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Joan. Poole

University of Windsor

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The Evolution of Social Services in the Border Cities during the Great Depression

by

Joan Poole

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research through the Department of History in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, History at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, 1990
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ABSTRACT

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
IN THE BORDER CITIES DURING THE
GREAT DEPRESSION

by
Joan Poole

This thesis is a study of the evolution of attitudes towards the delivery of social services to the poor, the dispossessed, and the unemployed during an unprecedented economic crisis that lasted for the better part of a decade. Its particular geographic focus is a group of contiguous communities known as the Border Cities, and composed of East Windsor, formerly Ford City, Sandwich, Walkerville and Windsor, Ontario.

For centuries, the response to the problems of poverty and unemployment were based on the principles of the English Poor Law which held that:

1) responsibility for the welfare of the poor was primarily a local and private matter;
2) poverty and misfortune were due to a basic moral flaw in the individual;
3) certain groups in society were poor through no fault of their own, and were a legitimate
charge upon society.

The Border Cities offer an excellent opportunity to study how the Depression affected an area and what varied solutions were offered to the economic, social and political distress caused by widespread unemployment, plant shutdowns, unpaid municipal taxes, climbing relief rolls and finally defaulting municipalities. Under pressure, the traditional ways of thinking and doing came up short and there was a need to re-think traditional charity and local responsibility.

This thesis will examine more fully the various responses to the problems of the Great Depression, with special attention to the evolution of social services and their delivery, the creation of new administrative machinery of local government, and a new legislative relationship among the municipality, the province and the Dominion.
I would like to thank Professor Larry Kulisek, Professor Trevor Price and Professor Bernhard Kroeker, members of my Thesis Advisory Committee. Also I would like to thank Mark Walsh and Linda Chakmak, of the Municipal Archives, City of Windsor, and Agnes Pearson of the University of Windsor Archives for their advice and support. A special thanks to my typist Linda Jessup for her patience and perseverance.
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Introduction

The Great Depression began in Canada in October 1929 with the stock market crash on Wall Street. Ten years later the Depression was over, but the Second World War had begun. Before it was over in 1945, the world, and Canada in particular, had changed irrevocably. Changes occurred in nearly every facet of Canadian life, but perhaps nowhere was the change more apparent than in how governments at all levels viewed the economy, their role in it, and their response to the social and political ramifications of economic decisions and events.

This thesis is a study of the evolution of attitudes towards the delivery of social services to the poor, the dispossessed, and the unemployed, during an unprecedented economic crisis that lasted for the better part of a decade. Its particular geographic focus is a group of contiguous communities known as the Border Cities and composed of East Windsor, formerly Ford City, Sandwich, Walkerville and Windsor, Ontario.
If the Depression's depths and duration were unprecedented, the Border Cities led the province in catastrophes resulting from it, i.e. unemployment, financial collapse, municipal bankruptcy, and senior level bail-out and supervision.

For centuries, the response to the problems of poverty and unemployment, in Britain and the countries she colonized, was based on the principles of the English Poor Law, legislated during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and refined during Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901). The philosophy of the Poor Law was teneted on three basic principles:

1) that responsibility for the welfare of the poor was primarily a local and private matter;
2) that poverty and misfortune were due to a basic moral flaw in the individual;
3) that certain groups in society were poor, through no fault of their own, and were a legitimate charge upon society.

These groups, known as the "worthy poor", included the blind, the lame and the halt, the widows and the oppressed of Biblical times.

This thesis will show how the doctrine of local responsibility failed in an industrialized, complex, highly interdependent society.
Canada did not discover unemployment in the Great Depression, but it was only then that the precarious nature of industrial society became glaringly apparent.\(^1\)

In addition, the doctrine of personal or individual responsibility coloured every aspect of delivery of social services to those individuals outside of the traditional category of "worthy poor". The doctrine was manifested in terms of granting cash relief or vouchers, requesting that menial work be done for relief payment, and granting relief that was meagre with punitive stipulations and the loss of the individual's rights to privacy and pleasure. In all cases involving the concept of local liability and the doctrine of individual responsibility, the rudimentary and limited delivery system of traditional responsibilities for legitimate social services were overwhelmed by the new demands placed upon them.

The Border Cities offer an excellent opportunity to study how the Depression affected an area and what varied solutions were offered to the economic, social and political distress caused by widespread unemployment, plant shutdowns, unpaid municipal taxes,

climbing relief rolls and finally, defaulting municipalities. Under pressure, the traditional ways of thinking and doing came up short and there was a need to re-think traditional charity and local responsibility.

Prior to 1929, Windsor, as a one industry town based on automobile manufacturing, had a boom and bust economy. During the "auto boom", workers had a fairly high standard of living. Windsor and the surrounding area were in the vanguard of technological and cultural change which made up the second industrial revolution, and were far ahead of the rest of Canada in developing welfare capitalism and employer initiated benefits for workers. But whatever the area and its industries had developed on their own as a way of coping with the boom and bust swings of the economy, it was not enough to handle the problems of the Great Depression, and the help of all levels of government was required.

Solutions were offered by the municipal, provincial and federal governments. The local or municipal government rationalized the delivery of services, but its efforts were inadequate, as they required a broadened resource base which only the provincial and federal levels could provide. As a result there were new ideas and new institutions created at both the municipal and provincial levels.
The cost to the municipalities was the loss of their former power and autonomy.

The federal government reluctantly entered into new cost sharing agreements with the provinces to aid them fiscally with the problems of the Great Depression. However the federal government, until after the Second World War, was hesitant to become involved in any long term social welfare programs, and enacted legislation on a yearly "ad hoc" basis. In contrast, the American federal government, under Franklin D. Roosevelt as president, enacted legislation called the "New Deal" which brought the senior level of government directly into the struggle for and delivery of social services during the Depression.

This paper's main focus will be on the Border Cities' response, both private and municipal, as they worked out a rationalized system of delivering social services in response to overwhelming economic and social crises. By the end of 1931 what was in place for the provision of relief and welfare services by the municipality was a three level organization, made up of the political, the public and the professional sectors.

Within the private sector, several individuals came forward with new ideas, and made contributions both at the local, provincial and federal levels. One such individual was Senator David Croll. At 90
years of age, still living in Toronto, a member of the
Canadian Senate, he is a man with a life-long
commitment to the little man and progressive social
welfare legislation. In 1930, at age 30, Croll was
elected Mayor of Windsor where he claimed to have
pioneered the welfare state.² His progressive
Liberalism led to his election to the provincial
parliament in 1934 where he became a member of Mitchell
Hepburn’s cabinet, one of two progressives in the
cabinet, along with Arthur Roebuck. Croll soon held
portfolios for the first Departments of Public Welfare
and Municipal Affairs to which he later added Labour.

Croll resigned in disgust from the Hepburn cabinet
after Hepburn called in the troops to quell the
striking workers at the General Motors plant in Oshawa
in 1937. He was re-elected Windsor’s Mayor in 1938 and
later joined the Essex-Kent Scottish Regiment as a
private and went overseas during the Second World War.
After the war, he represented, as a Liberal, the
federal riding of Spadina for many years, until he was
appointed to the Senate where he again took a
pioneering role in defining the problems of poverty and
social injustice in Canadian society.

Another prominent Border Cities' personality, whose influence was felt beyond the local area, was Mr. Wallace Campbell. Campbell joined the Ford Motor Company in 1905, under founder Gordon McGregor, and became its president in 1927. He served as Chairman of the Border Citizens' Services Committee during the key years of the Depression. This committee illustrated how effectively the private sector and local government could work together to resolve local problems, maintaining the tradition of local focus and self-help. Campbell adapted many of the principles of management learned in industry and applied them to the delivery of social services. During the Depression years, the Citizens' Committee raised vast sums of money from local industries and from workers who were still employed. Both public bodies and private businesses initiated compulsory deductions from salaries, to help pay for the high relief costs in the Border Cities. The Citizens' Committee became a model for other citizens' groups across the province, and the basis for current organizations such as the United Way.

Campbell was appointed in 1932 by Conservative Premier George Henry to head a Provincial Commission reviewing the Administration of Direct Relief across the province. The committee's report, although only 24 pages long, provided a blueprint for the creation of
municipal social service departments, based on uniformity of service, a non-partisan approach to the granting of relief, and equity for all recipients. The Campbell Report also recommended the creation of a provincial Department of Public Welfare to look after the continuous relationship between the province and the municipalities, and to make permanent the provincial role in relief.

The report also suggested that a Public Welfare Board be established in each municipality to represent the public interests and to ensure that fair practices were maintained and that no political intervention was permitted. The city of Windsor, one year earlier, in 1931, had instituted such a Welfare Board to be representative of various interest groups, separate from the elected municipal council and independent of the political process.

Besides the alternatives offered by all levels of government and by the private sector, many residents of the Border Cities sought radical political solutions to the problems of the Depression by supporting and voting for new political parties that appeared or re-appeared in the 1930's. In 1932 a new national political party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, or C.C.F. party, was formed. It attracted many adherents in the Border Cities, and ran candidates in federal,
provincial and municipal elections. Other parties such as the Communist Party of Canada, formed in 1919, were revived and received renewed support as a result of poor conditions. These parties developed as a direct response to the failure of the old parties to offer new ideas or to take effective action against the ravages of the Depression. Many colourful individuals in the Border Cities supported the new parties, and brought a new excitement and passion to municipal elections.

In 1934 Windsor was among the first Canadian cities to elect a socialist mayor, trade unionist George Bennett. Windsor also elected as a municipal councillor and later as a controller, a staunch member of the C.C.F. party in the person of Olive Jane Whyte, a social worker who worked for the United Church of Canada.

In the course of the next several chapters, this thesis will examine more fully the various responses to the problems of the Great Depression, with special attention to the evolution of social services and their delivery, the creation of new administrative machinery of local government, and a different legislative relationship among the municipality, the province and the Dominion.
The first chapter will present background information on the Border Cities prior to 1929 and will focus primarily on the impact of the Great Depression from 1929 to 1935.
Chapter 1

Background and Impact of the Great Depression in the Border Cities

During the last part of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century, the population of the Border Cities exploded. European immigrants, plus workers from other parts of Canada, were lured to the Border City area by the promise of secure jobs in the ever-expanding auto industry. Detroit, across the river from Windsor, became the automotive centre for the U.S.A. and for the world. This fact, plus the easy transportation and accessibility to the large markets in the American midwest, influenced the location in the Windsor area of automobile manufacturing plants and their ancillary industries. During World War I, the Border City area was also very important for the developing munitions industry. In fact, during the war years, Ford had diverted some of its production to munitions and war supplies.

The period up to 1929 was basically a period of optimism in the Border City area, as it was throughout
the whole of Canada. Although there were periodic economic recessions, these were time-limited and cyclical. Usually, for people who wanted to work, there was full employment. Union activity, begun in the early part of the century, lessened in the teens and twenties. Employers were more concerned with staff turnover, especially of skilled tradesmen, than with unemployment. Even some of the economic and social dislocations, caused by the Great War and the problems of the returning veterans, could not diminish the sense of hopefulness and belief in continued prosperity and expansion.

The population of the Border Cities increased from 23,777 in 1911 to 120,000 in 1929. From 1921 to 1927 the Border Cities increased in population 85.2%, while Montreal increased 28%, Vancouver 21%, Quebec City 15%, Toronto 8.5%, Hamilton 7.5%, and Ottawa 6.3%. In that period, the Border Cities increased their population by 49,394, while Toronto, a city of over one half a million people and next in percentage increase in Ontario, gained 43,879 people.¹

The following chart presents graphically the population increases throughout the area.

TABLE I
GROWTH OF THE BORDER CITIES AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EAST</th>
<th>WALKERVILLE</th>
<th>WINDSOR</th>
<th>SANDWICH</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>inc 1912</td>
<td>3048</td>
<td>17538</td>
<td>2106</td>
<td>12692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5800</td>
<td>6279</td>
<td>37170</td>
<td>3643</td>
<td>33381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>16081</td>
<td>11351</td>
<td>68079</td>
<td>11483</td>
<td>106994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>14954</td>
<td>9751</td>
<td>63010</td>
<td>10922</td>
<td>986372²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The City of East Windsor, formerly Ford City, had an incredible increase from 5,800 in 1920 to 16,081 in 1930 and was incorporated as a city in 1929. Its population increase was mainly due to the many industries that had located within its boundaries; Ford of Canada, the truck division of General Motors, and the Dominion Forge and Stamping Company. It was an area of modest homes for workers and fairly low municipal taxes.

The town of Walkerville also saw an increase in population, but an increase less dramatic than the other three Border municipalities. Although Walkerville had many key industries, e.g. Hiram Walker Distillers and Wyeth Drugs, many Walkerville employees lived in Windsor. Sandwich also saw a great increase in population; in a ten year period from 1920 - 1930

the population tripled. Expansion here was related to the hope for further expansion of the United States Steel Corporation in neighbouring Ojibway. Unfortunately, the plant closed in the 1930's as a result of tariff changes, negotiated at the Imperial Economic Conference in 1932, which no longer made the plant economically viable.

With the rapid expansion in population there was a concurrent expansion in all public services, especially in real estate activities and civic improvements. By 1929 the community had 26,000 homes but 100,000 lots laid out. Sidewalks, sewers, watermains and cement highways were built where there would probably be no building of any consequence for years. One very important public work undertaken in this period was the completion of the filtration plant at Ford City by the Essex Border Utilities Commission in 1926.

After the Great Depression began, it was the failure of many homeowners to pay their municipal taxes, which was a main contributor to the municipalities' bankruptcies. In 1929 the amount of unpaid taxes in the city of Windsor was only $32,072.

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By 1932 the amount had increased to $2,547,206.\textsuperscript{4}

In the pre-Depression era, economic recession, unemployment, and poverty were seen primarily as temporary and self-correcting. Any assistance given to families and individuals was the responsibility of local government or private charity, a concept rooted in the English Poor Law and transplanted to British North America. One of the local agencies, very active in aiding the less fortunate, was the "Home of the Friendless". The home operated as a hostel for destitute people, providing meals and lodging on a short term basis. Volunteers associated with this group raised private money, but also received grants from the municipalities. In the Auditor's Report for the City of Windsor, under "Charity", modest amounts of money were allotted through the Depression years to the Home of the Friendless.

\textsuperscript{4} Bradshaw Report on City of Windsor Finances, May 12, 1932. RG 3AV-1/1.
CHARITY DISBURSEMENTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount Allotted According to Auditor's Reports</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>7,877.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>4,710.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>3,240.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,745.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>2,680.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>2,724.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>2,226.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>4,548.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures reveal two interesting realities. The high expenditures in 1928 are related to a moderate downturn in the Border Cities economy. In the period 1927 - 1928, the Ford Motor Company had significant lay-offs as it moved its production from the Model T to the Model A, and the numbers of people needing assistance increased during this period. From 1931 to 1934, the amounts allotted to the Home of the Friendless remained very low, as the problem of unemployment and poor relief reached staggering proportions. During this period, many groups were involved in providing assistance. By 1935, with conditions improving following amalgamation, the Home of the Friendless renewed work with its traditional clientele and costs rose to the 1929 level. Churches

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5 Auditor's Reports, City of Windsor, 1928 - 1935. RG 3A12/45-54.
also played a traditional role in providing for the needy and worthy poor. Other groups such as trade unions, benevolent societies, and fraternal organizations such as the Masons, offered short-term assistance to members who had fallen on difficult times.

Although assistance to the poor was seen mainly as a local or private responsibility, the experiences of the Great War diluted somewhat the notion of individual responsibility with a realization of the communal nature of society. The war had increased Canada's patriotism and forged an emerging sense of Canadian identity. Residents of the Border Cities became very involved in the war effort, especially in the purchase of war bonds. Officially the City of Windsor contributed over $100,000. to the war effort.⁶

After the war, the government of Ontario enacted Mother's Allowance legislation which provided pensions to widows and children of soldiers killed during the Great War. Half the cost of this program was to be borne by the municipalities and half by the province. This piece of legislation did create a precedent for future cost sharing programs, developed between the municipalities and the province during the Depression,

to cover the high cost of relief.

During the period before 1929 in the Border Cities, there were concerns about the fast expansion of public services, the staggering growth of population, and the duplication of services involved in operating four separate municipalities. One of the key groups looking at possible future problems was the Border Cities Chamber of Commerce. During the teens and twenties of the century, the Chamber raised the idea that municipal amalgamation might be a better alternative to operating four separate municipalities.\(^7\)

In 1922 (April 6) the Chamber organized a debate on "The Amalgamation of the Border Cities". For the affirmative was Mr. J. H. Rodd, K.C.; for the negative Mr. J. H. Coburn, K.C. Mr. Rodd's main point was that public organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, which were striving in the best interests of these communities, found their efforts continually obstructed by the fact that "we were five or six communities instead of merely one". Rodd, in the debate, admitted that joining-up involved a lot of petty and unworthy jealousies, but he believed that 5 communities could work more effectively as one. On the negative side, Mr. Coburn felt that "we were getting along very well

\(^7\) Bradshaw Report on City of Windsor Finances, May 12, 1932. RG 3AV-1/1.
as it was and that each community was more thoroughly informed as to its own problems". He also said that the question of taxation was a factor that could not be overlooked.  

At the municipal government level, Windsor City Council, on November 21, 1929, enacted a by-law calling on the city to look at the possibility of amalgamation with its three neighbours. This By-law remained neglected until the problems of the Depression forced the provincial government to act on amalgamation as a means of rescuing four bankrupt or financially precarious municipalities.

At a provincial level the Conservative government, in 1929, commissioned a study on the Public Welfare System in the province. Even before the stock market crash and ensuing Depression, there were indicators that caring for the less fortunate was far more than a local responsibility and that changes were occurring which made certain groups in society more vulnerable to economic recessions. The Royal Commission on Public Welfare, headed by Mr. P. D. Ross, had as its mandate to review the provision of public welfare services that

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8 Chamber of Commerce Minutes, April 6, 1922. Series II, Sub-series D, Box 7.

9 Minutes, City of Windsor Council Meeting, November 21, 1929. RG 2AV1/15.
fell into the domain of the provincial government. The Commission found many gaps and inequities in the provision of services across the province. It clearly identified 7 areas where the province was "badly lacking".\(^{10}\)

1) Preventive Social and Health Work.  
2) Social Follow-up Work.  
3) Training of Social Workers.  
4) Provision for Occupation of Inmates of Provincial and Municipal Institutions.  
5) Segregation of Various Classes of Inmates and Institutions.  
6) Proper Inspection of the Institutions maintained or assisted by the Province.  
7) Efficient coordination of the various Charitable and Corrective Agencies.

The Commission also recommended that the provincial government invest in considerable capital outlays of at least $20 million for institutional improvements. The Commission stated that its recommendations were not based on problematical or possible future needs:

They are based on need which exists now --- which indeed has existed for some time past. The usual public tendency in regard to such need is to wait until they become grave evils.\(^{11}\)

Another recommendation of the Ross Commission was the establishment of a provincial Department of Public

\(^{10}\) Report of the Royal Commission on Public Welfare, P. D. Ross, Chairman, 1930.  
\(^{11}\) ibid.
Welfare under a cabinet minister with various directors under him and his deputy minister, such as a Director of Mental Hygiene, a Director of Child Welfare, and a Director of Adult Relief. The Commission concluded its findings with the following statement:

The task allotted to the Commission embraces conditions which are affected by 56 different existing statutes of the Legislature. To attempt to gather all necessary features of these acts in a more compact form would be a problem, but possibly a single Government Department to revise and utilize them all to the best advantage would be practical.\(^\text{12}\)

The provincial Liberal government of Premier Mitch Hepburn finally did enact some of these recommendations and, in 1934, David Croll, former Mayor of Windsor, became the first provincial Minister of Public Welfare.

But in spite of these various attempts to coordinate policies and procedures around the growing of charity and relief, until the 1930's, there was very little organized effort to develop any lasting legislation around unemployment, the problems of poverty, and the expenses of running four parallel and separate municipalities in the Border City area. Although in the year 1927 - 1928, because of lay-offs at Ford, there was a period of economic recession, the

\(^{12}\) ibid.
mood right up to the stock market crash in October 1929 was one of optimism. A column in the Border Cities Star on November 24, 1927 titled "Economic Situation and Hopes for the Future" based on an interview with John Mansfield, the President of Chrysler Canada, quoted him as stating:

The worst period in the progress of the Border Cities has been experienced and is now a thing of the past. Unemployment will disappear entirely within a few weeks. The Border Cities are on the threshold of great growth which few can visualize and their population is destined to increase within a few years. I think that you will see 200,000 or 250,000 in these Border Cities.\(^{13}\)

Even after the stock market crash, and the subsequent economic and social dislocation, many in the Border Cities thought that the Depression, following past patterns, would be of short duration. They also believed that the difficulties could be resolved at a local level, if only people had the will to succeed. The minutes of the Border Cities Chamber of Commerce reflect this optimism.

\(^{13}\) Border Cities Star, November 24, 1927.
There are many signs that we have scraped the bottom of the Great Depression. It is certain so far as the Border Cities are concerned at any rate that conditions will not get appreciably worse. The community situation won’t get much worse before it gets better. The remaining months of 1931 will in all probability be the low point of hard times and 1932 will usher in the ascending circle.¹⁴

In many ways the Border Cities area was better prepared than many other municipalities to handle the problems of the Depression. The area’s economy had always been more volatile because of its dependence upon a single industry, automobile manufacturing, known for its "boom or bust" fluctuations. During times of plant shutdown and lay-offs, all sections of the community had developed coping strategies. Employers, because they were concerned about losing skilled tradesmen to other areas, shortened work hours allowing more people to work. Employees, never sure when they would be laid off, became accustomed to saving as much as possible for the slow times.

The area had been among the first in Ontario to amalgamate different private charities and fundraising campaigns into one group which, during the Depression, was called the Border Citizens Service Committee. This

¹⁴ Border Cities Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, September 30, 1931.
quest for a more organized unified charity organization began well before the 1930's. As early as 1919 it was noted at a Chamber of Commerce meeting that in many American cities, including Detroit, local charities had successfully consolidated into one. As in other manufacturing cities in Canada, the Depression created large numbers of unemployed people who became dependent on the municipalities for support. In addition, the Border area was very dependent on the auto industry. More than half the manufacturing jobs in the area were related to the automobile. In 1929, there were 10,441 jobs related to the auto industry, as opposed to 9,501 in other sectors. With the Depression came an increase in lay offs. From a high number of 242,000 cars produced annually in 1928, car production in the Windsor area dwindled to 60,700 by 1932.

When the auto industry began to flounder, it created a ripple effect in the Border Cities' economy as so many people were supported directly or indirectly through auto manufacturing. Added to this were high numbers of transients who had arrived from other

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15 Border Cities Chamber of Commerce Minutes, February 27, 1919, Series II, Sub-series B, Box 7.


regions of the country looking for high-paying jobs in the auto industry. With fewer jobs, and more lay-offs, these people were the first to become unemployed. Many remained in the area and added to the numbers on relief.

Windsor suffered more than many other Canadian municipalities because of its proximity to the U.S.A. In good times, the Detroit area offered many employment opportunities to Border Cities' residents. However, in 1931, in an effort to deal with its own high unemployment, especially in Michigan, the American government made a unilateral decision to bar Canadians living in Windsor and working in Detroit from continuing to work in the United States. In 1926, there were approximately 15,000 commuters employed in Detroit. By 1927, there were practically as many people living in the Border Cities supported by employment in Detroit as there were people living in the Border Cities supported by work there. This situation was unparalleled in any other large community in Canada, and illustrated how vulnerable the local economy was to international politics. A 1931 Employment Report, commissioned by the Border Cities Chamber of Commerce, illustrates the numbers of people affected.

18 Border Cities Chamber of Commerce Minutes, May 10, 1932, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 11, File 106.
## Total Employment of Border Cities Residents as of May 31, 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Border Cities</th>
<th>Commuters</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>10,332</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>25,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>19,558</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>29,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>22,501</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>30,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>19,855</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>25,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>15,040</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>17,040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In keeping with its overall policy of political isolationism and economic protectionism throughout the 1930's, the government of the U.S.A. created a high tariff barrier on the importation of foreign-made goods, including those manufactured in Canada. Also in 1920 the U.S.A. had adopted a Policy of National Prohibition which forbade the consumption or sale of alcohol beverages. Although a lucrative illegal business of selling liquor to Americans developed along the Detroit River, a business known as "RUM RUNNING", the American decision had a negative effect on the Canadian distilling industry, especially on Hiram Walker Distillery located in the town of Walkerville. The Prohibition Law was finally repealed by the Americans in 1933.

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The embargo upon Canadian alcoholic beverages entering the United States wiped out a large business which involved millions of dollars in this community. The embargo was another international measure which bore more heavily upon the financial situations of the Border Cities than in any part of Canada. 20

A further economic difficulty in the Border Cities was experienced in the railway business. Windsor, because of its geographic location, was a railway terminus from which five different rail lines radiated. These lines employed fairly large numbers of people. Because of a national and international situation in railroading, very large numbers of these were laid off. 21

As a result of these many factors, the Border Cities level of unemployment was among the highest in all of Canada.

Those cities that have the most severe unemployment such as the Border Cities and Toronto suburban communities have had to stand the largest relief bill. This means that taxpayers in these places have had to contribute far more to the relief of unemployment than those in communities less affected by the Depression. 22

21 ibid.
22 Cassidy, op. cit., page 264.
Unfortunately, the funds for the payment of relief costs came almost solely from municipal property taxes. As the Depression continued much longer than ever expected, many people were unable to pay their property taxes. By 1931 Windsor had the highest percentage of unpaid taxes in any municipality in Ontario.

**Percentage of Current Year's Tax Levy Uncollected as of December 31, 1927**

**Ontario Municipalities***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belleville</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brantford</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Falls</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshawa</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Catharines</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York Township</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East York Township</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures taken from "Financial Statistics, Canadian Governments" compiled and issued by Citizens' Research Institute of Canada, Toronto.

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23 Cassidy, op. cit., page 260.
By 1932 the situation had become so acute, that the provincial government commissioned a survey, headed by Horace Bradshaw, to review the city's finances and to make recommendations. This survey, called the Bradshaw Report, identified unpaid taxes as the main financial problem of the city as it led to the inability of the city to pay back its loans, to honour the debentures issued to cover capital works, and to pay the high costs related to unemployment relief. The Bradshaw Report stated

... that one of the most serious factors which enters into the City's problems is the accumulated unpaid taxes which on December 31, 1932 amount to $2,547,206.00. In 1931 only 58-1/2% of the taxes due were paid within that year.²⁴

Ultimately all the economic difficulties experienced by the Border Cities, due to the Depression, led to the amalgamation in 1935 of East Windsor, Windsor, Walkerville and Sandwich, and the assumption of the financial affairs of the newly created City of Windsor by the province. The long-term result of the Great Depression in the Border Cities was the complete overhaul of the municipal welfare system and a redistribution of responsibilities among the municipality, the province, and the federal government.

²⁴ Bradshaw Report, May 12, 1932, RG 3AV-1/1.
Chapter 2

The Municipal Response to the Great Depression

Solutions to the many difficulties created by the Great Depression were initiated at all three levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal. Although the main focus of this paper is on the local responses, and changes that contributed to the evolution of a codified and established social service delivery system, this response can only be understood when measured against provincial and federal initiatives. This chapter examines the response of the municipalities to the problems of the Great Depression.

When the Depression began, it was generally assumed that any problems created could, and should, be handled at the local level. The principle of local responsibility was grounded conceptually in the English Poor Law, which also implied that people were often responsible for their own misfortune either because of a basic moral flaw or because of their own indolence. Relief would be provided by the local authorities, but the aid offered was generally meagre and often mean and
punitive. In Windsor, people seeking relief were deprived of certain little pleasures, as if by seeking relief, they forfeited any right to enjoyment. During the Depression, and for several years following, those on relief were not allowed to own or drive cars, have radios or liquor permits.

Local authorities also were reluctant to make direct cash payments for those on relief, preferring to give out vouchers for all required items. Inherent in this thinking, was the fear that with cash, people might abuse the system, might buy forbidden items such as liquor rather than food. The voucher system stigmatized those on relief, singling them out when they went to stores, and limiting their freedom of choice as to what they bought or where they shopped.

Another principle of the English Poor Law, reflected in the Border Cities' response to the Depression, was that of "local responsibility". Although the municipalities recognized the need to look after their own residents, they felt no obligation to people who had moved to the Border Cities from other areas. Each Border City enacted residency requirements for people seeking relief. At first there was a 6 month residency requirement, but later this was extended to 1 year. Those who had lived in the area under 1 year were directed to return to their home.
communities. Occasionally, the city underwrote the travel costs of returning a family to its home community, usually out of province. Residents from other communities who chose to stay were considered a "charge" on their home municipalities from whom the Border Cities attempted to collect. As late as 1935, and following the amalgamation of the Border Cities, the policy of referring non-residents back as a financial charge to their home municipalities was maintained. A Welfare Committee Report tabled at a Council Meeting of the newly amalgamated City of Windsor for November 12, 1935, requested that the provincial Department of Public Welfare make arrangements with the federal government, so that all municipalities could collect under the "residents' rule" the cost of all relief, temporary or otherwise, hospitalizations, school expenditures and transportation, incurred on behalf of newly arrived indigents from other municipalities.¹ This process was known as "billing back", and continued well past the Great Depression.

The municipalities' response to the problems of the Great Depression took three forms:

¹ Council Minutes, November 12, 1935, RG 2AV1/16.
a) the construction of public works
b) the provision of direct relief
c) administrative changes in the machinery of local governments in order to make the implementation of (a) and (b) more uniform and expeditious.

The first plan of attack on the economic difficulties of the Depression was public works projects. These projects suited the political climate of the time, as well as the particular situation of the Border Cities. People seeking relief were to be made to work on public works projects, as there was a great deal of discomfort in providing relief unless there was some work attached to it. The Border Cities also required new public works and construction. Because of the area's rapid expansion in the first three decades of the century, it had lagged behind in many capital works projects such as sewers, grading, road repairs and government buildings. Such construction, if undertaken, would provide work for the unemployed and as well, modernize the city.

After only one year however, the local government became disillusioned with using public works as a method of dealing with unemployment. It was expensive and it addressed only the needs of the labouring classes. W. R. Campbell, Chairman of Ford of Canada, told a meeting of the Border Citizens' Services
Committee on October 7, 1931 that:

It would cost the various municipalities much less to keep these people than to provide costly projects just for the sake of providing work.²

By 1932 the Border Cities had abandoned relief work in favour of direct relief.

The cost of direct relief during the first 2 years of the Depression (1929–1931) was funded out of revenue from municipal property taxes. In 1930 the federal government legislated a Relief Act which made federal funds available to the provinces and through cost-sharing to the municipalities, but there was no attempt, at least federally, to administer these funds in any organized way.

They were distributed by a ramshackle collection of private agencies and hastily organized relief committees.³

The original formula of cost sharing among the municipality, the province, and the federal government was 1/3 each. However, as the Depression wore on, the senior levels of government were forced to pay more and more the cost of relief as the municipalities grew

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² Minutes, Border Citizens’ Services Committee, October 7, 1931.

financially weaker. In the year 1935, the province of Ontario paid all the relief costs for the newly amalgamated City of Windsor.\(^4\)

Direct relief in the Border Cities did not include cash payments. Families were issued vouchers for food, clothing, and fuel. In some cases involving able bodied men, Windsor tied the provision of direct relief to the performance of some kind of manual labour. Men on relief were put to work in the summer doing road grading jobs, cutting grass, and collecting garbage for which they were credited with $4.00 per day towards their relief allowances.\(^5\)

The Border Cities also set up residency requirements for the granting of direct relief. In 1930 Windsor City Council enacted a residency requirement of 3 months in order to receive direct relief from the city. In 1931, as the number of unemployed continued to rise, the requirement was raised to 6 months, and then one year.

One of the most significant ways that the municipal government responded to the impact of the Depression, was through the administrative reorganization of the social service delivery system.

\(^4\) Bradshaw Report, RG 3AV-1/1.
\(^5\) Cassidy, op. cit., page 76.
Until the Depression, the administration of relief and the care of the elderly, the poor, and the homeless had been through a rather loose system shared by local government and private charities. Although certain amounts of money were allotted by municipal governments for the care of designated groups, it was never considered a very important part of local government operation. During the early part of the century, information about charity payments is quite difficult to find in Windsor City Council Minutes. Usually information on charity was recorded in the Finance Committee Reports. One year after the Stock Market Crash, Charity Reports were filed under the Public Works Committee Reports. By 1931 there was a separate Committee Report in the Council Minutes under the section "Welfare Committee". Beginning in that same year there was a conscious attempt by the city of Windsor to streamline the provision of welfare and relief services. Early in 1931 the Council engaged the services of Miss Grace Jackson, of the Social Welfare Council in Toronto, to do a report on the Reorganization of the Public Welfare Department.6

Throughout 1931, attempts were repeatedly made to separate the granting of relief and welfare from the

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6 Unfortunately no copies of this report have been preserved.
political process, to develop humane standards of care for all relief recipients, and to hire professionally trained social workers to implement the procedures developed by the public sector. Administratively these attempts resulted in a fairly well organized public welfare department in the City of Windsor. Philosophically these changes reflected an acceptance by elected officials that the problems of the poor and dispossessed were a permanent feature of modern society, and would not entirely disappear when prosperity returned to the area. Furthermore, an effort was made through these administrative changes to define a public welfare policy and to implement procedures that would ensure fair and competent services provided by professional social workers. The hiring of professional social workers represented a marked shift in attitudes towards welfare services. In the past, well intentioned volunteers, often affiliated with churches had provided many of the welfare services to those in need.

The bureaucratic approach replaced the more dramatic crusades of Social-Gospel-inspired reformers; ameliorating the problems of an urban industrial society was now a technical matter entrusted to those who claimed professional expertise. 

Overall Structure of Social Service Delivery System Composition

**FOCUS**

**POLITICAL**

**UNIT**

Welfare Committee of City Council

**MEMBERSHIP**

Municipal Councillors, Chairman, elected by Council from one of its members

**PUBLIC**

**UNIT**

Welfare Advisory Board

**MEMBERSHIP**

Appointees representing public, voluntary organizations; Border Cities Services Committee and employers; 3 Representatives from City Council

**PROFESSIONAL**

**UNIT**

Department of Public Welfare Dept. Head Professional Social Workers

**MEMBERSHIP**

- Department Head hired by Welfare Advisory Board who reported to the Board
- Social Workers hired by Dept. Head with formal approval of Welfare Committee

**MUNICIPAL UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE**

**DUTIES:**

- registration of all seeking employment.
- maintain listings of all available employment.

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8 Welfare Committee Report, April 30, 1931, op. cit.
WELFARE COMMITTEE OF CITY COUNCIL

Composition

1) 1 Councillor
   - elected or chosen
     as Public Welfare
     Commissioner to be
     Head of Welfare
     Committee of City
     Council

Commissioners throughout Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commissioner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>No commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>George Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Clyde Curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>George Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Clyde Curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Olive Jane Whyte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Olive Jane Whyte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DUTIES - General

1) Define overall policy for the Department of Public Welfare

DUTIES - Specific

1) Oversee all welfare expenditures and refer to Finance Committee.

2) Approve all hiring within the Department of Public Welfare.
WELFARE ADVISORY BOARD

Composition

1) 3 Members of Municipal Council
   - Chair of Welfare Committee
   - Chair of Finance Committee
   - 1 other Member appointed by Council

2) 2 Representatives of Border Citizens’ Services Committee

3) Representatives of other private sector agencies and interests groups

DUTIES - General

1) Oversee the implementation of Public Welfare procedures.

Duties - Specific

1) Advisor to the Public Welfare Commissioner who is named or appointed from and by the members of City Council.
   (Minutes, April 20, 1931)

2) Full management and control of the public welfare department and its administration in accordance with the general policy laid down by the Council.
   (Minutes, October 5, 1931)
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Composition
1) Department Head
2) Professional Social Workers

DUTIES - General
1) Develop day-to-day procedures for implementing overall policies laid down by the Welfare Committee.

DUTIES - Specific
1) Investigate all cases referred to department for help.
2) Maintain central registry of those requesting help.
3) Ensure that certain basic standards of care offered to those on relief by setting up daily food allowances, minimum standards for shelter, health care, etc.
4) Provide relief and all other welfare services.
In addition to administrative changes that would professionalize the social welfare delivery system, many attempts were made to remove the provision of relief from the political process. At a council meeting, held April 30, 1931, a recommendation was made that the Welfare Advisory Board appoint one or two Directors to be in charge of the Public Welfare Office. In fact, one was appointed, Mr. James Clarke. Once the Director was appointed, all current employees were requested to resign so that a complete reorganization of the department could be effected. Advisory Board members were also forbidden to secure any information about a particular case and could only access prescribed information at regular meetings of the Board. Finally, a Committee was struck whose purpose was to find other office space for the Welfare Department which was then housed in the basement of City Hall. A more neutral location was sought. Space was eventually found in the Bell Telephone Building on Goyeau Street.

9 Welfare Committee Report, April 30, 1931, op. cit.
At a council meeting (Windsor City Council), held on October 5, 1931, the council went on record as

... favouring the principle that the Department of Public Welfare should be administered entirely on a non-political basis, that the Council shall in future outline the policy, and control the expenditures only of the Department, and that the Advisory Board and the Welfare Director, acting under the instruction of the Board shall, except as herein before qualified, have the full management and control of the Department as its administration in accordance with the general policy laid down by the Council from time to time.  

One of the most significant developments in the overhaul of the municipal public welfare system, was the creation of the Welfare Advisory Board, which was created as a civic watchdog to oversee the work of the Welfare Department and to ensure that fairness and professional standards were maintained. In the minutes of the Welfare Committee Report, tabled on October 20, 1931, the duties of the Board were clearly defined as the following:

1) The keeping of complete records of expenditures in public welfare matters.

2) The preparation annually, at the first of the year, of a budget of anticipated expenditures in public welfare and social services.

3) The employment, subject to the approval of the Municipal Council of such staff as may be found necessary to the work of the Board.

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10 Welfare Committee Report, October 5, 1931, op. cit.
4) Administration of civic relief and family social work.

5) Framing of policies of cooperation with private agencies whose work affects the family welfare field.

6) Cooperation with the Employment Bureau and other work-providing agencies.

7) Supervision of admissions to residence and institutions of persons for whose care the city is responsible.

8) Scrutiny and endorsements of payments to institutions on a per diem basis.

9) Approval of admissions to hospitals and sanatoria where payment is guaranteed by the city and shaping of policy in respect of such persons or their families.\textsuperscript{11}

Windsor was one of the first Canadian municipalities to reorganize its machinery of local government in an attempt to provide social welfare services in an equitable and professional manner. According to Professor Harvey Cassidy:

\begin{quote}
\ldots a most important administrative development which arose out of the unemployment emergency was the formation of departments of public welfare in a number of cities, including Toronto, London and Windsor.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Welfare Committee Reports, April 20, 1931, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{12} Cassidy, op. cit., page 123.
These new departments have been designed to bring together in one branch of civic government, the various social welfare services commonly carried on by a city including poor relief, social casework and hospitalization of indigent patients.\footnote{Cassidy, op. cit., page 76.}

These changes in the municipal welfare system also had an effect on the organization of provincial government machinery. In 1929 the province had commissioned Mr. P. D. Ross to review the provision of Welfare Services across the province. Later, in 1932, the same Conservative government appointed Wallace Campbell, Chairman of the Ford Motor Company, and head of the Border Citizens’ Services Committee, to do a massive study of Provincial Policy on Administrative Methods in the Matter of Direct Relief in Ontario. Many of Campbell’s observations and recommendations were based on the Border Cities experience and led ultimately to the establishment, in 1934, of the first provincial Department of Public Welfare.

In 1934, when the Coughlin Report on the Border Cities failing finances was commissioned by the province, the chairperson, Judge J. Coughlin, spent some time reviewing the system in place for providing direct relief, in order to see if there were ways that money could be saved. He recommended a general
tightening up of procedures around granting of relief. He still felt that employment was the answer for those on relief and recommended:

... a careful classification of the personnel of the unemployable to first determine how many are employable and what employment they are suited for. 14

The local municipalities, throughout the early years of the Depression, lobbied both the private sector of the community and the province for more money. The creation of the Welfare Advisory Board, a quasi-official agency, was one attempt to encourage close cooperation between the public and private sectors. The municipalities also sought the aid of local employers. This tactic was supported by Judge Coughlin in his report. He called on employers to look first to employing long-term residents of the area, and recommended that the relief administration cooperate closely with industry so that, insofar as may be possible, everyone who is useful to industry will be discovered and absorbed before outside population is brought in.15

As early as 1930, Windsor City Council embarked on a series of meetings with private employers to find out

15 ibid.
what assistance they could offer in the current economic crisis. A special Unemployment Committee Report, dated February 24, 1930, records a meeting held on February 18, 1930 in which the following representatives of companies attended:

C. M. Ruynett - Bell Telephone Company
M. G. Campbell - Kelsey Wheel
M. R. Cooper - Ontario Employment Bureau
W. H. Cantelon - Auto Specialties Company
O. C. Callendar - General Motors Corporation

The meeting was chaired by acting Windsor Mayor F. J. Mitchell. The aim of the meeting was to ask employers for help in supporting some of the city's policies, such as only employing permanent residents of the area, and to ensure that those who were most needy received employment first, i.e. married men with dependents.

While the Border Cities were soliciting the help of private industry, they continued to petition the province for more help. Through the first Federal Relief Act, passed by the Conservatives in 1930, a cost-sharing program for relief payments had been worked out between the federal government and the provinces. This, in turn, led to monies being made available for cost-sharing between the provinces and the municipalities. As the economic situation in the Border Cities became more desperate the province

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assumed a greater and greater share of relief costs.

The province also offered relief to the Border Cities and other hard-pressed municipalities through the creation of a "Land Settlement" scheme. This was a scheme whereby unemployed city dwellers could be relocated on crown land and put to work farming. Unfortunately, the idea never worked that well. Many of the people living in towns and cities of the South had no farming experience. Also, the land given was not particularly useful for agriculture, often being very stony and scrubby.

One of the most devastating effects of the Depression in the Border Cities was the precarious state of municipal finances whose main income was property taxes. Because of the length and extent of unemployment, many homeowners were forced to default on their property taxes. Homes were abandoned and became a charge on the municipalities. Vast tracts of serviced land, prepared for the construction boom that never happened, had to be maintained. As relief costs rose, the situation became even more acute. There was no longer money to support the unemployed, keep up the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the municipalities infrastructure, or to pay interest on municipal debentures. During the years 1932, 1933, and 1934, Windsor Municipal Council made many resolutions,
asking for more help from the province. In spite of increasing pressure, the province on a day-to-day basis tried to resist acknowledging responsibility for the problems raised by the Depression. Even in 1935, the year the province assumed all relief costs, a communication was filed from the Minister of Public Welfare advising that the provincial government

... is not prepared to increase cash relief allowances and that the Province suggests that a saving of 10% could be effected if bread and milk were purchased centrally.17

After amalgamation, the areas’ focus was on increasing the shelter allowance paid to those on relief which the province had assumed in 1934. On April 28, 1936 a delegation from Windsor visited David Croll, in Toronto, to present their concerns to him in a brief on the Housing Situation in the City of Windsor. The brief made the following recommendation:

That landlords be placed on a par with all classes of tradespeople supplying indigents and that welfare rentals be allowed at the fair cash rental rate instead of on the basis of the taxes levied, and that allowances of indigent rentals on properties be taken over by the city for unpaid taxes on arrears of housing payments.18

17 Council Minutes, December 17, 1935.

18 Welfare Committee Reports, RG 2A1/47. Brief submitted to David Croll, Minister of Public Welfare, April 28, 1936, RG 2A/1-47.
While the Border municipalities were busy on all fronts trying to deal with the consequences of the Great Depression, the private sector in the area was also launching a frontal assault on the many problems in the area.
Chapter 3

The Private Sectors' Response to the Problems of the Great Depression

Windsor was one of the Canadian municipalities with a very definite history of private sector involvement in the delivery of social services. Even before the Depression, there was a developed tradition of business leadership and initiatives as well as a history of self-help groups and local enterprise. During the Depression, two of the most active private sector groups in the area were the Border Cities Chamber of Commerce and an off-shoot of the Chamber of Commerce, the Border Citizens' Services Committee.

Some of the prime contributions made by both of these groups were to focus on the issues, cut through the rhetoric of politicians, and often hold public forums for discussion and resolutions of concerns that had been identified. The private sector also was part of a movement which sought to separate the granting of relief from the influence of politics. Like governments, the private sector initially viewed the Depression as one similar to those of the past, short-
lived, cyclical, and ultimately solvable by local
government and private initiative.

As early as 1919 the Border Cities Chamber of
Commerce had sought ways to streamline the provision of
local charity and to operate more efficiently. To this
purpose the Chamber had established a Committee to look
at the consolidation of local charities, a Committee
formulated on the premise that provision of service
among private groups was fragmented and often
duplicated. The minutes of a meeting of the Border
Chamber of Commerce held on February 27, 1919 reported
that

... all city relieve [SIC] in
Windsor is handled by Mr. W. F.
Hackney although in other Border
municipalities such relieve [SIC]
is looked after by the Mayors. Mr.
Hackney is quoted as mentioning
that Detroit, Cleveland, Boston,
Kansas City and Pittsburg were
among those cities which had
already successfully organized the
consolidation of their local
charities.¹

In the 10 year period following 1919, there is no
further mention in Chamber Minutes of any consolidation
of local charities. This was partly related to the
relative prosperity of the 1920's when the Border
Cities' economies were booming. By 1928, with a

¹ Minutes, February 27, 1919, Border Chamber of Commerce,
Series II, Sub-series E, Box 9, File 24.
downturn in the economic cycle, the minutes of the Ladies' Section of the Chamber of Commerce revive the idea of consolidated organization through which social agencies might cooperate. At a meeting held October 11, 1928 by the Ladies' Section of the Chamber, two ideas were raised; the creation of a consolidated organization for the granting of charity and relief, and, a Central Registry in the Border Cities in which all persons receiving assistance from any organization would be listed.² A Committee consisting of the President, the Secretary, and the Chair of the Ladies' Section was formed, whose prime task would be to issue invitations to all social agencies to attend a meeting to discuss an umbrella organization. The idea must have been successful, although there is no reference to further developments in the Minutes. However, at a meeting held November 25, 1930, a Report from the Border Council of Social Agencies was tabled, and discussion was focused on the creation of a Central Registry for persons needing assistance.³ From 1930, the Ladies' Section of the Chamber focused its energy on the plight of unemployed women. At a meeting held

² Minutes, October 11, 1928, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 12, File 113.

³ Minutes, November 25, 1930, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 12, File 113.
September 29, 1931 the Ladies’ Section expressed concern that no action had been taken to help young women who were unemployed and had no homes in the Border area. A motion was made to ask the YMCA to register unemployed single women and to ask the Border Citizens’ Services Committee to pay any costs incurred.⁴

The main body of the Chamber of Commerce, throughout the period of the Depression, focused on identifying issues and recommending solutions to the vast array of problems. From 1929 to 1931 the Chamber had in effect a standing Municipal Unemployment Committee. At the Committee’s first meeting, held December 29, 1929 and chaired by Mr. J. W. Seens, the committee presented a philosophical analysis on the current Depression and made several recommendations. The Committee felt that Canada was a country in which winter conditions made inevitable seasonal fluctuations in employment. It blamed high unemployment in the area on a steady influx of workers from outside points. It also suggested that the area not become too public about its current economic difficulties as it might have an adverse effect on the floatation of municipal

⁴ Minutes, September 29, 1931, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 12, File 113.
debentures. At this same meeting the Committee recommended:

1) that the Employment Committee recommend to the Board of Directors of the Chamber that a resolution be sent to the provincial and federal governments requesting that a study be made of the seasonal unemployment situation in Canada and that public works be undertaken during periods of seasonal unemployment;

2) that the Board of Directors be requested to re-organize the Auto Parts Committee of the Chamber whose focus would be on encouraging, wherever possible, the manufacture in the local area of all automobiles and auto parts now being imported from other countries;

3) that the Directors should issue a general statement to be published in the Border Cities Star that all employers of labour study the seasonal unemployment situation and adjust their business if they can. The committee also asked employers to hire people who had established permanent homes in Windsor, rather than newly arrived workers.

The concept of having residency requirements for hiring was also picked up by the municipality in terms of establishing residency requirements for those seeking relief.

A second meeting of the Chamber Committee on Employment was held on August 18, 1930 with Dr. Ray D. Morand as Chairman. The recommendations made at this meeting were as follows:

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5 Minutes, December 29, 1929, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 11, File 106.
6 ibid.
1) that all citizens having in view the construction or repair of buildings, undertake the same now, so as to offer work to local tradesmen.

2) that a ban be imposed upon imported finished automobiles, presumably by the federal government.

3) that construction of public buildings begin.

4) that employers distribute their employment so that all may secure work.

This was also a suggestion of the local government, that plants reduce hours, but maintain their labour pool as much as possible. It was done partly as a way of ensuring that skilled tradesmen and artisans remain in the local area.

5) that employers not employ any further employees coming to the Border Cities after the municipal registration of the unemployed is closed.

Citizens were also encouraged to participate in a buy-at-home campaign, and to continue buying period, as a way of stimulating the local economy. The Committee also recommended that architects, engineers, and purchasing agents give preference to Border City products in their buying.

Besides imploring the private sector for help, the Committee also made recommendations to different levels of governments involving capital works projects. At that time (1930) public works were seen as a key weapon in fighting unemployment. At a municipal level some of the key public works projects completed at this time were Jackson Park and the Drouillard Road underpass. One major federal public work undertaken was the construction of a new federal building on Ouellette
At the last meeting of the Chambers' Committee on Unemployment, held on July 29, 1931, more recommendations were made along the same lines as those made previously. These involved the idea of rotating labour to provide maximum employment for the maximum number of people, hiring only permanent residents of the area, hiring workers with dependents, and only married women who had no other means of support.  

Following the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Unemployment the full Chamber addressed two issues associated with the Depression, the first relating to the barring of area commuters to Detroit, and the American embargo on distilled spirits from Canada. On December 23, 1930 a Special Committee of the Border Cities' Chamber of Commerce formed to deal with the commuter issue, had an interview with Prime Minster Richard Bennett in Ottawa to discuss the situation of the debarred commuters. Prime Minister Bennett promised to take energetic action and instructed Dr. W. O. Skelton, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, to forward an official note to

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7 Minutes, Employment Committee, August 15, 1930, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 11, File 106.

8 Minutes, July 29, 1931, Series II, Sub-series E, Box 11, File 106.
Washington.

The Special Committee also arranged for a meeting, which was held on December 27, 1930, with Thomas Stone of the Canadian Legation. At this meeting an arrangement was made whereby the Chamber would take evidence from debarred commuters to be forwarded to the Legation in Washington and to be presented by them to the American authorities. 9 According to Chamber records, 282 briefs were presented to the Legation. Unfortunately none of these letters are preserved in local archives. That the banning of commuters was a major economic disaster for the local economy can be seen in this review of declining numbers as prepared by the Royal Commission on Amalgamation headed by Judge J. Coughlin. 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Commuters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>4,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>2,151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One person from the Chamber's Office was assigned the task of receiving the evidence of debarred

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10 Coughlin Report on Amalgamation. RG D1 2/1.
commuters. The campaign was not particularly effective in forcing the Americans to re-open the border. On May 13, 1931 word was received from the Canadian Legation in Washington that an agreement with the Americans had been entered into. Certain cases which had been closed to appeals could be re-opened. However, through this process, out of 282 briefs presented, only 7 commuters were reinstated.\textsuperscript{11}

In response to the American embargo on Canadian distilled spirits, the Chamber recommended a retaliative policy on American imports into Canada. The Chamber asked the Federal Department of Trade and Commerce to conduct a survey to determine what commodities were being imported from the U.S. that could be manufactured in Canada. The expressed aim behind this move was to increase the industrial employment of the Border City area by widening the market for Canadian made goods through the creation of suitable tariff schedules.\textsuperscript{12} This idea was never quite successful. The American market for Canadian distilled spirits only opened up when Prohibition was repealed in the U.S. in 1933. The Conservatives, under R. B. Bennett, did raise the tariff steeply as part of their

\textsuperscript{11} Chamber Minutes, May 13, 1931, Series II, Sub-series A, Box 4, File 20.

\textsuperscript{12} Minutes, August 18, 1930.
fiscal program to combat the Depression, a move which fit into the traditional Conservative policy of protectionism but which did little to offer relief to those areas hard pressed by the Depression.

The Border Citizens’ Services Committee was the other private sector group which played a key role in the Border Cities area. The group was created as an offshoot of the Chamber of Commerce, whose minutes for September 18, 1931 contain the following explanation for the Committee:

A group of industrial employers had met the mayors of the Border municipalities for the purpose of working out a scheme of coordinated assistance. It was hoped that it would be possible to work out a scheme whereby money raised by industry could be used by the municipalities for unemployment relief, and would be eligible for government assistance on a 2 to 1 ratio.¹³

The Committee acted only in an advisory capacity to local government. All direct administration of relief was handled by the various municipal welfare boards, often where members of the committee sat, representing different industries or social agencies such as the YMCA or the Victorian Order of Nurses.

¹³ Minutes, Chamber of Commerce, September 19, 1931, Series II, Sub-series A, Box 4, File 20.
The inaugural meeting of the Border Citizens' Services Committee was held on October 5, 1931. Wallace Campbell, Chairman of the Ford Motor Company, was the Committee's first chairman. Later that month, at a general Chamber Meeting held on October 23, 1931, the directors of the Chamber defined the Chamber's relationship with the new Border Citizens' Service Committee, by stating that while it had no definite policy on the new committee, the Chamber and its staff would cooperate as fully as necessary and would assist in setting-up and performing the staff work of any temporary organization required.\textsuperscript{14} Following the initial meeting, the Committee met approximately 6 more times during 1931-1932. At a meeting of the Committee, October 31, 1931, Wallace Campbell stated one of the Committee's purposes as being:

... to effect a plan to take relief administration out of the municipal political field and to create a fair and efficient relief system which will operate without fear or favour.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Minutes, October 23, 1931, Series II, Sub-series A, Box 4, File 20.

\textsuperscript{15} Minutes, October 31, 1931, Series II, Sub-series A, Box 4, File 20.
Professor Harry Cassidy noted in connection with the private sector involvement in raising funds for relief:

The stimulation and coordination of private effort has also brought forth new administrative machinery in the form of specialized committees of municipal councils or joint committees of council members and prominent citizens. A new development of importance has been the formation of Citizens' Committees to assist the municipalities in financing and administering direct relief.  

Professor Cassidy, in his book *Unemployment and Relief in Ontario*, goes on to outline the organizational structure of the Border Citizens Services Committee, which he maintained was the most ambitious in the province, and which was designed to bring about co-operation in relief matters between public and private agencies in nine Border municipalities.

In general, the Committee acted as an agency to coordinate and unify all relief efforts in the Border Cities, public and private. Although its powers are only advisory on matters of municipal relief policy, it is really semi-official for it is based upon close cooperation between a number of local governments and private associations and many of its members are municipal officials.  

\[16\] Cassidy, op. cit., page 124.  
\[17\] Ibid, page 125.
The Border Citizens' Services Committee commenced its fund-drive in the fall of 1931. By April 1932, it had already collected $200,000. It was intended only as a temporary committee, to deal with the problems of the Depression. However, once it was formed, it continued. It was later known, after amalgamation in 1935, as Windsor Community Services. In 1947 it was incorporated as the Community Fund of Windsor. In its current form it is known as the United Way of Windsor-Essex County.

The Committee provided a direct link between private effort and municipal action. It collected and oversaw sums of money ensuring that every dollar raised was spent on relief, and distributed fairly. Like the Chamber of Commerce, the Services Committee also made recommendations. For example, as the numbers of unemployed increased in the Border Cities area, there was increased pressure on local municipalities to ask indigents from other areas to leave. The Border Citizens Services Committee was against this idea.

If they leave, the very large numbers of homes thus permanently vacated will still further reduce property values and tradesmen turnover so that the municipal tax action problem will assume even greater aspects.

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18 Chamber Minutes, April 21, 1932.
20 Minutes, Border Citizens' Services Committee, April 21, 1932, Sub-series A, Box 4, File 21.
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF BORDER CITIZENS' SERVICE COMMITTEE

Chairman
Wallace R. Campbell

Central Committee

30 members made up of representative citizens from the 9 cooperating municipalities in Windsor-Essex county, plus presidents of private social agencies such as the YMCA, Red Cross, and Victorian Order of Nurses.

Sub-Committee
link between Central Committee and municipal governments.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Welfare Committee of Council

- Elected Representatives
- oversees relief expenses

Welfare Advisory Board

- Private Citizens
- ensures fair treatment in granting relief

Department of Public Welfare

- Professional Welfare Workers
- distributes relief in the form of food, fuel and clothing

DUTIES OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE:

- fundraising
- allocation of funds among municipalities
- development of uniform relief granting policies
- arrangements for purchasing supplies at low prices
- development of uniform system of caring for single unemployed men

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Cassidy, op. cit., page 125.
The following tables indicate the amounts of money spent on relief in the various municipalities from November 1931 to 1932, the number of indigents in the same period, and more importantly the amounts of money raised and given to each municipality by the Border Citizens' Services Committee in the same period.

**TABLE 1**

**TOTAL RELIEF COSTS IN BORDER CITIES**  
**NOV. 1931 - APR. 1932**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>43,029.43</td>
<td>180,615.44</td>
<td>74,818.44</td>
<td>64,133.84</td>
<td>73,479.95</td>
<td>53,306.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkerville</td>
<td>16,285.95</td>
<td>17,836.95</td>
<td>18,787.21</td>
<td>15,376.56</td>
<td>14,243.30</td>
<td>10,060.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Windsor</td>
<td>25,582.41</td>
<td>45,503.96</td>
<td>53,366.40</td>
<td>48,675.87</td>
<td>47,249.65</td>
<td>25,018.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>8,954.00</td>
<td>7,212.96</td>
<td>5,269.07</td>
<td>3,005.25</td>
<td>7,231.02</td>
<td>5,282.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tecumseh</td>
<td>3,699.80</td>
<td>5,529.54</td>
<td>5,670.23</td>
<td>6,060.40</td>
<td>5,105.50</td>
<td>3,345.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich</td>
<td>6,050.65</td>
<td>9,503.54</td>
<td>9,280.37</td>
<td>8,850.45</td>
<td>9,527.11</td>
<td>7,839.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich East</td>
<td>10,645.25</td>
<td>9,439.20</td>
<td>11,136.20</td>
<td>8,991.53</td>
<td>10,839.12</td>
<td>6,375.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich West</td>
<td>3,620.39</td>
<td>5,544.18</td>
<td>3,604.18</td>
<td>3,973.60</td>
<td>5,083.47</td>
<td>2,477.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**  
121,577.80  
281,185.77  
181,902.16  
159,067.50  
172,759.12  
114,787.18

65
TABLE 2

TOTAL MONEY RAISED AND ALLOCATED
BY THE BORDER CITIZENS' SERVICE COMMITTEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>16,800</td>
<td>15,504</td>
<td>13,844</td>
<td>4,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkerville</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>3,007</td>
<td>2,502</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Windsor</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>9,376</td>
<td>9,627</td>
<td>3,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>1,756</td>
<td>1,704</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tecumseh</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>1,692</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,338</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich East</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>2,744</td>
<td>2,978</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich West</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>1,512</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 20,000 24,300 40,000 37,817 35,910 11,970

Total money raised and allocated by the Border Citizens' Service Committee

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RELIEF COSTS RAISED BY BORDER CITIZENS' SERVICES COMMITTEE FROM NOV. '31 TO APR. '32

Percentage of total relief costs raised by Border Citizens Services Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 31</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 31</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 32</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 32</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 32</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 32</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4

**BORDER CITIZENS' SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**FINANCIAL REPORT – APRIL 21, 1932**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>11,330</td>
<td>11,269</td>
<td>10,621</td>
<td>10,794</td>
<td>8,893</td>
<td>8,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkerville</td>
<td>1,479</td>
<td>1,515</td>
<td>1,484</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>1,166</td>
<td>1,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Windsor</td>
<td>5,795</td>
<td>7,718</td>
<td>7,498</td>
<td>6,854</td>
<td>6,571</td>
<td>1,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>1,287</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>1,468</td>
<td>1,518</td>
<td>1,106</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tecumseh</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>1,666</td>
<td>1,632</td>
<td>1,718</td>
<td>1,674</td>
<td>1,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich E.</td>
<td>1,511</td>
<td>1,752</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>1,572</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich W.</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>23,676</td>
<td>25,648</td>
<td>25,148</td>
<td>25,619</td>
<td>22,609</td>
<td>15,942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These tables are important in several ways. They indicate how great the private sectors' contribution was relative to relief costs in the early years of the Depression. See Table 3. One factor that aided greatly in the raising of funds was a compulsory system of donations set up by many employers. For example, in his book on the Windsor Utilities Commission, Clark Keith notes that all employees working for the Utilities Commission were
made to contribute to the welfare fund.

Compulsory contributions to the welfare fund were to be 5% on salaries up to $1,200. and 12-1/2% on all in excess of $1,200.\textsuperscript{23}

Other private industries also asked their employees to give. Walker Metal Products, in June 1931, increased contributions to the welfare fund 7-1/2% up to $1,000., 15% on the second $1,000. and 17-1/2% on all over $2,000. annually.\textsuperscript{24}

Table 1 also shows how relief costs escalated during the winter months, especially in the one month period from November to December 1931, when costs increased by $160,000. These higher costs were related to the inability of workers to find casual employment in the winter months in construction, outdoor work, or agriculture. The costs were also related to higher costs for food and fuel. People could not grow their own food in the winter months and needed more money to heat their houses. There was also a significant increase, in the winter months in the number of indigents in the area, from a high in December 1931 of 25,648 to a low in April 1932 of 15,942. This phenomenon was also related partly to cold weather.

\textsuperscript{24} Keith, op. cit., page 42.
conditions. It was more difficult for people to live on the streets when the weather was cold.

The amount of money raised by the Border Services Committee tapers off in April 1932, see Table 2. Originally the Committee was organized as an emergency effort for a five month period. It was not expected to operate over the summer months, but resume in the fall. Hence its fundraising activities diminished by April 1932.\textsuperscript{25}

While the Chamber of Commerce and the Border Citizens' Service Committee were the two main private sector groups involved in identifying issues and offering solutions, other charitable organizations and social welfare agencies continued to respond to need. Private charities such as the churches, and social welfare agencies such as the YMCA, tended to administer to groups that fit the mandate of their organization. As Harry Cassidy pointed out, private charities were able to aid families that fell through the gaps in the public welfare system, e.g. families who did not meet municipal residency requirements.\textsuperscript{26}

Some welfare programs operated under provincial legislation with a provincial/municipal cost sharing

\textsuperscript{25} Minutes of Border Citizens' Service Committee, May 11, 1932, Series II, Sub-series A, Box 4, File 20.

\textsuperscript{26} Cassidy, op. cit., page 215.
scheme. For example, the Children's Aid Society for the County of Essex had been incorporated and received its Charter in 1899. Costs for the agency were borne by provincial grants and municipal taxes. Mother's Allowance, to aid women widowed during the Great War, and their dependent children was also a joint provincial/municipal cost-sharing program. A quick perusal of the Auditor's Report for the City of Windsor, from 1928 to 1937, indicates that the charities financed by the municipality remained constant. Under Charity and Welfare costs for 1929 - 1933 are listed the following:

- Mothers Allowances Commission
- Home of the Friendless
- Charity and Board of Health

After 1934 the category Charity and Welfare is broken down under various headings:

- Burials and Ambulance
- Shelter
- Hospitalization
- Insurance
- Medical/Dental/Optical
- Transportation
- Childrens Aid Society^27

However, in spite of attempts made by the local municipal government and the active participation of the voluntary sector, by 1934 it was becoming increasingly obvious that the turmoil of the Great

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^27 Auditor's Reports, City of Windsor, 1928-1937, RG 3A12/45-54.
Depression was beyond local resources to resolve. According to the Coughlin Commission Report, by 1934 there was on the average in the Border Cities area, 28,636 people or 29% of the total population on relief. Several of the Border Cities municipalities were on the verge of bankruptcy. This drastic situation led many citizens to seek non-traditional and more radical solutions to the problems posed by widespread unemployment and social unrest.

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Chapter 4

The Radical Response to the Great Depression

In the Border Cities, the search for radical political solutions to the difficulties of the Great Depression focused on the activities of two groups, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation or C.C.F. party and the Communist party of Canada. A third group already in existence, attempting to improve the lot of workers in the area, was the trade union movement. Although there were various attempts to organize Labour throughout the 1930's, mainly through the efforts of the Trades and Labour Congress (T.L.C.), it was not until after the second world war, that unions gained widespread recognition and were able to negotiate good contracts with employers.

In municipal elections throughout the 1930's, both the C.C.F. party and the Communists ran candidates for Mayor, Aldermen, and Board of Education. The attraction to the new parties in the area was partly due to strong feelings that the traditional parties, Conservative and Liberal, had failed to provide
leadership or to offer remedies to the long-term suffering in the Border Cities. And yet, even though the parties had some success, i.e. Windsor was one of the first Canadian municipalities to elect a socialist mayor in the person of George Bennett in December 1934, support for left wing groups was always seen as an aberration, a response to difficult times, but never a response that would endure into prosperity. The minutes of the Windsor Chamber of Commerce for August 18, 1930 reflect this feeling.

If Communism is increasing the numbers of its converts in Canada, and it seems to be doing so in a number of centres, the phenomenon is due mainly to unemployment and not to any predisposition to communism in the Canadian mind. If unemployment could be connected, it is generally conceded that revolutionary communism would disappear at the same time.

Throughout the period of the 1930's in the Border Cities area, municipal politics were passionate and volatile. Many people were attracted to socialism; conversely others were frightened of it, and failed to distinguish between the principles of Democratic Socialism as endorsed by the C.C.F. and the principles

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1 Bennett was elected Mayor in the municipal elections held on December 3, 1934.

of International Communism as practised in the U.S.S.R.

The Communist party of Canada had in fact been formed in 1919, but not until the 1930’s did it gain any serious recognition or support. The C.C.F. party had been formed in 1932, when various agrarian protest groups, labour representatives, and urban intellectuals came together. The new movement was a federation, not a conventional political party. Its basic philosophy was that of democratic socialism with an underlying Christian focus based on the "Social Gospel", the belief that Christians should work for a Christian society here on earth, and not concern themselves with personal salvation. At a meeting in Regina in 1933, the official doctrine of the party was drawn up in the "Regina Manifesto" which clearly identified the aims of the federation which included such measures as public ownership of all utilities, and nationalization of the banking system, railways, and some natural resources. The Manifesto closed with this sentence:

No C.C.F. government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full program of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

On February 26, 1933 Windsor sent representatives to a C.C.F. meeting in Toronto. In March 1933, Ben Levert, a Windsor dentist, was elected as one of the three Labour representatives to the provincial C.C.F. Council. Meanwhile C.C.F. Clubs and Study Groups were forming in Windsor. Later that year, Agnes McPhail, William Irvine, and J.S. Woodsworth the leader of the C.C.F. party, visited Windsor to speak on the party's behalf.

The municipal election, in December 1934, really exemplified the search for non-traditional solutions to the areas' economic and social problems. The election also illustrated the great sense of passion and excitement which politics provided for a large majority of people in the Border Cities. There was also a strong anti-Communist thrust to the election. The victorious candidates took office in January 1935 and served only a short term, until July. That same year, the Amalgamation Act of the four Border Cities was passed by the Ontario Legislature, and in June 1935, new elections for the amalgamated City of Windsor were held.

The mayoralty contest in Windsor was between Alderman George Bennett a C.C.F. supporter and trade unionist, and Alderman Clyde Curry who had run 3 times before for mayor and had lost each election. Through-
out the campaign, George Bennett was constantly accused of being a Communist sympathizer. He did little to refute this accusation and often contradicted himself. The following excerpts from the *Border Cities Star* indicate his predicament.

**Headline:**

*Reds Say They Will Back George Bennett*[^4]

Commissioner George Bennett struck a bargain with the Windsor Communist Election Committee at a conference yesterday afternoon, and as a result will have the undivided support of the Communists in his mayoralty campaign, it was announced by Communist speakers and substantiated by Commissioner Bennett at a meeting held last night under the auspices of the National Labour Council. At the same meeting Commissioner Curry said that "he did not want 'Red' votes to assist in electing him to the Mayor's Chair.

Bennett replied "I am not a Liberal, Conservative or Communist. I am unadulterated Labour. We have no quarrel with the workers in any land, but we have a quarrel with the capitalists in every land."[^5]

The following day in the paper (November 29), Bennett denied that there was a "hook-up" with the Essex Trades and Labour Congress, himself, and the Communist party in regards to the upcoming municipal

[^4]: *Border Cities Star*, November 28, 1934.
[^5]: ibid.
election. He admitted to sharing some of the Communist principles as they had been part of Labour's platform for years. He outlined these principles as:

1) the establishment of the principles of enforcement of the minimum wage for women;
2) unemployment insurance;
3) a fair wage clause in city contracts;
4) increased relief allowances;
5) opposition to Fascism and war.6

At an all candidates meeting held very early in the campaign, at the Polish Hall on Langlois, twenty candidates for Aldermen were present including two Communists. These two candidates, Georgina Ketcheson and Charles Newbury, were refused permission by Chairman Ray Sinasac to sit on the platform. Jeers and bedlam followed. The two Communist candidates insisted on sitting on the stage. Commissioner Curry tried speaking, but the audience who wanted to hear the two Communist speakers stormed the stage. Eventually the police were called in to quell the riot and eject the Communist agitators.7

6 Border Cities Star, November 29, 1934.
7 Border Cities Star, November 28, 1934.
Besides George Bennett, Olive Jane Whyte who had run as a C.C.F. candidate in Windsor-Walkerville, was running as a candidate for Windsor council. As in the provincial election, she did not have an easy time, first because she was a member of the C.C.F. party, and secondly because she was a woman. Olive Jane Whyte was a social worker, and a member of the United Church. At one point in this election her opponents sought to disqualify her as a candidate because she lived in a house on Langlois Avenue, owned by the United Church and on which no property taxes were paid. As usual, Miss Whyte was outspoken and straightforward:

Make history by electing a woman candidate. They say its hard work being on council, but I can do as much work as any man I ever met.  

The main focus of Communist and anti-Communist activity in this campaign of December 1934 was in the City of East Windsor where the impact of the Depression was most severe. Six Communist candidates were running for Aldermen in this election, including Tom Raycraft who had run as a Communist in the Windsor-Walkerville riding in the provincial election of June 1934 and had received 479 votes.  

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8 Spoken at an all candidates meeting held at Patterson Collegiate Institute on December 1, 1934 and reported in the Border Cities Star, December 3, 1934.

9 Border Cities Star, November 30, 1934.
The main anti-Communist fighter in East Windsor was Alderman Dr. P. N. Gardner. His response to the Communists was contained in a headline in the Border Cities Star: "Will Fight Tooth and Nail to Thwart Communists".

Warning that East Windsor will become Communist headquarters for Canada if the Communists gain control in the coming civic election, Alderman P. N. Gardner, announced last night he will meet their challenge, and fight tooth and nail to thwart their efforts.10

Gardner was filled with a great sense of moral outrage. He went on to say,

The only way East Windsor citizens can save the church and civilization as well as liberty of speech and freedom of the press, is to go to the polls and defeat the Communist slate in its entirety. Would Raycraft, Collins and Morris dare to stand in Soviet Russia and say the things they say here where we have free speech?" Raycraft replied to this charge saying he was not anti-Church.11 The Communists are going to use the Council as an open forum and incidentally they are going to rain sledge hammer blows on Capitalism.12

10 Border Cities Star, November 24, 1934.
11 ibid.
12 ibid.

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Every political meeting held in East Windsor seemed to end in disarray and often fist fights. The Border Cities Star reported an East Windsor Rally at Holy Rosary School where the communists booed the speaker for 12 minutes.\textsuperscript{13} On December 1, 1934 the paper carried a report about a meeting at Gordon McGregor School.

The "Reds" hooted so loud that anti-Communist forces could not be heard. When one anti-Communist member of the audience jeered the speaker they asked for him to be ejected by the police.\textsuperscript{14}

One pressing issue during this campaign was that of amalgamation. The City of Windsor was including a plebiscite on amalgamation in its voting. The City of Walkerville, which voted a week later, on December 10, 1934, was also holding a plebiscite on amalgamation. Mayor Richard Farrow of Walkerville led the anti-amalgamation group in Walkerville. He stated:

\begin{quote}
I stand for no surrender of Walkerville's rights, no change of name, no less of allegiance to the tradition.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

In the Windsor municipal election held on December 3, 1934, George Bennett was elected Mayor; John Duck,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Border Cities Star, November 30, 1934.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Border Cities Star, December 1, 1934.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Border Cities Star, December 3, 1934.
\end{itemize}
Norman Eansor, Olive Jane Whyte and Frank Dayus were elected Aldermen. Oscar Ketching, a Labour candidate was 9th, and the two Communist candidates, Georgina Ketcheson and Charles Newbury were 11th and 12th respectively. The City of Windsor had voted five to one in favour of amalgamation. In East Windsor, Dr. P. Gardner was returned as the head of the aldermanic polls, and no Communists were elected. On December 10, 1934 Walkerville re-elected Mayor Farrow and voted against amalgamation four to one, the actual vote being 2,535 to 641.

Even before the Walkerville votes, ex-Mayor Croll, acting in his capacity as Minister of Municipal Affairs, had announced the formation of a Commission to undertake an immediate survey of amalgamation terms. The Commission was to be headed by Judge Coughlin and its members included Mr. S. E. McGorman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of S. W. & A. Railway Co., Dr. Horace Brittain, Secretary of the Ontario Municipal Association, H. L. Cummings, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs, J. Clark Keith, General Manager of the Border Cities Utilities Commission, and James Lowther who was to be the Commission's secretary. In

\[16\] *Border Cities Star*, December 4, 1934.

\[17\] *Border Cities Star*, December 11, 1934.
announcing the formation of the Commission, Croll stated:

I am mindful of my statement at election time that I would not agree to amalgamation without the expressed consent of Walkerville.  

At the time, Windsor was one of several Canadian cities to elect a socialist mayor, the others being Vancouver, Lethbridge, Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto. As far as the C.C.F. party was concerned, Gerald Caplan writes:

With the impetus of the Toronto and Windsor mayoralty victories, party activities were marked by a renewed vigour and enthusiasm in all urban centres of the province.  

After the Border Cities were amalgamated in 1935, the activities of the C.C.F. and Communist party continued at the municipal level. Municipal elections for the newly amalgamated city of Windsor were held on June 24, 1935. The two principle opponents for Mayor were George Bennett and Commissioner John Duck who in the last Windsor council had served as Finance Commissioner.

Mayor Bennett did little to gain support from the establishment. On June 17, 1935 he attended a rally at

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18 Border Cities Star, December 4, 1934.

the Windsor arena, where 2,500 Communists gathered. At this rally he received the endorsement of his candidacy from Tim Buck, leader of the Communist party of Canada.\textsuperscript{20} The following day Bennett announced that he had no link with the Communists and described himself as an unadulterated Labour man and a follower of the carpenter of Nazareth.\textsuperscript{21} The furor created the campaign slogan: "It's either BUCK OR DUCK".\textsuperscript{22}

Although Mayor Bennett continued to deny that he was a Communist throughout this campaign, the Communists maintained a strong vocal presence. Their main campaign effort was in Ward I, formerly East Windsor, where they offered three candidates, Tom Raycraft, Fred Joyce and Cecil Dayus. Despite the Windsor Star's support for John Duck, George Bennett was returned as Mayor, although only 50% of the electorate voted. In East Windsor only Tom Raycraft was elected. Olive Jane Whyte was also returned to city council.

The municipal election, fought in December 1936, was not as animated as previous campaigns, and the issue of party politics was not as pronounced. The

\textsuperscript{20} Border Cities Star, June 18, 1935.
\textsuperscript{21} Border Cities Star, June 19, 1935.
\textsuperscript{22} ibid.
The worst effects of the Depression seemed to be over. The numbers of people on relief were going down. The unemployment level was also decreasing. Building permits issued had gone from 76 in 1933 to 943 in 1936. A scheme to refund and refinance city debentures had been developed, and there was a new sense of order and control. Auto production was picking up and in 1936 the Chrysler Corporation paid a substantial bonus to its workers. In 1937 auto production in the Border Cities peaked and more cars were produced than in any previous year.

Internationally, the "Abdication Crisis" involving King Edward VIII and Mrs. Wallis Simpson was overshadowing all world events. According to Windsor Star columnist, Thomas R. Brophy:

> It was a bit of bad luck for the civic politicians that a crisis should occur in London, just when the campaign was warming up. They were having a hard enough time attracting local public attention even before the stirring sequence of events that shoved them out of the limelight.

In the mayoralty contest, there were three candidates, the incumbent mayor, George Bennett,
Colonel E. S. Wigle, and a third candidate Viyo Michael Yaksich. Colonel Wigle was an "old son", a World War I hero, and a former Mayor. He was conservative in his approach, did not like the city's flirtation with left wing politics, and had the support of the Windsor Star, a powerful political voice in the area. He was also proud of the fact that he had no affiliation to any political party or group. On November 20, 1936 he ran a large advertisement in the Windsor Star which read:

Always free from political entanglements and not associated with any group, financial institution, or press. Free to be an active servant for all. 25

This election of December 1936 marked a change in the municipal structure of Windsor. Besides 2 aldermen from 5 wards, the city council was to have a Board of Control made up of four members who would function somewhat as a Cabinet and meet 2 or 3 times per week. This Board of Control would also have the power to award all city contracts. 26

The election was held on December 7, 1936. Bennett was defeated by Colonel Wigle by 534 votes. Art Reaume, former mayor of Sandwich, Cyril Cooper, Clyde Curry and Olive Jane Whyte, were elected to the

25 Windsor Star, November 20, 1936.
26 Windsor Star, November 24, 1936.
Board of Control. In its editorial on December 8, 1936, the *Windsor Star* analyzed the result of the vote.

Yesterday's election constituted a distinct rebuff for the radical forces of which Mr. Bennett had been looked on as leader-in-chief. Windsor Council has elected a Board of Control and a City Council that can boast a large number of experienced men, and at the same time has administered a severe rebuff to the left wing elements. Of the latter, Miss Whyte and Alderman Ebert Morris are the only Board of Control or Council representatives.27

During the latter part of the 1930's, the Border Cities' search for more radical solutions to the problems of the Great Depression was far less enthusiastic. In some way the election of Colonel E. Wigle represented the tone of the times. The Communist party of Canada lost much of its interest in domestic politics and became more concerned with the rise of Fascism in European countries such as Spain and Germany. From 1936 on, the Communists were moving towards the creation of the Popular Front and eventually would send troops to fight in the Spanish Civil War. The C.C.F. party continued to be a presence on the provincial level, but never again received the same support as before at the municipal level in the Border Cities. Olive Jane Whyte, as Controller,

27 *Windsor Star*, December 8, 1936.
remained the one consistent CCF voice on council. In the elections of December 1937 she and former Mayor George Bennett were elected as Controllers, topping the polls against their nearest opponents Clyde Curry and Dr. Crowley. Whyte campaigned on public ownership and against a suspected plot to seize the civic transportation franchise from the people.\(^{28}\)

In the 1938 municipal elections, David Croll returned from provincial politics to run for Mayor of Windsor against Colonel Wigle. He had resigned from the cabinet of Premier Hepburn, frustrated by Hepburn’s attitudes towards Labour as exemplified in the 1937 General Motors strike in Oshawa where Hepburn had called in soldiers. Croll’s letter of resignation to Premier Hepburn said in part:

> In my official capacity, I have travelled the middle of the road, but now you have put the extreme alternative to me; my place is marching with the workers rather than riding with General Motors.\(^{29}\)

Croll based his 1938 municipal campaign on the doctrine of Home Rule, his basic idea being that the province had taken over too many of the responsibilities of the municipality and had too much

\(^{28}\) Windsor Star, December 7, 1937.

power.

With a return to prosperity, and the outbreak of war, people in the Border Cities rejected the new radical solutions and returned to the comfort of the two old parties.

The C.C.F. was able to survive during the remainder of the decade, but only barely. The number of True Believers steadily declined and those that remained were, though faithful, disillusioned and unenthusiastic.

Although the C.C.F. party survived marginally at a provincial level, its activities and those of other non-traditional parties had a definite impact on developments in the Border Cities. The campaigns waged by these groups during municipal elections forced candidates to focus on the problems created by the Depression. In fact, some of the principles endorsed by these candidates were later legislated by senior levels of government, i.e. unemployment insurance by the federal government. Because they were often seen as a threat to law and order, these radical groups were also able to put pressure for change on local government, leading them to create programs that aided those most affected by poverty and unemployment.

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30 Caplan, op. cit., page 84.
Since working class areas if organized had numbers, political groups especially of the socialist species appeared a real threat to traditional civic government.

In conclusion, the main role of radical politics in the Border Cities area was as a focus for issues and a catalyst for change.

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Chapter 5

The Senior Levels of Government: Federal/Provincial Involvement

At the beginning of the Depression the prevailing attitudes towards dealing with the unemployed, the homeless, and the deserving poor was that care for such groups should be a local or municipal responsibility. The Doctrine of Home Rule was dominant.

Local self-governing municipalities democratically resolved local issues through information gathering, public discussions and debate, and a final expression of the general will in plebiscites.¹

Premier Howard Ferguson, in a letter to York Township Council, dated January 1, 1928, reaffirmed the provinces' position very clearly.

Unemployment is an entirely municipal affair. It would not be just to use the money contributed by the province for purely local relief. The municipality derived the benefits from the working man in times of prosperity and should be prepared to bear the burden when times were not so bright.  

As the Depression raged on, many municipalities, unable to bear the financial burden of relief to the unemployed, petitioned the provincial government for more financial aid; "Relief from Relief" was the cry of all beleaguered municipalities and the hope was that the province would assume a more active role in helping them.

Relief from relief would shift responsibility for the unemployed out of the local political arena where the business of taking from Peter and giving to Paul was proving to be politically dangerous.  

Eventually financial aid was forthcoming, but the offering of such aid changed forever the relationship between the province and the municipalities.

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2 Cassidy, op. cit., page 75.

As cities and towns grew in size and number, power and complexity, in twentieth century Canada, they lost control of their affairs and became increasingly subject to senior levels of government.4

Throughout the 1930's, municipalities saw many of their powers eventually taken over by newly organized departments of the provincial governments such as the Department of Public Welfare and Municipal Affairs. The experience of the Border Cities illuminates clearly the trend towards the centralization of power by the provincial government. During 1934, 29% of the Border Cities population was on relief, approximately 29,000 people.5 All the municipalities, except Walkerville, were totally dependent upon provincial government funds for continuance of their relief programs. In 1935 the province covered 100% of relief costs for the entire amalgamated area.6

What happened in the Border Cities occurred across the province. More and more municipalities found themselves dependent on provincial funds to pay for their relief costs. But if the problems of relief were


5 Coughlin Report, page 3.

uniform across the province, the delivery of relief services was not equitable or standardized. Professor Harry Cassidy, in his provincial study commissioned in 1932, found incredible variations in standards of care and levels of relief given to families. To make recommendations for developing a more comprehensive and systematic approach to the provision of relief in the province, the government of Premier George Henry appointed Wallace Campbell of Windsor to report on Provincial Policy on Administrative Methods of Direct Relief in Ontario. The aims of this advisory committee headed by Campbell were as follows.

To assist the government in dealing with the problems arising out of unemployment, including the distribution of relief to the needy, and the special assistance that may be required by municipalities which have difficulty in meeting their percentage of the cost of unemployment relief. 7

The Campbell Report although brief, 21 pages in all, was a very thorough review of all aspects of relief granting and administration. Its philosophy contained some remnants of the Poor Law mentality in that the relief offered would be fairly meagre, and must never be viewed as an attractive alternative to working for wages. The Committee reported:

7 Campbell Report, page 7.
... that it has aimed to keep in view the need for all possible economy in the expenditure of public funds, while at the same time it has sought to advise the measures which it is hoped will meet adequately the needs of those who by reason of unemployment require public assistance.  

However, the Committee introduced a new concept beyond the Poor Law, that although relief was to remain meagre, it must be administered in a fair, equitable, and administratively organized manner. Campbell, in the report, gave the following points as a clear definition of what sound administration would include:

a) careful investigation on the part of the municipal welfare department as to the needs of families applying for relief and continuous supervision of each family receiving relief both as regards to relief issues and the general well-being of such families.

b) continuous supervision on the part of the provincial authorities of municipal administrative methods and standards in order to ensure reasonable uniformity and practise in all parts of the Province.  

Another important concept in the Campbell Report was that the construction of public works should not be used as part of relief programs. The failure of public works projects to adequately deal with the difficulties

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8 ibid.
9 ibid.
of the Depression had been experienced by most
industrial centres across the country. Furthermore,
public works projects only addressed the needs of the
labouring classes and not unemployed skilled tradesmen
and white collar workers.

The Committee accepts the view
which it believes now widely
prevails, that all normal
governmental works enterprises
should be dissociated from relief
planning and administration. It is
believed that any services planned
or tendered by persons receiving
relief, in consideration of such
relief, should be provided and
administered separately from and
independently of ordinary public
works programs. 10

The report separated very clearly the functions of
the municipalities and the provinces. At a municipal
level, it outlined basically what would become the
functions of a welfare department and stressed that
such a department must operate independently of the
political process. Campbell partly based his
recommendations on the experiences of the Border
Cities, in overhauling their welfare system. The
Committee also developed a policy respecting the
Special Treatment of Embarrassed or Bankrupt
Municipalities and anticipated the later work of the
Border Cities’ Financial Commission.

10 Campbell Report, page 7.
Right now, certain municipalities cannot discharge their responsibility for 1/3 direct relief costs. Special treatment to any such municipality should clearly rest with the Province subject to Dominion approval.\textsuperscript{11}

The Campbell Report was radical in its concept, in that it marked a definite shift from the ideas of the Poor Law that relief was strictly a local matter. It assumed that the Province would now have a strong role to play, and a role that would continue even when the current economic crisis was over. It established a basic theoretical framework for joint provincial/municipal involvement in the provision of social welfare programs.

Many of the recommendations of the Campbell Report were eventually implemented and formed the basis for the creation of the Provincial Department of Public Welfare in 1934 under David Croll. His attitude towards the operation of this department had been formed partly out of his Border Cities experience. He felt that the province should be involved, but that it should be involved humanely. In August 1934 he announced that complete medical care for those on relief would be paid for by the province. He also urged a change in the Mothers’ Allowance Act to allow

\textsuperscript{11} ibid.
mothers with only one dependent child to qualify for assistance. According to Senator Lowell Murray, in speaking of David Croll:

His examination of public policy has always gone right to the essence and for him the essence of policy is its effect on the lives of ordinary men and women.\(^\text{12}\)

In the municipal election of 1938, when Croll ran for Mayor against Colonel Wigle, he questioned the increasing power of the provincial departments and ran a campaign based on more municipal power and less provincial intervention. Croll, as Minister of Public Welfare, had not agreed with all of the recommendations of the Campbell Report. The overall spirit of the report was in some ways harsh and punitive, especially the concept that relief should not be in cash but goods and services. This concept was to ensure that relief recipients did not abuse the system, and could not use relief money for purposes other than intended. The Campbell Report also supported the idea of "internment camps" for "misdemeanants". The basic purpose of such camps was to isolate potential troublemakers and prevent social unrest. Croll was as much against the camps as he was against relief vouchers. He further believed that a genuine effort should be made to enable

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the unemployed to earn at least the necessities of life so that they would feel that they were earning their way.

The Border Cities experience played a key role not only in the formation of a Department of Public Welfare, but also in the creation of the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs. This department came about partly because of the financial situation in hard pressed municipalities and the need for provincial government intervention and assistance. In the Border Cities case, the province appointed a commission headed by Judge J. Coughlin, to review their financial plight. On the basis of the Coughlin Commission findings, the province enacted the Amalgamation Act in April 1935, even though the residents of Walkerville had voted overwhelmingly against amalgamation during plebiscite held as part of the municipal elections in December 1934. The other three Border Cities had voted for amalgamation. They were all collapsing economically and saw no other options.

The province not only developed a scheme to refinance the city’s debentures, but appointed a Finance Commission to oversee the newly amalgamated city’s financial affairs, responsible to the Ontario Municipal Board under the general rubric of the newly created Department of Municipal Affairs. The goal of
this new department was to impose some order on chaotic municipal finances and to slow down the number of defaulting municipalities. This goal was accomplished by forbidding municipalities from issuing any debentures without the permission of the Ontario Municipal Board. Also in 1935, the municipalities were no longer allowed to level income taxes on residents.

Both prior to and after the establishment of such ministries, there was an expansion of legislation providing for greater provincial control over many local government functions.13

The Coughlin Commission, also examined the area's relief procedures and identified a need for a more uniform system of relief, and defined policies and procedures for the municipal Department of Welfare. In doing this, the Commission reinforced many of the concepts of the Campbell Report and supported the development of a well designed social welfare delivery system already implemented in the local area. The Coughlin Report also supported Campbell's concept that the provincial government should be involved in relief services, and that this involvement would be on-going and permanent.

The extensive and distressing unemployment brought about in part by this condition, made it imperative that a well organized system of relief should be brought into existence, dependent almost wholly on federal and provincial funds.\textsuperscript{14}

From 1934 on the province, through its various departments, was inextricably bound-up and involved with the affairs of the Border Cities. Until the end of the decade, the area continued to petition the province for more money for relief costs.

The report of the Welfare Committee for the city of Windsor, filed with the minutes for a Council meeting held December 17, 1935, contains a letter from David Croll, Minister of Public Welfare. The letter advises that:

a) the Provincial Government is not prepared to increase cash relief allowances.

b) there is no objection to the municipality subsidizing the present schedule and paying the additional cost thereof and of suggesting that a 10\% saving could be effected if milk and bread were purchased centrally.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Coughlin Report, page 3.

\textsuperscript{15} City of Windsor Welfare Report, December 17, 1935, RR 2A1/47.
By the end of the 1930's such direct appeals to the province by the City virtually stopped. However, as a result of the Great Depression, the principle of provincial responsibility in the affairs of municipalities had been firmly established, the balance of power had shifted, and the principle of local responsibility for the less fortunate had been changed. Funds for relief, from then on, came partly from the province and were administered by the municipality. This kind of cost-sharing and administrative responsibility borne out of the Great Depression continues to exist today.

While such new relationships were being forged between the provinces and the municipalities, the federal government was, in a hesitating manner, becoming involved also in some of the problems of the Great Depression. If the provincial government of Ontario had initially developed a "hands-off" policy towards the difficulties experienced by the municipalities in the early part of the 1930's, the federal government was even more detached.

Under the British North America Act, such responsibilities as health, welfare, education, etc. fell under provincial jurisdiction. In a debate held on March 8, 1932 on a resolution to extend the operation of the Unemployment Farm Relief Act from
March 1, to May 1, 1932, Richard Bennett, Prime Minister of Canada, stated the federal position quite succinctly:

The primary obligations rest with the municipalities and the provinces, the duty of Parliament in a national crisis or in a great emergency is to assist and supplement the efforts of the provincial authorities.\textsuperscript{16}

Just before the federal election of 1935, Bennett outlined an extensive reform program and the parliamentary sessions of 1934 and 1935, were crowded with the passage of a long series of social-security laws, labour statutes and economics control measures.\textsuperscript{17} Unfortunately, his actions came too late; Bennett was defeated and the Liberals under Mackenzie King were returned to power. King basically supported the "ill defined and nebulous"\textsuperscript{18} approach to the Depression that Bennett had used in the early years.

The following statement quoted by John Taylor in "Relief from Relief" summarizes King's position:

\textsuperscript{16} Cassidy, op. cit., page 75.
\textsuperscript{17} Creighton, Donald. \textit{Dominion of the North}. MacMillan, Toronto, 1957, page 496.
\textsuperscript{18} Struthers. No Fault of Their Own. page 173.

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The obligation of looking after men who are unemployed should be understood to be primarily a matter for individuals in the first instance between municipalities and the people living within their bounds; in the second instance next between the provinces and the citizens of the respective provinces and only finally a matter of concern in the federal arena.\(^{19}\)

Not only was Bennett defeated, but two years later the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council declared five of his major statutes as ultra vires of the federal parliament.\(^{20}\)

Like their municipal and provincial counterparts, federal government officials initially saw the Depression as similar to economic downturns of the past; cyclical and time limited.

To a large extent the unemployment policies pursued by R. B. Bennett and Mackenzie King in the 1930's, were continuations of approaches and attitudes towards joblessness that had been widespread in Canada before 1930.\(^{21}\)

Following the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to disallow some of the statutes

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\(^{19}\) Mackenzie King, as quoted by John Taylor in "Relief from Relief", page 17.

\(^{20}\) Creighton, op. cit., page 497.

of Bennett's "New Deal", Mackenzie King in 1937 appointed a Royal Commission on Dominion Provincial Relations whose purpose would be:

... to investigate the original settlement of Confederation in the light of the economic and social changes of the past 75 years.\(^{22}\)

The Commission's findings\(^ {23}\) published in 1940 provided a blueprint for the division of power and provision of services among the provinces and the Dominion. A conceptual framework was laid for direct federal government assistance in certain social welfare programs. In 1941 the National Unemployment Insurance Act was legislated and in 1944, a scheme of Family Allowances for all families with children was created.\(^ {24}\)

\(^{22}\) Creighton, op. cit., page 499.

\(^{23}\) The Rowell-Sirois Report.

\(^{24}\) Creighton, op. cit., page 552.
Conclusion

Throughout the course of this paper, the author has traced the evolution of attitudes towards the poor, the dispossessed, the unemployed from the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929 to the beginning of World War II in 1939. The focus has been, over this 10 year period, on the area known as the Border Cities. This area is in fact a microcosm of the rest of the province and Canada as it reflected changing attitudes and values, urban and industrial changes, and ultimately a new kind of responsibility and relationship among the three levels of government; municipal, provincial and federal. In successive chapters, the author examined how the Border Cities responded to the incredible difficulties and dislocation caused by the Great Depression.

At its start, responsibility for those who were economically disadvantaged and deprived was seen as a strictly local one, falling under the jurisdiction of the municipal government or private charities.
However, in 1929 and 1930, no one envisioned that the economic recession would ever be so long-lasting or so devastating. As the numbers of unemployed continued to rise, it became clear that the local resources were no longer adequate to meet the needs of thousands who found themselves unemployed, homeless, and destitute and help was sought from the senior levels of government.

The Border Cities in their search for solutions were innovative both on an individual and societal basis. One of the major innovations in the area was the complete revamping of the municipal social welfare delivery system. Starting in 1931, the City of Windsor developed a three tiered welfare service system which included the political, the public, and the professional social work sectors. Through this administrative structure, the service delivery system was made more efficient, more fiscally responsible and independent of the political process. Furthermore, humane standards of relief were set and equity and uniformity were assured for all relief applicants. A Welfare Advisory Board was established which was to be representative of the community as a whole, and whose task was to oversee expenses and ensure that fair policies and practices were maintained.
The public welfare department was created as a unit, separate from elected officials on the municipal Welfare Committee, and was staffed by professionally trained social workers. Workers in the department were to investigate all cases referred, maintain a central registry of relief recipients and ensure that all received basic standards of care. The creation of such a social service delivery system, was a sign that the granting of relief and welfare was now a permanent mandate of local government.

The Border Cities area also showed resourcefulness in its successful engagement of the private sector in helping with the multiplicity of problems created by the Depression. Two of the most active private sector groups in this period were the Border Cities Chamber of Commerce and the Border Citizens' Service Committee. The private sector lobbied for changes in the social welfare administrative system, and raised vast sums of money to help the municipalities offset relief costs. These two groups encouraged citizens to buy-at-home and pressured employers to utilize compulsory payroll deductions to raise money.

In addition to the municipal and private sector efforts, two individual citizens, David Croll and Wallace Campbell, were recognized and seen to have made important contributions to the development of social
welfare services, locally and provincially. David Croll, mayor, provincial cabinet minister, federal M.P. and senator was a humanitarian. He always maintained that he cared about legislation, but he cared more about people.¹ As minister of the newly created provincial Department of Public Welfare, Croll systematized and codified the organization of relief services across the province. Again his policies were partially based on the Border Cities experience.

Wallace Campbell, president of Ford of Canada, also made a great contribution to the development of social welfare services locally and provincially. As a businessman his style was more managerial than Croll's, and his emphasis was on efficiency and fiscal accountability. At the same time, he also stressed uniformity, fairness, and professionalism in his recommendations. Campbell rose to prominence locally as the head of the Border Citizens' Service Committee, a private sector group that worked hand in hand with local municipalities throughout the early years of the Depression. He also headed a study for the Provincial Government on the Provincial Policy and Administrative Methods of Direct Relief in Ontario. The Report very clearly separated the functions of the municipalities


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and the province and recommended the establishment of a provincial department of public welfare. It also represented a definite shift from the concepts of the English Poor Law and saw welfare not only as a local responsibility but a provincial one as well.

The economic plight of the Border Cities also affected the relationship between municipalities and the province in another way. Because of soaring costs related to poor relief, three of the four Border municipalities defaulted. The province took a strong position as a result, legislated the Amalgamation Act which incorporated four municipalities into one, and set up a provincially operated Finance Commission to oversee the municipality’s financial affairs.

Changes in the relationship between the province and the municipalities brought a concurrent change in the relationship between the provinces and the federal government. Through cost-sharing arrangements, more money was made available to the provinces to cover social welfare costs. Finally, through the passage of various federal acts, a conceptual framework was laid for direct federal government assistance in universal social welfare programs, such as Family Allowances and Unemployment Insurance.

In the search for solutions, the Border Cities also dabbled with left wing politics and the CCF party
for a time received strong support in the area, which was one of the first in Canada to have municipal elections fought along party lines. The left wing groups were able to put pressure on those in power to create new social welfare programs at the local and provincial levels. Governments often legislated programs out of fear of social unrest and violence. During some of the municipal election campaigns of the 1930's there were many volatile and potentially violent situations involving left wing candidates and the supporters of the status quo.

In conclusion, the examination of the experiences of the Great Depression and responses to it within the Border Cities illustrates how policies towards the delivery of social services evolved from an emphasis on strictly local responsibility to the creation of a modern efficient administrative system, involving all three levels of government.
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