Names of frequently cited archives are abbreviated as follows:

EA City of Edmonton Archives
LAC Library and Archives Canada
PAA Provincial Archives of Alberta
PAM Provincial Archives of Manitoba
SA City of Saskatoon Archives
WA City of Winnipeg Archives
VA City of Vancouver Archives

Introduction

1 See James H. Gray, The Winter Years: The Depression on the Prairies, and Barry Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years, 1929–1939: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression, two popular and widely read studies of the period.

2 While municipal relief administrations are mentioned in some works, they are rarely at the centre of the story. For important exceptions, see David Bright, “The State, the Unemployed, and the Communist Party in Calgary, 1930–1935”; Patrick H. Brennan, “Thousands of Our Men Are Getting Practically Nothing at All to Do: Public Works Relief Programs in Regina and Saskatoon, 1929–1940”; Theresa Healy, “Trouble Enough: Gender, Social Policy, and the Politics of Place in Vancouver and Saskatoon, 1929–1939”; Katrina Srigley, Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929–1939; Steven Hewitt, “‘We Are Sitting at the Edge of a Volcano’: Winnipeg During the On-to-Ottawa Trek”; Bill Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-To-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot; and Michael R. Goeres, “Disorder, Dependency, and Fiscal Responsibility: Unemployment Relief in Winnipeg, 1927–1942.” Goeres argues that Winnipeg fashioned relief policy not to alleviate unemployment per se but to address unemployment’s implications—namely, disorder and
dependency. He concludes that the city’s experience with Depression-era relief led to citizens’ demands for a postwar welfare state.

3 See, in particular, A. E. Safarian’s *The Canadian Economy in the Great Depression* (1959). Later examinations of Canada’s Depression experience that are primarily economic include Alvin Finkel, *Business and Social Reform in the Thirties* (1979), and Graham D. Taylor and Peter A. Baskerville, *A Concise History of Business in Canada* (1994), 371–82. Finkel explores the relationship between the Canadian state and Canadian business community, arguing that, in their quest throughout the 1930s for profit and market stability, businessmen initially attempted to achieve these goals on their own. When that failed, they pushed the state to regulate business through national regulatory bodies in the hope that such bodies could impose stability.

4 In “Trade Wars: Canada’s Reaction to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff,” economic historians Judith A. McDonald, Anthony Patrick O’Brien, and Colleen M. Callahan suggest that the Smoot-Hawley tariff had severe negative repercussions in the United States as well, arguing that Canadian tariffs on American goods introduced after Smoot-Hawley were direct retaliatory measures.

5 See, for example, John Herd Thompson, with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922–1939: Decades of Discord; Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years*, and L. M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R. B. Bennett, 1930–1935*.


9 Although I do not explore Depression-era kin survival strategies in this book, many writers have. See, for example, Denyse Baillargeon, “‘If You Had No Money, You Had No Trouble, Did You?: Montreal Working-Class Housewives During the Great Depression,” and Beth S. Wenger’s fascinating account of the Depression experience of New York Jews in *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise*, esp. chaps. 3 and 6.


12 See James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914–1941*, and Kenneth Bryden, *Old Age Pensions and Policy-Making in Canada*. In his examination of King’s Green Book proposals of 1945, Alvin Finkel argues, however, that whatever welfare policies the postwar federal Liberals promised in response to the perceived threat from the CCF and a general Canadian demand for social welfare programs, the policies were doomed to provide much less. Postwar prosperity, combined with a “declining interest in reform, particularly on the part of business and medical elites, contributed to the federal government’s unwillingness to pursue reform vigorously.” Alvin Finkel, “Paradise Postponed: A Re-examination of the Green Book Proposals of 1945,” 122.

13 See, for example, Walter D. Young, “The CCF: The Radical Background.” Young explores the urban socialist and labour elements that supported and characterized the CCF movement and brought the party to power in Saskatchewan in 1944. In “CCF Town and Country,” Kenneth McNaught argues that “the movement of the ’Thirties sprang from urban labour, the Christian social gospel of the Protestant churches, and . . . the radical urban intellectuals—as well as from the soil of the wheat belt” (213).

14 See, for example, David Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910–1945*.


16 Ibid., 7.


19 Joan Scott made this point some twenty years ago in “Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis.”

20 On these relational elements of masculinity, see Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, 2.

21 Lara Campbell, “Respectable Citizens of Canada: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in the Great Depression, Ontario.”


24 A useful review of the origins of the male breadwinner role can be found in Colin Creighton, “The Rise of the Male Breadwinner Family: A Reappraisal.” On Canada in particular, see Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada*. See also Cynthia Comacchio, *The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850–1940*, and Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*. As Griswold argues, many men who lost the means to earn wages also lost their self-respect. Some stopped trying to find work, others left their families out of a sense of shame, and others still began to drink heavily, hoping to forget their troubles. He cites a 1940 survey of American households according to which more than 1.5 million husbands walked out on their wives and families during the Depression years. Griswold suggests that state and federal relief and welfare initiatives were aimed at compensating for the effects of the loss of the male breadwinner role.


28 Ibid., 262. Historian José Harris assesses the situation differently, asserting that many union leaders were suspicious of the National Insurance Act. José Harris, *Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy, 1886–1914*, 328.


31 Ibid. This conclusion was related to the rise and professionalization of new medical experts.

32 Sociologist Wally Seccombe makes an argument similar to that of Martha May, showing how the economic and social dislocation flowing from the First Industrial Revolution forced the emerging British working class to rely on multiple family earning strategies that saw all family members contributing to the household income. In the late nineteenth century, however, following the Second Industrial Revolution, men’s wages rose and arguments for the family wage gained ground, leaving women and children to play smaller roles in the paid labour force. But not all members of the family experienced their working and non-working lives in the same way, nor were their interests and goals necessarily the same. In “Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future,” historian Ava Baron suggests that because “men and women were differently situated in the family, the workplace, and the community, their experiences of these institutions may have diverged” (6). Bettina Bradbury likewise points out that in Canada, “power and rights were not evenly distributed within any families” through the second half of the nineteenth century.

Seccombe’s conclusions about industrializing Britain largely confirm Bradbury’s research on industrializing Montréal. Marking the period between 1861 and 1881, Bradbury argues, “was the growing importance of wage-earning offspring and the increasing likelihood that sons and daughters in their teens and twenties would remain at home and contribute their wages to the family.” Without this income to top up the family head’s wages, complemented by women’s careful shopping and ability to stretch wages, “poverty, even starvation, would have been chronic.” But near the end of the century, the situation began to change. By 1891, adult children, especially males, were increasingly boarding on their own outside of the family home. At the same time, fewer families were sending children under the age of fifteen out to work. Behind these shifts in the family economy was a stronger economy that resulted in higher wages and new capitalist labour requirements that offered

33 See Mark Rosenfeld, “It Was a Hard Life: Class and Gender in the Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920–1950.” This role division contrasts sharply with the rural experience, where men and women worked together on the family farm, although typically at different jobs. See, for instance, Bradford James Rennie, *The Rise of Agrarian Democracy: The United Farmers and Farm Women of Alberta, 1929–1921*.

34 Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 2. As historians like Molly Ladd-Taylor point out, however, all “maternalists” did not necessarily share the same goals or approaches. Ladd-Taylor distinguishes between “sentimental maternalists” and “progressive maternalists.” Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930*, 136. Neither should historians assume that maternalist discourses and actions were expressed only through notions of a bourgeois domesticity, thus neglecting, say, working-class notions of domesticity.


36 In *Engendering the State*, Christie argues that with the Depression, the maternalist discourse changed to a decidedly paternalist one. Alvin Finkel disagrees with this analysis, noting that Christie fails to properly account for class differences among welfare recipients or the roles of big business and the Mackenzie King administration. For a useful overview, see Alvin Finkel, “Welfare for Whom? Class, Gender, and Race in Social Policy.”

37 Bryan Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991*, 236. This figure, of course, says nothing about women’s long-time contributions to the family economy—that is, the work women performed that did not appear on censuses and other government records, including planting gardens and tending livestock to help meet families’ dietary needs, mending old clothing, taking in and looking after boarders, and generally managing the household. For more on these contributions, see Bradbury, *Working Families*.


This is, of course, assuming a distinction between a breadwinner ideal and the reality for most working-class people, many of whom could not sustain anything approaching the ideal. See Christie, *Engendering the State*; Margaret Jane Hillyard Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920–1997*, 202–3; and Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*.


44 In *No Car, No Radio*, Margaret Jane Hillyard Little likewise argues that “the model of a male breadwinner with dependent wife and children underwent tremendous stress during this period” (204).

45 Across Canada, for example, the number of urban dwellers gained steady ground against the number of rural dwellers, especially during the opening decades of the twentieth century. In 1901, the nation’s urban-rural split stood at roughly 2 million to 3.4 million, respectively. Ten years later, the disparity was much reduced, at 3.3 million to 3.9 million. By 1921, Canada’s urban and rural populations were in a near dead heat at approximately 4.4 million each. In 1931, for the first time, the urban population was larger, with approximately 5.6 million urban and 4.8 million rural Canadians. See Statistics Canada, Summary Tables, “Population, Urban and Rural, by Province and Territory,” http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62a-eng.htm.

46 Edward K. Spann, in *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840–1857*, follows closely these critical mid-century years that saw New York City emerge as the leading metropolis of a fast-growing industrial and cultural powerhouse nation. At the same time, he does not neglect the city’s increasingly impoverished working-class and immigrant populations. See also Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850*.


See also Stanley K. Schultz and Clay McShane, “To Engineer the Metropolis: Sewers, Sanitation, and City Planning in Late Nineteenth-Century America.”

Alan F. J. Artibise, “City-Building in the Canadian West: From Boosterism to Corporatism.”

See, for example, Carolyn Strange *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930*, and Joan Sangster, *Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada*.

This is a problem that continues to bedevil western cities although the natural resources fuelling their economies have changed.

## The Rise of the City Relief Machines

1. “Family Welfare in Greater Winnipeg, 1934,” PAM, P2542, file 5, was a report produced by the Winnipeg Unemployment Relief Committee.


3. At a meeting with provincial officials, a Saskatoon delegation “stressed the point that unemployed from the smaller towns and villages were accustomed to flock into the cities in the winter months, thus aggravating the general situation.” Provision of Relief Work Is Requested, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 14 November 1929. See also “City Warns Unemployed Men Seeking Work…”, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 January 1930. One common municipal response was to call a meeting with provincial officials. See, for example, “City to Urge Unemployment Parlay Soon—Council Passes Motion Asking Gov’t to Call Conference,” *Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 October 1929.


8 “Family Welfare in Greater Winnipeg, 1934,” 3. See also Barbara Roberts, “Shovelling Out the Unemployed,” 2. Roberts describes the Canadian Union of Municipalities circulating letters among city councils nation-wide, seeking information on local relief costs and practices in an effort to make a compelling case for federal unemployment relief aid in the autumn of 1929.

9 See James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914–1941, 14. For a fuller history of unemployment dating from classical times through the Middle Ages and into the twentieth century, see John A. Garraty, Unemployment in History: Economic Thought and Public Policy.

10 Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, 14. See also Peter A. Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and Their Families in Late Victorian Canada; John Taylor, “Relief from Relief: The Cities’ Answer to Depression Dependency”; and John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, Canada 1922–1939: Decades of Discord.

11 During the recession of 1921–22, the City of Winnipeg helped more than twelve thousand people who were affected by unemployment. During the winter of 1931–32, the city helped over thirty-seven thousand people in a single month—more than three times as many.

12 “Relief of Unemployment in Manitoba Either by Direct Relief or Relief Works,” 15 February 1932, PAM, G8032, Reports, 1931–32.


14 Taylor and Baskerville, A Concise History of Business in Canada, 371.

15 “Relief of Unemployment in Manitoba Either by Direct Relief or Relief Works.”

16 “Family Welfare in Greater Winnipeg, 1934,” 9–11. James M. Pitsula shows how the same practices were employed in Regina, where “the Regina Welfare Bureau did not distribute relief to the unemployed. This function was left to the Civic Relief Board, which was appointed by City Council.” James M. Pitsula, “The Saskatchewan Voluntary Sector in the Context of Social Enterprise: A Case Study of Family Service Regina,” 19.

17 Special relief officer H. F. McKee explained the way it worked to David Mitchell, the city commissioner: “All relief . . . except certain specified exceptions such as medical attention and transportation, is divided on a three-way basis between the Federal Government, the Provincial Government, and the Municipality, and no relief is given unless the division is made on that basis. The result is that all our accounting and regulations must be carried out co-operatively as between the three parties participating. In fact, every move we make is conducted on that basis, and we are fortunate so far, that we have been able to keep harmony in the Department through the sound common
sense of the officers dealing with the other.” Letter from McKee to Mitchell, 8 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.


20 MacGregor, *Edmonton*, 139.

21 Carl Betke, “The Development of Urban Community in Prairie Canada, Edmonton,” 165–78. Betke describes in some detail the early character of the city, drawing mainly on newspaper reports from the *Edmonton Bulletin* and focusing on the years 1897, 1906, 1913, and 1921.

22 Ibid., 49–52.

23 Ibid., 139–40. James H. Gray, in *Red Lights on the Prairies*, describes the booming conditions in Edmonton in 1906:

There was work in abundance in Edmonton for anybody with physical stamina or any kind of skill. There were pick-and-shovel jobs without limit—mining coal, digging up and gravelling the streets, excavating basements, and putting in the miles of sewer and water mains that were dug every year. By 1906 there was no way to keep up with the building boom. Not only had the new provincial government embarked on a massive construction program, but private enterprise was putting in warehouses, factories, railway shops, yards, and office buildings. Topping it all was the house building boom in all the bright new subdivisions. It got so far out of hand that many of the new houses went in without even foundations, let alone sewer connections. (103–4)

24 Real estate speculation was one of the principal economic activities in the city at the time. As an example of this aspect of the boom town, a Red Deer farmer purchased ninety feet of front footage in the downtown core for $13,500 in 1905 and sold it for $31,500 less than one year later. Betke, “The Development of Urban Community,” 184.

25 Ibid., 170–73; MacGregor, *Edmonton*, 167 and 301. For a full discussion of early civic elites, see Alan F. J. Artibise, “Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871–1913.” Artibise points out that “while the role of municipal governments and business organizations in altering the rate and pattern of urban development on the prairies was certainly limited by outside forces, the growth, shape, and character of the five major cities owes [sic] much to
the policies devised and vigorously applied by these bodies in response to
the possibilities and problems that emerged for their communities” (211). In
Saskatoon, the most important like-minded bodies were the Board of Trade,
the Saskatoon Club, and the Saskatchewan Power Company. The membership
of all three groups overlapped and represented the influential business voice
in the city. For descriptions of the work of these groups, see Don Kerr and Stan
Hanson, Saskatoon: The First Half-Century, 92–100. See also Gerald Friesen’s
account of urban elites on the prairies in The Canadian Prairies, 286–87.

26 Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, 286. See also L. D. McCann, “Urban Growth
in Western Canada, 1881–1961,” and Paul Voisey, “The Urbanization of the
Canadian Prairies, 1871–1916.” For a consideration of early boosterism and its
relationship to city playgrounds and parks, see Susan Evelyn Markham, “The
Development of Parks and Playgrounds in Selected Canadian Prairie Cities,
1880–1930.”

27 By spring 1906, the Edmonton-area Dominion Immigration Agent estimated
daily arrival of three to five hundred people into the city. MacGregor,
Edmonton, 153. Not all of these would stay in the city, of course, as many
stopped in Edmonton only long enough to claim their 160-acre parcel of land
in rural Alberta.

28 Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, 104–10. James Gray estimates that by 1911, some
eighty-five hundred single men were living and working in the city, which at
that time had a total population of a little more than twenty-five thousand.
See also A. F. Dreger, A Most Diversified Character: A Pioneer’s Memories of
Early Strathcona and Edmonton; Owen D. Jones, “The Historical Geography
of Edmonton, Alberta”; Catherine C. Cole, “Garment Manufacturing in
Edmonton, 1911–1939”; and Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa, eds. Edmonton:
The Life of a City.


30 One important early union was the Carpenters and Joiners, who, in April 1906,
sought an eight-hour day and a minimum $3 daily wage, and threatened to
strike if the city would not comply. The union was successful. See ibid., 224–25,
and MacGregor, Edmonton, 156.

31 Carl Betke, “The Original City of Edmonton: A Derivative Prairie Urban
Community,” 326.

32 Piali Das Gupta, “Well Within the Margins: Prostitutes in Edmonton, 1904–
1939,” 33–34. Das Gupta drew on various censuses that relate to the working-
class composition of the city in the first decade of the twentieth century.

33 Betke, “The Original City of Edmonton,” 312.

34 Ibid., 311–12.
35 MacGregor, *Edmonton*, 184. Saskatchewan had similar figures. As historian Bill Waiser points out in “The Myth of Multiculturalism in Early Saskatchewan” (61), Saskatchewan was primarily a white, Protestant, Anglo-Canadian province.


37 Ibid., 241.


40 Jean E. Murray, “The Contest for the University of Saskatchewan.” See also Michael Haydon, “The People's University? The University of Saskatchewan and the Province of Saskatchewan,” 215.


42 Kerr and Hanson, *Saskatoon*, 323.

43 Ibid., 106.

44 Quoted in Thomas, “Saskatoon, 1883–1920,” 256.

45 Kerr and Hanson, *Saskatoon*, 111–14. One dealer reportedly made an average of $600 per day during the height of the boom in 1912.

46 Saskatoon applied for and received city status from the provincial government on 1 July 1906, increasing its borrowing power from 10 to 20 percent of assessment.

47 Kerr and Hanson, *Saskatoon*, 322.

48 MacGregor, *Edmonton*, 204.

49 Between 1912 and 1914, the city paved thirty streets and graded another 155, laid and paved seventy more miles of sidewalks, and doubled the length of water mains. Furthermore, by 1913, the municipal authorities' propensity toward annexation of territories outside the city in anticipation of future growth had saddled the city with serious sanitation problems in forty-seven new but far-flung subdivisions. MacGregor, *Edmonton*, 202.


54 Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, 211. Historian Brian McKillop describes the development of Winnipeg’s geographic-ethnic-class divide this way: “The city, like the province itself, was the product of two waves of immigration: the first mainly Anglo-Saxon, British, and Ontarian from roughly 1870 to 1890, and the second, predominantly eastern European, from 1890 to 1914. The result was that the city developed a ‘we-they’ dichotomy both spatially and in its prevailing political ethos. Winnipeg had been built around a railroad and a river, and the coming of this second, ‘different’ set of immigrants dictated that henceforth there would be a ‘wrong’ side of the tracks and a ‘right’ side of the river.” McKillop, “A Communist in City Hall,” 41.


57 Winnipeg Development and Industrial Bureau, Fourth Annual Report, 1910, 145.

58 Alan F. J. Artibise, ed., Gateway City: Documents on the City of Winnipeg, 1873–1913, 265.

59 “All People’s Mission Annual Report, 1908–09,” 199. Winnipeg’s All People’s Mission was formed in the early 1890s and, beginning in 1899, served as the official charitable arm of the Methodist General Board of Missions. Alan Artibise notes that the Mission was only one of many similar charities until 1927, when J. S. Woodworth assumed its leadership and turned it into the city’s pre-eminent charitable organization. The Mission catered to Native and foreign-born people, regardless of religious background. For more on Woodworth, see Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914–1928, and Kenneth McNaught, A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J. S. Woodsworth.

60 See Rebecca Coulter, “Teenagers in Edmonton, 1921–1931: Experiences of Gender and Class,” 32–35; David Leadbeater, “The Development of Capitalism in the Area Currently Called Alberta”; Morris Zaslow, The Opening of
the Canadian North, 1870–1914, 54, 62–63; and Liza Piper, The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada.


62 Garraty, Unemployment in History, 15–16. See also Sheilagh Ogilvie, “Guilds, Efficiency and Social Capital: Evidence from German Proto-Industry.” Ogilvie argues that the uses of guild training—and particularly certification—served to “exclude identifiable groups (unmarried women, women generally, bastards, those with certain religious affiliations) thereby reducing competition against guild members” (308). The skills training that guilds insisted upon was, in Ogilvie’s view, less about maintaining quality control and more about maintaining members’ status and work availability.

63 Garraty, Unemployment in History, 29.

64 Rondo Cameron, an influential economic historian, argues that underlying the agricultural crisis of the period was “the failure of agricultural technology to advance significantly (to meet the growing demands for food by an increasing population), with a consequent stagnation or probably even a decline in agricultural productivity.” Rondo Cameron, A Concise Economic History of the World: From Paleolithic Times to the Present, 106.


67 Ibid., 3.

68 The Vindicator, January 1877, quoted in Keyssar, Out of Work, 3.

69 Keyssar, Out of Work, 3.

70 Ibid., 5. British historian John Welshman adds to the idea of unemployability by arguing that until 1914, the concept “embraced those unable and those unwilling to work.” Through the 1920s, both of these categories were perceived as belonging to a “social problem group.” In the context of the 1930s, however, British social policy-makers became increasingly concerned with the role of long-term unemployment in contributing to an unwillingness to work. See J. Welshman, “The Concept of the Unemployable,” 598. For the Canadian experience, see Peter A. Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and Their Families in Late Victorian Canada, and Jennifer Anne Stephen, Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity, and the Gendering of Canada’s Welfare State, 1939–1947.
As the editor of the *Star-Phoenix* explained early in 1930, “It has generally been understood that the granting of casual or temporary relief to persons out of work or otherwise distressed is the business of . . . municipalities.” “Ottawa and Unemployment,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 January 1930. See also Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*; John Taylor, “Relief from Relief: The Cities’ Answer to Depression Dependency”; and Frederic M. Miller, “National Assistance or Unemployment Assistance? The British Cabinet and Relief Policy, 1932–33.”

Mariana Valverde, “The Mixed Social Economy as a Canadian Tradition.” See also James M. Pitsula, “The Mixed Social Economy of Unemployment Relief in Regina During the 1930s.” Joey Noble explores an earlier iteration of private charity in the nineteenth century as a function of class fear in “‘Classifying’ the Poor: Toronto Charities, 1850–1880.” In a similar vein, sociologist Paula Maurutto, in *Governing Charities: Church and State in Toronto’s Catholic Archdiocese, 1850–1950*, illustrates how Toronto’s Catholic churches worked together with and became increasingly entrenched in provincially and municipally organized welfare bureaucracies to exercise control over relief recipients. At the same time, both Toronto’s Catholic Archdiocese and the provincial government used the increasingly bureaucratized welfare system to control the day-to-day activities of local Catholic charitable organizations.


Ibid., 43; “legislative machinery” is from *The Globe*, 27 February 1874.


Betke, “The Development of Urban Community,” 75.

Ibid., 43–44. See also Edmund H. Dale, “The Role of Successive Town and City Councils in the Evolution of Edmonton, 1892 to 1966.”

This sketch of Winnipeg’s early welfare history is derived from “Family Welfare in Greater Winnipeg, 1934,” 18–45. On Aids to Dependent Children programs in Manitoba, see Lorna Hurl, “The Politics of Child Welfare in Manitoba, 1922–1924.”


Ibid., 5.

In Edmonton, private charities included the Salvation Army, the Canteen Fund, the Canadian Legion, the Red Cross Society, the *Edmonton Bulletin’s “Not Forgotten Fund,” the Edmonton Journal’s “Sunshine Society,” the Knights of Columbus, the Royal Society of St. George, the Northumberland and Durham Association, the Order of the Royal Purple, the King Albert Society, the Elk’s Lodge, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire (IODE),


83 Ibid.


85 Ibid., 95.

86 Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 20.

87 Ibid., 25.

88 Report of Winnipeg Emergency Unemployment Relief Office, 1921–1922, p. 1, PAM, G8267. Although the report does not explicitly say so, the sort of relief offered by the city suggests that it was mainly single men who called at the city’s wood yard that winter to apply for relief. Married men with families, for instance, would have needed groceries, not meal tickets, and accommodations at the Immigration Hall would not have been helpful because married men with families typically had homes in the city.

89 Ibid., 30–31.

90 *Labour Gazette*, May 1921, 682.

91 By January 1922, three hundred to five hundred men could be found daily cutting and sawing wood for their relief.

92 See reports in the *Edmonton Journal*, 3 March, 4 March, and 21 March 1922.

93 Lynn MacKay notes that the practice of less eligibility predates the phrase. In her study focusing on the year 1817 at the St. Martin in the Fields workhouse, for instance, she notes that “although parish officials did not actually use this phrase [of less eligibility] in 1817/18, they were certainly adhering to the principle that conditions in the house should be less eligible than those obtaining in the community at large.” Lynn MacKay, “A Culture of Poverty? The St. Martin in the Fields Workhouse, 1817,” 217.

94 Quoted in Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 6. See also Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Policy from Colonial Times to the Present*. According to Abramovitz, “From the start, social welfare policy has been shaped by the work ethic and the belief that the provision of benefits to able-bodied persons will weaken their motivation to work” (1).


97 Ibid., 16.


99 Letter from Chief Engineer Archibald to City Commissioner Leslie, 24 December 1929, SA, D500 III 895.

100 Minutes of Conference Proceedings, 1 March 1930, LAC, RG 27, vol. 3133. It should be borne in mind that few unemployment figures, whether in this book or elsewhere, are entirely reliable. Unemployment figures were collected according to different criteria with little regard for uniformity. Often, the number of unemployed recorded in any given urban centre constituted only those persons who registered for unemployment relief. But even this number is problematic because numbers of registered unemployed persons shifted according to seasonal rhythms. Numbers also typically did not include women or the underemployed (which actually meant unemployed for many). Generally speaking, most researchers during the Depression reckoned that at the Depression’s lowest point (1933), some 30 percent of Canada’s working population was unemployed. But this number is also problematic because the Depression’s effects were felt unevenly across the country, hitting different regions harder at different times. This non-uniformity might in part be explained by the effects of different economic structures. In the Prairie West, for instance, the low point of the Depression did not arrive until 1937, a time when much of the country had already been on the mend for several years.

101 At that early stage, Saskatoon did not yet count single men; city authorities assumed they could get along on their own on farms.

102 Minutes of Conference Proceedings, 1 March 1930. Equally arresting are the costs of relief work to the city. According to the minutes, Winnipeg spent $27,000 on relief works over the whole of the 1928–29 winter season. By the close of the 1929–30 season, this amount had jumped to $200,000. The Edmonton Bulletin subsequently reported that Winnipeg had 373 married men on relief in 1928 and 285 in 1929. “Winnipeg Relief Period Extended,” Edmonton Bulletin, 15 April 1930.


104 “Contentious Matters Face City Council.” Winnipeg’s relief costs increased just as dramatically, from $150,000 in 1929–30, to $1.6 million in 1930–31, to $4.2 million in 1931–32. Report of Operations and Costs Year Ending December
To the Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Edmonton: Report of the City Commissioners," *Edmonton Bulletin*, Budget Report, 26 November 1929. Saskatoon’s relief expenditures increased just as rapidly: from 1930 to 1933, the city’s annual spending on relief was $13,000, $186,000, $433,000, and $590,000, respectively. Estimates for 1934 came to $625,000, although the city’s commissioner thought “that may be a low estimate.” Memo of Conference Between Members of Saskatoon’s City Council and Saskatchewan Premier J. T. M. Anderson, 7 February 1934, SA, 1069-1209. Winnipeg spent $64,282 on direct relief over the winter of 1929–30. The following winter, the city spent $1,007,614, or more than sixteen times the cost of the preceding winter. Annual Report, Destitution and Unemployment Relief for the Fiscal Year May 1st 1930 to April 30th, 1931, PAM, G8030, Reports, 1931–32.


“Relief of Unemployment in Manitoba Either by Direct Relief or Relief Works.” Winnipeg officials also made comparisons in this document with the only large Canadian centre to the West: “But Winnipeg, unlike comparable larger centres in the East, lacked both the age and diversity of many of the key activities of a long established community life, or the unusual variety of resource and activity of Vancouver.”

Prior to 1932, according to James Struthers, relief was mainly confined to the unskilled (whom Struthers defines as “a class generally believed to lack the Protestant virtues of self-reliance, thrift, and sobriety”). Struthers argues that after 1932, “skilled workers and middle-class members of society had exhausted their assets after three years of unemployment and depression. The result was a noticeable change in the type of people coming onto the dole.” Winnipeg’s report appears to confirm this characterization. Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 74. See also Denyse Baillargeon, “If You Had No Money, You Had No
Trouble, Did You? Montreal Working-Class Housewives During the Great Depression.


114 American historian Timothy J. Gilfoyle notes that “increasingly, urban political historians not only reject the ‘machine’ paradigm for its biographical, episodic, and manichean treatments of urban politics, but remain critical of reducing politics to issues of symbolism and culture.” Timothy J. Gilfoyle, “White Cities, Linguistic Turns, and Disneylands: The New Paradigms of Urban History,” 185. Among the critics is Jonathan C. Teaford in “Finis for Tweed and Steffens: Rewriting the History of Urban Rule.”

115 “Family Welfare in Greater Winnipeg, 1934,” 11. Distinguishing between specifically Depression-related unemployment relief and other welfare services made sense. For one thing, senior government contributions to municipal relief efforts made the same distinction. It was easier, in other words, for municipalities to keep monies directed toward Depression-related unemployment problems separate from those that fell under other private, municipal, and provincial arrangements. This was especially true in the wake of a series of important federal unemployment relief acts passed by the Bennett-led Conservatives between 1930 and 1934. These acts authorized the federal government to enter into cost-sharing arrangements with provinces and municipalities for the provision of unemployment relief to, among others, unemployed urban dwellers.


117 Ibid. By way of comparison, Winnipeg’s Social Welfare Commission, which administered non-Depression-related welfare services, claimed a total of only 860 “open” cases in the spring of 1934 and helped an average of roughly five hundred people each month at a cost of $200,000 per year. Ibid., 7–8.

118 The Civic Relief Department, Under T. S. Magee, Deals with Ordinary Indigents, (Town Act), Mothers’ Allowance Cases, Old Age Pensions, and Neglected Children, 8 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.

119 Letter from H. F. McKee to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 8 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19. McKee explained the way relief functioned in Edmonton in response to a query from the Home and Property Owners’ Association.

120 Letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell, 2 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19. The city spent nearly $65,000 dollars during November 1932 on groceries, rent, fuel, light and water, clothing, and medical costs. The relief costs for the entire year of 1932 came to just over $1 million.
121 Letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell re: Administration Relief Costs, 7 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 17.


123 Minutes, Civic Relief Board Files, 24 November 1932, SA, 1009. The numbers were up considerably from the same month one year before. During a typical week in November 1931, the city provided relief to 717 families at a cost of $4,482, averaging $6.25 per family.

124 Teaford, “Finis for Tweed and Steffens,” 138. As Teaford notes, up to the 1970s, historians of city politics were preoccupied with the boss-reform dialectic, neglecting the important roles played by city comptrollers (who drafted budgets), city engineers (who planned sanitation and waterworks systems), city solicitors (who advised city councils on all legal matters and drafted bylaws), and “the whole staff of professional bureaucrats (who conducted the day-to-day business of running the city)” (138).

125 Unemployment Relief Reports, PAM, G8030.

126 “Civic Board for Relief Now Mooted,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 20 September 1932.

127 The description of Edmonton’s Special Relief Department activities is drawn from “Conduct of the Relief Department,” 8 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.

128 Ibid. The investigation branch employed a small group of workers comprising five investigators in the field, a “special man with a car,” an interpreter, a “record man,” and one chief inspector in charge of the work.

129 The work of city investigators was complemented by two inspectors employed by the province, but their reports and files were deposited at the Special Relief Department offices along with those produced by the city’s own investigative team.


133 Theda Skocpol and Edwin Amenta, “Did Capitalists Shape Social Security?”, 572.

134 See especially Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*.

135 Some critics argue that Skocpol’s distinction between her “old” approach and her new “polity-centred” approach constitutes nothing more than a return to an earlier “pluralist” approach to state-in-formation theory. See Francis Fox Piven’s review of Skocpol’s *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* in *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 791. See also G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America? Power and Politics*.


137 “A Report on Unemployment in Winnipeg, 1931,” p. 4, PAM, G8030
Unemployment. Many city relief records are rife with similar phrases.


139 Ibid.

140 Ibid., 14.

2 The Anatomy of City Relief


3 For earlier expressions of these competing images of married and single men, see, for example, Howard Chudacoff, The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture; Vincent Bertolini, “Fireside Chastity: The Erotics of Sentimental Bachelorhood in the 1850s”; E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era, 115; and Karen Lystra, Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America, 31. One contradiction here is that, at least in the American context, the single man on the move was also the single man on the make, representing the promise of the American Dream and embodying the mythology of the rugged frontier.


6 Suzanne Mettler, “Dividing Social Citizenship by Gender: The Implementation of Unemployment Insurance and Aid to Dependent Children, 1935–1950,” 304. Mettler argues that whatever the initial policy framers’ intentions, the characters of both Unemployment Insurance programs and Aids to Dependent Children programs were subject to administrative arrangements. How they were carried out “on the ground,” in other words, determined their status. Unemployment Insurance programs were “most readily harnessed by national administrators” (325). This boosted their status in American society. Aids to Dependent Children programs, however, were more likely to fall under the guidance and control of local or state administration, and their status deteriorated as a result.


8 Ibid.
“Hair Outlines Plans to Meet Unemployment,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 November 1929.

“Digest of Relief Operation, 1931–32,” SA, 1069-1522, file 2; see also letter from W. R. Clubb to Gideon Robertson, 2 December 1930, PAM, G 8030, Unemployment 1930–31.

See Andrea Tanner, “The Casual Poor and the City of London Poor Law Union, 1837–1869,” esp. 188, and Steve King, “‘It Is Impossible for Our Vestry to Judge His Case into Perfection from Here’: Managing the Distance Dimensions of Poor Relief, 1800–1840.”


Letter from Premier Brownlee to Walter Smitten, Commissioner of Labour, 5 December 1930, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515A.


“We Meet with Innumerate Cases Just Like This,” *Edmonton Bulletin*, 29 December 1929.

Letter from W. R. Clubb to Gideon Robertson, 2 December 1930. Clubb wrote: “Applications for relief have been received from three thousand seven hundred and sixty-three single men of whom three hundred and ninety-six were refused assistance under the residence ruling.”

Letter from Civic Relief Probation Officer Gutteridge to Commissioner David Mitchell, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 1. Another relief investigator’s report showed similar numbers. The investigator claimed that of two hundred men investigated, only 28 percent were legitimate city charges. Report of Relief Investigator F. H. Drayton to T. S. Magee, 24 February 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 1.

Letter from Commissioner Mitchell to T. S. Magee, 1 April 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 1.

Letter from Comptroller J. Hodgson to Commissioner David Mitchell, 28 January 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 1.

Letter from Mayor Knott to Premier Brownlee, 18 December 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 5.

Circular letter from Mayor Hair to all new candidates for alderman, 17 November 1932, SA, D500 III 893.

Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 16 November 1933, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 1067. See also Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 16 November 1933, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 1068. The minutes in file 1068
contain quotations from a letter written by the Deputy Minister of Railways, Labour, and Industries to the Civic Relief Board.

23 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 October 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 65.

24 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 October 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 75. This is the sole reference to Aboriginal people and municipal relief that I have come across for all three cities. This is surprising, given that the Aboriginal population in Saskatchewan alone was approximately fifteen thousand in 1931. One possible explanation is that municipal authorities saw Aboriginal people as falling within federal jurisdiction. See Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918–1939*. Another explanation, although there is no explicit evidence of such in the relief records, is racism, which among other things tended to render Aboriginal people invisible. In general, historians have explored little of the Aboriginal Depression experience, whether on or off the reserve. Olive Dickason’s authoritative survey text, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, makes no reference at all to Aboriginal people during the Depression. Neither does J. R. Miller’s *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* have much to say on the topic, except that a census of the Aboriginal population, taken during the early 1930s, showed an increase—not a decrease, as many expected—in their numbers. This was significant because, for the first time, Aboriginal policies “predicated on the eventual disappearance of Indians had become fatuous.” J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian–White Relations in Canada*, 213. Bill Waiser’s *Saskatchewan: A New History* discusses the tendency of the Métis surrounding Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, to move into that city, support themselves for one year to meet the residence requirement, and then apply for relief. Waiser quotes Charlotte Whitton, who on her tour of western Canada in 1932 at the request of Prime Minister Bennett, “complained about ‘the half breed, a shiftless, gypsylike people who were a problem and a menace both to the Indian and white races with whom they mingle’” (291). For treatments of John B. Tootoosis, secretary of the League of Indians of Canada through the late 1920s and 1930s, see Laurie Meijer Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action*, and F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF*. Tootoosis was a grandson of the famous Cree Chief Poundmaker.

25 Letter from T. S. Magee to Mayor Knott, 5 January 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 7. See also the letter from H. F. McKee to City Commissioners, 31 December 1935, RG 11, class 152, file 1, which relates eighteen cases of transient families in Edmonton as examples of larger trends. Each family was given “temporary relief” in the city. This did not mean that the city willingly paid for migrant family relief. In the spring of 1931, Edmonton relief officer Magee related the case of one man who had come from Vancouver with his family.
the previous October: he was accepted on city relief, largely because his wife was pregnant with twins. The relief officer remarked, in the McKee letter to city commissioners, that “as this is only one of many similar cases permitted to come into the city during the winter and participate in our relief scheme it seems unthinkable that at the end of the season these transients should be left here to become full City responsibilities.”

26 Memo of Conference Between Members of Saskatoon’s City Council and Saskatchewan Premier J. T. M. Anderson, 7 February 1934, SA, 1069-1229.

27 Foreigners, by legal definition, were not citizens and thus were subject to legal exclusion from the rights enjoyed by citizens. See Robert Adamski, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Robert Menzies’s “Introduction” to Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings, in which the editors of this volume conclude that “decisions about inclusion or exclusion relied heavily on conceptions and definitions of ‘citizenship’” (1).

28 In Winnipeg, city council recommended deportation for any “foreigner” who was unemployed and had been in the city for less than five years (“Relief of Unemployment in Manitoba Either by Direct Relief or Relief Works,” 15 February 1932, PAM, G68532, Reports, 1931–32). For additional discussion of such policies, see Barbara Roberts, “Shovelling Out the Unemployed,” as well as her study Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1920–1935. For a useful exploration of nativism in western Canada, see Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: Nativism in Alberta, and, on anti-Semitism in particular, Harold Troper and Irving Abella, None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948.

29 “Hair Outlines Plans to Meet Unemployment,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 29 November 1929.


31 Memo from Mr. R. English, Department of Municipal Affairs, to Mr. V. W. Smith, Chairman, Relief Committee, 1 June 1931, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515B.

32 Meeting of Committee upon Relief to Unnaturalized Unemployed Persons, 3 November 1931, SA, 1069-1521, file 1.

33 Letter from W. R. Clubb to Gideon Robertson, 2 December 1930.

34 Ibid.

35 Memo attached to report of the Medical Health Officer, “Regarding the Deportation of Sick and Destitute Immigrants,” January 1930, SA, 1069-1521, file 15.

36 Ibid.
“Foreigners Not Keen on Settlement,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 May 1932.

Letter from T. S. Magee to David Mitchell, 21 May 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 October 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 63.

Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 November 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 129.

Letter from A. W. Haddow to Commissioner David Mitchell, 6 June 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

Residence Requirements, Relief, 29 May 1935, EA, RG 11, class 152, file 1.

Memorandum of Joint Meeting Between Premier Brownlee, Deputy Mayor Baker, President of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce W. W. McBain, City Commissioner D. Mitchell, and City Engineer A. W. Haddow, 14 July 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 4.

Letter from Premier Brownlee to Mayor Davidson, 1 May 1931, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515A.


In Connection with Prosecutions Already Reported on re: Applicants for Relief Unlawfully Obtaining Supplies by Misrepresentation, 18 April 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 2.

See, for example, “A Report on Unemployment in Winnipeg, 1932,” PAM, G8030, Unemployment; and “Rowland Declares War on Frauds,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 23 March 1932.

See Denyse Baillargeon, “Indispensable, but Not a Citizen: The Housewife in the Great Depression.” Baillargeon’s research on Montréal housewives suggests that married women served a “social stabilizing” role in that urban society.

American historian Theda Skocpol agrees, arguing in that the United States, from around 1900 through to the early 1920s, created “a maternalist welfare state, with female-dominated public agencies implementing regulations and benefits for the good of women and their children” (2). In Skocpol’s view, it was the generous post–Civil War assistance and benefits to returned soldiers that set a precedent for state aid to deserving recipients (in the case of the soldiers, in recognition of their contribution to the nation) and prompted women activists to lobby during the Progressive Era for mothers’ pensions, based on their contributions to the nation’s reproductive health. See Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy*. 

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in the United States. See also Cynthia Comacchio, Nations Are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario’s Mothers and Children, 1900–1940.

50 Christie, Engendering the State, 215. For useful (and sometimes contrasting) assessments of Christie’s work, see Dominique Marshall’s review of Engendering the State in Canadian Historical Review 82, no. 4 (2001): 754–58, and Alvin Finkel’s treatment of Engendering the State in “The State of Writing on the Canadian Welfare State: What’s Class Got to Do with It?”

51 Letter from H. F. McKee to Commissioner David Mitchell, 23 August 1934, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 17.


53 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 24 April 1934, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 1339.

54 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 29 May 1934, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 1384.

55 “City Council to Adopt New Scheme of Giving Relief,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 26 March 1932.

56 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 October 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 67.

57 Letter from Acting City Clerk to City Commissioners, 14 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.

58 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 October 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 76.

59 Letter from Margaret Kee to ADM MacNamara, 20 February 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief.

60 Letter from T. S. Magee to David Mitchell, 2 September 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 4. Magee had earlier been asked to investigate practices at the single women’s branch of city relief as a result of complaints made by the Canadian Labour Party.

61 “For Shame,” letter to the editor, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 14 May 1932.

62 Information Obtained from a Few of Those Interviewed re: Domestic Work on Farms and in the Country, 17 February 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief.

63 Ibid.

64 Letter from Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board to W. R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, 21 July 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment.
“This need,” the board reported, “will become greater as the period in which recipients are on relief lengthens.”

65 Memo from H. F. McKee to Commissioner David Mitchell, 20 January 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.

66 Memo from H. F. McKee to Commissioner David Mitchell on conduct of the Relief Department, 8 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.

67 Letter from Carl Berg to Mayor Knott, 8 June 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 11. The problem became even more dire during the winter months. In Winnipeg, men called to “buck wood” at the city’s wood yard for their relief had, according to the unemployed, “insufficient clothing,” causing them to have to stop work. Adding insult to injury, the men were cut off relief. Letter from ADM of Public Works to Chairman and Members of Winnipeg’s Civic Unemployment Relief Committee, 19 February 1932, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

68 Letter from Acting City Clerk to City Commissioners, 14 February 1933.

69 Memo from H. F. McKee to City Commissioner, 20 January 1933.


71 Letter from Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board to W. R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, 21 July 1933.


73 Letter from Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board to W. R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, 21 July 1933.

74 Letter from W. T. Kennedy, president of the Northern Shirt Company, to W. R. Clubb, 7 December 1932, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

75 Letter from A. R. Ivey, secretary of the Retail Merchants Association of Canada, to W. R. Clubb, 3 December 1932, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

76 Letter from F. S. Wright to Commissioner David Mitchell, 16 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 17. Winnipeg faced similar complaints almost two years later from the Greater Winnipeg Shoe Repairers’ Association, who protested the city’s use of unemployed shoe repairmen and requested that “the entire business be distributed to the local shops on a voucher system.” See “Council Minutes,” 9 October 1934, WA.

77 Letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell, 22 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 17.
“Work Will Be Given to Childless Married Men,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 May 1932. Perhaps not surprisingly, it appears that nothing came of this suggestion.

Memo from H. F. McKee to Commissioner Mitchell on Conduct of the Relief Department, 8 February 1933.


“City Council to Adopt New Scheme of Giving Relief.” On 11 May 1932, the city called for tenders from local food suppliers. See “Grocery Tenders Are Called For,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 May 1932.

Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 December 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 335.

Letter from the West Side Business Men’s Association to City Council, 8 January 1934, SA, 1069-1099, file 8.

Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 10 November 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 149.

A provincial relief investigation committee in Alberta outlined other problems associated with instituting a more flexible voucher system. Responding to a general complaint raised by the unemployed that “the voucher system does not permit relief recipients to purchase direct from farmers, or take advantage of bargains,” the committee responded that “it would therefore be necessary to reduce the face value of the relief voucher if arrangements were made to obtain food at lower prices. The relief recipient would not benefit from such an arrangement; the farmer would not benefit, and the retailer, who is a tax-payer, would be the loser. Any change in this respect would involve the paying of cash relief and the possible abused which might arise.” Report of the Relief Committee Appointed by Order-in-Council 437-38, 22 December 1938, p. 19, Alberta Folklore and Local History Collection, University of Alberta Libraries.

Ibid.

Ibid. See also Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 September 1933, Civic Relief Board Files, file 937.


91 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 16 November 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 173.

92 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 23 January 1933, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 427.

93 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 10 November 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 149. Winnipeg’s unemployed had similar complaints. Resolutions passed by the Labor Women’s Group of Greater Winnipeg, for instance, argued that “great hardships are wrought on those families receiving relief in kind of work performed, instead of standard wages; endless suffering has been caused to many men, women, and children who have had to walk miles through lack of the necessary funds to pay for transportation; those receiving relief could often economize by buying in cheaper markets than they are at present permitted to take advantage of.” Letter from Mrs. M. L. Aiken, Secretary, Labor Women’s Group of Greater Winnipeg to the Hon. W. R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, 3 June 1931, PAM, G8030, Unemployment, 1930–31.

94 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 21 September 1933, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 937. See also Magda Fahrni’s “Counting the Costs of Living: Gender, Citizenship, and a Politics of Prices in 1940s Montreal.” Fahrni’s supposition that housewives in the 1940s “made a public, political statement out of what might once (during the Depression, for instance) have been regarded as a shameful situation, to be hidden at all costs” (485) is not necessarily borne out so easily among female shoppers in (at least) the urban Prairie context. There, women clearly had no qualms about expressing their dissatisfaction with relief groceries, stigma or not. See also Susan Porter Benson, “Living on the Margin: Working Class Marriages and Family Survival Strategies in the United States, 1919–1941”; Joan Sangster, Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920–1950; and Ruth Frager, “Politicized Housewives in the Jewish Communist Movement of Toronto, 1923–1933.”

95 Report of Operations and Costs Year Ending December 31st, 1932, PAM, G8032, Yearly Reports, City of Winnipeg Unemployment Relief Department.

96 Unemployment Report 1932, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

97 Letter from F. S. Wright to Commissioner Mitchell, 16 December 1932.


100 Letter from ADM MacNamara to President of McGill University, 20 March 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

102 Various responses to Winnipeg’s inquiries, 9 May 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment. In the opinion of Dr. Stielbeling, of the US Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Home Economics, the food schedule was somewhat less than wholly sufficient: “I think that the diets undoubtedly would satisfy the minimum requirements of different dietary essentials, but they do not allow any wide margin for safety.”

103 Letter from Lucy H. Gillett, Superintendent, Nutrition Bureau, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, to Mr. A. MacNamara, Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Public Works, 3 May 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

104 Letter from Mildred D. Goodeve, Nutritionist, Child Welfare Association of Montréal, to ADM MacNamara, 26 April 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

105 Letter from Marjorie Bell to ADM MacNamara, 18 April 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment.

106 Quoted in letter from Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board to W. R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, 21 July 1933.

107 Quoted in letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell, 6 January 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 18.


110 Ibid.


112 Meal ticket valid at Olympia Café, n.d., EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

113 Bill from H. Edwardson to City, 21 May 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

114 Letter from T. S. Magee to City Commissioner, 29 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 4.
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115 Letter from Dr. R. B. Jenkins to City Commissioner, 22 March 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 20.

116 Letter from T. S. Magee to David Mitchell, 21 May 1931.

117 Ibid. The four meal tickets were intended to last the men from Thursday to Saturday.

118 Ibid.

119 Unemployment Committee Report, 27 May 1931, EA, RG 11, class 5, file 3.

120 Letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell, 2 August 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 13.


123 Unemployment Committee Report, 13 May 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.


125 Ibid.


127 [Testimony of] Representatives of single, unemployed men before Cabinet, 10 July 1936.

128 Letter from Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council to A. MacNamara, Single Unemployed Commission, 28 December 1932, PAM, G8030, Unemployment Relief 1932.

129 Letter from Permier Bracken to R. B. Bennett, 22 April 1932, PAM, G8036.

130 Letter from Premier Brownlee to R. B. Bennett, 9 May 1933, PAA, Premiers’ Papers GR 1969.0289, file 314C.

131 Letter from City Treasurer to City Commissioner, 1 April 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 9.

132 Telegram from Mayor Knott to Senator Griesbach, 1 April 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 9.

133 Telegram from Mayor Knott to Premier Brownlee, 1 April 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 9.
134 See, for example, the letter from Ambrose Bury to City Council, 6 February 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 7.

135 Memorandum of meeting with R. B. Bennett, 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

136 Letter from City Clerk Tomlinson to Premier Anderson, SA, 1269-1521, file 3. It is not clear whether the province actually did “make a profit.” Nor is it clear at what percent interest the province was able to secure loans for the cities. Whatever the case, however, the situation conveys the sense that the provinces were carrying on as though this were a normal business transaction. Edmonton likewise sought low-interest loans through the provincial government. For example, Mayor Knott wrote to Premier Reid about “seeking [a] one million dollar loan from the federal government through your good offices. In this connection it is felt that the loan applied for of $1,000,000 should be granted at as low a rate of interest as possible.” Letter from Knott to Reid, 16 July 1934, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 1025.

137 “Provincial Government Pays $243,000 for Relief,” Edmonton Bulletin, 21 March 1930. Calgary had received $54,000, in contrast to Edmonton’s $35,000.

138 Letter from T. S. Magee to Commissioner David Mitchell, 18 November 1931, EA, RG 11, class 5, file 149.

139 “Unemployment Policy,” PAM, G8032, Reports, 1931–32.

140 Letter from William Carnill to Mayor Knott, 31 March 1932, EA, RG 11, class 7, file 149.

3 Building Cities

1 See the report in the Winnipeg Free Press, 18 August 1932, and “Laying the Corner Stone at the Winnipeg Auditorium by His Excellency the Governor-General the Earl of Bessborough—Thursday, August 18th, 1932,” PAM, G8232. The container has since been removed from the cornerstone and now rests inside the main auditorium building for public viewing. Curiously, the program, prepared by the city clerk’s department five days before the ceremony, accorded no role to any of the workmen who actually built the auditorium. Yet, on the day of the ceremony, it was the head stonemason, Harry Whiteley, and George Farmley, bricklayer, who together laid the stone on the bed of mortar.

2 Of course, not all urban improvements carried out as unemployment relief projects have survived. Some, like Edmonton’s extensive paving, grading, and graveling efforts, have long since disappeared beneath the more modern asphalt and concrete of a growing metropolis. Others, like Saskatoon’s brushing work—clearing away unwanted vegetation from the edges of
ravines—satisfied immediate local improvement needs, but their effects did not last much past the next season. And others still, like Edmonton’s Rat Creek Bridge, have since been demolished and replaced by newer structures.

3 See James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914–1941*.

4 As we shall see in the following chapter, most men typically received no more than about one week’s work in five or six, whereas direct relief was distributed much more widely. Historical considerations of Canada’s Depression experience have paid small attention to unemployment relief projects. The American literature is much richer, probably because of the prominence of various New Deal programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

5 Bonnie Fox Schwartz, *The Civil Works Administration, 1933–1934: The Business of Emergency Employment in the New Deal*, viii. American historian Ellis W. Hawley, in *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly: A Study in Economic Ambivalence*, describes a similar development in other New Deal programs, especially the National Recovery Administration, which was led by efficiency and planning types.


7 Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 77.

8 Part of this story, too, lies in the steps that city planners took to convince city ratepayers and citizens to support and even share their public works visions. Before embarking on any major work relief project, for example, city officials (and often newspaper editors) had first to pass money bylaws through their respective municipal government boards (which, in turn, gauged “public” opinion by holding a vote among the city’s ratepayers).

9 Edmontonians, for instance, viewed the rapid population growth in Calgary as a serious threat to their own prospects. By 1925, Edmonton and Strathcona combined had a population of 11,400 compared to Calgary’s 12,000. Over the next half decade, the populations of both Edmonton and Calgary would triple in size. See Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History*, 138. Saskatoon was also typically engaged in rivalries with its sister city to the south, Regina. See Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century*.

10 John H. Archer, *Saskatchewan: A History*, 162. As Don Kerr and Stan Hanson point out, though, as late as 1928 Saskatoon was still pumping its raw sewage into the South Saskatchewan River, an incredibly dangerous and gallingly short-sighted practice that resulted in several typhoid deaths. See Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, *Saskatoon*, 57, 90–92.
11 Archer, Saskatchewan, 162.


14 Ibid., 327.

15 W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, 324.

16 Ibid., 324–6. Morton notes that “the generation of power and the manufacture of gas remained scattered among a number of small firms, and when the rapid growth of the city began at the [nineteenth] century’s end the supply of power became quite inadequate” (326).

17 Winnipeg Board of Trade, Twenty-sixth Annual Report, 7 February 1925, 92.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.


21 As Jonathan Teaford notes, however, the early and growing reliance of Midwestern cities on automobile production also meant that these cities suffered from the vagaries of the automobile industry generally. Through the 1930s, for instance, cities in the Midwest suffered from the decreasing demand for automobiles. Jonathan C. Teaford, Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest, 103–4.


23 In 1922 and 1921, the provincial and federal governments contributed one-third of the cost of winter public works construction in Canadian cities as an unemployment relief measure. In 1925, the Province of Alberta contributed one-quarter of the costs of labour associated with public works construction, and in 1926, the province paid for food and lodging for single men in Edmonton. See Labour Gazette, August 1921, 999, where the Federal Department of Labour reported a Dominion grant to Saskatoon of $1,482 on the understanding that this would account for one-third of relief expenditures in the city. The provincial and municipal governments would contribute a further third each.

24 Arthur Meighen, for example, considered unemployment to be “beyond the power of local, or even national, control,” but he authorized federal monies to pay one-quarter of the extra costs associated with winter work relief. Privy

25 See, for example, “The Relief of Unemployment,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 August 1930: “The conference recommends that local councils, provinces, and the Dominion should embark on or continue construction of public works and highways, encourage private corporations to carry on building and maintenance, and place advance orders for supplies and equipment.”


27 Letter from Deputy Minister Thomas Molloy to City Commissioner Leslie, 16 December 1929, SA, D500 III 895. See also “Cooperation Called For,” 11 December 1929; “Government Will Assist Winnipeg in Unemployment,” 14 December 1929; and “Special Work Is Planned for the Destitute Unemployed,” 23 December 1929, all in the *Edmonton Bulletin*.

28 Unemployment Committee Report, 23 December 1929, SA, D500 III 895.

29 Report of the Committee Appointed by Unemployment Conference to Enquire into Shelter for the Unemployed, 23 December 1929, SA, D500 III 893. At the time of the committee meeting, Saskatoon’s assessment of the number of unemployed was 661: 347 married men and 314 single men.

30 Letter from Deputy Minister Thomas Molloy to City Commissioner Leslie, 11 December 1929, SA, D500 III 895.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Letter from Chief Engineer Archibald to City Commissioner Leslie, 24 December 1929, SA, D500 III 895.

34 Quoted in Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 46.

35 See Memo for City Commissioners re: Unemployment Relief, Calgary Meeting, 24 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 1. Under section 92, the provinces were responsible for unemployment relief.

36 Work relief programs were almost always referred to as “emergency” undertakings. This term reflected widespread assumptions during the early 1930s that the economic downturn would be short-lived and temporary, as is illustrated by the fact that Bennett’s unemployment relief acts of 1930 and 1931 both expired after one year. See Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, chap. 2.

37 Letter from A. W. Haddow to Commissioner Mitchell, 18 June 1931, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515B.

38 Letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 31 December 1931, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 2.

See, for example, the memo from Chief Engineer Haddow to City Commissioner Mitchell, 29 March 1934, EA RG 11, class 162, file 6. The engineer reminded the commissioner that, during the past year, the provincial and federal governments had contributed one-third of the cost of direct relief to relief labour on city projects. See also the letter from Mayor Daniel Knott to O. L. McPherson, Alberta Minister of Public Works, 22 January 1934, EA RG 11, class 162, file 6. In his letter, Mayor Knott insisted that “both the Provincial and Dominion Governments should contribute one-third each of the direct labor costs only” on various local improvement projects in Edmonton. See also letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 20 October 1932, EA, RG 11, class 162, file 3. The engineer expressed his hope that a “policy along lines of last winter is followed, in which expenditures for materials are included (in agreement with provincial and federal governments). . . . It would be to the advantage of the city to carry out public works which would be needed in any event in the immediate future.”

It might be added, however, that Commissioner Leslie “expressed the view that no expenditure for new bridges should be made until sufficient increase in population warrants it. Under present conditions, he believed, Saskatoon had sufficient bridges to meet requirements. Compared to other cities, Saskatoon is not too badly off.” “Bridge Building Is in Future Plans,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 May 1930.

The *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* described support for the bridge project among the city’s ratepayers in an editorial on 28 October 1931: “While the ratepayers are not unanimous in their opinion as to the desirability of undertaking such an ambitious project at this time, opposition to the project has not been particularly noticeable.” Although this is hardly a ringing endorsement for the project, the city’s ratepayers approved of the city’s plan at two separate debenture bylaw votes. At the first vote in November 1931, ratepayers passed the debenture bylaw by a margin of four to one (4,679 for and 1,150 voted against). The second debenture bylaw, voted on in February 1932, passed by an even wider margin (2,347 to 292).


Petition from Cromdale Community League presented to Edmonton City Council, 23 November 1931, EA, RG 11, class 12, file 5. Spokespeople for the community leagues purported to represent the views—broadly speaking—of the people living in this or that community. Typically, the community would organize a meeting, inviting anyone from the community interested in the issue at hand. A discussion would then take place, and a set of resolutions would be produced and direction given to the spokesperson to inform the city council of the community’s thoughts on the matter. The *Edmonton Journal*
editorial staff suggested a wooden bridge because although it would only last about twenty years (not as long as a steel bridge), it would require more labour. Most of the steel fabricating would be done elsewhere. See “Bridge,” Edmonton Journal, 30 January 1931.

45 Petition from Highlands Community League presented to Edmonton City Council, 3 December 1931, and Petition from Westmount Community League presented to Edmonton City Council, 4 December 1931, EA, RG 11, class 12, file 5.

46 Petition from Eastwood Community League presented to Edmonton City Council, 8 December 1931, EA RG 11, class 12, file 6.

47 Petition from Local Council of Women presented to Edmonton City Council, 27 November 1931, EA RG 11, class 12, file 6.

48 Petition from Edmonton Art Club presented to City Council, 8 December 1931, EA RG 11, class 12, file 6.


50 The degree of disagreement on work relief projects tends to confirm the conclusions of historians Jonathan Teaford, David Hammack, and Harold Platt. Summarizing their arguments, Timothy Gilfoyle writes: “Modern city services and infrastructures created new municipal agencies and special-interest factions that transcended neighborhood and ethnic loyalties, dramatically altering forms of municipal authority. Even elites were never monolithic. Rather, they were internally divided, constantly competing, and shifting alliances depending on the issues involved. The provision of services and infrastructures in late nineteenth-century cities was, in Teaford’s words, an ‘unheralded triumph.’ Engineers thus replace elective officials in the political narrative of the city.” Timothy J. Gilfoyle, “White Cities, Linguistic Turns, and Disneylands: The New Paradigms of Urban History,” 185. See also Jonathan C. Teaford, The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870–1900; David Hammack, Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century; and Harold Platt, City Building in the New South: The Growth of Public Services in Houston, Texas, 1830–1915, and The Electric City: Energy and the Growth of the Chicago Area, 1880–1930.

51 Letter from S. W. Campbell to Premier Bracken, 3 October 1930, PAM, G8036, Norwood Bridge.


53 Letter from C. W. Alston, Poole Construction Company, to Edmonton Mayor and Commissioner, 9 January 1932, and letter from Chief Engineer to Commissioner, 13 January 1932, EA, RG 11, class 12, file 9.
54 These sorts of indicators of the general health of a city’s economy still remain important. See City of Saskatoon, “Housing Indicators for Saskatoon,” and Alan F. J. Artibise, “Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871–1913.”

55 See, for example, “These Large Construction Projects Would Advance Winnipeg’s Key Position,” Manitoba Free Press, 13 September 1930, and “Get for Edmonton Permanent and Useful Civic Improvements at 25% of the Cost,” Edmonton Bulletin, 10 November 1931.


57 Letter from W. H. Carter to ADM A. MacNamara, 8 September 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief.


59 Letter from F. A. Graham, Manager, Western Supplies Limited, to His Worship the Mayor and Members of the City Council, 14 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 8.

60 Ibid. With increasing regularity, desperate businessmen, especially those involved in the building trades, began offering their services on credit in exchange for guarantees of payment in better times. Prime Minister Bennett wrote Manitoba’s Premier Bracken in April 1933: “Representatives of the construction industry in Canada met me the other day and discussed the unemployment problem from the construction standpoint. They expressed the opinion that there were some firms in Canada who would not be unwilling to expend their own resources in carrying on construction works for the provinces and postpone payment until a later date if interest upon their investment in the work was paid annually.” Letter from Bennett to Bracken, 8 April 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief.

61 Letter from Saskatchewan Association of Architects to Saskatoon City Council, n.d., SA, 1069-C43. The Manitoba Association of Architects wrote Manitoba’s Premier Bracken a similar letter. See letter from E. Fitz Munn, Secretary, to Premier Bracken, 1 September 1931, PAM, G8230, Unemployment, 1930–31.

62 Letter from E. R. Howes, Manager, Canada Ingot Iron Company, to Manitoba Minister of Public Works, 16 September 1931, PAM, GR 1629/GSO 123 G8236. The minister of Public Works assured the company that “every effort is being made to make as equitable a distribution of our business as possible.” But he also pointed out that “practically all relief work purchases come within the jurisdiction of the Municipalities,” so the complaint was better directed at the

63 Letter from Building Trades Council of Winnipeg and Vicinity to Province of Manitoba, 12 September 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief. The idea, clearly widespread on the urban Prairie, that work relief was, despite its higher costs, more beneficial to relief recipients than “doles” set cities like Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg within a much wider context of similar ideas elsewhere. American historian William W. Bremer, for example, discovered similar assumptions animating New Deal work relief programs: “If general economic recovery and the physical well-being of the unemployed had been their overriding concern, then New Dealers might have appropriately supported massive deficit expenditures for direct relief to give jobless people money to support the economy and themselves.” William W. Bremer, “Along the American Way: The New Deal’s Work Relief Programs for the Unemployed,” 637.

64 Letter from R. Maybank to Secretary Unemployment Relief Committee, 11 March 1931, PAM, G8230, Unemployment, 1930–31.

65 Ibid.

66 Letter from Chief Engineer to City Commissioner, 31 December 1931, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 2.

67 “No Citizen to Go Without Food, Is Promise of Mayor,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 8 July 1932. As time wore on and the Depression deepened, of course, it became increasingly difficult to justify (or afford) the more costly work relief. By October 1932, Saskatoon’s mayor had softened his earlier firm opposition to direct relief: “I am opposed to the idea of giving direct relief, without at least exploring other avenues first.” “Hair Is Opposed to Direct Relief,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 12 October 1932.

68 Unemployment Relief Policy, 1931–31, PAM, G8232.


70 Letter from Mayor Clarke to City Council, 8 July 1935, EA RG 11, class 160, file 10.

71 Letter from ADM MacNamara to William Clubb, 29 October 1931, PAM, GR 1629/G SO123, G 8036.

72 Letter from Chief Engineer Archibald to City Commissioner Mitchell, 6 February 1931, EA, RG 11, class 5, file 1.

73 Letter from Hereford to MacNamara, 20 February 1932, PAM, G8267, Unemployment Relief 1931–32.

Minutes of meeting, 4 September 1930.

“Seek Federal Aid in Erection of Bridges.”

Ibid.

Minutes of meeting, 4 September 1930.

Ibid.

“Seek Federal Aid in Erection of Bridges.”

Ibid.

Minutes of meeting, 4 September 1930.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

“Seek Federal Aid in Erection of Bridges.”

“These Large Construction Projects Would Advance Winnipeg’s Key Position.”

“Street Railway Offers $50,000 for Bridges,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 24 October 1930.


City Council Report on Norwood and Main Street Bridges, 19 December 1930, PAM, G8236, Norwood Bridge.


Ibid.

Council Minutes, 13 October 1930, SA, D500 III 895.

Letter from Mayor Hair to Alderman Eddy, 3 October 1930, SA, D500 III 895.

Letter from City Solicitor to Secretary of the Board of Railway Commissioners, 29 October 1930, SA, D500 III 895. A November press release from the federal Department of Public Works read: “Negotiations opened
with Canada’s two large railway companies, both cooperated and agreed to advance their contemplated construction and improvement programs from one to three years, the Government agreeing to compensate them to the extent of paying interest on the estimated capital expenditure for a period of eighteen months at the rate of five percent per annum.” Press release, 5 November 1930, LAC, RG 27, vol. 2264, File: Unemployment Relief, Press Releases, 1930–31.

98 “Next Year’s Plans,” Edmonton Bulletin, 9 September 1930.
100 M. J. Roberts, “The Motor Transportation Revolution.”
103 Although Robertson had been unable to visit Saskatoon personally, members of the city’s council travelled to Regina to discuss their local unemployment situation.
104 Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, 53.
105 Letter from Mayor Hair to J. A. Merkely, Minister of Railways, Labor, and Industries, 4 August 1931, SA, 1069-1573, file 3.
106 Letter from City Clerk Tomlinson to Deputy Minister Thomas Molloy, 14 December 1932, SA, 1069-221, file 1.
107 Memorandum of meeting between Mayor Hair, City Commissioner Leslie, and Chief Engineer Archibald, 15 July 1931, SA, 1069-1573, file 3.
108 Letter from Chief Engineer Archibald to City Commissioner Leslie, 18 September 1931, SA, 1069-1573, file 1.
110 Editorial, “The Saskatoon Bridge,” Saskatoon Star-Phoeni, 26 October 1931.
111 “City Indignant as True Situation Is Revealed by Report,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 27 October 1931. The report suggested that the provincial government favoured the cheaper $500,000 sewerage disposal plant over the $1.2 million bridge project.

Report of Special Meeting of Standing Committee, 4 November 1931.

SA, 1269-219, file 1, Bridge Construction Files, December 1931.

“Sask. Gov’t to Push Bridge Proposal.”

“Bridge Bylaw Given Big Majority,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 24 November 1931. There were 4,679 votes in favour and 1,150 against.

“Bridge Building Can Go Ahead Is Mayor’s Message,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 12 December 1931.

“New Concrete Bridge at Saskatoon over South Saskatchewan River,” *Canadian Engineer: A Weekly Paper for Civil Engineers and Contractors*, 21 March 1933, 6, Saskatchewan Provincial Archives, C. J. Mackenzie fonds MG 56, box 2, file 12-2.

This was fairly standard on most relief projects. See W. J. C. Cherwinski, “The Formative Years of the Trade Union Movement in Saskatchewan,” 126.

“New Concrete Bridge at Saskatoon over South Saskatchewan River,” 6.

Ibid.

“Wage Rates on Broadway Bridge Project Ranging from 45 Cents per Hour for General Labour to One Dollar per Hour for Electricians,” SA, 1269-219, Bridge Construction Files, file 12.

“New Concrete Bridge at Saskatoon over South Saskatchewan River,” 6.

Ibid., 6. During those eleven weeks, the temperature in Saskatoon never rose above 0°F (about –18°C), and “for several days at a time temperatures below minus 40°F [−40°C] were recorded.”

Ibid., 6.

Ibid., 8.

Ibid., 6.

Ibid., 7.

Letter from Haddow to City Commissioners, 18 June 1931, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515 B.

Whatever the reason for the disparity between Edmonton’s and the other two cities’ more ambitious work relief plans, Edmonton authorities’ response to the Unemployment and Farm Relief Act was certainly consistent with their hesitancy the previous year to embark on large work schemes under...
the auspices of the earlier Unemployment Relief Act. In fact, Edmonton’s City Commissioner Mitchell appeared to confirm this when, in presenting the chief engineer’s list of new projects in autumn 1931 to city council, he remarked, “So large an expenditure of capital money could not possibly be entertained by the City on its own account in its present financial condition but a modified program might be considered provided a large percentage of the cost were assumed by Federal and Provincial authorities with a view to providing work especially for unemployed married men who are residents of the City.” Letter from City Commissioner David Mitchell to Aldermen, 18 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 1.

131 Ibid.

132 Letter from Haddow to Mitchell, 24 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 1. It is not clear whether Haddow’s suggestion was ever implemented.


134 Ibid.

135 Letter from ADM MacNamara to Winnipeg City Council, 29 October 1931, PAM, GR1609/G S0123 G8036.

136 Ibid.

137 Letter from Minister Clubb to City Clerk M. Peterson, 24 February 1932, PAM, G8035 Auditorium. The minister also suggested that “the board of architects be asked to go into the matter very thoroughly and endeavour to make savings which would bring the building within the estimated cost of Nine Hundred and Thirty Two Thousand.”

138 Letter from Northwood to Civic Unemployment Relief Committee, 15 February 1932, PAM, G8035, Auditorium.

139 Letter from R. G. Graham to W. R. Clubb, 24 February 1932, PAM, G8036 Winnipeg Auditorium.

140 Telegram from Premier Bracken to Premier Brownlee, 26 December 1929, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 310.

141 Telegram from J. M. Davidson to Premier Brownlee, 27 December 1929, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 310.

142 Telegram from Brownlee to Bracken, 30 December 1929, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 310.

143 Letter from Brownlee to Bracken, 2 January 1930, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 310. Brownlee’s source for this information, the Western Canada Fuel Association, had earlier informed him that most coal used
by Manitoba industrial plants, schools, and other buildings came from the United States.

144 Letter from Brownlee to Bracken, 9 January 1932, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 310.

145 Letter from Building Superintendent McDonald to Public Works Minister McPherson, 13 February 1934, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 310.

146 Letter from W. A. Griesbach to Mayor Knott, 26 June 1934, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 7.

147 As noted earlier, the Broadway Bridge opened to public traffic on 11 November 1932, but it had been substantially finished by early October. Winnipeg’s Civic Auditorium, meanwhile, was almost finished by May 1932, but the city delayed its official opening so that the governor general could lay the building’s cornerstone during his Winnipeg visit in August.

4 Unemployed Men at Work

1 Letter from City Clerk Tomlinson to Charlotte Whitton, 6 January 1931, SA, 1069-2055, file 8.


3 Letter from Tomlinson to Calgary’s city clerk, 12 January 1931, SA, 1069-2055, file 8. Had she known these facts, Whitton almost certainly would have felt that her suspicions that local relief administrations were incapable of dealing with the problem of unemployment in any coherent, unified, or useful way were confirmed.


5 Unemployment Relief Report, 27 December 1932, EA RG 11, class 149, file 17. In a typical week in January 1931, Edmonton had some 1,800 married men on relief and typically offered work to only 250 each week. Assuming proper rotation, allowing each man the same amount of work, each man would work only one week out of every seven. See Reports on Relief Work for weeks ending 3 January, 11 January, 19 January, 24 January, 7 February, 14 February, and 21 February 1931, EA, RG 11, class 5, file 1.

6 Even when the cities embarked on major public works construction projects such as Saskatoon’s Broadway Bridge or Winnipeg’s Civic Auditorium, each
man assigned to the job typically worked little more than one or two weeks out of every six. During those not infrequent times when no major relief job was in progress, unemployed men on relief might work even less than that. Cities did not, moreover, require all residents on relief to work. Women, whether married or single, were not considered for employment even on lighter relief work, such as street sweeping, much less on major projects. See P. H. Brennan, “‘Thousands of Our Men Are Getting Practically Nothing at All to Do: Public Works Relief Programs in Regina and Saskatoon, 1929–1940.”

7 See, for example, M. B. Katz, The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare, 5–16, and Alexander Keyssar, Out of Work: The First Century of Unemployment in Massachusetts.

8 It is important to note here, however, that cities only rarely initiated relief camps for single men on their own; more often, the cities agitated for camps to be set up by the senior governments. This speaks in some ways to Michael B. Katz’s idea that welfare in the American context performed several tasks, including “relief of misery [and] preservation of social order and discipline.” Michael B. Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America, xi. As we shall also see, cities employed other modes to remove single unemployed men from their borders, including offering them only the meaniest work relief, regularly cutting them from the relief rolls each spring, and lobbying the senior governments to institute farm work programs and relief camps in rural areas.

9 Unemployed married men employed on major work relief projects were expected to arrive at the work site on time for their shifts and report directly to the job foreman giving out orders for the day. City officials evidently believed that, at day’s end, workers would return home to their families as both proud heads of households and main providers.

10 Letter from Ronald Hooper to W. R. Clubb, 10 November 1932, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief.


12 Letter from T. S. Magee to R. C. Rathbone and R. Campbell, Special Relief Office, 2 March 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 2. By the end of March 1931, Edmonton’s relief office was cutting approximately 150 single men from the relief rolls every three days. Letter from Magee to R. C. Rathbone, 21 March 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 2. On 22 March 1932, for instance, Edmonton relief officials cut single men from the relief rolls because “spring work is beginning to show signs of opening up and we feel now that these men are able to care for themselves.” Memo from R. Campbell and R. C. Rathbone to Commissioner Mitchell, 22 March 1932, EA, RG11, class 149, file 8.
13 See, for example, James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914–1941, 81–82, and Bill Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot, 25–40. See also Report of Operations and Costs Year Ending December 31st 1933, PAM, G8032, Yearly Reports, City of Winnipeg Unemployment Relief Department. Winnipeg stopped including single men in its yearly reports on unemployment in the city after the federal government took responsibility for them in November 1932. Edmonton’s Special Relief Department confirmed in February 1933 that “the single unemployed man is now under the care of the Federal Relief Commission, Chairman A. S. Mackenzie.” Letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell, 8 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19.

14 Garraty suggests that the “pyramids and the Temple of Karnak in Egypt and the Temple of Jerusalem, may have been built as public work-relief projects.” John Garraty, Unemployment in History: Economic Thought and Public Policy, 12–13. The idea in those days, according to Garraty, was that the very poor should not starve, but neither should they be given support without labouring for it.

15 Most historians agree that the first European example of the workhouse emerged in Amsterdam during the 1590s. As J. F. Harrington suggests, it may be no coincidence that the first workhouses appeared in a country such as the Netherlands, where Calvinistic religious philosophies dominated. See J. F. Harrington, “Escape from the Great Confinement: The Genealogy of a German Workhouse,” 312n8. However, other scholars question this conclusion, pointing to the emergence of workhouses in non-Protestant countries shortly after their opening in Amsterdam.

16 See, for example, Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse, 3. Katz estimates that “in most places, three, four, or more times as many—received public outdoor relief in any year as were admitted to poorhouses.” Historian Mary MacKinnon notes that only 12 to 15 percent of English and Welsh paupers were finding relief at the workhouse by the 1860s. This percentage increased to a high of between 20 and 30 percent by the early 1900s. Mary MacKinnon, “English Poor Law Policy and the Crusade Against Out-Relief,” 604.


18 Marjorie Levine-Clark, “Engendering Relief: Women, Ablebodiedness, and the New Poor Laws in Early Victorian England,” 111. It should be said, however, that voices advocating women’s unfitness for paid work were answered by competing voices from political economists and “self-interested factory owners” who argued that women should work for the “good of society and the economy” (111). Even single women—whether they were widows, had been deserted, or had never married—could typically access relief only through “their” men, either their husbands or their fathers.

20 “A Working Girl,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 7 May 1932. If “A Working Girl” was still working when she penned the letter, then it remains unclear whether she counted herself among the one out of ten who was not working merely to satisfy their own desires.

21 Letter from D. Mansfield to T. S. Magee, 28 February 1931, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515A.

22 Letter from Whaley to Hair, 7 July 1931, SA, 1069-1521, file 3.

23 Letter from Archibald to Hair, 9 July 1931, SA, 1069-1521, file 3.

24 Letter from A. G. M. Wallace to City Council, 16 October 1931, SA, 1069-2055, file 1. It is difficult to tell how widespread responses like these to the notion of women working on relief jobs was, although historian Lara Campbell refers to similar letters in Ontario during the 1930s, suggesting that they were not uncommon. Lara Campbell, “Respectable Citizens of Canada: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in the Great Depression, Ontario,” 172–75.


26 An earlier literature often emphasized the importance of “crises in masculinity” at various points in history. This approach has since met with considerable criticism, however, mainly because the notion of a “crisis” in masculinity suggests that masculinity is an unchanging concept rather than a socially constructed one, constantly being formed and reformed, deconstructed and reconstructed. See, for example, Michael Kimmel, “The Contemporary ‘Crisis’ of Masculinity in Historical Perspective”; R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 84; and Katharine V. Snyder, “A Paradise of Bachelors: Remodelling Domesticity and Masculinity in the Turn-of-the-Century New York Bachelor Apartment,” 250.


28 Letter from Mayor James Douglas to Aldermen, 18 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 162, file 1.

29 Letter from City Commissioner Mitchell to Aldermen, 18 August 1931, EA RG 11, class 162, file 1.
30 “Council to Plan Distribution of Work Wednesday,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 15 September 1931.

31 Letter from Chief Engineer Archibald to City Commissioner Leslie, 18 September 1931, SA, 1069-1573, file 1.


33 “Call Tenders for Second Sewer Unit,” Edmonton Bulletin, 2 January 1930. See also “Only Married Men Will Be Employed on Project,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 5 September 1931.

34 “Federal Money Now Available,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 5 July 1930.

35 “Married Men Only Will Be Employed,” Edmonton Bulletin, 30 June 1930. See also letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to Commissioner David Mitchell, 23 August 1934, and letter from Alderman Farmilo to Council, 1 October 1934, EA RG 11, class 160, file 8.

36 Letter from W. H. Carter to A. MacNamara, ADM of Public Works, 8 September 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment Relief, file 44.


38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Letter from City Commissioner to Canadian Legion, 12 December 1930, SA, 1069-2055, file 8.

41 “Mayor Hair Nails Story by Scarlett: Did Not Tell Men to Rustle for Meals, He Declares,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 10 July 1930.


43 Letter from Ronald Hooper to W. R. Clubb, 10 November 1932.

44 Building Trades Council of Winnipeg and Vicinity Submission on Building Construction vs. Direct Relief, 12 September 1933, PAM, G8030, Unemployment Relief.

45 It is difficult to gauge the UEMA’s size because its membership shifted over time and it is not clear how it measured its own membership.

46 For an important examination of masculinity and soldiering, see Mark Moss, Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War. On the incorporation of citizenship into the relationship between manliness and soldiering, see R. Claire Snyder, Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military
Service and Gender in the Civic Republican Tradition. Snyder argues that, at certain points in the American past, soldiers have represented themselves as citizens on the basis not of blood or birthright but rather of their civic practices, including fighting and engaging in other martial activities. She also emphasizes what Judith Butler has called the “performative” practices through which gender, including particular types of masculinity, is constructed. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

47 Unemployment Committee Report, 2 July 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 4, 1931 [file 13]. Veteran’s groups like the UEMA clearly made their claims against the cities as men who had fought for King and Country and who therefore deserved better treatment than other unemployed men. In a sense, their claims represented a masculine citizenship based on their service to Canada and the British Empire.

48 Letter from George Greenfield to Mayor Douglas, 10 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 150, file 8.

49 Letter from George Smith to Mayor Douglas, 13 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 150, file 8.

50 Letter from James Burnard to Mayor Douglas, 21 July 1931, EA, RG 11, class 150, file 15.

51 “Relief Wage Is 45 Cents,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 15 September 1931.

52 Letter from T. S. Magee to R. C. Rathbone, 2 March 1931.

53 Letter from Mike Arychuk to Premier Brownlee, 14 January 1932, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 516B. Writing of Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century, historians Anna Clark and Sonya Rose argue that notions of respectability within the working class increasingly turned on the image of the married male breadwinner—a figure who was defined, at least in part, in opposition to the single man. Single men thus became, by definition, unrespectable vis-à-vis married men’s respectability. See Sonya O. Rose, “Respectable Men, Disorderly Others: The Language of Gender and the Lancashire Weavers’ Strike of 1818 in Britain,” and Anna Clark, “The Rhetoric of Chartist Domesticity: Gender, Language and Class in the 1830s and 1840s?” In particular, Clark’s examination of Chartist rhetoric shows how “by evoking domesticity, Chartists could uphold working-class manhood, appeal to women, and extract concessions from the state” (63). Domesticity, of course, implied a home with a wife and children—the opposite, in other words, of the single man’s experience.

54 In an interview, Alice Kessler-Harris spoke about how, during the Depression, married women were pushed out of jobs they needed and sometimes resorted to similar practices in order to keep working: “And so there are instances, for example, of women divorcing their husbands or separating from their husbands to keep their jobs, pretending they weren’t married, postponing

55 “Many on Relief Childless, Rowland Presumes Large Number Got Married Here to Obtain Assistance,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 18 March 1932.

56 “City Council to Adopt New Scheme of Giving Relief,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 26 March 1932.

57 Letter from Clerk to Central Council on Unemployment, 27 November 1933, SA, 1269-1299.

58 Letter from H. F. McKee to City Commissioner, 2 February 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 19. It might be noted, though, that the city relief officer could (and did) make some allowance when children were involved.

59 Ibid. The city’s unemployed, not surprisingly, disagreed. On 14 February 1933, a United Workers’ Council appeared before the city council “protesting against single men on relief being refused relief upon getting married.” The city chose to “take no action” on the complaint. Letter from City Clerk to City Commissioners, 14 February 1933, EA RG 11, class 149, file 19.

60 “Pledge to Repay Must Be Signed for City Relief,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 October 1932.

61 “Gets Relief by Fraud; Draws One Extra Month,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 February 1932.

62 Ibid.

63 “City Council to Adopt New Scheme of Giving Relief.” It is not clear where the men got the marriage certificates.

64 “Shirkers to Get No Consideration,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 4 September 1931.

65 Letter from Bracken to Bennett, 12 April 1933, PAM G8230, Unemployment Relief.


67 Resolution Adopted by the Highlands and District Community League to Be Submitted to Edmonton City Council, from Secretary M. N. Gilman, 7 April 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 3.


69 Letter from W. H. Carter, Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company Limited, to A. MacNamara, Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Works, 8 September 1933, PAM, G8230, Unemployment Relief.
Letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to Commissioner David Mitchell, 20 October 1932, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 3. Virtually the same list of potential works was produced again the following spring and then again in December. Letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to Commissioner David Mitchell, 12 May 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 3; List of Needed Public Works Prepared by Chief Engineer Haddow, 12 December 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 5.


Letter from ADM of Labour Department to R. Jacobs, Chairman, Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board, 25 May 1933, PAM, G 8230, Unemployment Relief.

Memo of Conference Between Members of Saskatoon’s City Council and Saskatchewan Premier J. T. M. Anderson, 7 February 1934, SA, 1069-1209.

Edmonton’s city commissioner outlined these limitations to the city council in the summer of 1933; however, the limitations were well known long before that. See Letter from Commissioner Mitchell to City Council, 11 July 1933.

Letter from Commissioner Mitchell to City Council, 24 October 1932. It might be added, however, that the cities sometimes secured loans from the federal government to carry out works under the direct relief scheme. Late in 1934, for instance, Edmonton received a $500,000 loan from the federal government to help finance its local improvement programs using labour taken from the ranks of the city’s unemployed married men. Letter from Premier Reid to Mayor Knott, 13 September 1934, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 1025. The city had initially asked for $1 million. Letter from Knott to Reid, 16 July 1934, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 7.

Letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to Commissioner David Mitchell, 3 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 3. See also the letter from Mitchell to Haddow, 11 July 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 4. By August, the city hoped to begin a $100,000 program of work, to include grading and gravelling, curb and walk work, sewers, watermains, and parks work. The program was, however, entirely contingent on the city’s financial situation. “Our chief difficulty in the matter,” Edmonton’s city commissioner admitted to Chief Engineer Haddow, “is that of making the necessary financial arrangements to provide the money. At the moment, we are awaiting information from some of the bond dealers as to whether it would be possible to arrange for the issue of either treasury notes or debentures for a limited amount sufficient to meet the cost.” Letter from Commissioner David Mitchell to Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow, 1 August 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 4.
78 Report from H. F. McKee to City Commissioners, results of survey of work schemes in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Saskatoon, and Regina, 9 July 1935, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 10.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 “Must Work If They Want Bridge Jobs,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 11 May 1932.

82 “Intimidation by Jobless Alleged,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 5 May 1932. The city relief officer estimated that the men were earning the equivalent of forty to eighty cents per hour.


84 Minutes of Civic Relief Board Meeting, 20 April 1932, SA, Civic Relief Board Files, file 181.

85 “Blain Says Relief Gang Is Loafing.”

86 “River Bank Work No Use, Leslie Says,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 27 May 1932.

87 Ibid.

88 “Intimidation by Jobless Alleged.”

89 “Must Work If They Don’t Want Bridge Jobs,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 11 May 1932.

90 “Intimidation by Jobless Alleged.”

91 Letter from H. F. McKee to David Mitchell, 8 February 1933.


93 Letter from City Commissioner David Mitchell to H. F. McKee, 12 July 1934, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 7.

94 Letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to Commissioner Mitchell, 10 January 1933, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 3.

95 Ibid. The men would arrive at the relief office on their first working day. There, they would receive one streetcar ticket and their orders for the day. Once at the worksite, the men met with the onsite foreman, who directed them to their work gang. At the end of the day, the foreman would give the men two more streetcar tickets, one to get home and another to return to another worksite the following day.

96 Letter from Alderman Farmilo to Mayor and Commissioner, 7 November 1934, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 8.
See, for example, letter from City Clerk to City Commissioner relating worker delegation demands, 13 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 17.

Edmonton Chamber of Commerce Resolution submitted to Edmonton City Council, 9 August 1933, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 24.

Letter from H. F. McKee to City Commissioner, Special Relief Department’s Answer to Various Relief Complaints, etc., 21 May 1934, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 31.

Letter from Chief Engineer A. W. Haddow to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 16 May 1934, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 7.

Ibid.


“Stool-Sitting ‘Shoppers’ Picketing Scheme Planned,” Edmonton Journal, 4 June 1934. The women also intended to occupy the time of clothiers to the exclusion of all other customers.

Letter from Edmonton National Labour Council Secretary R. Lemaitre to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 26 May 1934, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 31.

Letter from A. Spence, Secretary of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America, West Edmonton Lodge, to City Council, 19 May 1934, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 31.

“Ex-Servicemen in Threat to Join Relief Strikers If Increase Not Granted,” Edmonton Journal, 17 May 1934.

Ibid.

Ibid. The Union Jack reference is important because it speaks to a particular identity shared by veterans that involved membership in the Empire, Britishness, and an anti-communist stance.

“Quiet Returns in City Strike,” Edmonton Journal, 22 May 1934.

Ibid.


Letter from Knott to Bennett, 23 May 1934, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 31. Just the day before, relief officials reported that “only a few” recipients of some
two hundred called to work actually showed up at the worksite. See “Quiet Returns in City Strike.”


121 In *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City*, historian David T. Courtwright explores the association of violence and single male culture from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth. Courtwright argues that the real (as opposed to imagined) violence perpetrated by single men was the result of lethal combinations of high testosterone, easy access to guns and other weapons, and booze. This concoction, in Courtwright’s view, fuelled single men’s violence and society’s fears of it.

122 Quoted in Laipson, “‘I Have No Genius for Marriage,’” 284.


124 David Bright, “The State, the Unemployed, and the Communist Party in Calgary, 1930–1935.”

125 Resolution Adopted by the Highlands and District Community League to Be Submitted to Edmonton City Council, from Secretary M. N. Gilman, 7 April 1933.

127 Letter from Police Chief Shute to Mayor Douglas, 10 December 1929, EA, RG 11, class 150, file 141.

128 David Bright, “Loafers Are Not Going to Subsist upon Public Credulence: Vagrancy and the Law in Calgary, 1900–1914.”

129 Letter from H. F. McKee, Manager, Special Relief Department, to A. A. Mackenzie, Chairman, Unemployment Relief Commission, 10 December 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 17.

130 Letter from H. F. McKee, Manager, Special Relief Department, to Commissioner David Mitchell, 23 March 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 8.


132 Unemployment Policy, 1932, PAM, G8032, Reports, 1931–32.

133 Letter from Brownlee to R. Priestley, 28 April 1932, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 170A. See also Unemployment Relief Committee Minutes, 4 October 1931, WA.


135 Letter from Mayor Underwood to City Clerk, 13 September 1931, SA, 1069-1522, file 2.

136 “Shirkers to Get No Consideration.”

137 Ibid.

138 “Cities Must Aid Farm Labour Plan,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 19 April 1932.

139 Unemployment Policy, 1932, PAM, G8032, Reports, 1931–32. For the remaining eight months of the contract, the farmer promised to pay the man a further five dollars per month. The scheme also offered five dollars per month to the farmer’s wife, for the “extra work necessitated through keeping the hired man on the farm” would likely fall on her.

140 Letter from ADM of Public Works to Brown and Rutherford, Lumber Dealers, 27 April 1932, PAM, G8036.

141 Unemployment Relief, 28 March 1932, PAM, G8230.

142 Letter from P. Kostynuik to Mayor Knott, 15 July 1931, EA, RG 11, class 150, file 15.
Doctors wielded considerable power over single men’s relief provision. Cities, for instance, relied on physicians’ assessments of men’s fitness for work on farms and in camps, and the contents of the physicians’ reports could determine whether a man received any relief at all. In late 1931, for example, one single Winnipeg man went to work on a farm for five dollars per month but soon returned to the city after feeling ill. The Winnipeg doctor attending to relief cases examined the man and “denied he was sick.” The man was subsequently cut off all city relief. The case, according to a group of unemployed protesters that converged at the provincial legislature in late February 1932, was not an isolated one. The protesters aimed their frustration at one relief doctor in particular, who had developed a bad reputation among the unemployed. “Dr. Harvey,” the group asserted, “is incapable of carrying out his duties of passing upon the health of applicants for relief.”

Letter from ADM of Public Works to Chairman and Members of Winnipeg’s Civic Unemployment Relief Committee, 19 February 1932, MA, G8030, Unemployment Relief Files.

“Shirkers Causing Trouble in Ranks Of City Jobless,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 10 January 1930.

Unemployment Relief, 28 March 1932, PAM, G8030.

Ibid.

“Demand for Harvest Aid Falling Off,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 16 September 1932.


See the discussion in Waiser, Park Prisoners, 48–84.

Bill Waiser, Saskatchewan: A New History, 310. The camp commandant had on file more than 150 forms completed by “professional drifters” from Halifax, Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton who had heard that the city was opening a camp. All were refused admission. The camp commandant’s expectations of “respect for authority” fell apart in May 1933, on the occasion of a riot that was probably provoked when mounted RCMP officers charged the camp in an effort to quell what they perceived as a Communist insurrection within the camp.

Report Covering Operations of Exhibition Relief Camp, 6 May 1931, SA. It is not clear exactly how this last statement was meant to be read. As historians
have shown in other contexts, the toilet could be a place to relax away from the foreman’s eyes, but it could also be place for illicit sexual liaisons. See, for example, Steven Maynard, “Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890–1930.”

154 Report Covering Operations of Exhibition Relief Camp, 6 May 1931.

155 Ibid.

156 Letter from City Commissioner to T. S. Magee, 1 April 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 2. As the commissioner notes, in the spring of 1931 the number of single men in the camps increased steadily, from 796 (out of a total of 3,770) on 28 February, to 835 (out of 3,839) in early March, to a high of more than 1,000 by mid-April. The province also opened smaller camps at Barrhead and Ardrossen in early 1931.

157 Council Resolution, 8 April 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 2.

158 Letter from T. S. Magee to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 6 May 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

159 Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, 51.

160 Letter from T. S. Magee to City Commissioner David Mitchell, 17 June 1931, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 3.

161 Memo from R. English, Department of Municipal Affairs, to Smith, Chairman, Relief Committee, 1 June 1931, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 515B.

162 See, for instance, Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, 52–53, and Waiser, Park Prisoners, 87–88.

163 Memo from A. W. Haddow to Commissioner re: Unemployment Relief, Calgary Meeting, 19 August 1931, EA, RG 11, class 160, file 1. It is not clear whether, by “practically suggested,” the chief engineer meant that Bennett almost suggested cutting the men from the relief rolls or that Bennett’s suggestion was practical. Either way, the effect was the same, making Edmonton officials believe that the federal government would take care of single unemployed men in camps.

164 See Waiser, Park Prisoners, 55–84, for an extensive and sensitively drawn account of these operations. The national park initiatives included relief camps at Waterton Lakes, Elk Island, Jasper, and Banff National Parks, in Alberta; Prince Albert National Park, in Saskatchewan; and Riding Mountain National Park, in Manitoba.

Memorandum Covering Discussion with Senator Robertson in Ottawa, 25 and 26 August 1931, PAM, G8030, Unemployment 1930–31. If the men remained on the job for three months, Robertson promised, the federal government would pay their way back to the city in the spring.


Telegram from Knott to Bennett, 22 April 1932, EA, RG11, class 160, file 3.

Letter from Brownlee to Murphy, 6 May 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 10.

Letter from Brownlee to Knott, 9 May 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 10.

Letter from Knott to Calgary Mayor Davison, 28 May 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 10.

Letter from City Commissioner to T. S. Magee, 3 February 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 7.

Letter from Harrison to Brownlee, 6 February 1932, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 516B. The president of Edmonton’s branch of the Canadian Legion was only too willing to provide the proof:

> It seems that the trouble, which I strongly believe was premeditated, arose between Heffer [a communist] and the foreman of the Camp to which the men were attached, which culminated in the former being fired by the said foreman, whereupon Heffer influenced the men referred to above to stop work and return with him to Edmonton. It seems that the foreman in question was of a very irritable nature and at times next to impossible to reason with. Heffer, learning of this, apparently used him [the foreman] as the “goat” and irritated the man until he [Heffer] was fired. I believe there is some justification in appealing for reinstatement of these men to relief, when one considers the fact that probably 90% of them are more or less uneducated and not knowing Heffer’s “purpose” were easily influenced by a past master at his “art.”

The situation concerned the premier enough that he wired local MP H. E. Spencer in Ottawa asking him to “kindly see Minister and advise if he will give instructions to take [the] men back at Jasper.” Telegram from Premier Brownlee to H. E. Spencer, 8 February 1932, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 516B.

Letter from McKee to David Mitchell, 6 May 1932, EA, RG 11, class 149, file 10.

See, for example, Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us* and *Park Prisoners*.

See A. B. McKillop, “A Communist in City Hall.”
5 Local Responsibility in Decline

1 As only one example of many, in late February 1934, Winnipeg’s City Council informed the provincial government that “the City of Winnipeg is no longer able to assume any portion of the cost of direct relief.” In May of that year, Saskatoon passed a resolution calling on the “Federal Government to assume full responsibility for unemployment relief.” Minutes of Council, 27 February 1934, and Saskatoon Council Resolution forwarded to Winnipeg City Council, Minutes of Council, 8 May 1934, WA.


3 In parallel fashion, historian Robert Wardhaugh describes in more general terms Ottawa’s declining interest in the Prairie provinces as a result of the Depression and other national and international concerns: “The revamping of federalism and the constitution, the crisis in capitalism and the beginning of a new economic order, and the lengthening shadows of dictatorship and the threats of world war relegated Prairie concerns to the background. The crude political reality was that as the region became less influential and indeed, more burdensome, King’s focus turned elsewhere: The West would never again receive the same attention from Ottawa.” Robert A. Wardhaugh, *Mackenzie King and the Prairie West*, 163.

4 See John Taylor’s important article “Relief from Relief: The Cities’ Answer to Depression Dependency,” where Taylor argues that most of the early calls for full federal responsibility for unemployment relief came from the western cities. See also Keith Banting’s wider discussion in “Canada: Nation-Building in a Federal Welfare State.”


6 Ibid. King did not elaborate on his remark about France. However, French unemployment figures may have painted a somewhat rosy picture. During the 1920s, French farmers had hired about two million foreign migrant workers. When the economy soured, many of these workers were dismissed and sent home, but their removal from the workforce was probably not reflected in unemployment statistics. In addition, in 1930, many French factories reduced workers’ hours rather than laying workers off, and French employment figures did not generally include underemployed workers. Personal communication, Kenneth Mouré, September 2010.
7 Letter No. 10 for Council, enclosed in letter from Davison to Clarke, 7 December 1934, EA, RG 11, class 105, file 1.

8 Proceedings of Conference of Representatives of Canadian Western Municipalities, Calgary, 28–29 January 1935, VA, 33 B-4, file 3. Fifty-three delegates, including mayors, aldermen, commissioners, managers, and councillors, together representing twenty-six cities, are listed as in attendance.

9 Ibid. The conference was divided into three main committees, Finance, Relief, and Taxation, and each of the three produced resolutions calling on the federal government to assume responsibility for relief. See also “Mayors Delve into Taxation and Relief Problems; Urge Ottawa Assume Total Relief Costs,” Calgary Daily Herald, 29 January 1935; “Credit at Cost by Central Bank Asked by Mayors,” Globe and Mail, 30 January 1935; and “Mayors Conference at Calgary,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 28 January 1935.

10 Letter from Davison to Clarke, 7 December 1934.

11 Letter from Clarke to Davison, 8 December 1934, EA, RG 11, class 105, file 1. Clarke nevertheless approved of the newspaper’s report, deeming it effective in putting the issues facing the cities squarely in the public eye.

12 Letter from Saskatoon Mayor J. S. Mills to Edmonton Mayor Joe Clarke, [n.d.] January 1935, EA, RG 11, class 70, file 1.

13 Finance Committee Resolution, Proceedings of Conference of Representatives of Canadian Western Municipalities, Calgary, 28–29 January 1935. In a handwritten note on Vancouver Mayor Gerry McGeer’s copy of the Finance Committee Resolution, the phrase “No thought of repudiation” follows the resolution that reads: “FURTHERMORE BE IT RESOLVED that all Western Provincial Governments be requested forthwith to pass legislation making it imperative upon all holders of existing debentures and coupons of Western Municipalities and School Boards to register their ownership with the various Provincial Secretaries or Ministers of Municipalities in each Province as a condition precedent to the cashing of any coupons or bond.”

14 Proceedings of Conference of Representatives of Canadian Western Municipalities, Calgary, 28–29 January 1935.

15 Telegram from Camillien Houde, Mayor of Montréal, Proceedings of Conference of Representatives of Canadian Western Municipalities, Calgary, 28–29 January 1935. Houde initially proposed to the western delegates a Dominion-wide meeting to take place in Ottawa. (The actual meeting took place in Montréal.) Houde first came to the idea of organizing a national conference of Canadian mayors during a visit to London, Ontario, to receive from that city as “Montreal’s first magistrate the parchment which conferred upon him all the privileges of citizenship.” Transcripts of Radio Canada Canadian Radio Commission Coast-to-Coast Broadcast by Mayors of Nine
The Ontario Mayors Association resolution, unanimously passed by forty-four Ontario mayors, reads: “Whereas unemployment relief is a national problem: Therefore be it resolved that this conference goes on record in favour of petitioning the premier of Ontario to support the decision of the premier of our sister province of Quebec in his offer to the federal government that the full cost of this problem be paid by the provinces of Canada and the federal government share and share alike.” Camillien Houde pointed out in his telegram to the western mayors conference that “mayors of Quebec cities and towns affected by direct relief, thirteen altogether, met in my office in December and unanimously passed the following resolution: That the Dominion and Provincial Governments should immediately assume responsibility for direct relief.” Telegram from Camillien Houde, Mayor of Montréal, Proceedings of Conference of Representatives of Canadian Western Municipalities, Calgary, 28–29 January 1935. See also “Believes Government Preparing to Assume Relief Responsibility,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 29 January 1935.

The “five million citizens and 75 percent of the taxes” claim was a consistent feature during the Dominion Mayors Conferences of 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938. See, for instance, “Mayors at Montreal Reach Solemn Verdict at Conference Today,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 26 March 1935; and “Honeyman Asks for Municipal Relief Strike,” Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 16 March 1937.

Considerable planning had gone into the meeting, indicating the importance that the mayors attached to the conference. The mayors soon struck an organizing committee that met in Montréal in mid-March to make arrangements for the mayors’ arrival later that month. Among those on the organizing committee was Edmonton alderman and future family court judge Athelstan Bisset, who collected materials associated with the conference, including information circulars that various individuals presented to each delegate, conference proceedings, and transcripts from a radio broadcast. See Dominion Conference of Mayors, PAA, Athelstan and Mary Bisset Collection, PR 1981.0330, box 1, file 32.

Comparative Statement of the Relief Situation in Canadian Municipalities in Relation to Municipal Finances Prepared by Department of Social Research,
McGill, for the Organization Committee, Dominion Conference of Mayors, Hotel Mount Royal, 25–27 March 1935, submitted 23 March 1935, VA, 33 C-4, file 14. Figures include dependents of heads of families and single persons, but indigents and workers engaged on relief works were excluded. Marsh made himself available throughout the conference to answer any questions that might arise from the numbers he produced. His figures are based on data from February 1935 or the nearest available date prior to February.

23 Comparative Statement of the Relief Situation in Canadian Municipalities in Relation to Municipal Finances.

24 Verbatim Report of Proceedings, Dominion Conference of Mayors, Morning Session, 25 March 1935, PAA, Athelstan and Mary Bisset Collection, PR 1981.0330, box 1, file 32, n.p. It might be pointed out here that the press made much of Houde’s apparent threat simply to discontinue Montréal’s direct relief payments as of 1 May 1935, forcing the federal and provincial governments either to continue paying for direct relief and make up the municipal shortfall or else to direct the police and militia to keep order. The press also claimed that some 50 percent of the nation’s mayors were behind Houde’s plan. Apparently, though, mayors in the Prairie provinces were not. None of these threats appeared in the verbatim conference proceedings, and the conference passed no resolutions to this effect. See “Conference of Mayors Explosive,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 25 March 1935, and “National Crisis Looms as Result of Failure to Secure Concessions,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 28 March 1935.


26 Verbatim Report of Proceedings, Dominion Conference of Mayors, Evening Session, 25 March 1935. The precise wording of the resolution, as introduced by Mayor Houde, read: “NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; by this Conference of Mayors representing all parts of the Dominion of Canada and directly representing approximately five millions of its population and more than seventy-five per cent of the taxes paid; THAT from and after the first day of April A.D. 1935 the Dominion Government take over and assume the entire cost of unemployment relief in the Dominion of Canada.” Canadians who tuned into the Radio Canada Canadian Radio Commission Broadcast, which began at 9:15 p.m., heard the following: “The Canadian Radio Commission brings this evening a broadcast which will be of historic importance. For the first time the heads of Canada’s great urban centres are meeting to discuss their problems. You will hear this evening nine three-minute addresses on the terrible problem of unemployment given by leading Mayors from nine Provinces of Canada.” The addresses that followed sketched out the conditions in each mayor’s city. See Transcripts of Radio Canada Canadian Radio Commission Coast-to-Coast Broadcast by Mayors of Nine Provinces, Dominion Conference of Mayors, 25–26 March 1935.
Verbatim Report of Proceedings Dominion Conference of Mayors, Evening Session, 25 March 1935, p. 91. The reference to the residual powers clause in section 91 of the British North America Act signalled the mayors’ contention that the “Peace, Order, and Good Government” power gave the Dominion government the jurisdictional competence to assume responsibility for what might otherwise be considered a matter of local responsibility and therefore a provincial or municipal issue.

See Memorandum of Proceedings, Continuing Committee of the Dominion Conference of Mayors, 22 April 1935 to 12 March 1936, reprint of letter from Perley to Houde, 18 April 1935, VA, 33 C-4, file 14, pp. 1–2. See also, for example, “Acting Prime Minister Tells Delegation That Consideration Will Be Given but Problem Should Be Taken to Provincial Houses,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 28 March 1935. The federal government continued to refuse to deal directly with city administrations despite the conference itself, the radio broadcast on the first evening of the conference, and a conference committee’s trip to Ottawa on 26 March 1935 that included an invitation to MPs to participate in a special meeting in the Railway Committee Rooms in the House of Commons. See Verbatim Report of Proceedings, Dominion Conference of Mayors, Morning Session, 27 March 1935, pp. 191–93.

Telegram from Houde to Reid, 14 April 1935, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 835. Perley had been left in charge when Bennett “was effectively out of action from late-February to mid-May,” owing both to an acute respiratory infection and to his attendance at the Silver Jubilee in London. Robert A. Wardhaugh, Behind the Scenes: The Life and Work of William Clifford Clark, 96.

Memorandum of Proceedings, Continuing Committee of the Dominion Conference of Mayors, 22 April 1935 to 12 March 1936, reprint of letters from Perley to Houde, 18 April 1935, and from Reid to Houde, 22 April 1935, VA, 33 C-4, file 14, pp. 1–2 and 3. Similar provincial expectations of an impending Dominion-provincial conference came from L. P. D. Tilley, premier of New Brunswick, and John Bracken, premier of Manitoba (see pp. 4 and 5).

Verbatim Report of Proceedings, Dominion Conference of Mayors, 27 March 1935, pp. 208–15. The motion to strike the committee passed easily, by a vote of 26 to 2. According to Winnipeg Mayor John Queen, Houde and the other mayors also invited the nation’s premiers met with them later that spring “to present a strong and united demand to the Dominion Government for them to relieve the Municipalities from this [relief] expenditure.” But, he lamented, “at that time, the provincial governments did not see they [sic] way fit to join in that Conference.” Letter from John Queen, mayor of Winnipeg, to John Bracken, 22 July 1935, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 835. See also Camillien Houde’s recapitulation of the 1935 Conference’s activities in a letter to Gerry McGeer, mayor of Vancouver, 22 March 1936, VA, 33 C-4, file 14.
32 Telegram from Houde et al. to Reid, 10 April 1935, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 835. As chair of the Continuing Committee of the Dominion Conference of Mayors, Houde sent similar letters to the premiers of all nine provinces, as well as to Acting Prime Minister Sir George Perley. See Memorandum of Proceedings, Continuing Committee of the Dominion Conference of Mayors, 22 April 1935 to 10 March 1936.

33 Telegram from Houde et al. to Reid, 14 April 1935, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 835.

34 Memorandum of Proceedings, Continuing Committee of the Dominion Conference of Mayors, 22 April 1935 to 10 March 1936, p. 6.


37 Minutes and Resolutions, Dominion Conference of Mayors, Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, 23–25 March 1936, VA, 33 C-4, file 14, Relief Committee Resolution, pp. 1–2. Other resolutions passed at the conference included one urging the federal and provincial governments “to participate financially and administratively in a supervised policy to establish upon small acreages of agricultural and garden lands families now registered upon relief, as an unemployment measure, for the purpose of giving an opportunity to relief recipients to make themselves self-supporting and relieving the municipalities of permanently maintaining families on relief.” Another proposed “that the Government of Canada take the lead in establishing a uniform, centralized agency for the care, maintenance, training, and rehabilitation of the blind,” and still another suggested “asking the Dominion Government to consider the serious condition of the youth of the country and devise some scheme to alleviate their position.” See ibid., General Resolutions, pp. 1–3.

38 “Relief Loans to Provinces $111,000,000,” Calgary Daily Herald, 25 March 1936. Manitoba owed $15,028,086; Saskatchewan, $46,834,986; Alberta, $22,779,000; and British Columbia, $26,947,680.

39 Goldenberg would go on to enjoy a long career, first serving as labour arbitrator for the Canadian Labour Congress, later consulting on the Rowell-Sirois Commission and serving as a senator from 1971 to 1982, and finally chairing the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in the lead-up to the Constitution Act of 1982.

40 Comparative Statement of the Financial Situation in Canadian Municipalities, Prepared by H. Carl Goldenberg, M.A., B.C.L., F.R., Econ.S. McGill University, for the Dominion Conference of Mayors, Ottawa, 1936, Table 5, submitted 22 March 1936, PAA, Premiers’ Papers, GR 1969.0289, file 835. Goldenberg’s figures are generally higher than those produced by Leonard Marsh the previous
year but are probably closer to the reality. Marsh projected expenditures for 1935 from the vantage point of February 1935, where Goldenberg presumably had access to more precise numbers gleaned from the cities later in the year. Goldenberg set Winnipeg’s 1935 spending on relief at $1,886,000 as compared to Marsh’s $1,556,000 and Edmonton’s at $545,543 as compared to Marsh’s $463,000. Saskatoon’s relief spending—at $292,671, according to Goldenberg’s 1935 figures—fared slightly better than Marsh’s estimate of $305,000.


42 Minutes of the Meetings of the Joint Conference, Dominion Conference of Mayors and Union of Canadian Municipalities, Ottawa, 16–18 March 1937, VA, 33 D-2, file 3. The Dominion Conference of Mayors was not the first national mayoral association. In 1901, the mayors of Canada’s larger centres had formed the Union of Canadian Municipalities to advocate chiefly for municipal issues, particularly matters relating to utilities. This association met yearly. In 1937, largely in order to avoid duplication of activities, the Dominion Conference of Mayors and the Union of Canadian Municipalities merged to form the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities (later the Federation of Municipalities).

43 Memorandum of Proceedings, Continuing Committee of the Dominion Conference of Mayors, 11 August 1936 to 15 March 1937, VA, 33 D-2, file 3, p. 3.

44 Circular letter from Bullock to mayors, 8 February 1937, VA, 33 D-2, file 3. In the interim, Stanley Lewis, mayor of Ottawa, became chair of the DCM’s Continuing Committee.

45 Reports of the Chairman, Dominion Conference of Mayors, and the President, Union of Canadian Municipalities and of the Committee on Resolutions, the Committee on Amalgamation, and the Committee on Statistics, as approved by the Joint Conference, Ottawa, 16–18 March 1937, VA, 16 E-2, file 8.

46 Report of the Resolutions Committee of the Joint Meeting of the Dominion Conference of Mayors and the Union of Canadian Municipalities, 18 March 1937, VA, 33 D-2, file 3. The resolution reads: “THAT the Dominion Government forthwith increase their grants-in-aid by such amounts as are necessary to preserve the financial structures of the urban municipalities pending a proper redistribution of the costs of relief and of public revenues to permanently stabilize public assistance in Canada and the preparation of a scheme of work and wages to replace unemployment relief.” The amendment again calling on the federal government to take over and assume all relief costs was defeated at the conference. See also “Mayors Alter Relief Stand,” Globe and Mail, 19 March 1937. Representatives presented to King and Cabinet the revised demands from Ottawa, Moose Jaw, Halifax, and Winnipeg.


49 Statistical Report, Unemployment Relief Costs, Canadian Municipalities, Prepared for the Dominion Conference of Mayors, 1937. Saskatoon’s relief expenditures came to just over $800,000; the city raised $103,505 through taxation and borrowed $142,000. Edmonton, in similar fashion, raised $340,000 of its total relief expenditure that year of $1,289,487.

50 Ibid.

51 “Honeyman Asks for Municipal Relief Strike.”

52 Ibid.


54 For the mayors’ perspective on the Rowell-Sirois Commission (officially the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations), see Tentative outline, General notes and memoranda, re: Proposed brief for Rowell Commission, 17 November 1937, VA, 33 D-2, file 3. After Mackenzie King called the commission in August 1937, the Central Management Committee of the new mayors’ organization, the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, busied itself preparing its brief. By November, the mayors had produced a tentative outline for presentation to the commission. In the main, the mayors’ proposed brief focused on the fact that the “duties and responsibilities of municipalities have increased without a proportionate increase in the power to raise the revenue necessary to meet their new obligations.” Municipal revenue generation through property taxes, the mayors argued, had been and continued to be “an inadequate basis of taxation.” In the end, it seemed generally agreed that the mayors considered some sort of redistribution of taxation and other revenue-generation powers desirable. City authorities in Alberta told a similar story in their brief to the Rowell-Sirois Commission. See “Cities of Alberta: Submission to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, 1938,” Peel’s Prairie Provinces, Bruce Peel Special Collections Library, University of Alberta, Peel 10478, http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/10478.html.

55 Minutes of the First Annual Conference of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities Held at the Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, 15–17 March 1938, Canadian Federation of Municipalities Archives. The mayors’ resolution reads: “THAT pending the Dominion Government taking over, and assuming and discharging the full responsibility in the matter of unemployment relief, the said government on the expiration of the present agreements with
the respective provinces, enter into a new agreement with the provincial
governments, whereby the Dominion Government assumes 50% of the cost
of unemployment relief, including medical assistance and hospitalization,
conditioned upon the provinces assuming at least 40% of the said costs. See
also “Mayors Demand Ottawa Pay Half Relief: Job Crisis Unabated They
Hold,” Globe and Mail, 16 March 1938.

56 For more on the history of Canada’s relief camp experience, see Lorne Brown,
When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State, and Bill
Waiser, Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada’s National Parks,
1915–1946.

57 Quoted in Taylor, “Relief from Relief,” 18.

58 Waiser, Park Prisoners, 89.

59 "Police, Mobs, in Bloody Fight Today,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 7
November 1932.

Readers might make some allowance for the dramatic language, especially the
word rioter. For a more complete description of the Edmonton Hunger March,
see Eric Strikwerda and Alvin Finkel, “War, Repression, and Depression,
1914–1939,” chap. 4 in Alvin Finkel et al., Working People in Alberta: A History,
97–100.

61 Waiser, Park Prisoners, 86.

62 E. J. Hart, J. B. Harkin: Father of Canada’s National Parks, 421.

63 See descriptions of camp life in Victor Howard, “We Were the Salt of the Earth!”:
The On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot; Laurel Sefton MacDowell, “Relief
Camp Workers in Ontario During the Great Depression of the 1930s”; and
Waiser, Park Prisoners and All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and the
Regina Riot.

64 Quoted in Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us, 35.

65 Ibid.

66 Quoted in Hart, J. B. Harkin, 403. The informant, Hart explains, was later
revealed to be a “communist” sympathizer who had been expelled from the
Riding Mountain camp.

67 Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us, 37.

68 Ibid., 42–43; Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, 102. For a general examination of
relief camps, see Brown, When Freedom Was Lost.

69 Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us, 43.
Ibid., 43–55.

71 Ronald Liversedge, Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek, 83.

72 “B.C. Jobless Hold Relief Officials with Picket Lines,” Calgary Daily Herald, 8 June 1935. For detailed descriptions of the On-to-Ottawa Trek, see Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us, and Victor Howard, “We Were the Salt of the Earth!” For an important rebuttal to Howard’s book by surviving Trekkers, see Robert Savage, Robert Jackson, Jean Shiel’s (Evans), and Ben Swankey, review of “We Were the Salt of the Earth!” and the author’s rejoinder, “Victor Howard Responds,” Prairie Forum 11, no. 2 (1986): 278–83 and 284–87.

73 See Waiser, All Hell Can’t Stop Us, 18–22, 222. My description of the Trek draws on Waiser’s account.

74 Robert B. Bryce, Maturing in Hard Times: Canada’s Department of Finance Through the Great Depression, 112.

75 David G. Bettison, The Politics of Canadian Urban Development, 61. James Struthers sets the figure at a slightly more conservative 75,000. As Robert Wardhaugh points out, though, “by 1933 housing construction had fallen to 31 per cent of the 1929 level.” Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, 155; Wardhaugh, Behind the Scenes, 95.

76 Quoted in Bryce, Maturing in Hard Times, 163. John Bacher argues that the Depression itself ushered in a “new social approach to housing issues.” According to Bacher, the publication in 1932 of the Halifax Citizens’ Committee on Housing report and subsequent similar studies investigating housing problems in other cities “expressed the new ideals characteristic of the ideals of the Depression-era social housing advocates.” John C. Bacher, Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy, 67.

77 Wardhaugh, Behind the Scenes, 94–95. Bennett’s jurisdictional and cost concerns over housing policy had already been made known to Herbert A. Bruce in response to the Bruce Report, a study of housing problems in Toronto in 1934. See also Larry A. Glassford, Reaction and Reform: The Politics of the Conservative Party Under R. B. Bennett, 1927–1938, 164–65. Glassford notes that Ontario Lieutenant-Governor Dr. Herbert Bruce was also an early advocate for federal intervention in housing policy, especially affordable housing for the poor. J. S. Woodsworth was a similar advocate.

78 Bryce, Maturing in Hard Times, 163. Among the figures appearing before the Special Committee was Deputy Minister of Finance W. C. Clark, whose ideas would heavily influence the drafting of the Dominion Housing Act. Representatives of the Dominion Mortgage and Investment Association and the National Construction Council also appeared before the committee. Jill Wade, Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing In Vancouver, 1919–1952, 63–64. See also Wardhaugh’s treatment of the committee’s work in Behind the Scenes, 94–102.
Most cities had their share of so-called slums. A 1934 survey of housing in Winnipeg reported that of the nearly two thousand homes surveyed, roughly thirteen hundred had rooms used for both cooking and sleeping. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 73.


Quoted in ibid., 62.

Ibid., 61.

Ibid., 63.

Minutes and Resolutions, Dominion Conference of Mayors, Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, 23–25 March 1936. They instead called for “a housing plan designed to correct the aforesaid conditions,” and they asked “that subsidies be provided for the purpose of eliminating slum conditions, by a process of rehabilitation, and by building new homes, for the purpose of adequately housing the people.” The mayors also unanimously declared the Dominion Housing Act a failure in terms of its capacity to generate new jobs. See “Mayors in Conference Call on Ottawa Gov’t for New Housing Plan.”

As John Bacher notes, there were “several reasons for the disinclination of western lending institutions to participate. These included the provincial debt moratoria and adjustment legislation, the fact that old houses could be bought at prices cheaper than new, the costs of real estate taxation and appraisal, and the inadequate inspection facilities of firms that lacked established lending organizations.” Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 111–12. Bacher also surveys the federal government’s experimentation with home improvements legislation.

Quoted in ibid., 113.

Ibid.

Ibid.


See, for example, Special Issue on the Great Depression, *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 4 (1969).

For a recent assessment of Bennett’s tariff policies vis-à-vis Great Britain and the United States, see Anthony Patrick O’Brien and Judith A. McDonald, “Retreat from Protectionism: R. B. Bennett and the Movement to Freer Trade in Canada, 1930–1935.”


Ibid. The federal government had entered into a special arrangement with the nation’s railway companies to this effect.
94 See Bryce, *Maturing in Hard Times*, 59. As Bryce notes, “The Dominion and provincial governments were hard pressed to find enough revenue or sources of credit to meet their essential regular expenditures, as well as those for relief.” In Alberta, while this was not an unemployment relief measure per se, the new Social Credit government at least promised each citizen a $25 dividend. Some unemployed workers were nevertheless skeptical about the new government’s ability to deliver on its promise. A reporter spoke to one group of single, unemployed men—who were among the roughly three thousand who had descended on Edmonton in 1935—about their expectations: “Asked if they really believed that the time would come when a $25 monthly dividend would be declared, the leader of the party smiled and said: ‘What if it isn’t? We have nothing to lose. We’ll have to spend the winter in camp anyway, so we might as well be in Alberta and be in on the ground floor if the dividend is declared.’” “3300 Single on Calgary, Edmonton Relief: Hundreds More in Camps Interested in S.C. Dividends,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 3 December 1935.


99 Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 141. Montréal Mayor Camillien Houde believed that the efforts of the earlier 1935 Dominion Conference of Mayors and its Continuing Committee had resulted in the federal government’s agreement to “increase its contribution to unemployment relief in the Provinces to the extent of 75% for a period of four months. It was specifically stated by the Federal Government that this action was taken for the purpose of assisting the Provincial Governments to relieve the burden of unemployment relief costs that had fallen upon the municipalities.” Letter from Houde to Gerry McGeer, mayor of Vancouver, 22 February 1936, VA, 33 C-4, file 14.

100 Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 141.

101 P. T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, a Feminist on the Right*, 86. See also Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*.


103 Rooke and Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart*, 90.

104 Ibid.

For an insightful discussion relating to Charlotte Whitton, the needs of the unemployed, and the emerging profession of social work, see Struthers, “A Profession in Crisis.” Struthers concludes, “Ultimately, the skills Whitton made most attractive to government were those of a profession that could limit the costs of social welfare and keep a close surveillance over the unemployed. In return for such services, social workers could expect increasing employment within a burgeoning state sector. In effect, they, not the jobless, would become the chief beneficiaries of Canada’s ‘reformed’ system” (185).

Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 143.

Ibid.

Ibid., 141–45.


Quoted in Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 144.


Ibid., 30 March 1936.

Ibid., 3 September 1936.

Ibid.

Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 155–57.

Diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon MacKenzie King, 20 December 1937.


Ibid.


Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 191. A second housing act—the National Housing Act, passed in 1938—essentially expected the same sort of cooperation from municipalities (basically, that they refrain from passing any zoning or property tax bylaws that might discourage new home construction projects).

Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 104.

Quoted in Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 191.

Quoted in ibid., 179.

Each city’s appropriation was based on its population according to the 1937 census. At a rate of three dollars per resident, Edmonton, for example,

126 Summary of the Operative Provisions of the Municipal Improvements Assistance Act, 7 July 1938, SA.


128 Letter from Mayor Pinder to Saskatchewan Premier Patterson, 18 November 1938, SA.


130 Letter from City Commissioner to Dr. A. MacG. Young, MP, 31 March 1939, SA.

131 Letter from City Commissioner to Chief Engineer Wier, 19 June 1939, SA. The total amount loaned to the city was just under $200,000; this included funds for the pumping station standby, primary water mains, the electrical distribution building, a waterworks heating plant, sewer and watermains, paving on Lorne Avenue, and a new boiler at the power plant. List of Applications Forwarded to the Government Under the Municipal Improvements Assistance Act, 1938, 29 September 1939, SA.

132 Council Minutes, 13 July 1938, p. 265, EA.

133 Ibid.

134 Council Minutes, 1 September 1938, p. 295, EA.

135 City Council Minutes, 1939, p. 67, EA.

136 Council Minutes, 24 July and 8 August 1939, WA.


139 Patrick H. Brennan, “Thousands of Our Men Are Getting Practically Nothing at All to Do: Public Works Relief Programs in Regina and Saskatoon, 1929–1940,” 42.

140 Office of the City Engineer, Report on Construction Works as at 29th February 1940, SA. It remains unclear whether either Edmonton or Winnipeg participated in the Civic Improvement Act scheme.