

# OMSSA 75th ANNIVERSARY

From 1950 to 2025

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# POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

## Two Broad Elements

The first was the Ontario Government's decision in 1946 to revamp residential care for the elderly impinging greatly on municipal (and charitable) houses of refuge.



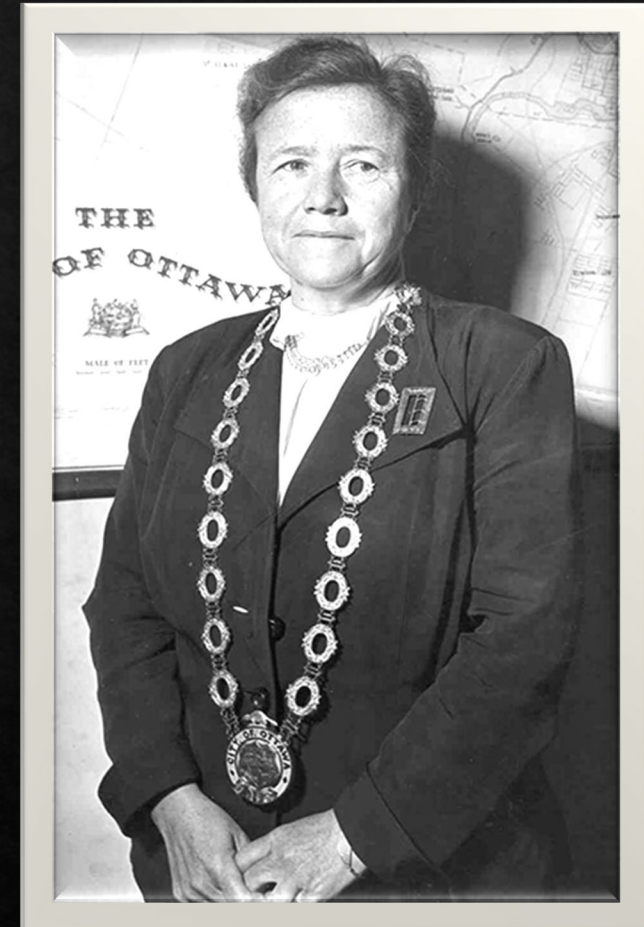
The second was the very real tug of war between who should run social services

- ♦ A cadre of centrally administered professional social workers free from the interference of all governments; or
- ♦ The incumbent municipal structure that had increased its hold on service delivery during the war



# THE GREAT DEBATE

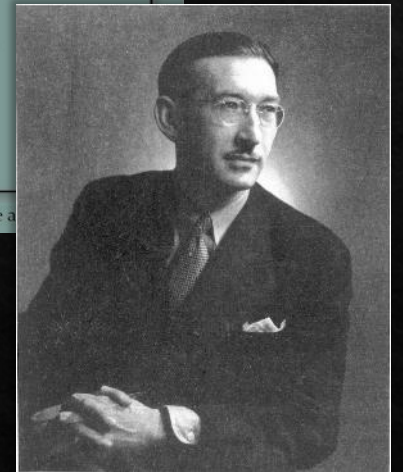
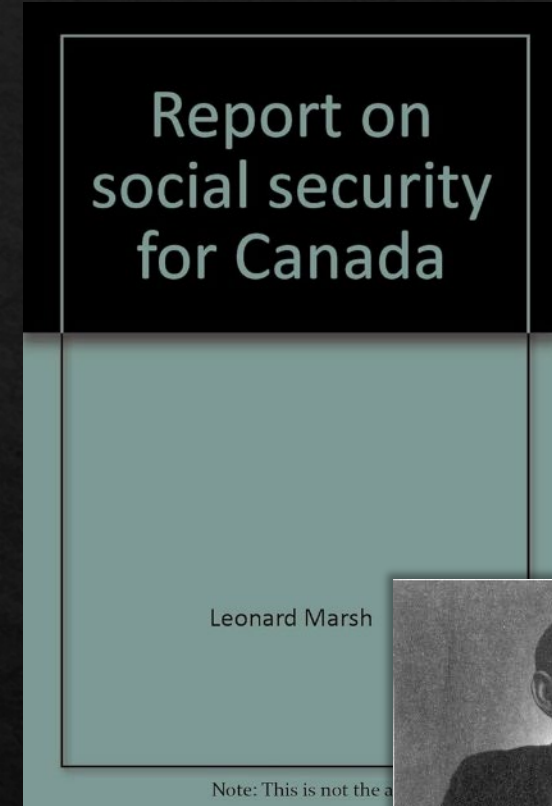
- ◆ In 1944, Charlotte Whitton, an original member of the Royal Commission that created the Department of Public Welfare in 1930 and later to become the mayor of Ottawa, conducted a massive survey called 'The Administration of Welfare Services in Ontario'
- ◆ She recommended a complete overhaul of services placing trained social workers in charge of the new system. Whitton had support from the new Minister and Deputy as well as the University of Toronto School of Social Work.



# THE GREAT DEBATE

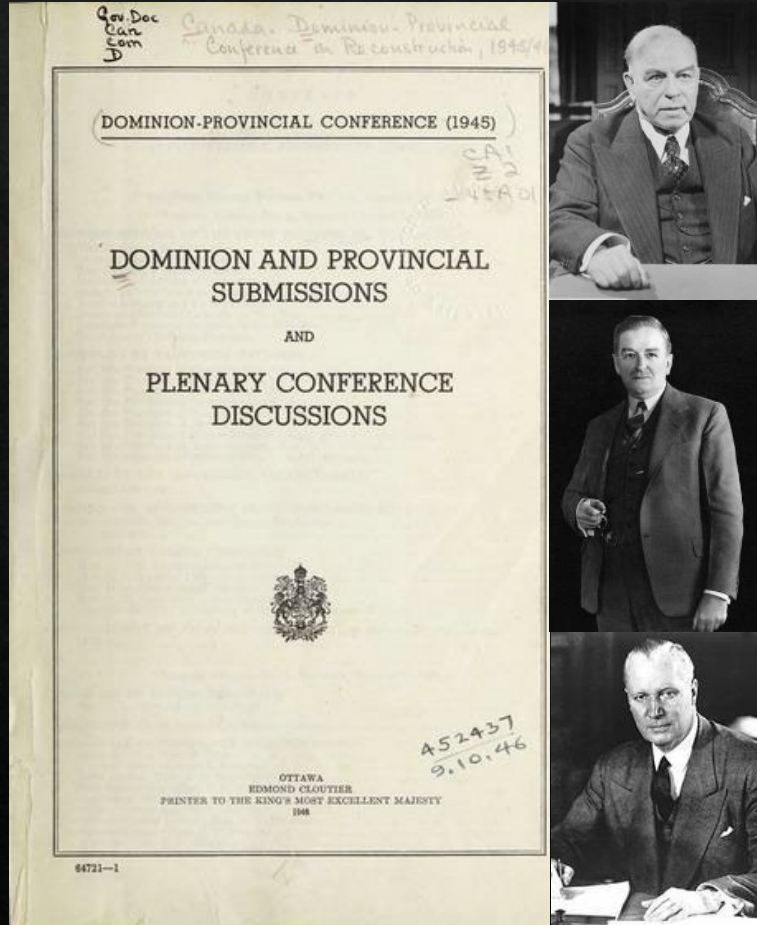
Whitton's recommendations lined up with

- ◆ Leonard Marsh's Report on Social Security for Canada which called for large scale income security for all Canadians; and
- ◆ the federal Dominion Green Books on the structure of programs for the postwar era.
  - ◆ The Green Books called for income security to be provided to all at the federal level in exchange for taxing powers that would be given up by the provinces in exchange for the federal programs.





# THE GREAT DEBATE



◊ In 1946, the Dominion-Provincial conference on Reconstruction collapsed .

Neither:

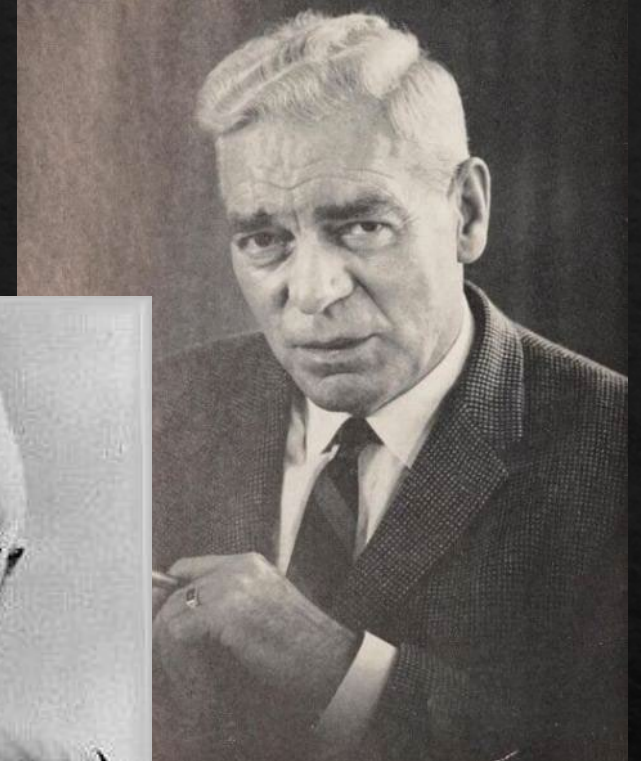
◊ Quebec's Premier Duplessis nor

◊ Ontario's Premier Drew

would accept a handover of taxing power without specific controls over federal programs that Prime Minister King was not prepared to give up.

# THE GREAT DEBATE

- ◆ With the federal government out of the game, the debate over centralization and professionalization took on a new life.
- ◆ Powerful proponents of local municipal delivery
  - ◆ William Goodfellow, the new Minister of Public Welfare; and
  - ◆ Leslie Frost, Treasurer of the province and later, Premier in 1949





# THE GREAT DEBATE

"During the summer of 1947 these conflicting visions of welfare reform clashed head-on at the **Ontario Conference of Social Welfare**, a major gathering of provincial and federal politicians, social workers and municipal representatives of the **Community Welfare Council of Ontario** to debate the future of social assistance in the province."

# THE GREAT DEBATE

◇ Harry Cassidy from the University of Toronto spoke first:

... “local politicians talk about money all the time when they discuss welfare questions and appear to many of us to be oblivious to the issues of human well-being that are involved.”





# THE GREAT DEBATE

◆ Grant Crawford, President of AMO then took the lectern:

“Municipal councils in general have a healthy skepticism of experts and promises.” (They need) “to satisfy the elected representatives with factual evidence that the proposals advanced will meet the need and that there is some reasonable limit to the apparently limitless expansion of welfare services.

The primary responsibility of the elected representatives is to those whom they represent and not to the underprivileged or those in need of assistance.”



# THE GREAT DEBATE

- ◆ Enticed by 50% cost sharing, Toronto, Hamilton and Windsor formed Welfare Units in anticipation of the new legislation which was to have come out of the 1947 conference.



- ◆ The Progressive Conservative government, in the end, finally (by 1949) refused to proclaim it.



# THE EMERGENCE OF OMSSA

- ◆ But the three new self-proclaimed welfare unit administrations did not necessarily accept the deep divisions between:
  - ◆ left and right,
  - ◆ academics vs. politicians, or
  - ◆ certified professionals vs. administrators.
- ◆ Many administrators thought the administration of welfare needed to be separated from partisan politics at all levels and required at least some professional social workers working alongside them.
- ◆ They saw the great postwar debate as opening needless fault lines that were counterproductive to moving forward.



# THE EMERGENCE OF OMSSA

- ◆ To these ends, a group of administrators, some who had attended the 1947 conference, began talking about forming a professional association and got down to business in 1949.
- ◆ They were encouraged by provincial welfare director James S. Band.
- ◆ In 1950, forty people attended the first annual conference of the Ontario Welfare Officers Association (OWOA), the forerunner of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (1972) .





# THE 1950's

- ◇ OMSSA was created to
  - ◇ Represent municipal interests,
  - ◇ Share best practices, and
  - ◇ Advocate for improvements in the delivery of social services in partnership with the provincial government.

## Focus Areas

- ◇ OMSSA focused on areas like
  - ◇ Welfare Administration,
  - ◇ Public Health, and
  - ◇ Housing
- ◇ reflecting the social challenges of post-war Ontario.

# THE 1960'S to 1980

1960-1974

- ◆ The introduction of major provincial programs, like social assistance (GWA and FBA and GAINS), child welfare, homemakers & nurses, 'day care' and public housing initiatives;



- ◆ Increased collaboration between municipalities and the province. OMSSA played a key role in ensuring municipal perspectives were represented in these programs.

1974-1980s:

- ◆ During this time, OMSSA expanded its focus to include training and capacity-building for municipal social service administrators.
- ◆ It became a hub for professional development and knowledge-sharing.





# From OWOA to OMSSA

- ◇ Ontario: Department of Public Welfare (1930) to Ministry of Community and Social Services (1972)
- ◇ Municipalities
  - ◇ 1950-1972: OWOA
  - ◇ 1973- present: OMSSA
- ◇ By that time there was a move afoot to get away from the word “welfare” and also several of especially the larger municipal offices had developed and were providing services well beyond the administration of welfare.
- ◇ “Social Services” had become the more accepted term for the role both at the provincial and municipal level.

A birthday cake with lit candles and balloons in the background.

*Thank You*

Questions?