

# OMSSA 75th ANNIVERSARY

From 1950 to 2025

John Stapleton

May 13, 2025

## Agenda

# PART 1: LEAD UP TO OMSSA

- 1) The Lead up to World War II (1930-1939)
- 2) The War Years (1939-1945)
- 3) Post War Reconstruction (1945 onward)
- 4) The Great Debate (1947)
- 5) The Birth of OMSSA (1950)



## Agenda

### **PART 2: OMSSA OVER 75 YEARS**

- 1) The 1950's
- 2) The 1960's to the 1980's
- 3) The 1990's
- 4) 2000 to 2025
- 5) Legacy and Impact





**Part 1.1**

# **THE LEAD UP TO OMSSA**

1930 to 1950

- 1) The Lead up to World War II (1930-1939)
- 2) The War Years (1939-1945)
- 3) Post War Reconstruction (1945 onward)
- 4) The Great Debate (1947)
- 5) The Birth of OMSSA (1950)



# THE LEAD UP TO WWII

"But it was the Great Depression that forced the municipalities into the forefront as the source of relief for large segments of the population.

A permanent change had been effected in that local governments had come to accept that at least some welfare services were their responsibility, and most had taken delivery into their own hands.

The old system where out-of-door relief was farmed out by the city or town to a house of industry or some such private charity was seen no more. "

Dr. Cliff Williams:1984



September 13, 2005



# THE LEAD UP TO WWII

- ❖ In 1935, bankrupt or distressed municipalities paid cash assistance for the first time. The decision was made by **Liberal Minister David Croll**
- ❖ The cash paid was heavily subsidized by the province
- ❖ All municipalities continued providing their systems of vouchers, clothes and food hampers, seeds and bag of coal and coke for fuel.





# THE LEAD UP TO WWII

- ❖ Caseloads across Ontario moved towards 400,000 beneficiaries at a time when Ontario's population stood at 3,000,000.
- ❖ Almost 16% of Ontario's population received direct relief in 1935 while many others received "indirect relief" that required work in return for relief.
- ❖ Municipal relief administrations were stretched 'beyond the breaking point' .





# THE LEAD UP TO WWII

- ◆ But tensions were growing....On July 31, 1935, Hepburn famously outlined his feelings about municipalities asking for cost sharing to pay for relief rolls.

“There's a growing impression among the taxpayers of this province that they are being drained of their money to provide a living for idlers... We will pay the municipalities a lump sum each month ...

In other words, we will say to them: 'Here's the alimony, you raise the children’



# THE LEAD UP TO WWII

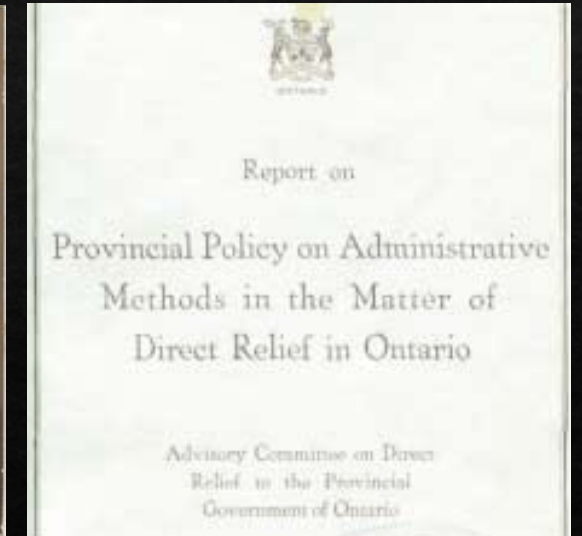
- ◆ Throughout the 1935-1939 period, municipalities tinkered with relief rates that were then called "Campbell rates"
- ◆ First recommended in an Ontario-based Royal Commission from 1932 headed by **Wallace Campbell**, general manager of the Ford Motor Company of Canada.
- ◆ "Campbell + 5" , 10, 15, 20, 25 or 39 became a part of the common lexicon.

(2) *Maximum Food Allowance*

Your committee feels that, in view of the indefensible spread in costs among Ontario communities, an obligation rests upon it to suggest some sort of general standard in respect to food allowances. It is not proposed that the maximum will be generally applicable to every family receiving assistance. We believe, however, that throughout the Province as a whole and under existing market conditions the standard of cost here put forward is sufficiently high to take care of the food needs of persons and families on relief.

Summer schedule as follows:

For one adult per week.....	\$1.00
For the second adult in a family, per week an additional.....	.25
For the third member of the family, per week an additional.....	.90
For the fourth member of the family, per week an additional.....	.85
For the fifth member of the family, per week an additional.....	.80
For the sixth member of the family, per week an additional.....	.75
For the seventh member of the family, per week an additional.....	.70
For the eighth member of the family, per week an additional.....	.65
For the ninth member of the family, per week an additional.....	.60
For the tenth member of the family, per week an additional.....	.55







# THE LEAD UP TO WWII

## The 1938 Rate Cut

“A 15 per cent rate decrease was greeted with howls of derision and scorn by social activists but the stronger voices came from municipalities that looked at the province's move as more symbolic, clearly meddling in the municipal view, where they did not belong.

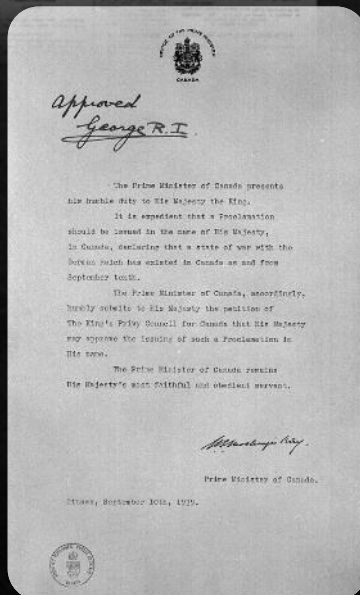
In the summer of 1939, great plans were conceived to fight the government at every turn.”



# THE LEAD UP TO WWII



- ◆ However, this is one skirmish that did not get a chance to play itself out.
- ◆ On September 10, 1939, Canada declared war on Germany.



From "No Price Too High" Courtesy Netflix Productions 1997



**Part 1.2**

# **THE LEAD UP TO OMSSA**

1939 to 1945

- 1) The Lead up to World War II (1930-1939)
- 2) **The War Years (1939-1945)**
- 3) Post War Reconstruction (1945 onward)
- 4) The Great Debate (1947)
- 5) The Birth of OMSSA (1950)



# THE WAR YEARS

- ◆ Between 1939 and 1941, Ontario's monthly average number of relief recipients dropped from 133,971 or 9.8% of the population to 27,713 or 1.9% ....
- ◆ By the end of 1943, only 15,216 Ontarians were still on (and)...88% (of them) were sick."





# THE WAR YEARS

Throughout the early 1940's, various groups in Toronto deputed to the Public Welfare Committee (in Toronto) that the Campbell Report rates should be scrapped in favour of rates that reflected proper scientific dietary standards.

## Two main debate questions:

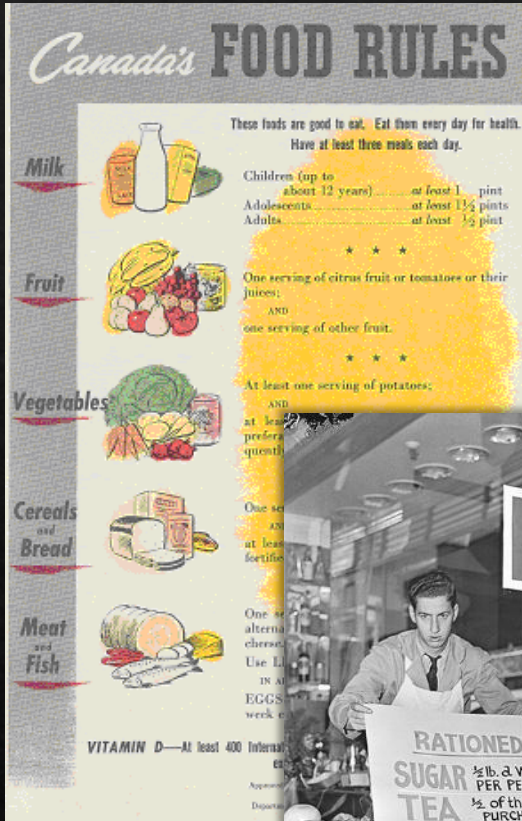
**1. Were relief rates sufficient?**



**2. If mothers would only cook and prepare food properly, would they have enough money to prepare nutritious meals based on what they received?**







# THE WAR YEARS

"More important was the changing context of the war itself.

War heightened the consciousness of Canadians about questions of diet and nutrition, whether they examined

- ◊ the inadequate health of army recruits,
- ◊ the standards of support necessary for the families of those fighting overseas, or
- ◊ their own ration books.

War also raised concerns about reconstructing society ."

**Part 1.3**

# **THE LEAD UP TO OMSSA**

1945 to 50

- 1) The Lead up to World War II (1930-1939)
- 2) The War Years (1939-1945)
- 3) **Post War Reconstruction (1945 onward)**
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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

**Part 1.4**

# **THE LEAD UP TO OMSSA**

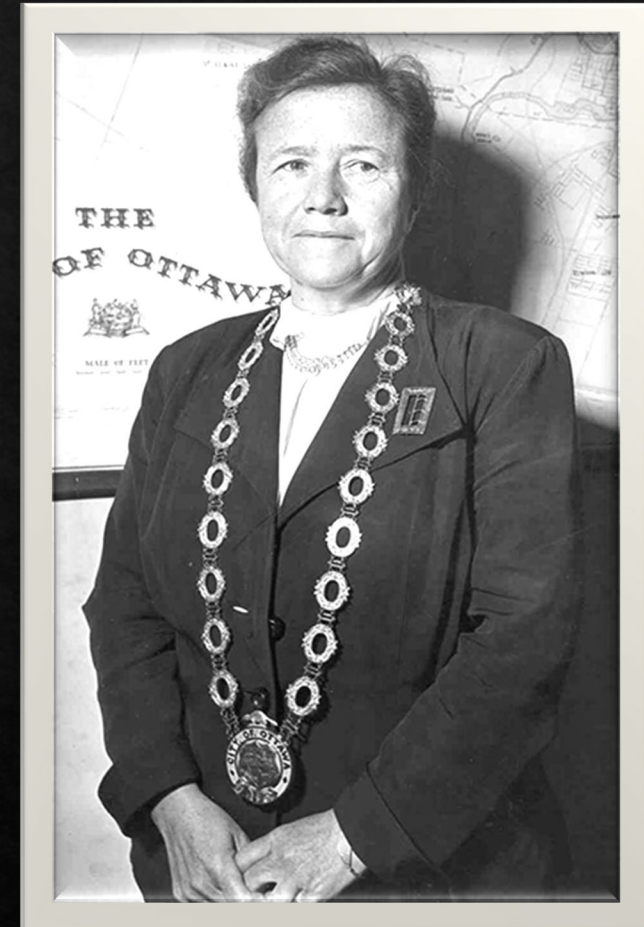
1945 to 50

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# THE GREAT DEBATE

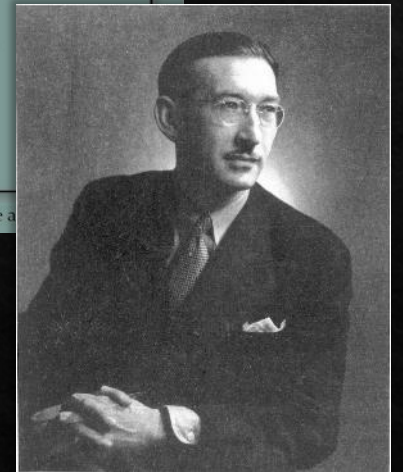
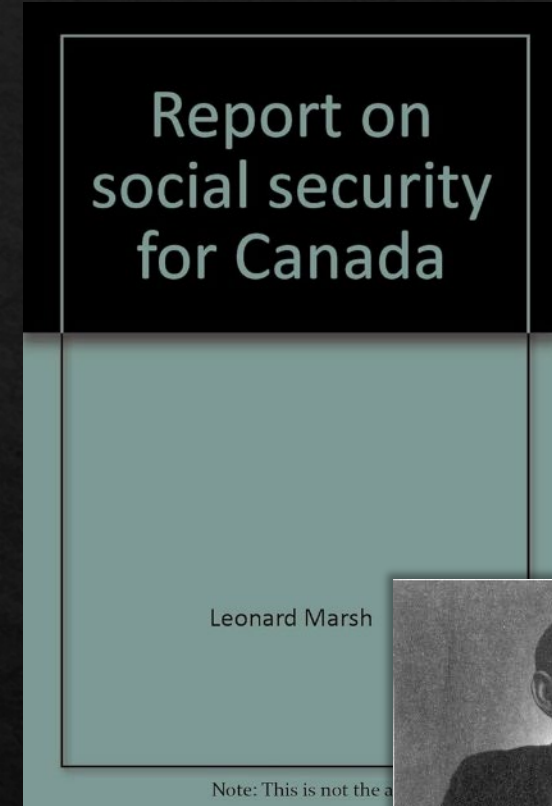
- ◆ In 1944, Charlotte Whitton, an original member of the Royal Commission that created the Department of Public Welfare in 1930 and later to become the mayor of Ottawa, conducted a massive survey called 'The Administration of Welfare Services in Ontario'
- ◆ She recommended a complete overhaul of services 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

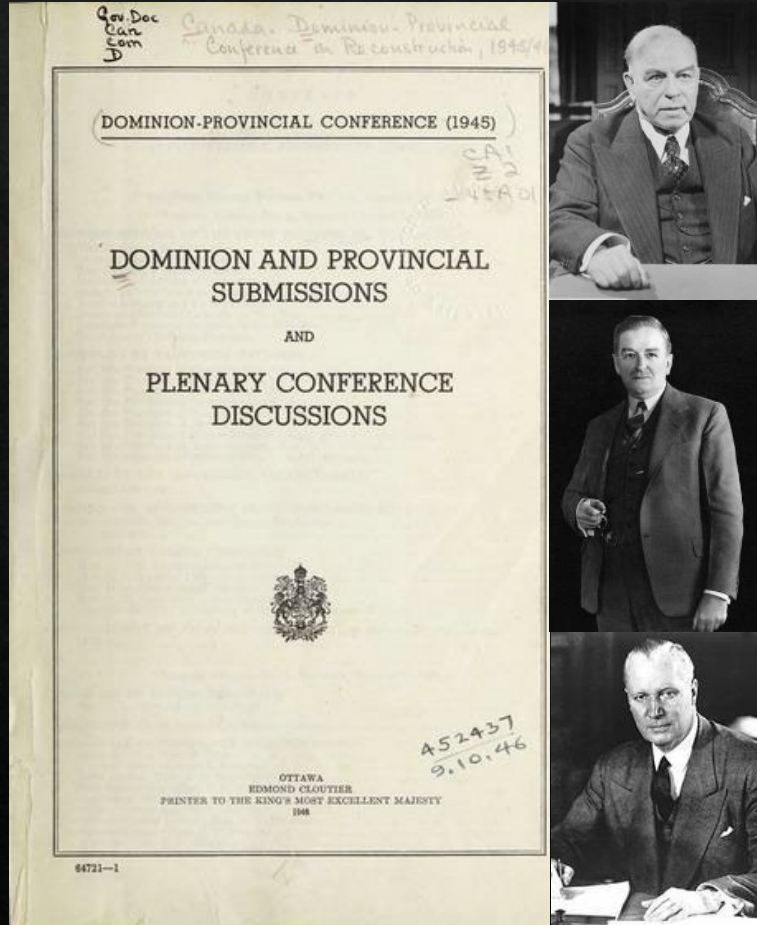
Whitton's recommendations lined up with

- ◆ 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:

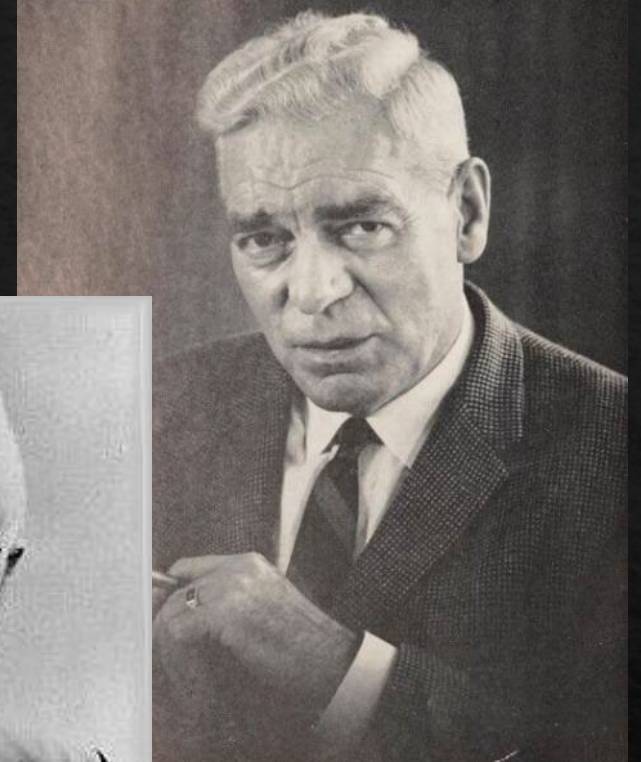
◊ Quebec's Premier Duplessis nor

◊ 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 scepticism 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.



**Part 2.1**

# **THE LEAD UP TO OMSSA**

1950

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# 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.



- 1) **The 1950's**
- 2) The 1960's to the 1980's
- 3) The 1990's
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- 5) Legacy and Impact

## **Part 2.1**

# **75 YEARS OF OMSSA**

The 1950's



# 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.

James S. 'JIMMY' Band  
MCSS Deputy Minister  
1950-1969



**MCSS  
Ministers over  
the Years –  
NDP, PC and  
Liberal**



Silipo, Yaremko, and Pupatello  
2005



### History Of Social Service in Ontario relevant to OMSSA

Date	Event
1950	Formation of the Ontario Welfare Officers Association (forerunner to OMSSA)
1951	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Divorced mothers added to Mother's Allowance for the first time</li><li>• Blind persons and disabled persons allowances implemented in Ontario;</li><li>• Vocational Rehabilitation (VRDP) introduced</li></ul>
1952	Introduction of Old Age Pensions - municipalities allowed to top up
1954	Goodfellow Commission on Ontario Indians - led to inclusion of Indian delivery of social services on reserve as part of GWA in 1958
1955	First Indian Social Services Act to parallel municipal services (child care, homemakers, child welfare, social assistance)
1956	Unwed mothers added to Mother's Allowance
1957	First postwar recession - Ontario moves cost sharing with municipalities from 50-50 to 60-40
1958	January 1, 1958 proclamation of GWA Act and repeal of Unemployment Relief Act: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consolidated County and First Nation delivery allowed for first time;</li><li>• Employables allowed as category for the first time since 1941;</li><li>• Cost sharing moves to 50 (fed)- 30 (Ont.) 20 (municipal) where it stayed until 1992.</li></ul> Major increases in Old Age Pensions reduced municipal role in topping up aged benefits

- 1) The 1950's
- 2) **The 1960's to the 1980's**
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## **Part 2.2**

# **75 YEARS OF OMSSA**

The 1960's to the 1980's



# 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.



James S. 'Jimmy' Band  
1950-1969

Robert 'Deputy Bob' McDonald  
1981-1985

Dorothea Crittenden  
1974- 1977

Bob Carman  
1977-1981



Merian Borczak  
1969-1973



The Famous 'Five Deputies' Photo from 1981

# A Convention Snapshot

## The 1986 OMSSA Convention

Niagara



### LIST OF OFFICERS 1985 - 1986

**HONORARY PRESIDENT**  
Hon. John Sweeney  
Minister

Ministry of Community & Social Services  
**HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENT**  
Peter Barnes  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Community & Social Services

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**PRESIDENT**  
Alan Wells  
Region of York  
**IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT**  
Phil Johnston  
Region of Waterloo

**1st VICE-PRESIDENT**  
Catherine G. Francis  
County of Brant  
**2nd VICE-PRESIDENT**  
Garry Cubitt  
Region of Durham

**SECRETARY/TREASURER**  
John MacKinnon  
County of Huron

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Balance of)

**CHAIR, COMMUNICATIONS**  
Dana Howe  
City of Windsor

**CHAIR, POLICY**  
Deborah Oakley  
Region of Halton

**CHAIR, MEMBERSHIP**  
Richard Stewart  
Region of Ottawa-Carleton

**CHAIR, NEWSLETTER**  
Chester Hinatsu  
City of St. Thomas

**CHAIR, STANDARDS & EDUCATION**  
Joann Simmons  
Region of Peel

**CHAIR, DAY CARE**  
Marna Ramsden  
Metropolitan Toronto

**CHAIR, RESOLUTIONS**  
David Court  
District of Algoma

**CHAIR, NORTHERN TASK FORCE**  
Jim Dolph  
City of Thunder Bay

#### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Dick Verrips  
County of Bruce

Ray Lazanik  
Metropolitan Toronto

John Folusewych  
Town of Kirkland Lake

#### CONVENTION COMMITTEE

Dana Howe, Chairperson  
City of Windsor

Maurice Fraser  
Region of Niagara

Glen Davies  
Region of York

John Stapleton  
Ministry of Community & Social Services

Judy Arnott  
Region of Niagara

John MacKinnon  
County of Huron

Dick Verrips  
County of Bruce

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

John G. Anderson - Box 40, Inglewood, L0N 1K0  
(416) 846-3930

**THE ONTARIO MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION (OMSSA)** is a non-profit, voluntary, organization made up of Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Social Services Administrators and staff; appointed and elected officials; and individuals from private agencies committed to Social Services in Ontario.

OMSSA is affiliated with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and members of OMSSA serve on committees of the parent body.

Founded in 1951 as the Ontario Welfare Officers' Association, the Association has evolved from one representing Administrators only to one which now includes line staff, supervisors, elected officials, private members and Provincial and Federal employees as Associate or Participating Members.

The Association's stated purpose is to influence and enhance the quality of Social Services in Ontario. The aims and objectives of the Association are:

- to foster and promote a positive and progressive public attitude toward Municipal Social Services.
- to foster and cooperate in the establishment throughout Ontario of uniform high standards of administration in Municipal Social Services.
- to promote the understanding and the uniform interpretation and application of income maintenance and supportive Social Service legislation.
- to promote close liaison and the interchange of ideas and knowledge in relation to the foregoing, between members of the Association, all levels of Government, affiliated Associations and the public, and
- to advance the social, economic and general welfare of all persons employed in Municipal Social Services.

The Annual Meeting and Convention of the Association is the principle Municipal forum in Ontario for examination and discussion of Federal and Provincial Social Services' policies as they relate to the Municipalities of Ontario.

It is also a forum for training, information-sharing and for presenting recommendations to the senior levels of Government.



# A Convention Snapshot

The 1986 OMSSA Convention

Niagara



Elizabeth Room (b) Privatization Of Day Care  
Chairman - Mac Carson, C.A.O.  
Hamilton-Wentworth  
Speakers - John Pepin, Family Day  
Care Services, Toronto  
Herb Goldsmith, Assoc. of  
Day Care Operators  
Diane Hamre, Durham  
Regional Council

Brock Foyer (c) Automatic Enforcement Of Support Orders  
Chairman - John Stapleton, M.C.S.S.  
Speakers - Wilma Scott, Judge of the  
Family Court  
Craig Perkins, Min. of the  
Attorney General  
Peter Jackson, Min. of the  
Attorney General  
John Biel, M.C.S.S.

Adjourn.

6:30 p.m. MAIN BALLROOM  
Cocktails and Refreshments

7:00 p.m. Annual Banquet  
Dancing to Jeffrey and The Juniors

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4th, 1986

9:00 a.m. THREE CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

Main Ballroom (a) Emergency Planning - "Making the Links"  
Chairperson - Margaret Michaelis  
Parry Sound District

### Panelists:

Ken Reeves  
Min. of the Solicitor General  
"Overview of Emergency Planning  
in Ontario"

Raymond La Fonde  
Health & Welfare Canada  
"Responding to the Human  
Consequences of Disaster"

Gerry McCaul  
MCSS, Toronto  
"Role of the Ministry in Disaster  
Planning"

Elizabeth Room (b) Current Issues In Ontario Native Welfare Administration  
Chairman - David Szwarc,  
Region of Halton  
Speakers - Kay Taylor  
Executive Director, O.N.W.A.  
Jim Loft  
Vice-President, O.N.W.A.

Brock Foyer (c) Programs And Agreements For Dental Services  
Chairman - John Folusewych  
Town of Kirkland Lake  
Speakers - Brian Paterson, Depty.  
Executive Director Ontario  
Dental Association  
Dentist Board Member - I.b.a.  
Ontario Dental Association

10:30 a.m. Recess

10:45 a.m. THREE CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

Main Ballroom (a) Emergency Planning (cont'd) - "Social Services Responses to the Barrie Tornado"  
Film "Eye of the Storm"  
Gary Calvert, City of Barrie  
Louise Pope - Mike Jarvis, MCSS, Barrie  
Question period

Brock Foyer (b) Emergency Shelter and Food Banks  
OMSSA Host - Alf Spencer  
Hamilton-Wentworth  
Chairperson - Shirley Hoy  
Metro Toronto  
Speakers - Municipal: Phillip Abrahams  
Metro Toronto  
Provincial: Doris Guyatt  
MCSS, Toronto  
Charitable:  
Canon Robert Cuyler  
Anglican Church of Canada

Elizabeth Room (c) Community And Neighbourhood Support Services Projects  
Current Projects and Future Plans  
Chairperson - Coletta McGrath, M.C.S.S.  
Speakers to be announced

Adjourn - Have a safe trip home.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

- 1) The 1950's
- 2) The 1960's to the 1980's
- 3) **The 1990's**
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## Part 2.3

# 75 YEARS OF OMSSA

The 1990's



# THE NDP AND PC AND DOWNLOADING

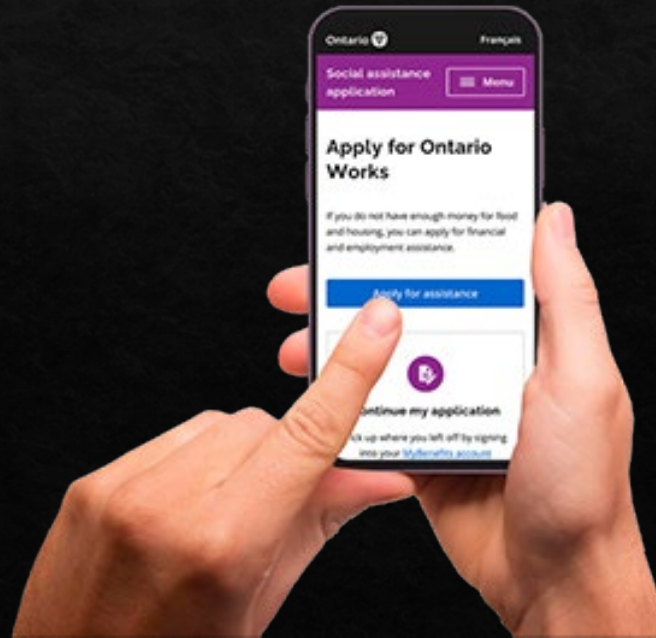
- ❖ In the mid-1990s, the provincial government under Premier Mike Harris introduced significant reforms, downloading responsibility for many social services to municipalities.
- ❖ OMSSA became a critical advocate for municipalities, emphasizing the need for sufficient funding and clear guidelines for service delivery.
- ❖ It helped municipalities navigate the complexities of assuming greater responsibility for housing, social assistance, and childcare services.





# ONTARIO WORKS

- ◇ OMSSA worked closely with municipalities to implement the **Ontario Works program**, which replaced the earlier General Welfare Assistance program with an emphasis on employment-focused support.





- 1) The 1950's
- 2) The 1960's to the 1980's
- 3) The 1990's
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## **Part 2.3**

# **75 YEARS OF OMSSA**

2000 to 2025

Emergence, Renewal And Change

# EMERGENCE, RENEWAL AND CHANGE

## Professional Development



OMSSA has increasingly focused on providing training, certification, and professional development opportunities for municipal staff involved in housing, social assistance, childcare, and other social services.

## Advocacy



It continues to advocate for adequate provincial funding for municipal social services.



# EMERGENCE, RENEWAL AND CHANGE



## Policy Development

Fair and effective policies related to homelessness, affordable housing, and childcare.



## Coordination

Coordination between municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government.



## Policy Influence

OMSSA actively engages in consultations with the provincial government, ensuring that municipal voices are heard in policy changes affecting social services.

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## **Part 2.3**

# **75 YEARS OF OMSSA**

2000 to 2025

Emergence, Renewal And Change





# LEGACY AND IMPACT

- ◆ OMSSA has played a vital role in shaping the delivery of social services in Ontario.
- ◆ By fostering collaboration among municipalities and advocating for sustainable policies, it has ensured that local governments can effectively support vulnerable populations.
- ◆ Its history reflects its commitment to professional excellence, innovation, and advocacy in municipal social services.

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

*Thank You*

Question?