, as there is some garbage (about 40 per cent) which can't be burned.

Landfills are the cheapest alternative by far compared to incineration, recycling and composting. To set up a new landfill would cost about \$25 per tonne to operate; the Blue Box program costs about \$200 per tonne; incineration would cost between \$80-\$110 per tonne and a recycling plant for materials re-

covery would also cost about \$80-\$110 to operate.

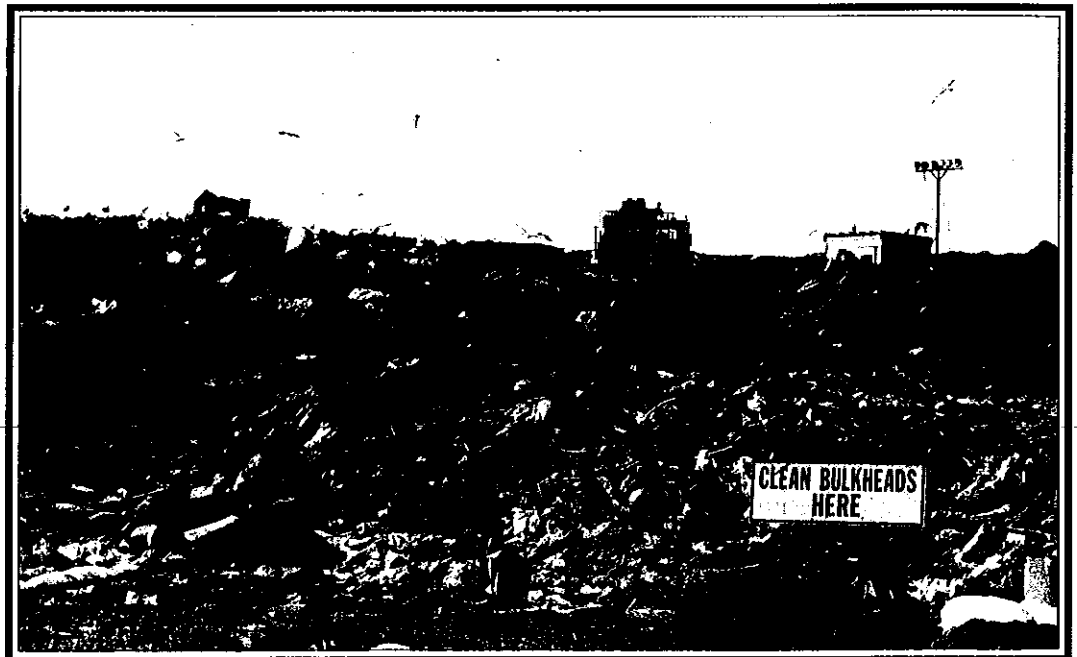
For landfills you must worry about surface water pollution, ground water pollution, air pollution and nuisance factors. In Thorhild you must consider, for example, how the cattle would be affected by the airborne pollutants and if this would endanger the people who consume this meat.

"There will never be a landfill which satisfies all concerns. A site must be acceptable to most people," said Fok.

With proposed sites being

Cloverbar is sought it is consistently generating a great interest.

The best solution to our garbage problems is to reduce the amount we generate. As **Canadians** we hold a dismal record. We **put out 1.6 kilograms of garbage daily, (the most per capita in the world)** compared with the United States 1.5 kg per day and on down to the lowest output from China at 0.5 kg per day. As consumers we could make purchases more carefully and learn to reduce, reuse, recycle and recover goods. We could also demand recycled goods



*Cloverbar Landfill is expected to be full by early 1995. Photo by Sheila Kushniruk*

tested and rejected in the last few years, it may seem environmental regulations for landfills are tightening up, but Alberta Environment's landfill regulations haven't changed in the last 20 years. What has changed though, is the public's awareness of the environment. Years ago when Cloverbar was proposed and opened there was little interest from the public said Fok. But as a replacement for

to encourage the marketplace for such items.

Fok suggests that if we could see the cost of garbage disposal on our monthly bill from the city, perhaps we would treat the issue more seriously and begin reducing our output. Estimates put the cost of garbage disposal for an average three to four person household at about \$10 per month.

# The Illusion of Participation: The Northlands Story

By Linda Rasmussen

This was a real "David and Goliath" saga. After years of living in the shadow of Edmonton Northlands we engaged our powerful neighbor in a battle to save our community.

This time David lost. Blinded and shackled by the illusion of a participatory democratic process, we naively believed the power imbalance could be rectified. We were wrong.

The process took nine years and four different City Councils. It involved thousands of hours of volunteer time because, unlike Northlands, we could not pay for consultants, lawyers and lobbyists. It cost the City tens of thousands of dollars in administrative costs. This does not include the lost infrastructure costs and tax revenues caused by turning established neighborhoods into parking lots.

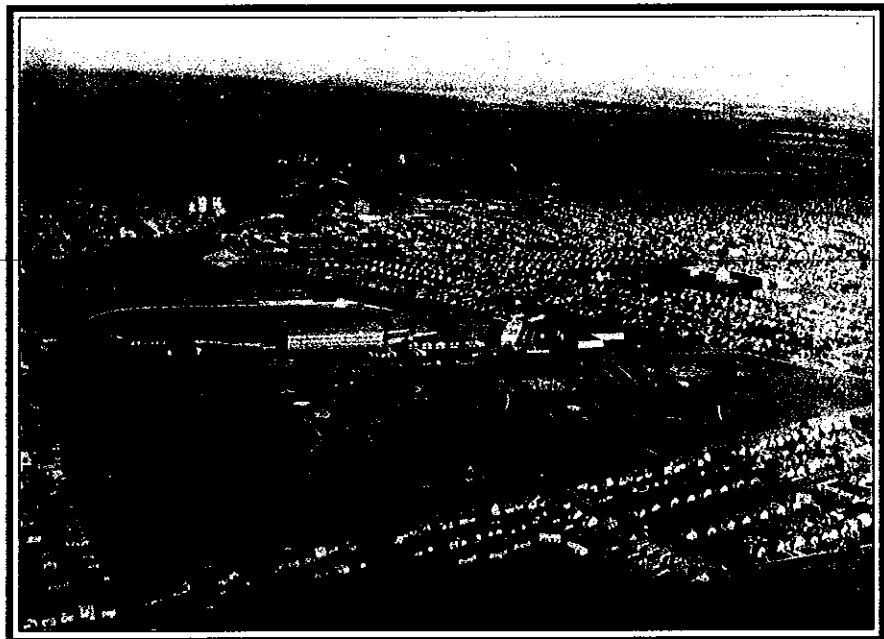
The final decision was purely political. City Council ignored the arguments of the community and its administration. The city put us through a futile exercise that was monetarily costly and psychologically devastating. This was not the anticipated mediation process. It was an adversarial situation in which a politically motivated City Council acted as the final judge. It was a totally unequal confrontation between a group with money, time and political clout and a community which lacked expertise, resources and political stature. Our equal status with Northlands in the

Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) process was a fraud.

Finding the best solution for all concerned should have been facilitated not frustrated. We needed expert advice untainted by political influence. We might have been advised not to use the ARP process to attain our goals. Communities need true mediation and fair arbitration. Above all, there must be the political will to address power imbalances through intervenor funding and equal access to information and decision-makers.

Of course, Northlands is a formidable Goliath. It is a multi-million dollar operation run by the elite of the city's establishment. Legally a not-for-profit corporation, Northlands calls itself a "quasi-municipal" organization operating in the best interest of the city. It uses its sizable surpluses, along with grants, in a never-ending process of expansion. Until the summer of 1981, no one had challenged Northlands to show whose "best interest" were really being served and at what cost.

In 1981, we began to hear



*Aerial view of Northlands in 1959, showing Borden Park foreground, and surrounding communities. Photo from the City of Edmonton Archives.*

The ARP created the illusion that the city was doing something for the community. But, to put people through a charade of public participation is worse than giving them no voice at all. This is the source of the cynicism which threatens to undermine democracy.

rumors of a summer-long amusement park. Then Northlands fenced off part of Borden Park for Klondike Days. The community's complaints were met with contempt. That was the end of our patience and the beginning of the Borden Park Residents' Associa-

tion (BPRA).

No longer content to be bystanders to the unchecked growth of this giant in our midst, we wanted City Council to consider the effect of this major facility on our community. Our goal was to alleviate the uncertainty about the long-term plans for the area and to find solutions that would address everyone's needs—the community, Northlands and the city. We believed an ARP would do this.

The city and Northlands had never considered the needs of the community. In 1972 Northlands decided to remain in the heart of the residential communities and to expand. The city gave its approval and money without questioning the impact on the community.

Northlands began purchasing houses, not only in the approved expansion area but also in North Cromdale, the community east of Borden Park. While Northlands could not expropriate houses, they could use classic block-busting techniques. Northlands showed little regard for the people who wanted to remain in a community that had been their home for decades. Houses deteriorated and the renters were often less than desirable neighbors.

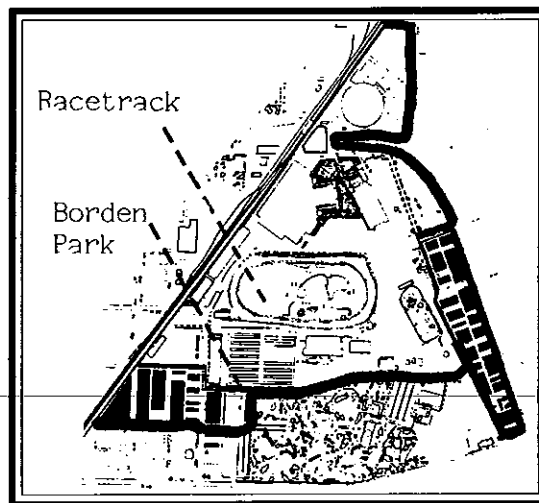
People warned us that we had taken on an opponent that was "more powerful than City Hall." However, this seemed like an exaggeration. The City's lease with Northlands gave the City a majority on the Northlands Board and control of the Northlands capital budget. As well, the city owned the site, which Northlands leased for \$1 per year.

Initially, the BPRA scored some major victories. A supportive City Council approved an ARP

for Northlands, used their control over Northlands' capital budget to kill the amusement park, and appointed a BPRA member to the Northlands Board.

This was a wake-up call for Northlands. Public support was definitely on the side of the community. The BPRA represented five community leagues and we drew 300 people to our meetings. Northlands began to keep us informed to an unprecedented degree. They also moved to resolve some long-standing parking and litter problems.

While Northlands was will-



*Definition of site drawing from 1991 Edmonton Northlands General Development Plan.*

ing to improve its image, it was not willing to give up its power. In 1983, Northlands arbitrarily reduced the city's representation on the Northlands Board to one fifth, shattering Council's delusion of control. The ensuing legal battle between the city and Northlands delayed the ARP until 1985.

Once underway, the ARP process treated the BPRA and Northlands as equal partners, each of us produced our own plans for the area and presented them in public meetings. The planning

department used these plans and the public's response as the basis for their ARP proposal. North Cromdale was the most contentious issue. The planning department supported the community's position that it could be a revitalized residential area.

In the end, Northlands got almost everything it wanted. Council rejected the planning department's proposal in favor of Northlands' concept. Northlands even increased its land holdings because the protracted process gave them time to purchase most the homes in North Cromdale.

More significantly, the City, in private negotiations with Northlands, relinquished its last vestiges of control over Northlands. A 30 year lease allows Northlands to do virtually anything it pleases on its site, such as building horse barns across the street from an LRT station.

#### **Postscript**

In the Fall of 1991, Northlands sent their own General Development Plan to City Council for information. The plan was inconsistent with the ARP. The BPRA established the Borden Park Preservation Foundation to raise money to buy some of the remaining homes in Cromdale. As of the Spring of 1992 only eight homes remained in private hands.

*Linda Rasmussen has lived in the community for 15 years. She was a founding member of the Borden Park Resident's Association and was BPRA president 1986 to 1990.*

# A Tale of Two Visions

## ...Achieving Consensus in the Inner City

By Diana Salomaa

A heated, and often contentious, planning process is under way in Central McDougall. This neighborhood, located in the inner city, is sandwiched between the Royal Alexandra Hospital to the north and the rising towers of the Grant MacEwan Community College campus under construction to the south. At stake is the future of ten acres of vacant land located in the heart of the community. This land is the highly visible linchpin to any future revitalization efforts.

The planning process has inadvertently exposed a raw never in the community by forcing a number of long-simmering issues into the open. Underlying the tension is a clash of values between long-term residents and recently arrived immigrants. Accusations of racism and counterclaims of "turning the

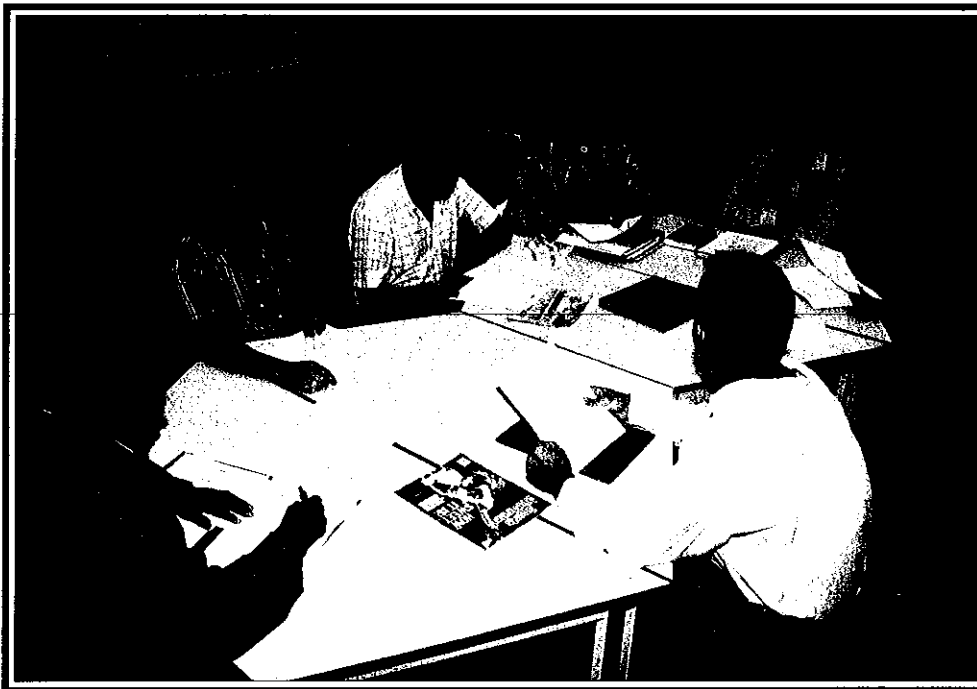
neighborhood into a slum" have fuelled the tensions. Not surprisingly, the City Planning Department, through its role of initiating and facilitating the consultation process, is now the lightning rod for frustrations and accusations by both groups.

Central McDougall is a neighborhood that has undergone

mash of walk-up apartments, houses, offices, industries and stores.

A more wholesale change, though, is in the composition of the neighborhood. Central McDougall has attracted a large number of new immigrants, creating a colourful mini-United Nations literally on the doorstep of

the original community. Over half of the current population in Central McDougall is made up of people with Vietnamese, Chinese, Central American and other origins. Keys to this influx are cheaper housing, closeness to downtown and settlement agencies and businesses scattered



*Members of the Immigrant Neighborhood Planning Group meet to discuss the problems they are having in getting affordable housing on the the Prince of Wales Armoury Site.*

some dramatic changes since its heyday when it was first developed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the early 1900s. Over the years it has undergone a remarkable transformation from a comfortable middle class enclave of single family homes to a mish-

along 107th Avenue which sprang up to cater to the needs of these newly arrived immigrants.

Many immigrants are refugees from repressive regimes. Integrating into the community is hindered by the fact they are not used to participating in "mainstream"

organizations such as community leagues. In fact, meetings with officials of any kind often is the harbinger of bad news in their own country and is prudently avoided at all costs.

Added to the change in demographics, Central McDougall has not remained unscathed from the usual assortment of social ills facing other neighborhoods. A major concern is housing. In particular, there is a lack of housing options. Over 80 per cent of all the available housing in the neighborhood is found in walk-up apartments. It is not unusual to find families living in cramped bachelor and one-bedroom apartments. Affordability is another tangible problem for many recent arrivals strapped for cash, without the luxury of a regular pay cheque.

Enter the City into this scenario. They own a prime sport of real estate in Central McDougall, ten acres of land to the exact. Before this land is developed and sold off, the City, with Council's approval, recognized that residents wanted a say in the kind of development to occur here. The bottom line of the planning process is to hammer out guidelines for developers based on both the desires of the community and the overall needs of the City.

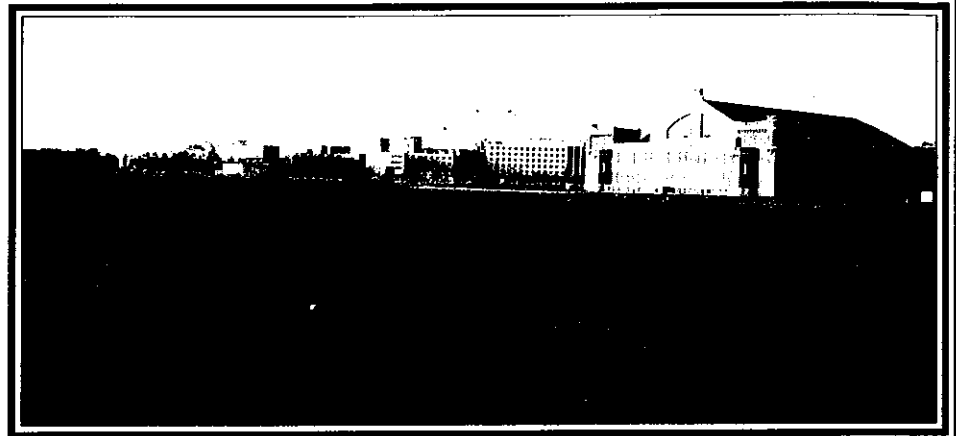
A group of community activists, frustrated by their perceived lack of input into community planning to this point, recently formed an immigrant planning group. They are now pitted against the community league. Both have legitimate concerns and differing visions. The community league is understandably alarmed by the wholesale changes in their neighborhood. They want to see

low density housing, preferably "ritzy" and upscale to attract higher income families and seniors. Community activists, on the other hand, point out the pressing need for affordable housing.

Who's vision will be realized? Will it be possible to negotiate some middle ground? In reality, both groups are closer than

ning process is still evolving by trial and error in Central McDougall. Hopefully, the end result will be something both sides can live with.

*Diana Salomaa is a social planner with the City of Edmonton's planning and development department.*



*Vacant city-owned land between 108 and 110 Ave and 104 to 106 St has community groups squabbling over its potential uses. Photo by Sheila Kushniruk.*

they think. Neither want a slum. Both want a stable, safe and viable community they can call home. With a lot of luck, perseverance and innovative planning, the dreams can be interwoven. Undoubtedly, everyone will not be happy with the results-it would be remarkable if they were. However, compromise is the hallmark of a democracy. As the song says, you can't always get (exactly) what you want.

In hindsight, the lesson visibly dramatized from this exercise is the need to develop trust and communication among the major players right from the start. Without it, the odds can be insurmountable. It would be like running the marathon with your shoes on the wrong feet. You may finish the race but chances are you may end up with a lot of blisters. The plan-

## **NUEVO...EN CASTELLANO**

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# No pepper for the poor

...Sarlo's assertions questioned



By  
**Jonathan  
Murphy**

With Brian Mulroney's election in 1984, the new Right became our country's dominant political force. Market forces were set loose. Free trade agreements exposed our country to global economic forces. Social expenditures were capped.

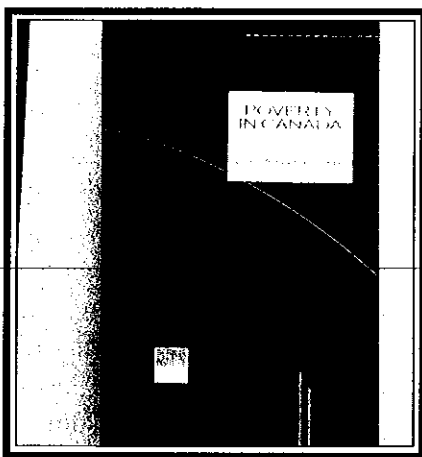
Many of the changes were criticized because they seem to hurt the vulnerable in our society. Unskilled workers lost their jobs to foreign competition. The inner cities decayed as housing programs were eliminated. The poor became poorer.

The new Right responds that wealth will be generated by economic growth caused by the freeing of money from the unproductive state sector. Although cuts to the social safety net will hurt the poor in the short term, eventually a bigger economy will provide more jobs for those who can work. A larger economic base will also be able to afford programs to support those who cannot work.

After a decade of new Right domination, their trickle-down theories are in tatters. The emergence of a permanent North Ameri-

can underclass makes us question blind faith in market forces as the solution to all social ills. The new Right ideologues feel cornered. If poverty isn't going away, the trickle-down theory must be imperfect. Therefore, poverty must in fact be disappearing. Those who say it isn't are self-interested liars.

Such is the conclusion of Christopher Sarlo's new book, *Poverty in Canada*, published by Vancouver's Fraser Institute. Sarlo



claims that "current approaches ... seriously misrepresent what it means to be living in poverty", that "poverty is not a major problem in Canada", and that if people run out of basic essentials it is primarily due to mismanagement rather than shortage of money. An examination of housing conditions further convinced Sarlo:

"Household facility information provides additional evidence that poverty in Canada is greatly exaggerated. In 1989, 99 per cent of families below the Low Income

Cut-off had flush toilets ... "

Currently, there are four different methodologies used to determine Canadian poverty, which all arrive at similar conclusions. Sarlo is critical of them all, and has developed his own method for calculating poverty. The variance between his figures and those of the other methods is dramatic. For example, the Edmonton Social Planning Council's poverty line for a 'typical' family of four is \$26,152, while Sarlo's figure (inflation adjusted to 1991) is only \$15,111.

Sarlo's criticism of the existing methodologies used to determine poverty lines is often valid. For example, the Canadian Council on Social Development's lines are defined simply as 50 per cent of average income. As he points out, as long as income distribution remains the same, the same proportion of the population will always be defined as poor, whether Canadians become much poorer or much richer as a whole.

The Statistics Canada methodology defines a family as poor when it would have to spend more than 58.5 per cent of income to match average family spending on food, shelter, and clothing. It is assumed that the remainder of income is needed to obtain items necessary for adequate social interaction. Sarlo criticizes the arbitrariness of the 58.5 per cent of income, which is determined by adding 20 per cent to the propor-



tion of income the average family spends on basic essentials (38.5 per cent of income). Indeed, Statistics Canada does not explain why 41.5 per cent of income should necessarily be adequate or inadequate to purchase essentials other than food, clothing, and shelter.

The Gallup opinion poll organization uses yet another approach to the problem. Gallup simply asks Canadians each year what they think a family of four needs to get by, and then averages their responses. Although this methodology produces poverty levels within three per cent of both Statistics Canada and the Social Planning Council methods, Sarlo sniffs contempt: "does the typical person even have an accurate idea of what they themselves spend in an average week? ... Public opinion polls are at best of only peripheral interest in a serious analysis of economic problems".

Sarlo adopts a Basket of Goods approach to determine family poverty lines. This method defines those items which are needed for a family to avoid poverty, and costs those items. It is far more time-consuming than the approaches used by Statistics Canada, CCSD or Gallup, and it provides room for endless debate about 'what is really essential'. Nevertheless the Basket method has some real advantages. It is useful in actual budget analysis and counselling, and the value judgements used in determining an acceptable standard of living are transparent. The Basket approach is also the basis of Social Planning Council methodology.

Where Sarlo and Social Planning Councils differ is in the type and quality of goods needed to

avoid poverty. The Social Planning Councils assume that a person must be able to participate in activities like recreation, reading, watching television, etc., in order not to be considered poor. On the other hand, Sarlo's image of poverty is stark: "poverty means that people do not have all of their basic physical needs" (p.157) ...



*Professor Sarlo teaches economic policy at Nipissing University in North Bay Ontario. Photo courtesy of Christopher Sarlo.*

"(poverty means) compromising long term physical health".

When Poverty in Canada talks about 'basic physical needs', it is deadly serious. Sarlo blasts the federal government because "included in Agriculture Canada's Nutritious Food Basket are such items as bacon, cream, cookies, salad dressing, jam, jelly, tea, coffee and condiments, all absolutely inconsistent with either good nutrition or low cost". While Sarlo's

food basket does permit salt ("a good source of iodine"), expenditures on pepper or ketchup would be considered wasteful or a sign the family is not really poor. Because other Basket measurements supposedly allow poor families too many calories, one whole page of the book is devoted to algebraic equations which define what a person really needs to eat in order to survive.

Shelter costs for different family sizes are arbitrarily calculated by deducting 10 per cent from CMHC-reported average shelter costs in each city. No provision is made for the cost of power and lights, often not included in rents. His assumption that vacant housing with free power and lights is available at 10 per cent below average rent in rent-controlled provinces is optimistic, especially for a family without lengthy residence and extensive personal connections. Some questionable assumptions are also made regarding standards for housing space and privacy.

For example, a single mother with a sixteen year-old son would be allocated a one-bedroom apartment.

Sarlo makes numerous errors which invariably result in further underestimates of real living costs. His claim that "dental societies in all major centres provide free dental services to the poor" is false at least in the case of Alberta. So too is the assertion that "Lions Clubs across Canada provide free

eyeglasses to needy individuals". The only program Edmonton Lions Clubs offer is a used eyeglass pick-up service. These eyeglasses are distributed in the Third World. School supplies for teenage children are excluded because Sarlo assumes they are "offset by part-time or summer earnings". Yet, whether a youth or a parent has to find the money to pay for school supplies, they remain a family expenditure.

While sums allocated to all expenditure categories are well below those calculated by other poverty-line methods, the bulk of the gap between Sarlo and other methods is because Sarlo does not believe items unnecessary to sheer physical survival should be included; "I had no difficulty in excluding products such as radios, television, VCR's, newspapers, magazines, etc. from the list". Not only those items are inessential, but also "children's toys, books and writing materials". Yet it is widely accepted that exclusion from mainstream life and activities, inevitable without resources for recreation of any kind, is a main cause for poverty-related social problems. Sarlo tells people to go to the public library for reading material, but making people read the newspaper in the library surely carries frugality to an extreme, especially as he does not allow bus fare for the poor family to get there.

Sarlo claims his book allows us to measure the poverty rate with "a consistent and reliable measuring stick and a credible methodology". Yet the only rationale provided for his physical survival methodology is the assertion that existing methods "are simply not

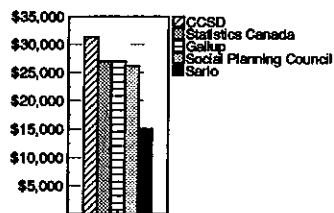
believable because they are not related to most people's understanding of what it means to be poor". This flies in the face of the only poll Sarlo mentions, in which a representative sample of the public assessed the needs of a family of four to be almost identical to the

ing poverty line methodologies was "not compassion but old fashioned self interest".

The 'social welfare lobby' can withstand Professor Sarlo's abuse. What is really dangerous about his book is that it purports to be a legitimate and academic analy-

## DIFFERENT CANADIAN POVERTY LINES

Family of Four - 1991



Some figures inflation-adjusted for 1988-1991

CCSD	\$31,207
Statistics Canada	26,990
Gallup	26,950
Soc Planning Council	26,152
Sarlo	15,111



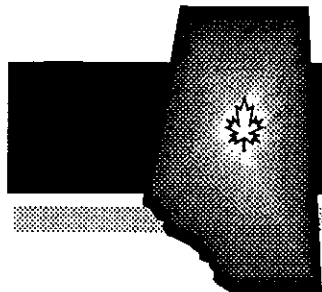
Social Planning Council and Statistics Canada methodologies, and 56 per cent greater than Sarlo's calculations.

Poverty in Canada is a potpourri of unsubstantiated assertions, careless errors, and strikingly harsh value judgements. The glue which holds it together is an unconcealed hostility towards social policy advocates. Although there may be some truth to the statement "high poverty lines are good business" for the human service sector, I'm not so sure about "arguably the masters of the craft, social activists have refined exaggeration to an art". It seems a little strong to insist that "most" of "the social welfare lobby...made a handsome living off the poor" or that the determining factor in develop-

sis of poverty. Governments may be tempted to use Sarlo's figures to reduce already inadequate income support programs. In reality, *Poverty in Canada* prescribes for the poor a miserable existence which would guarantee future generations of a dysfunctional and alienated underclass. We need to integrate poor people into the mainstream through access to training and decent employment, rather than worrying about how to keep them alive on the minimum possible government stipend.



**United Way**  
OF EDMONTON AND AREA



# Alberta Facts

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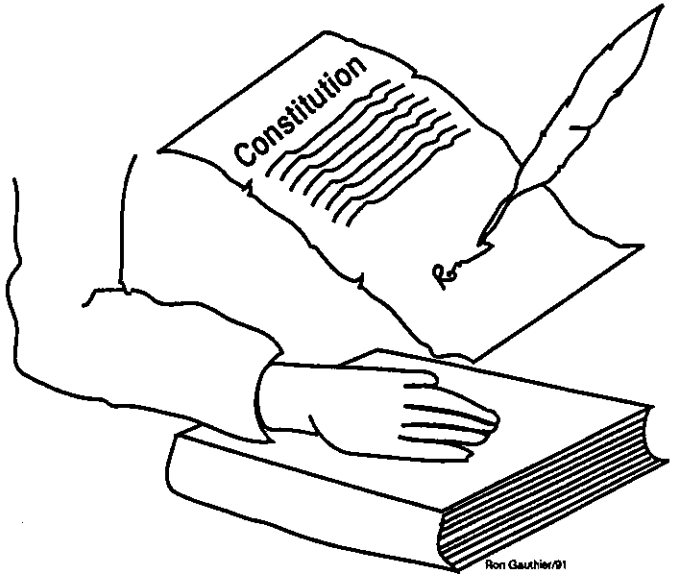
## CONSTITUTIONAL COUNTDOWN

On October 26th, Canadians have the opportunity to vote on a referendum which asks: *"Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992?"* In preparation for this event, the federal government is again showing the Canada Day ads to remind us how wonderful our country is and provincial governments are urging their constituents to vote "YES." On the other side, a number of other groups are counselling us to vote "NO" for a variety of reasons.

In making your decision, there are a few questions you should ask yourself:

- \* Canadians are a diverse group of people. Is it possible to develop a constitutional package that pleases everyone?
- \* Have we been presented with enough clear information about the expected impact of the constitutional changes to enable us to make an informed choice? Has agreement been reached on enough issues to make the package workable?
- \* The groups opposing the constitutional package have vastly different reasons for their rejection. Might this suggest that the reverse is true - that the package has different components that benefit a wide range of people?

- \* Canadians survived until 1982 without a "home-grown" constitution. Will we be any worse off than we are now if we reject the agreement?
- \* This package is the result of months of consultations and negotiations involving the provincial and territorial governments, aboriginal people, and interest groups representing significant numbers of Canadians. Is it likely that continued discussion would result in a significantly different consensus?
- \* What are the possible ramifications of rejection of the package, not just in relation to Quebec but for Canada as a whole? What is the likelihood that the debate will continue over a number of years without resolution? Would it hurt us at this point to take a five year moratorium to sit back and think about the issues?



In order to assist you in your consideration of the issues, we have prepared this special edition of Alberta Facts. Following are a number of *Myths and Realities* that have arisen during the constitutional debates. We hope that this will be of assistance to you in deciding how to vote on October 26th.

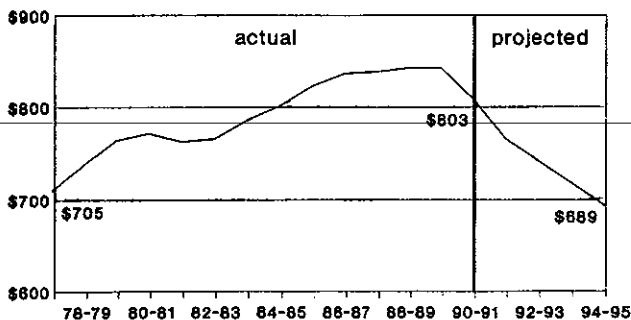
In order to assist you in your consideration of the issues, we have prepared this special edition of Alberta Facts. Following are a number of *Myths and Realities* that have arisen during the constitutional debates. We hope that this will be of assistance to you in deciding how to vote on October 26th.

**MYTH:** The Social Covenant in the proposed amendments will guarantee citizens comprehensive, universal and accessible health care and high quality advanced education.

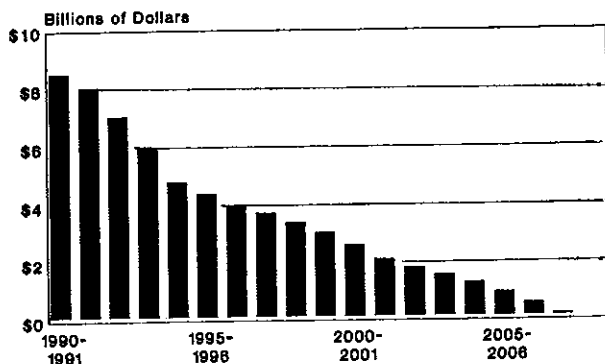
**REALITY:** The Social Covenant, although proposed to be part of the Constitution Act, would not be enforceable by citizens in the courts as are other constitutional rights. Even then, projections by the National Council of Welfare based on cutbacks since 1986 show the federal government will totally have withdrawn cash funding for health care and education by the year 2006, making it more difficult to enforce national standards.

*The charts below are taken from the spring 1991 report by the National Council of Welfare Funding Health and Higher Education: Danger Looming.*

**Federal Transfers for Health And Post-Secondary Education In Constant 1991 Dollars Per Capita**



**Federal Cash Outlays for Health and Higher Education**



**MYTH:** The transfer of "exclusive jurisdiction" over housing by Ottawa to the provinces will not change anything.

**REALITY:** Exclusive jurisdiction for housing at the provincial level will have more negative than positive results. Without a defined presence in the housing field, it is likely that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation will be abolished. CMHC has long made grants and loans available to Canadians who otherwise are unable to afford adequate accommodation and also insures mortgages for people buying houses who can only make small deposits. While a transfer of funds likely would accompany a transfer of jurisdiction to the provinces, it also likely means that provinces will have to raise their own additional funds. Otherwise, the current (and, for most purposes, inadequate) levels of funding will continue.

**MYTH:** The 'Québec veto' means that the province of Québec will have complete and final say over any future constitutional change.

**REALITY:** The 'veto' actually refers to a small number of items, such as reform of the Senate and the Supreme Court of Canada. Any reforms to these central institutions would require the unanimous agreement of the provinces. Most amendments to the Constitution would continue to require only the agreement of at least seven provinces representing at least 50 per cent of the Canadian population, together with Parliament. No province will have a veto over the creation of new provinces but unanimity will be necessary to have the new province participate in future constitutional amendments.

**MYTH:** It is more efficient to have job training and development in the hands of the provinces.

**REALITY:** At a time when the Canadian work force is experiencing a fundamental restructuring as a result of the free trade agreement and globalization of trade, it is important that Canadian workers be able to live and work anywhere in Canada. Having provinces set standards for job training and development may hinder Canada's ability to react efficiently and humanely to these pressures. As a result, it also is proposed that the federal government have a constitutional role in the establishment of national labour market objectives. While the federal government also will still have a role to play in Unemployment Insurance, agreements may be reached with provinces for the delivery of that and related programmes.

**MYTH:** Alberta will have more power with a triple-E Senate.

**REALITY:** Proportionately, Alberta will have the same number of seats in a reformed senate as the largest provinces. Practically speaking, however, we will have no more power as Alberta will need the cooperation of at least five other provinces to delay House of Commons legislation. Legislation could then be saved by a majority vote in a joint sitting of the senate and the House of Commons. Only fundamental tax policy changes directly related to natural resources could be defeated by a simple majority of 50 per cent plus one.

**MYTH:** Native self government will result in over 300 sovereign nations within Canada.

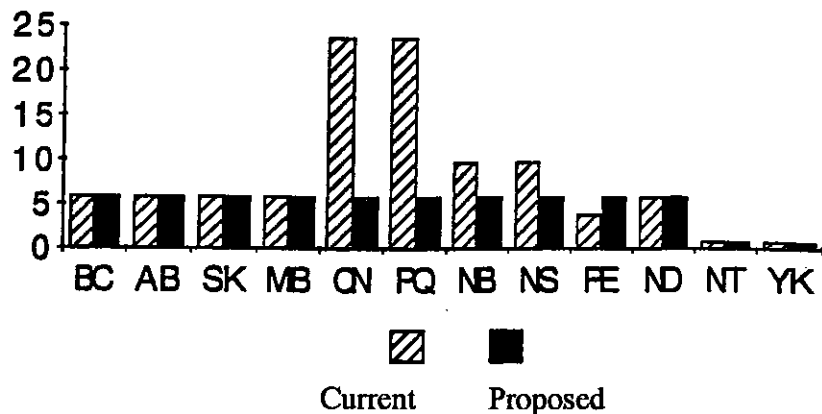
**REALITY:** Self government will be a power sharing agreement involving the federal and provincial government and native leaders, essentially creating a third level of government. The authority granted will not extend beyond native people. The constitutional proposals contemplate a series of negotiations for the establishment of aboriginal governments and for outlining their relationship with other governments. Laws passed by aboriginal governments may not be inconsistent with other laws which are essential to the preservation of peace, order and good government of Canada. In addition, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to aboriginal governments, subject to the availability of the notwithstanding clause.

**MYTH:** Recognizing Metis people as part of aboriginal Canadians means a loss of property to other Albertans.

**REALITY:** The province of Alberta set aside land for the Metis back in the 1930s. Most recently, a new set of agreements have strengthened the position of the Metisland base in Alberta. The accord reached between Metis and the provincial and federal governments means a renewal of the government's commitment to honour these agreements.

## THE CANADIAN SENATE

### Current and Proposed Distribution



**MYTH:** Quebec will get more powers or special status with the Distinct Society Clause.

**REALITY:** Whether placed in the text of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or in the larger body of the Constitution, it would be only in the rarest of cases where courts might use this clause to assist in ruling on a constitutional dispute. Even then, as courts can decide cases on a variety of grounds, the existence of the clause might not make any difference.

**MYTH:** The environment will be protected under the new constitutional accord.

**REALITY:** The proposed constitutional amendments will do little to help protect the environment. While the environment is addressed in the proposed Social Covenant, this cannot be enforced in the courts. Senate reform, on the other hand, may hamper the federal government's ability to legislate in the area of the environment. A majority of Senators, for example, could defeat fundamental tax policy changes that directly relate to natural resources.

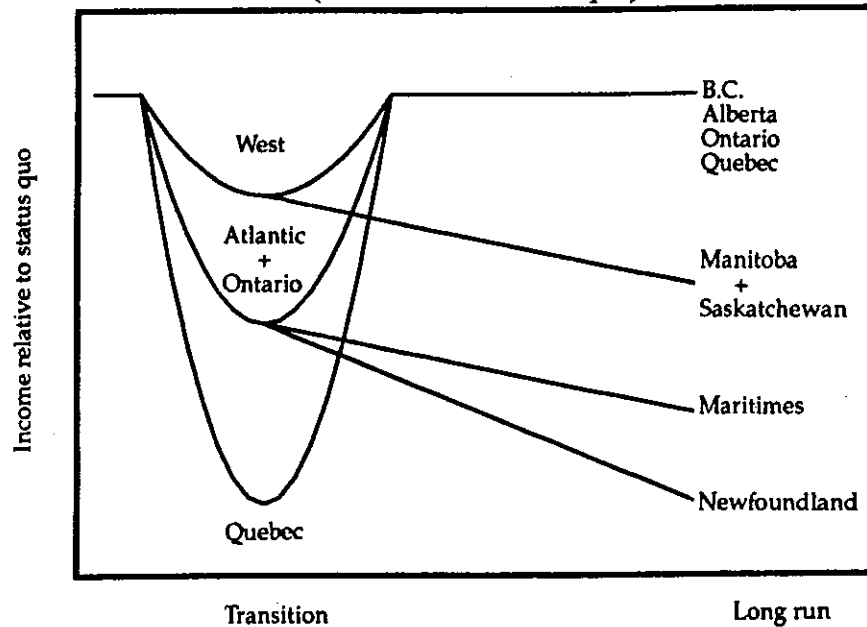
**MYTH:** It is against the democratic principle of representation by population to guarantee Quebec a minimum of 25% of the seats in the House of Commons.

**REALITY:** Canada never really has had a pure system of representation by population. In Alberta, rural voters receive greater representation per population than do urban voters. The maritimes always has had more M.P.s in the House of Commons than their population would have justified. In any event, projections suggest that Quebec's population will not dip significantly below 25% in the foreseeable future.

## INCOME LEVELS UNDER QUÉBEC SEPARATION (relative to the status quo)

**MYTH:** It would be to the economic advantage of the rest of Canada if we just let Québec go.

**REALITY:** Most economic forecasts suggest that Québec separation will have a significantly negative impact on the rest of Canada, and not only in Québec. In the long term, the Atlantic provinces and Manitoba and Saskatchewan would suffer the most economically.



Source: John McCallum, "Canada's Couce: Crisis of Capital or Renewed Federalism", C.D. Howe Institute, 1992.

### Recommended Reading:

Alberta In A New Canada: Visions of Unity Report of the Alberta Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform (March 1992) Call (403)427-6706.

Constitutional Forum Newsletter of the Centre for Constitutional Studies. Call (403)492-5681,

The Network Newsletter of the Network on the Constitution. Call (613)564-3362.

Constitutional Reform and Social Policy in Social Development Overview, Canadian Council on Social Development, Fall 1991. Call (613)728-1865.

Alternatives '91: Constitutional Tour Guide and Options '92 Canada West Foundation. Call (403)264-9535.

This issue of Alberta Facts was written by David Schneiderman, Executive Director of the Centre for Constitutional Studies, as well as Laird Hunter, Worton & Hunter Barristers & Solicitors and Alison MacDonald and Sheila Kushniruk of the Edmonton Social Planning Council. For more information about the Edmonton Social Planning Council, its regular publication **First Reading** and **Alberta Facts**, or other publications, please contact:

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FAX: 425-6244



# Community Planning Up From The Streets

By Anna Bubel

"How come they got rid of all the damn benches? How'd they feel if we took all their f—— parking stalls!?"

Inner city residents are fed up with being treated like second-class citizens they want to be heard. As the Community Planning and Development Worker with the Boyle McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan (A.R.P.), I help give voice to residents' concerns. In an effort to involve people from the entire community, I solicit opinions from people who are usually disenfranchised from the planning process. I have met with homeless people, rents, people with diverse ethnic backgrounds, retired persons, and people who are disabled.

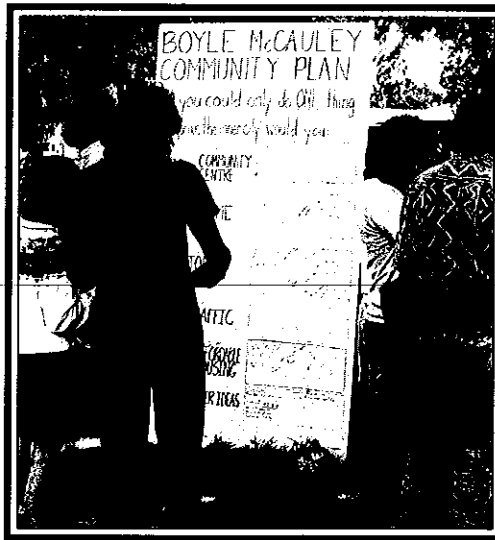
I also try to ensure that the plan addresses community concerns and reflects local priorities. From my office on 95 Street, I have a unique perspective on how the City of Edmonton can work with communities on local planning issues.

Three simple principles should characterize the relationship between the City and the community. First, there must be a genuine partnership. Such a partnership extends far beyond mere consultation—it demands a willingness to share power. This requires a process that enables equal partners to negotiate the best means to meet the community's needs without any coercion, backroom dealing, or technocratic "bafflelegab".

The City has taken a signifi-

cant step by initiating the public participation process in the Boyle McCauley A.R.P. By hiring a community worker, and funding the community planning office, the City has supported a shift in the balance of power. While I provide the community with technical planning assistance, I also act as a liaison with the City. In addition, the Planning Coordinating Committee (P.C.C.), which oversees the development of the plan, is led by residents and people who work in the area.

The second principle is flex-



*An inner city barbecue prompts residents to plan for the future of their community. Photo by Ele Gibson.*

ibility. Communities are unique; they need planners to adapt their methods. New and innovative approaches to community planning will emerge from a willingness to listen and learn from local residents. This requires that planners recognize they don't always "know what is best" for a community. Most importantly, flexibility will give new life to the A.R.P.

process and enable it to better reflect the needs of an ethnically and economically diverse city.

Here in Boyle McCauley, we have re-defined the concept of the A.R.P. We have rejected the traditional land-use focus and have expanded the plan to address issues such as: economic development, housing, crime and safety, recreation/community services, and transportation/physical environment. We are also involved in projects with immediate, tangible results. We are focused on the community's priority issues and are effecting change NOW.

Finally, the whole process of community planning needs to have integrity. The City has to be seen to be negotiating in good faith. Residents must be convinced they have been heard. Funds to act on recommendations must be made available, and Council and the Development Appeal Board should not overturn the plan. Without this commitment, a community planning exercise will do nothing but reinforce cynicism and despair.

I must admit to some nervousness over the ultimate fate of the Boyle McCauley A.R.P. I fear that my claim, "You can make a difference", will become another empty promise. These doubts aside, I look forward to developing a document that addresses community concerns and reflects local priorities. This kind of planning process will encourage residents to remain involved in their neighbourhoods and will launch a new relationship between the City and its communities.

# Civic Elections '92

...looking for some answers

Prepared by June Sheppard and Lise Mills

On October 19, the citizens of Edmonton will decide who will represent them on city council for the next three years. The Edmonton Social Planning Council has chosen some issues related to health and prosperity and we've raised some questions and concerns. We encourage the public to develop a better understanding of these issues and others and to question candidates on how they would deal with them. These issues include: employment issues; safety; solid waste management and neighborhood planning.

## Employment Issues:

The City of Edmonton has an equal employment policy which states it will ensure all employees and prospective employees will have equal access to employment by the city" and will not be subject to discrimination based on race, religious beliefs, marital status, color, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin or of any other person". However, when you look at the staff in City departments, a lot of work could be done in order to make the civic bureaucracy reflective of Edmonton's diverse population. Aboriginal, and physically or mentally challenged people occupy few city positions and even fewer management positions. For

example: of the 69 aboriginal staff, only two are managers; and of the 295 physically and mentally challenged, only 19 are management, this compared to a total of 1,036 managers.

Women are poorly represented, making up only 26 per cent of the total city staff. In departments where women are better represented, they rarely occupy an equal number of managerial positions as compared to their male co-workers. For example, in 1991 the department of finance was staffed by 55 per cent women. However, within those figures, only 16 women were managers while 61 managers were male.

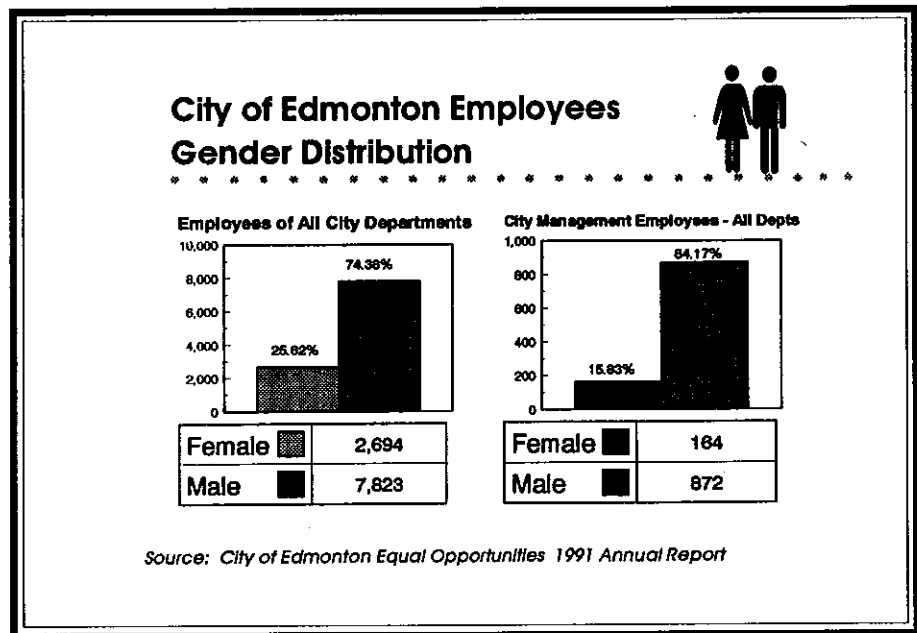
As these figures indicate, the city bureaucracy, management in particular, is a long way from accurately reflecting Edmonton's population.

Edmonton boasts an unemployment rate of 16 per cent for people aged 15 to 24, compared to

an overall city unemployment rate of 11.5 per cent. The national average unemployment rate is 9.5 per cent. (Statistics Canada, Aug. 1992)

Thus, questions should be asked of prospective city council members, such as:

- What responsibilities does the city have to be more representative of the population?
- What is your response to the idea the city take into account whether a business which honors equal opportunities be given contracts over those who do not?
- What can the city do to make sure young people have job opportunities?
- What responsibility does the city have to get people jobs and reduce the number of unemployed?





## Safety:

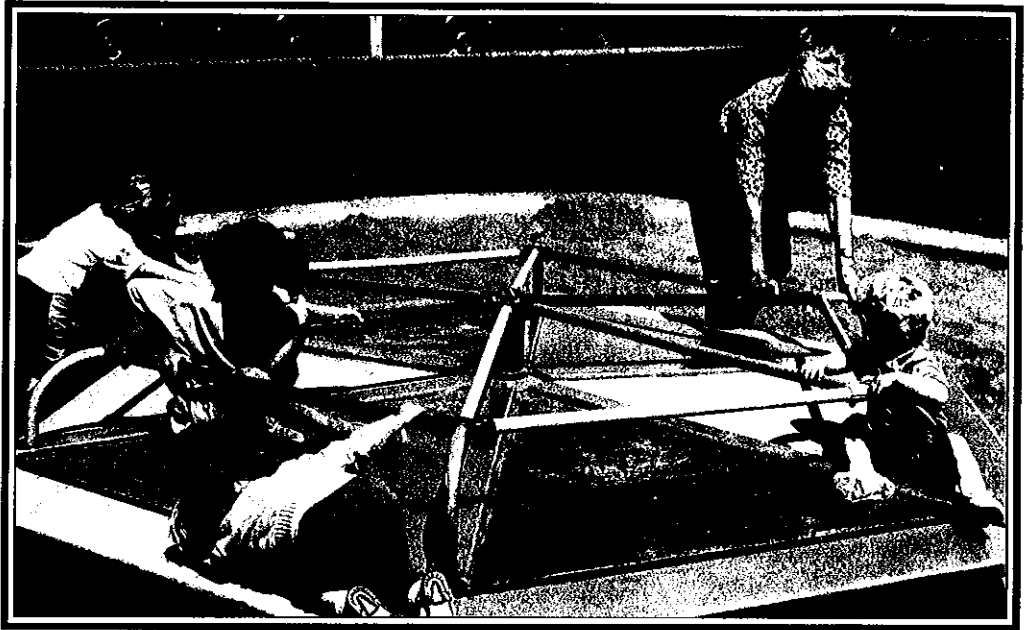
In 1991, Edmonton police reported there were 4,288 assaults and sexual assaults on women and 877 cases of child abuse. In just the first four months of 1992, there have been over 1,700 assaults and sexual assaults on women. By the end of June there were 543 cases of child abuse on record. Keeping in mind these figures account only for those assaults which are reported, they clearly indicate city council must place the safety of its citizens at the top of their agenda.

Creating safer cities must include long term social, economic and political planning by all levels of government in order to eliminate the root causes of violence. In the mean time Edmonton's city council has to make this city as safe as possible. In the physical planning of our city, safety and security could be integrated into function and the aesthetics of the urban scene and urban life.

In their final report, entitled "Toward A Safer Edmonton For All", the Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities listed 149 recommendations which can help make Edmonton a safer city. The report summarizes five reports which include: family violence, safe housing, young adult employment, designing a safer Edmonton, and children and youth today. The report suggested a committee, made up of volunteers representing various interests, be appointed by city council to monitor progress of these recommendations. The report also

recommended many workable solutions for improving safety in Edmonton. If council takes action on many of these suggestions it will help make Edmonton a safer city for women, children and men.

**••What's the municipal governments role in dealing with quality of life issues?**



*Safety for citizens should be raised with prospective city councillors. Photo by Sheila Kushniruk.*

**••If you had to choose between rebuilding the city's infrastructure or putting money into a program to prevent family violence which would you vote for?**

**••Do you support using land-base tax to service only the land, or do you support moving some of the tax money into social service programs?**

## Waste Management:

Now the city has announced it has found a place to bury its garbage in the County of Thorhild, but can we continue to put our garbage out of sight, out of mind. If council concentrates on reduc-

ing Edmonton's garbage output, pressure on landfills will be lessened. The Edmonton Board of Health, in its 1992 report "Health Goals for Edmonton", stated that Edmontonians currently produce 540,000 tonnes of garbage per year. This figure can be further broken down as : 226,200 tonnes (42 per cent) of commercial/industrial

waste, 173,400 tonnes (32 per cent) of residential waste, and 140,400 tonnes (26 per cent) of construction/demolition waste. The report also notes that while recycling has helped to reduce the strain on landfills it is not a complete alternative to landfills, due in part to the "soft market" for recyclables and the fact some things are not recyclable.

The report mentions six recommendations for reducing solid waste management and enabling sustainable development in Edmonton. One recommendation concentrates on actively promoting more environmentally responsible attitudes "at the individual,

corporate and community levels” to reduce waste. This education would emphasize the four R’s, reduce, recover, reuse, and recycle, in this order. Another recommendation is that all persons be committed to using the best “practical technology” to eliminate environmentally unhealthy emissions. Therefore our new city council should show it is committed to reducing the amount of garbage which is going into our landfills while still enabling sustainable development. The economy and public health cannot be looked upon separately.

••What are your views on recycling? Should the city be footing the bill for recycling programs such as the Blue Box program?

••What should the city be prepared to spend on recycling or for taking our garbage outside the city?

••What responsibility does the city have to reduce the amount of garbage its citizens put out?

cilities are planned which call for the demolition of existing housing.

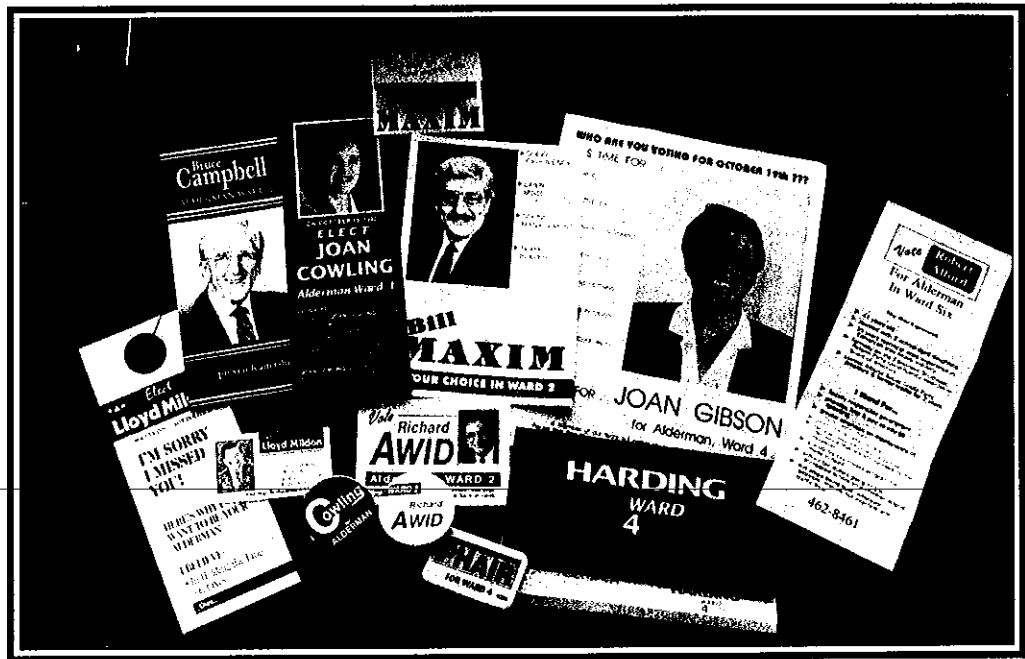
City planners do their best to involve all the stakeholders in community planning issues. However, not all the stakeholders are on a level playing field. The developer who can afford legal counsel, the homeowner with good political connections, have an advantage compared with the new Canadian with few connections, the renter, or the single elderly person.

A few communities have

The poorer and less well organized communities get more than their share of undesirable developments and less than their share for local improvements.

••What do you think can be done to make sure all neighborhoods get a fair allocation of city resources, given differing lobbying ability of different communities?

••Do you support a levy on prospective developers to allow affected communities to receive



October 19 will be the deciding day for 52 candidates hoping to get a seat on council.

## Neighborhood Planning

As our city grows and changes, tensions inevitably develop between different interest groups. A new campus downtown increases pressure on single-family housing, as developers erect multi-unit buildings. Modest neighborhoods near the river valley become trendy, and the traditional inhabitants are bought out or simply evicted to make way for luxurious houses and condos. Transportation and recreation fa-

been provided independent assistance in articulating their needs. Yet many others have not received help, and no clear policy exists which prioritizes community need for technical and organizational help.

The current situation seems to create winners and losers. The most affluent and sophisticated communities get political and technical help in resisting unwanted development and securing desirable neighborhood improvements.

independent advice on new developments?

••Should the city provide a program to offer technical help to communities affected by changes (redevelopment, new area plans, etc.)?

*June Sheppard is a Council board member and regular columnist with First Reading and Lise Mills is a University of Alberta student who worked with the Council last summer.*

# Cities restricted by role

...social justice hard to execute

By Judith Garber

The ability of Canadian cities to engage in socially-beneficial governance depends heavily on their legal powers. The boundaries of local action are set by the provinces, which were given sole authority over municipalities and property by the BNA Act. Despite continuing calls by municipal officials for greater autonomy, cities remain "creatures" of the provinces under the Constitution Act of 1982, and the current renegotiation of federalism will not change this. While powers differ from place to place, and Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal are granted relatively broad authority, a common legal foundation concretely influences governance in all communities.

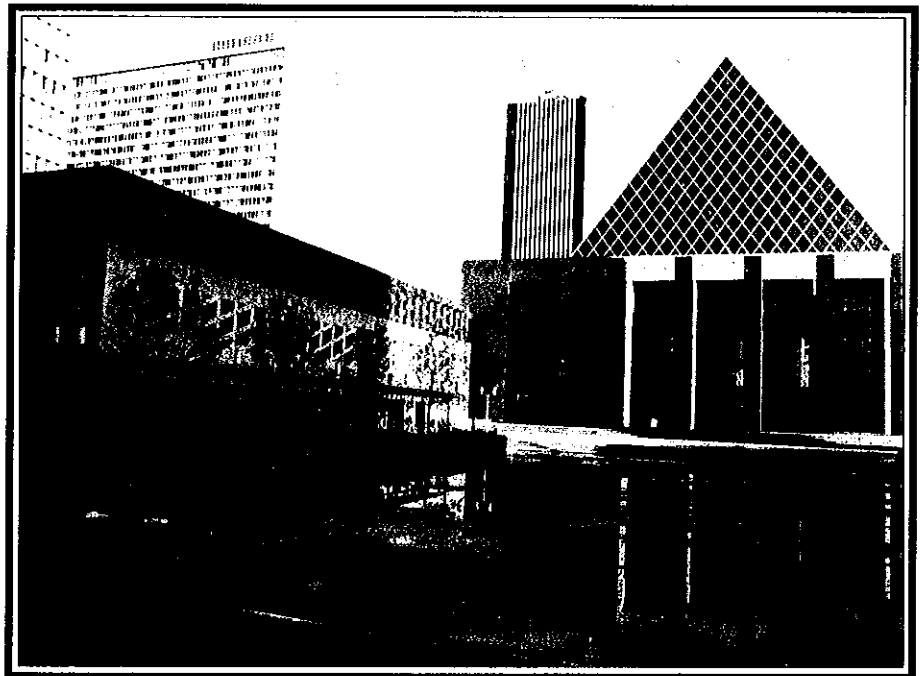
Cities do not seem weak. Among other activities, localities plan and zone land, collect refuse, fight fires, and build water and sewer systems; they share with provinces responsibility for property assessment, roads, policing, health, education, economic development, culture, and recreation. Historically, provinces have delegated these particular jobs to cities largely because economic investment and physical growth require adequate services, infrastructures, and an orderly society. Cities also mitigate the negative effects of growth, like overcrowding and incompatible land uses.

But cities are not very powerful, when, instead of sustaining

the interests of businesses or homeowners, we want them to own or control productive resources such as land or businesses, so the costs and benefits of growth are distributed more fairly than by private parties. Local officials, who are already politically disposed towards landowners and investors, risk scrutiny from legislatures, agencies, or courts if they try to step outside the traditional role of supporting growth.

Dependence on higher-level governments creates two possible scenarios: provinces may protect cities from the demands of powerful groups like developers and businesses, or provinces may prevent cities from shifting policy priorities towards redistributive and grassroots concerns. On the one hand, Canadian cities have benefitted greatly from certain pro-

vincial intervention. Protection from fiscal crises, coordination of services and planning via metropolitan or regional structures (Metro Toronto, Alberta's Regional Planning Commissions), and the provision of expensive social services cannot be accomplished by the localities. Viewed in light of American cities' vulnerability, the benefits of redistribution and aid from above are obvious. Moreover, provinces keep a fairly tight rein on property assessments, tax rates, and other mechanisms that localities use to compete—usually self-destructively—for private investment. For example, thought it has not stopped Edmonton's quest for development, Alberta's Municipal Act and court rulings about it forbid cities from giving tax abatements, land, or money to businesses unless these



*Edmonton's new city hall open after years of political wrangling.*

incentives directly produce benefits to the municipality.

The less attractive side of the provincial-local government, are perfectly free to substitute their own vision of urban economic and physical development for homegrown policies. No laws constrain the use of incentives and outright gifts by provinces, which can also spend money in ways that conflict with a city's wishes—Vancouver battled the British Columbia government and its private-sector partners when hundreds of vulnerable city residents were displaced by Expo '86.

Another dimension of the tradeoff between provincial resources and local self-government is that the progressive local initiatives may be thwarted by provincial politicians and bureaucrats whose agendas do not feature economic and social justice. Thus, external pressures from higher-level governments are added to the constant tension within cities between pro-business interests and grassroots impulses. The rate grassroots on issues can be diminished by restrictions on cities' authority. Most risky are progressive—not incentives-based—economic development, housing,

and land use strategies, which have been considered in most large and medium-sized communities. Some policy tools that can have redistributive results and make cities more livable are: municipal land banking; non-profit, city-directed development corporations; municipal production of affordable housing; rent controls; restrictions on demolishing or converting rental housing; requiring developers to provide infrastructure or services to offset the social costs of their venture. Each has been tried somewhere in Canada; however, other than Toronto, cities as a rule have only spotty or unclear permission to experiment with such non-traditional methods for managing growth.

It would be wrong to label cities "good" and provinces "bad" (or vice versa!), since local problems are never simple. Nevertheless, if localities could actively direct the way productive resources within their jurisdiction are used, instead of reacting to private decisions, there might be fewer shopping malls and more affordable housing in urban settings.

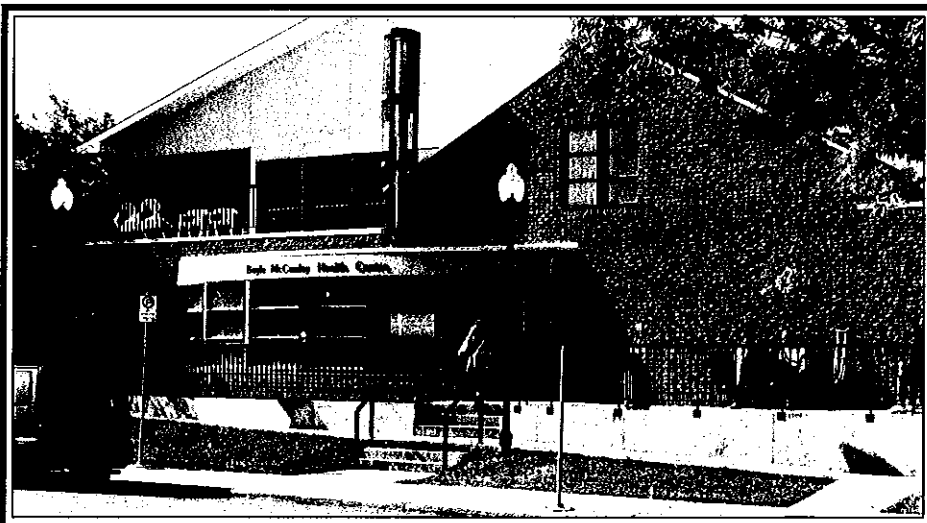
*Judith Garber is an assistant professor in the department of political science at the U of A.*

## Project Updates

Racism makes life tough for immigrants and visible minority people. That's the conclusion of a Council study of Northeast Edmonton, **Because of the Color**. Over 140 people and organizations provided input, and the report came up with some alarming conclusions. For example, nearly ninety per cent of respondents had witnessed or heard of a racial incident, and most agreed there was racial tension in their neighborhood. Schools and community leagues were singled out by respondents for not doing enough to bring people of different cultures together. A number of recommendations in the report are geared to improving access to services and combating racist attitudes. The report is available from the Council for \$5 including shipping.

Services for aboriginal people in the inner city are due for an overhaul, says a report co-written by the Council. The problem is finding the resources and the will to implement changes which would simplify and improve programs. The study, **Service Improvement for the Inner City Aboriginal Community**, was commissioned by the police-led Inner City Violent Crime Task Force. Police Commission chair Wayne Drewry is taking the lead in pushing for city, provincial, and federal support for the study's recommendations. Copies of the report are available from the Council.

Ever since the province changed its welfare program in 1991, the Council has been looking for money to revise its popular **Other Welfare Manual**. The Muttart Foundation has now agreed to pick up part of the costs, and the Council is hoping to find the rest of the money from other foundations. Publication date will likely be in late 1993.



*Boyle McCauley Health Centre is a rarity, funded partially by the City and the province.*

# Municipalities need more funds

...universal programs must be supported

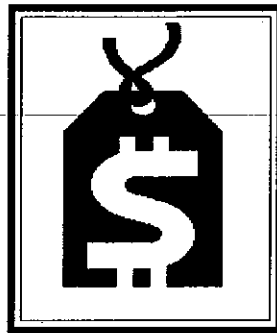
*The Council requested both Kay Hurtig and James Lightbody to write an article arguing the merits of a universal versus a pay as you go system for municipal governments. Kay took the side of universal systems and her article follows. James Lightbody's argument for pay as you go is found on pages 18-20.*

By Kay Hurtig

The unfortunate decision by the Getty government, in its 1992 budget, to expropriate for general revenue some \$300 million that had accumulated in the Alberta Municipal Finance Corporation, is exacerbating the serious problems that municipalities in the province already faced. The result is a growing municipal fiscal crisis. Local taxpayers demand and expect quality public services. They expect the taxes they pay should provide such services. Instead, with cut-back of funding from the provincial government, there is an increasing demand for expensive "Pay as You Go" systems for such long taken-for-granted services as garbage collection, infrastructure repairs, and civic facilities. Taken to its extreme, one can imagine suggestions that parks be privatized and run for profit and that the city telephone system and transit system be turned over to "free enterprise" to run on a so-called "Pay As You Go" system.

There are certain basic municipal services that should always be provided on a universal, non-profit basis, to all as part of the services that municipalities normally offer. Such basic universal services include transportation and

residential services such as sewage, water and telephone service. Of course, there's every reason why high volume users in business should be expected to pay extra based on the volume of garbage or the larger quantities of electricity or water, for example, that industries use. But to adopt "Pay As You Go" philosophies to such residential services as garbage collection is a costly and unfair mistake. Well-to-do people won't much



notice the extra charges that will be involved, but low income and middle income Edmontonians certainly will. Administration costs of such programs will cut heavily into any additional revenue that is generated.

I am strongly opposed to the government's failure to provide additional deserved revenue to municipalities. It's ironic that the Getty government that has long so strongly stressed the necessity of transferring power "closer to the

people" seems to mean only transferring power from Ottawa to the provincial legislature. Somehow they seem to forget the many services that municipalities can and should provide more effectively and efficiently than the provincial government. However, this can only be done if the proper share of tax revenue is provided to the municipalities.

The short-sighted and selfish unilateral expropriation by the Getty government is distorting the ability of the City of Edmonton to provide needed services. A more enlightened provincial government would act to avoid charges for services that discriminate against low and middle income citizens.

If the present dangerous trend continues, the next thing you'll hear is the demand for an end to the public education system and demands for increased provincial funding of private schools. This isn't as far fetched as it seems because exactly the same right-wingers have already been advocating a two-tier health care system for Albertans . . . one tier for those with money and the other tier (and inevitably poorer services) for those without.

*Kay Hurtig is the New Democratic Nominee for Edmonton Centre.*

# When the money is short

By James Lightbody

So it is October and municipal election time in Edmonton. And, just as the City budget provides us with an annual opportunity to tally up policy wins and losses in concrete terms, local elections do focus the normally erratic attentions of councillors to what they ought to have been doing over the past three years.

That is, what real strategic goals, if any, did they set for the 10,000 or so lost souls in civic employment. In the absence of such objectives (since Edmonton like most Canadian cities is not blessed with any strategic planning document) how on earth can even the most conscientious voter measure aldermanic accomplishment? Let's ponder this.

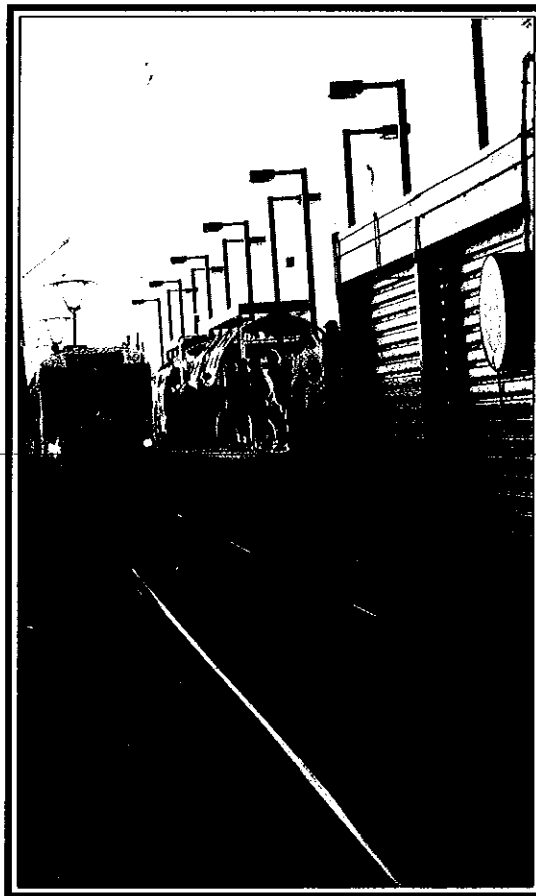
Because the field of social services represents a mixture of all three levels of governments, plus the private sector (which is perhaps healthy in terms of participation) there are inevitably some wasteful and unproductive practices which divert attention from the real social gains.

In this policy realm, sometimes it must seem to the jaded home-owner that a self-sustaining, unmanageably careening juggernaut has somehow set its own purpose, momentum and agenda. This is when real questions about universality legitimately crop up.

Most will accept that any modern complex city such as Edmonton must, as a form of social organization, face up to problems

associated with increasing family violence and traditional family unit disintegration, homelessness and poverty in its many guises.

The reality here is that Edmonton acts as a magnet for northern Alberta unemployed and underemployed as well as those people with very special concerns. The particular problem for Edmonton



*The city's LRT is one service which does not pay for itself.*

is that many of our neighbors have fled the homespun values and homilies of bootstrap liberalism that supports a very fragile web of social support in a still reasonably hard-hearted rural Alberta. We

must remember that even in our city a little over a generation ago behavior which was once labelled charity could in reality be said to begin at home or, in a crunch, with the local parish.

Our modern protective quilt of support evolved over the years as we moved beyond the Elizabethan concept of a deserving and undeserving poor. In Canada these actions were codified in the Canada Assistance Plan rooted in the progressive growth tax base of the provincial and federal governments. The lure of 'twenty cent' dollars (that is, a twenty cent outlay landed a full dollar of expenditure once matching funds were attached) hooked the municipalities.

Let's share my assumption that most Edmonton citizens would prefer to cash a cheque at the bank than check out of the food bank. Still, some of us from time to time, others on a more prolonged basis, find it necessary to turn to the state and state-sponsored agencies for redress from circumstances against which we are individually powerless. But what do you do when there's no more money locally for even the twenty cent ante?

What happens when the money runs out, when civic officials are unable to support an expansion of the wealth base suffi-

cient to generate program funds through reasonable new taxation, on a tax base which is not progressive, and growth-based, like the senior levels.

What happens is the worst kind of decision taking by elected officials not insulated by some type of political distance from those with legitimate grievances. For instance, in August this year city council chose to give the YWCA \$50,000. Why? Its vice president, as reported, said this: "If we don't receive the funds there is a real possibility the YWCA will fold." So what? But, Alderman Mel Binder justified the grant by noting that the city had provided the Eskimos with \$300,000 and "this is just as worthwhile and should be accommodated." This is nonsense of course.

In July, the city was asked to reduce rents in city-owned housing in a quarter of its 114 inner-city rentals properties. Councillor Mackenzie said no: "It isn't our role and we'll never get out of it, because once you get into it, the provincial government will just step back and say 'bet my guest.'" Of course this is so, but to which the ever accommodating Binder rejoined, "We can't simply pay lip service to the problem by saying it's a provincial responsibility." Why not, pray tell?

So it strikes me that the question posed me here, something referring to universality of city funded programs versus "pay as you go" schemes is really not the right question to ask. The right question should be "what works well when?"

At the local level certain public services must be considered universal in their application

and in their tax levy basis: all need, most pay for, police, fire and ambulance. At some sort of intermediate level most pay for and most receive benefit from libraries, sports, recreation and cultural pursuits, economic development, initiatives. At the bottom of the scale, measured by numbers using (now that the federal government has abandoned universality in family allowances and old age pensions) are the social services, the most encompassing of which are the bevy of income support programs.

At the local level, universal programs bleed tax dollars from

**"...it seems more fair that the proper role of city legislators is to ensure universal access"**

services for all to meet the particular needs of relatively few electors. This budget is also a zero sum game (that is, if I win you must lose). At senior levels of government, caucus solidarity provides a collective blanket for all legislators to hide beneath, but unpopular local decisions are pegged directly, individually, at each vote. So it seems more fair that the proper role of city legislators is to ensure universal access (eg. make sure all can gain program entry) while senior level legislators may ensure universal application (eg. everyone does get in). It really is time for City Hall to stop playing Mother Teresa and keep her nose fairly in her own business.

So, if we are permitted to offer an action agenda for those in the running this fall, let's ask them

to do this:

1. Sort out that which is happening is precisely in conformity to statutory responsibilities.
2. Live out the constitutional role of local government. In this, work to expand the wealth base of the civic enterprise and return to federal and provincial responsibility that which is properly theirs.
3. Rank all activities to establish priorities. Universal access yes, but target a selectivity into programs so that city hall does not try to dope a dash of everything.
4. Make a tough minded decision, leave to volunteers exclusively that which is best done by volunteers. Freeze the wishful from budget allocations.
5. Re-direct civic boosterism by the business community toward building lives, not the usual arenas, curling rinks and convention centres.
6. Targetspecific agenda items, and policy agendas, and develop a municipal role to associate industrial and commercial sectors with sponsorship of a particular area in need. Do let the lame associations hobble away.
7. So a new civic role would be to organize this above effectively, efficiently, by arranging the matches of the demanding with the limited potential donors. There is absolutely no reason to believe that hard work cannot expand the donor list.

Let us conclude with two brief notes. Any self-help book for governments in the 1990s will necessarily bear the title, "Doing More With Less": the objective is to make remaining plans work well.

While those on the left continue to struggle to find, in a con-

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strictive tax realm, the funds to patch up old universal plans while of course following the prime directive of sticking in office, creative liberals and fiscal populists have the field as they choose. To succeed in future, the lumbering activities of the traditional state apparatus will have to adapt to a lean more active facilitator role.

Finally, and importantly, we should recognize the particular ethos of civic nonpartisanship as being most important. Standing outside the petty rancour of partisan division, civic leaders can be in a position to bargain tough with the province to pull its weight for local purposes. Ideally, local government should come to stand as an aggressive spokesman, not a financier, for the non-partisan politically and the powerless economically.

You may take this action agenda and bolt to the hustings. It should work well. If those we have elected have not taken up something like this challenge, why not keep the list to keep score for next time?

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## Politicians Breakfast

**Friday, October 9  
All Saints' Cathedral  
7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.  
10039-103 Street  
\$12 each**

**Call the Council at 423-2031 if you're interested in attending the breakfast. All civic candidates have been invited and it will give you a chance to question your potential councillors.**

**Please R.S.V.P**

## Take Note:

You can now obtain packages of all 12 Alberta Facts published by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The packages are available at the Council office for \$5. Should you wish them to be mailed there is a \$3 shipping and handling charge. Call our office at 423-2031 to place your order.

Memorial University and the Community Services Council will be hosting the sixth conference on Social Welfare Policy in St. John's, Newfoundland on June 27-30, 1993. The theme will be Rethinking Social Welfare: People, Policy and Practice. For more details call (709) 737-8165.



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