

## **“FCSS: A Grande Lady With A Colourful Past And An Honourable Future”**

(A presentation at the Jasper 2001 FCSSAA Conference by John Lackey)

Thank you for attending today. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to share some of the history of FCSS. I do subscribe to the old saying that *“to understand the present, you have to know the past.”* It's an honour when someone feels you have something useful to share although I was cautious about the invitation. After all, it was Woody Allen who said, *“I don't want to belong to a club that would have somebody like me as a member.”*

As dry as the subject matter may appear, for anyone interested in the development of social policy and the evolution of an exciting, dynamic prevention program in Alberta, the birth and survival of FCSS is a fascinating story. I apologize right up front for having to provide so much information so quickly (it's like viewing a fine arts museum on a motor bike).

In Real Estate they say *“location, location, location”*. In FCSS it's always been *“timing, timing, timing!”* To understand how FCSS was conceived in 1966, one has to know what was happening in the Alberta of the early 1960's and before (of course everyone here is too young to remember that). The Preventive Social Service birth took place at a time during a period of prosperity, not unlike our own of the last few years. Many forces and factors existed and converged, resulting in something special that perhaps only happens once in a lifetime. These were:

- Visionary, influential and remarkable public servants; (have you heard about the newest board game in Edmonton called *“bureaucracy”*? The first one to move loses!)
- a stable, conservative government in power for 35 years that was anxious to reduce social dependency of every kind and leave a legacy;
- a healthy Provincial budget situation and uncommitted funds;
- the introduction of the Federal Canada Assistance Plan in 1966;
- large growth in “Municipal” Public Assistance and Child Welfare programs and vast discrepancies in their administration;
- rapid population movement from rural to urban with increasing and newly emerging social needs.

The 1960's were a fascinating time of great change, hope and optimism. From 1935 to 1965, Alberta changed from a pioneer society of small farmers to an urban society made prosperous from the sale of oil and gas. In 1935, 66% of the population lived in rural areas and 34% in cities. By 1965, those figures had reversed themselves ... an extraordinary movement of people and lifestyles over only a 30 year period. This trend to urbanization has continued ever since. In the 1980's, urban population rose to 85% and is no doubt higher now. Absolute numbers have also increased from 2 million in 1971 to 3 million in 2000.

In 1958 and 1959, Social Credit gave every resident over the age of 18 a fresh \$20 bill because of excess revenues (I know because I turned 18 that year!). Ironically, the government received considerable feedback to the effect that *"this is all very nice but surely you can pool the money and do something more effective"* (this was obviously before the Canadian Alliance came into being). By 1961, Alberta had a higher public per capita expenditure than any other province.

So here we were in the early 1960's with a long term, secure government with lots of money, needing to do something useful with it. The Social Credit party had governed since 1935, with Ernest Manning as Premier since 1943, with almost no opposition (sound familiar?). Of 63 seats, only 4 were opposition, including Neil Reimer, Jan Reimer's father, and he was more interested in advancing Medicare (today the Opposition hold 9 seats out of 83). Peter Lougheed was on the scene as leader of the Conservatives but they did not have one seat in the House.

To deal with this embarrassment of riches, Premier Manning called all his Deputy Ministers to a meeting and asked them to come up with innovative ideas on how to spend the surplus. Can you imagine the speed with which those Deputies scrambled back to their departments to call emergency meetings of the Management Teams? Among them was a remarkable man named Duncan Rogers, an Accountant by training, who became Deputy of Public Welfare in 1959. He was a wise, quiet, soft-spoken, thoughtful gentleman — hardly the image one conjures up for a revolutionary, but that he was!

Mr. Rogers, along with John Ward and John Smith, Senior Managers, conceived of and brought the Preventive Social Services program into being (this reminds me of the story about *"when life begins"*). What an unlikely bunch you say? In many respects, yes, but they were all highly successful, respected men of integrity, held similar values, understood their environment, could envisage the future, were great salesmen and shared religious roots. They were often referred to as the *"three wise men"* — and sometimes less flattering things (*behind every successful man is a woman — very*

*surprised! behind every unsuccessful man is a woman saying "I told you so ... and mother agrees"!)*. There is an old saying that *"in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is King!"* These were "one eyed" men of their times because of their uncanny vision.

L.W. Halmrast, a sheep farmer from Southern Alberta, was the Minister in 1966 and he had complete trust in Duncan Rogers. He was a mild-mannered, unsophisticated, decent man who was straight-forward and liked simple talk. He too was a religious leader in his community. When the idea of PSS was being considered, a delegation from the Association of Social Workers asked for a hearing with the Minister. They made the mistake of speaking in jargon (which social workers have been occasionally known to do). When Mr. Halmrast couldn't understand, he retreated into a discussion of sheep farming. The Social Workers went away disgusted by a Minister who used principles of sheep farming to run his department and needless to say, had very little influence on the creation of PSS. In fact the Department had no Professional Social Workers until 1958, the first being Bill McFarland, who became the Director of Child Welfare, and only a handful until the early 1970's.

Another key element was pressures on Municipalities which had responsibility for Public Assistance and Child Welfare assigned to them since 1913. Caseloads grew rapidly after the war and by the early 1960's, many felt they should no longer have to carry the burden of escalating costs. To complicate this, there was little consistency in their administration across the Province. The larger cities tended to hire professional specialists, while, in some rural areas, Village Clerks often were called upon to issue Public Assistance and, more often than not, the RCMP did the statutory Child Welfare work.

As a social worker in Lethbridge in 1961, I can remember meeting the Municipal Child Welfare officer at 4:30 pm on a Friday afternoon to receive 9 native children he had just apprehended because the parents — sugar beet workers - were both in jail. I piled them into my brand new VW Beetle, backed up, and left my front bumper on the curb because of the extra weight. As I remember, the mother was the first to be released and I found an empty home for her and the children. She got the children to bed that first evening, settled back and lit her pipe. The flame ignited a huge explosion that blew the roof right off the house. Apparently, when the gas was turned on, someone left an open valve in the basement. The only thing that saved the family was that when the house collapsed the walls leaned in on each other to form a tent and all 9 children were in one bed. I visited the Mom, a really amazing woman, in the hospital where she was being treated for a variety of burns. She still couldn't understand what had happened but informed me that she was definitely giving up her pipe. Such was the quality of social work inflicted on people in those days. And they say the first duty of social work is "to inflict no harm!"

It was not a period of enlightenment for many people in positions of authority. Duncan Rogers had many meetings to explain the concept of PSS. At one, a flamboyant Edmonton Alderman went into a diatribe that “*welfare families multiply like flies; they should be forced to work: they are immoral, drunks and neglect their children.*” The Deputy, ever the gentleman, replied that “*she made a good case for **PSS** — especially family planning.*”

Combined with these Alberta fiscal/social developments of the early 1960’s was the introduction of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966, a timely piece of Federal legislation that provided 50% sharing of Provincial Welfare costs. Overnight, the Province realized a windfall of \$10 million and it was with this that Duncan Rogers argued an early intervention program should be introduced to “*prevent people from going on Welfare*”.

Msrs. Rogers, Ward and Smith, beyond the politicians, consulted with all the key players across Alberta; namely the United Way, large agency CEO’s and the Heads of Municipal Social Service Departments. Part of the deal being pitched was that the Province would relieve Welfare and Child Welfare from cash pinched Municipalities so that some quality and standardization might be achieved, Municipalities would deliver the new PSS program — receiving 80% cost sharing from the Province to do so — and much needed fresh money would be injected into the non-profit, volunteer sector, which until then was the domain of the United Way.

Needless to say, all kinds of potential “*toes*” could be stepped on here if everybody wasn’t convinced there was something in it for them. But there was! This was a winner for all:

- The Fed. Gov., through the CAP, could influence Prov. welfare standards;
- The Prov. Gov. could standardize Child Welfare and Social Assistance & encourage a community-based prevention program at little cost to itself;
- Municipalities would be relieved of costly statutory Welfare services and pay only 20% of a new positive, early intervention program;
- The U. W. was happy because more community money was available;
- Agencies were pleased that more resources would come their way; and
- No fewer than five partners would share in funding this new program.

Everyone wasn’t entirely happy. Cities saw it as an erosion of their power and bureaucracy. In fact Calgary and Edmonton didn’t transfer all their responsibilities over until the 1980’s. Edmonton seemed to view developments as inevitable but Calgary fought it all the way. In fact, I believe Calgary still administers juvenile probation services (tell story about *painting the horse grey*). Municipalities also were deeply suspicious that the Province at some point would withdraw its funding and leave them “*holding the bag*”(not without reason).

Some Agencies were afraid new monies wouldn't flow through to them but rather be absorbed by the Municipality and they advocated for Citizens Committees to allocate the funds... and they wanted to be on them. Because of this, Advisory Committees were instituted by the Province but Agency representatives were excluded because of the conflict-of-interest.

Interestingly, one of the big debates at program initiation was whether Municipal Directors should be compelled to have an M.S.W. Luckily this was not made a condition, allowing for the appointment of a diverse range of talents.

And so Preventive Social Services came into being as an Act of the Legislature in July 1966 (the preferred name for the program was Preventive Innovative Social Services until an astute individual pointed out that the acronym was PISS). An \$800,000 budget was available for its first fiscal year but only \$177,000 was spent. The Act was one page of *enabling* legislation, simply stating that Municipalities could have a program, that the Minister would determine what constituted a program, and that there would be 80-20% cost sharing. Prevention was not defined but four "ground rules" were loosely defined based on what it *could not be*. Namely, there could be no support for:

- recreation or leisure pursuits;
- primarily rehabilitative programs;
- direct financial assistance;
- duplication of other programs.

How did a rurally-dominant, conservative, suspicious-of-social-service Government buy this? One has to look at the four major themes of Social Credit which were:

- monetary reform (this had proved to be unworkable in the late 30's);
- individualism and free enterprise;
- protestant work ethic; and
- Christian ethic of charity.

On the basis of these pillars, Preventive Social Services had a fairly strong foundation in Social Credit ideology. It was simply dressed up in acceptable language and tacked on to a capitalist economy. PSS supported local autonomy and volunteerism, the *deserving* being pulled up by their bootstraps, preventing dependency on Public Welfare and reducing the number of children coming into care and it would not cost the Province new money — nor create growth within the Central Government (a key defining point between Alberta and Socialist Provinces). This was how Duncan Rogers successfully sold the program.

There was some degree of hypocrisy here because, while the politicians justified the changes in Alberta, they condemned the *welfare state* in Saskatchewan. It was said "*they*

*continued to talk about social welfare in the same way a Catholic girl talks about premarital sex, i.e. condemned it publicly but pretended their own transgressions were somehow more laudable. It was not a grand plan for a socialist state but true concern for fellow man!"*

Ogden Nash, in "The Politician", said

*He gains votes ever and anew  
By taking money from everybody and giving it to the few  
While explaining that every penny  
Was extracted from the few to be given to the many!*

The first years of PSS were truly sailing on uncharted seas. It was up to John Smith, the first Provincial Director, and his four consultants — Dale Joslin, Thelma Scambler, Jerry Archibald and Mel Findlay, to get out there, sell it, and make a vague concept work! Calgary, Edmonton, Leduc County, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer came in immediately. The following year Lac La Biche and Ft. McMurray joined (combined, this was 64% of the total provincial population). Athabaska, Bellevue, Camrose County, City of Grande Prairie, and County #1, Grimshaw, Ponoka, St. Albert, St. Paul, M.D. of Smokey River and Westlock became members in 1968. Whether largely to access 20% dollars or to genuinely build a network of community-based preventive programs, these were the pioneer Municipalities that took a gamble. Unfortunately, some viewed it as easy cash, which usually proved to be troublesome later on.

The first years were freewheeling, full of fun — and frustration - as everyone involved wrestled with what this PSS was supposed to be. Its formally stated goals were to:

- prevent welfare;
- prevent marriage breakdown;
- reduce child welfare; and
- promote general social and physical well-being.

Its sub-goals were to:

- support social programs;
- promote municipally-determined priorities;
- encourage municipal social planning;
- build volunteer involvement;
- strengthen local initiatives for self-help; and
- maximize Federal cost-sharing.

The largest supported PSS assumption was that "*individual, family and community social breakdown could be prevented or its degree of impact and severity reduced.*" The

*parable* of building a bridge upstream on a river to keep people from falling in and thus needing costly rescue was a favorite, simple tale told repeatedly to help politicians understand the concept. I always liked the one about the “*common cold and pneumonia*” better.

Politicians tended to support PSS as *welfare prevention*, i.e. “*keep em working and the kids out of child welfare*” while staff at both levels of government were more *community development* oriented. The community and its agencies were prone to view it as a *cash cow*. The fact that PSS **was a process and a means to an end as much an end in itself** was an extremely difficult concept to get across (as it may still be today). Some goals worked at cross-purposes — as social goals often do. The resulting confusion was both its strength and weakness; its weakness because confusion often resulted in non-acceptance and wasted energy, but its strength, in that PSS could be sold on a *right* or *left* wing philosophy and every persuasion in between. And so it was, shamelessly! For example, you could argue on the Right that it was a self-help, anti-dependency strategy and to a Socialist that it was a client-involved vehicle for social supports.

The program, after the first few years of rapid growth, began to stall. From 64% of the population covered in 1967, it wasn't until 1978 that 85% was serviced by FCSS. Duncan Rogers had thought the program would access the \$10 million within a few years. In reality, a \$10 million expenditure was not reached for 10 years and in several of the early years budgeted money was returned to Treasury (see expenditure chart). Many Municipalities were very skeptical or simply denied having social problems. At a High River Council meeting, for instance, the Mayor said “*this Town has no unmarried parents!*” And, indeed, he probably had never seen one - because they all went to Calgary for services.

There were also intergovernmental tensions, primarily because the Province had to approve Municipal projects before they would fund the 80%. This was done through recommendation of the consultants and — of course — the Local Authority always thought its projects were perfect and eminently preventive. One heated controversy I remember was with Leduc. It forwarded a Gymkhana Club project, including horseback jumping, and insisted it fit the definition of PSS. That one went right to the Minister and was eventually disallowed. I'm not sure Leduc has forgiven the Province yet!

In 1968 there were 36 projects, consisting of PSS Directors (these were compulsory for each Municipal Authority), homemakers, day care, kindergarten, information services, family life education and social planning. Some of these were in existence before PSS but now found a natural, more reliable funder.

In 1967, Minister Halmrast retired and Alfred Hooke, the most rabid of anti-socialist Social Crediters, was appointed. He caused havoc within the Department, took ten years off Duncan Roger's life, but was removed from his portfolio quickly by Premier Manning when he took a high profile public position that welfare recipients "*were not deserving of washing machines*". Ray Speaker became Minister next and PSS enjoyed better political support.

And so the program slowly evolved with a few more Municipalities joining every year. In 1972, the Government introduced the Early Childhood Services Program (kindergarten). Since PSS funded most of the kindergarten projects prior to that time, this development caused major trauma in Municipalities. It was their baby and it was quite threatening to let it go partially because it was a well respected, tangible service which gave profile to PSS but also because Provincial money would be lost. In reality, it freed up money for other uses. It would not be the last PSS program to have a difficult weaning.

This raises an interesting aspect of the PSS evolution. Because PSS was supposed to be on the leading edge in meeting community needs, it was inevitable that some programs would grow inordinately as society changed. Homecare, Seniors Services and Day Care were the most dramatic. I will use Day Care as an example.

PSS funded Day Care from the outset but during the 1960's and 70's, vast numbers of women with preschool children entered the workforce. Each year more and more pressure was applied — especially in urban areas — to fund more Day Care spaces. In 1969, Day Care consumed 15% of the total PSS budget. By 1971, this had climbed to 26%, by 1975, 42% and, the following year, threatened to absorb more than half. This caused alarm with other PSS services that saw themselves being squeezed out, with Municipalities due to a rapidly escalating 20%, and the Province which was under siege to fund and regulate Day Care services across Alberta.

Because PSS could only finance non-profit Day Care Associations, the private Day Care Centres, which were growing by leaps and bounds across Alberta to fill emerging needs,, claimed discrimination and applied considerable pressure on government to stop the needless subsidy to *cadillac* Day Care and open it uniformly to all. The two sides became almost *armed* camps in their advocacy for their respective positions, i.e. *non-profits* became the self-appointed champions for quality care and *profits* for fairer *chevrolet* service for parents everywhere. Some of the most hostile public meetings I have ever attended revolved around this to the point of close to physical violence (I appreciated being 6'4" and weighing 200 lbs!). Calgary was the hotbed for dissent where Day Care chains had gained a foothold and Edmonton tended to lead the charge for *quality* care.

Meanwhile, most of the politicians (being men) were in a state of denial that Day Care was needed at all. The prevailing feeling was that women should be at home with the children — ignoring the fact that women were fleeing to the work force in droves out of necessity. The fight was doubly vicious because long held social/religious/economic societal values were under siege and these were not easily shifted in fundamentalist Alberta of the 1960's and 70's. But the dynamics of social evolution were unstoppable (not to say those of very angry women in need of good child care) and the Province, in some respects "*holding its nose*" finally acted to institute *standards* and a *portable subsidy* in 1978. The fight was far from over but the course was set to have PSS release Day Care. And the same thing happened with aspects of Home Care services, which PSS had pioneered, when the Department of Health expanded to assume many home support roles in the mid-1970's.

However painful for PSS to give up its progeny in adolescence, I would argue that it was a sure sign that PSS was doing its job and healthy both for its offspring and the mother. Broadly needed services could be broadened to receive an influx of resources (i.e. E.C.S., Day Care and Home Care financing far exceeds that of its parent)...and Mom could devote her energies to other children. No doubt this evolution is still occurring, hopefully with less pain than in its past!

I became the second PSS Director in 1974 when John Smith retired, under instruction by Duncan Rogers to "*get out there and sell it to municipalities.*" As mentioned earlier, he was disappointed at its slow pick-up. And get out to promote it we did. With seven consultants scouring the province, speaking to local Councils — reminding them of *drowning bodies in rivers* - it was a period of optimism, excitement and rapid growth. At a Pincher Creek Council briefing, the Mayor became progressively more excited and occasionally shouted "sheekin sheet", which I didn't understand because he had a pronounced Spanish accent but I assumed was positive. In the end, members voted unanimously against joining the PSS program. What the Mayor had really been saying was "chicken shit" at key points in my message. It was a long 6-hour drive back to Edmonton that night.

PSS Directors tended to be rough and ready characters, very connected to the community, and highly committed to social development. In other words, great people! Advisory Committee members, on the other hand, tended to be conservative Municipal Councillors — often with high moral standards. In other words, great people! This could, and did, result in some tense situations.

For instance, at one Northwestern Regional Conference held in Fahler, the entertainment at the final night banquet consisted of people sharing their favorite jokes. As alcohol was consumed during the evening, the jokes and stories became more lewd and one by one

offended Board members left the gathering with disgusted looks until only Directors were left. The following morning at breakfast, an indignant Board member, with a very sharp tongue, tore a strip off Directors (the few that were capable of making it) highlighting that they were sad, immoral specimens and miserable role models within their communities and she would make certain the Minister heard about their transgressions. She did, the Minister asked for a full report and I certainly had to admit *“they were indeed a bunch of scoundrels.”* But what dedicated, spirited, community developers they were! Many went on to become Councillors and Mayors and even respectable citizens in their home communities.

During the 1970’s, the evolution of Director’s, Board’s, their Associations, and Annual Conferences took place. For the first years, the Provincial Branch organized an Annual Meeting for Boards and Staff conjointly to help bring coherence to a widely spread constituency. In 1970 the first Director’s Association was formed in Banff with Lorne Larson as President. As a matter of interest, subsequent Presidents were Tony Tobin, Lethbridge, Bob Wanner, Medicine Hat, Denny Garrett, Slave Lake, and Jim Common, County of Strathcona. By 1973, Directors and Boards were holding Annual Meetings in similar venues but still with Provincial involvement and separate agendas.

The concept of a Board Association was first floated with Minister Helen Hunley in 1975. She approved and a *constitution* was approved in 1977, with an annual membership fee of \$200 per Municipal Authority. The Board Association, with Directors fully involved, became responsible for the organization of the Annual Convention, with shared funding from the Province. By 1980, the Director’s Association was defunct but was still loosely functional as a “Directors Network”. And so, the tail and the dog were finally in the right order!

Things were going along swimmingly until 1979 when a new Minister was appointed, triggering a turbulent time in the Department and PSS. The Peter Lougheed government had come to power in 1971 and basically left the Social Credit-initiated program alone to mature. But this Minister came to office distrusting bureaucracies and largely viewing PSS as a duplicative, “frilly”, even dangerous, waste of money. He was particularly disparaging of youth-oriented projects and those of a community development nature, especially in Northern Alberta where Native peoples needed to be taking some control over their future. *“That ‘s what MLA’s were for wasn’t it, to represent their people?”*

To deal with the perceived problem, the Minister called for a *“complete review”* to — what many expected - provide a rationale to abolish PSS. To this end, three Review Bodies were established consisting of Provincial Staff, Municipal Staff and MLA’s. Each was given the mandate to consult with their constituencies. The MLA group, conversing with

*“Albertans”*, was suspected to be the only one that would be heeded. There was much apprehension within the PSS community and a suspicion that their worst fears were coming true, i.e. the Province was about to *“pull the rug and leave Municipalities holding the bag.”* There was self-doubt at all levels. Deputy Minister, Stanley Mansbridge (father of Peter Mansbridge), called me aside one day to advise that *“PSS, like Caesar’s wife, not only had to be beyond reproach but had to be perceived as being beyond reproach”*.

After almost a year of process, each Committee produced a report not dissimilar one from the other. Much to a certain Minister’s surprise, there was overwhelming support and goodwill towards PSS, even as expressed by the Government’s own MLA’s. Well here was a dilemma what to do now? The answer was quite simple; rename the beast, make some changes to its administration and thereby put a Conservative stamp-of-approval on what proved to be an appreciated Social Credit program.

And that’s exactly what happened! The Minister asked that new name suggestions be forwarded for his consideration. The challenge of selecting a new name reminds me of the Psychiatrist and Proctologist (rear end specialist) who went into practice together and had to choose a name to put on their door. At first they thought of *“Heads and Tails.”* That seemed a bit hokey so considered *“Odds and Ends.”* This was a little insensitive so they settled on *“Nuts and Butts!”*

With similar ingenuity and much brain-wracking, staff forwarded all kinds of excellent suggestions to the Minister in various combinations and permutations — certain that one would be chosen. I was sitting eating lunch at my desk one day and the Minister called to declare proudly that the program would be renamed **Family and Community Support Services**. I almost fell off my chair! We had not suggested anything remotely close to this. My first impression was that it was too long, clumsy and made no reference to being early intervention or social in nature. But, apparently, the Minister felt *social* had negative connotations and *preventive* suggested problems. So the program had a new *handle* that the Government could now claim as its own.

Consistent with Conservative principles, and the maturation of PSS over 15 years, the following changes were effected in the Spring of 1981:

- it would be extended to all Albertans;
- red tape would be eliminated and Municipal decision-making would set priorities (followed by Provincial audits);
- the 80-20% cost share arrangement would be continued;
- funds would be advanced on a quarterly basis;
- funding would be increased over subsequent years;

- special funds would flow to areas of high growth and sparse population;
- a public awareness campaign would be launched to encourage and strengthen volunteerism;
- funding formulas would be introduced to replace deficit financing; *programs* at \$13 for urban and \$14 for rural; *administration* at \$9.50 for first 5000 people, \$1.10 for next 7000 and 70c for remainder;
- part-time Directors could be hired; and
- the 20% could now come from other than the Municipal tax base.

Many of these changes were desirable and timely. The last two were not and caused considerable difficulty. Less-than-full-time Directors diminished identity and the specialized attention required to oversee FCSS. It triggered many municipalities to create *community service* models whereby FCSS became folded in with broader recreation/cultural/miscellaneous programs for administration purposes. Authorities could also now eliminate their financial commitment and ask projects to provide the 20%, thus diluting one of the basic *partnership* tenants.

The 1981 instituted changes guided FCSS directions and growth for a decade. The Provincial budget advanced respectably from \$17 million in 1982 to \$35 million in 1990. But in that year another comprehensive FCSS “*review*” was called for and a report with 36 recommendations was presented in 1991. Partially as a result, in 1994 the program was transferred to Alberta Municipal Affairs and Municipalities were offered *unconditional* funding. This was an attempt by the Alberta Government to streamline its departmental administrative mechanisms and provide more Municipal flexibility in managing FCSS resources.

Municipalities could be forgiven, as in 1981, for again feeling that the Province was attempting to eliminate FCSS’s separate program identity. Emotions ran strong — with good reason — that this was a none-to-subtle exercise to exterminate the program (someone once said “*even paranoids have real enemies*”). The thinking went that it would become anonymous within Municipal Affairs (with no consultants or significant staff presence) and that cash-strapped Municipal governments would siphon off *unconditional* FCSS funds to higher priority *hard* services.

Much to the Provincial Government’s surprise, 47% of Municipalities, representing 73% of the population, chose to stay with *conditional* funding. Controversy raged and FCSS was moved back to Family and Social Services in 1996 and *conditional* funding reinstated. FCSS was beginning to feel like an **orphan** being bounced around between parents, none of whom seemed to love it enough to nurture and help it grow.

Yet another municipal-provincial *Steering Committee* was formed in 1996 to reexamine the FCSS program and in 1997 the 20% Municipal financial contribution was again made mandatory. A further examination of its place in the universe took place as a part of the Family and Social Services reorganization of 1999 and, later that year FCSS became adopted by the new Children's Services Ministry. A wise person once said *"if you pick a flower often enough to examine the health of its roots, it will die!"* On this premise, FCSS should have died several times, been buried and forgotten.

But the **cat came back** and entered the new millennium, somewhat battered, with a budget of \$37 million, covering 98% of Alberta's population. All the other innovative community development initiatives of the 1960's disappeared along the way. These included the Company of Young Canadians, the Alberta Service Corporation and the Human Resources Development Authority, all promising programs at one time. What is the secret of FCSS longevity? In my mind, the answers are not complicated and can be grouped into four categories.

First, **the basic premises and underpinnings of PSS/FCSS are timeless for all seasons and political persuasions.** They are based on the assumption that people have basic human needs that really don't change significantly from one generation or era to the next. As a wise person once said *"the most important things in life aren't things!"* At a local and interpersonal level, people often require assistance in identifying these needs with others of a like mind and then finding practical solutions to meet them. Human beings are social creatures who need to be involved in shaping a positive world for themselves. That is why what was conceived in the 1960's is totally relevant for the 2000's. This will become even more necessary as the world becomes more technical, impersonal and complex. FCSS provides a philosophy, process mechanisms, resources and opportunities for personal involvement. It produces tangible results and great value-for-money. As long as it remains true to these axioms, it will be successful.

A second critical factor explaining FCSS survival is **enduring Municipal and citizen participation.** Every time a review of FCSS was undertaken, people at the local level came forth and said *"don't you dare touch this program that has meant so much to us"*. Politicians — ever conscious of the next election - looked at this and said *"oh boy, we 'd better be careful here!"* Without question, this shared responsibility between governments and their constituents provided a check and balance that ensured FCSS would survive to see another day. On many occasions, outspoken Municipal staff and Elected Representatives would have been dismissed outright for their criticisms if in the employ of the Province.

Thirdly, **great people were consistently attracted to a noble enterprise!** Quite exceptional, dedicated citizens became connected to FCSS at the political, advisory

committee, staff, agency, volunteer and user levels. Through their example, other people became involved and credibility reigned. *“When the going got tough, the tough got going”* and stood up for what they knew was right. This extends to the Government of Alberta. It deserves tremendous credit for leadership in initiating the program and supporting it continuously for 35 years.

Last, FCSS found the way through trying personalities, political changes and traumatic societal upheavals to be **patient and flexible in adapting the program in pragmatic ways without abandoning its** basically sound roots.

Anything that is too rigid will fracture under pressure over time. FCSS swayed and bent with the times but has lived to see another day with its principles and methodology intact and head held high.

And what are FCSS prospects for the future? Mark Twain said *“the art of prophecy is very difficult, especially with regard to the future.”* I feel a bit the same: my crystal ball is fuzzy at the best of times! But I don’t really have much hesitation in saying that, if FCSS stays true to the above four features that have kept it in good stead for the last 35 years, it will stay healthy and an asset to thousands of citizens in helping them lead productive lives. FCSS has not gained the stature or credit it richly deserves after three and a half decades of valued service. It provides almost universal coverage through approximately 200 municipalities but its 2001 budget should be \$142 million, not \$42 million. Even at that it would be a bargain! Some of its spin-offs, like E.C.S., Day Care and Home Care have huge budgets while the parent remains poor. But, then again, it is vitally alive and as relevant as ever. Maybe its success is largely due to its *threadbare* nature and the character-strengthening struggle of good people like yourselves and your predecessors. All that I can do is encourage you to continue the good fight! You can see today what a fine and robust legacy you have to build on.

A friend of mine once said that *“to be seen, you have to stand up; to be heard, you have to speak up; but to be appreciated you have shut up and sit down!”* That’s exactly what I intend to do. Thank you very much for your courtesy of listening and I look forward to your observations and discussion.

Provincial Allocations for PSS/FCSS

YEAR	EXPENDITURES \$
1966/67	177,261
1967/68	707,780
1968/69	1,225,002
1969/70	1,758,181
1970/71	2,264,549
*1971/72	2,284,823
1972/73	3,208,321
1973/74	3,968,239
1974/75	5,514,286
1975/76	8,738,732
1976/77	10,214,020
1977/78	11,188,000
**1978/79	8,239,020
1979/80	9,196,092
1980/81	11,865,570
PSS 1981/82	17,118,750
FCSS 1982/83	23,800,000
1983/84	20,602,173
1984/85	21,222,158
1985/86	25,300,000
1986/87	33,312,104
1987/88	32,325,217
1988/89	33,758,413
1989/90	34,655,813
1990/91	35,886,076
2001/2002	42,300,000

\*Creation of E.C.S. in Dept. of Education    \*\* Day Care separates from FCSS

## MINISTER OF PSS AND FCSS SINCE INCEPTION

L.W. Halmrast	Public Welfare (1966)	Social Credit
Alfred Hooke	Public Welfare	Social Credit
Ray Speaker	Social Services	Social Credit
Neil Crawford	Social Services	Conservative
Helen Hunley	Social Services	Conservative
Bob Bogle	Social Services	Conservative
Dr. Neil Webber	Social Services	Conservative
Connie Osterman	Social Services	Conservative
John Oldring	Social Services	Conservative
Nancy Betkowski	Social Services and Community Health	Conservative
Jim Dinning	Social Services and Community Health	Conservative
Mike Cardinal	Family and Social Services	Conservative
Tom Thurber	Municipal Affairs	Conservative
Stockwell Day	Family and Social Services	Conservative
Dr. Lyle Oberg	Family and Social Services	Conservative
Iris Evans	Children's Services (2001)	Conservative