

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**Third Session — Thirteenth Legislature**  
**22nd Day**

**Monday, March 16, 1959.**

The House met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.

On the Orders of the Day:

**INVITATION TO CURL**

**Hon. J.H. Brockelbank:** — Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw to the attention of the members the invitation of the Civil Service Co-operative Curling Association to curl on this coming Saturday night, if they wish. I should have the names either today or tomorrow, so that they will not be holding out ice for us, which they might otherwise rent, if we are not going to use it. So, if members would please hand me their names today or tomorrow, it would be appreciated.

**WELCOME TO STUDENTS**

**Mr. A.T. Stone (Saskatoon City):** — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with, I realize this is getting to be quite a habit, but I am always glad to welcome a group of young citizens from the city of Saskatoon. I draw the attention of the members to a group of students from King George School, in Saskatoon, and I hope their stay will be a pleasant and a profitable one.

**SOCIAL AID ACT**

Moved by Hon. Mr. Bentley, that Bill No. 76 — An Act to provide for the Granting of Aid to Certain Persons under Certain Conditions, be now read a second time.

**Hon. T.J. Bentley (Minister of Social Welfare):**— Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 76 — a new Social Aid Act, 1959, — contains a couple of completely new principles in regard to social aid, and will require repealing the old Act and replacing it with a brand new one. Because

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of that, sir, I thought that I should make a fairly extended statement and explanation for the members of the House so that they will be able to debate it, if they care to, or at least they will have further information when the matter goes to Committee.

I would like to point out that, traditionally, relief for the poor has always been the responsibility of local government. Even back in the time of Elizabeth I, the poor law then provided that relief for the poor would be provided by the parish in which the person lived in those days, and that was transmitted to the Maritime Provinces of Canada before Confederation, except that, instead of now being to the parish it is to the organized municipality. Saskatchewan's first Act regarding rural municipalities placed the responsibility on the municipality to grant aid or relief to any needy person who was a resident of the municipality. That is 50 years ago or more, and 50 years ago, when the legislation regarding urban municipalities was passed, similar legislation was passed giving them the same responsibility. So all through, the principle of residence and the responsibility of the legal place of residence, be it parish or, later, municipality, has continued.

Going back to the 1930's when relief became very extensive in the province, the extent of the problem compelled the Provincial and Federal Governments to come to the aid of the municipalities. We all remember that; but even in this the principle of local responsibility was recognized. This is substantiated by the fact that municipalities entered into a relief agreement to re-imburse the Government for a percentage of total relief made to their residents in 1932-1933 on to 1933-1934. Under those regulations those in need were classified in three classifications. There were the bona fide residents, transients, and persons without municipal legal residence. The residence factor as it is today was the basis for establishing the categories.

The residence requirement has indeed been a fundamental to establishing responsibility for helping needy people throughout the ages. There has also been through the ages a feeling, almost a dogma, that help for the needy is cold charity, and, therefore a stigma is attached to anyone who requires it. All thinking people should know by now that this is not so. People can be in need through no fault of their own. In some ways a feeling of this kind is even more difficult to alter than is an actual situation that cannot underline our present state of philosophy regarding help for the needy is that help is their fundamental right, and providing that help is not a cold charitable obligation but an expression of social responsibility on the part of the nation towards its people. This humanitarian philosophy later incorporated in the Declaration of Human Rights, was expressed in the philosophy on which this Government established the Department of Social Welfare, when we first came into power in 1944.

Time will not permit me to dwell at any length on some of the principles inherent in our Social Welfare programs even though they have a bearing on social aid; but I do feel that it will help towards a better understanding on the subject and of how the legislation I am proposing is planned to strengthen and improve the entire operation of the program.

There are two specific aspects to a good welfare program, the economic and the social. The economic is aimed at man's physical well-being, and the social is aimed at personal adjustment. A social aid program that helps man's economic steps by providing money, but does it in such a way that his dignity and worth as an individual are harmed, may have a long and recurring negative effect on his personal adjustment.

In Saskatchewan, public assistance is one part of an over-all welfare program. It embraces all the programs under which direct financial assistance is extended. Of this, social aid is only one, but is the one not designed for any specific segment of society such as allowances for the blind or mother's allowance or disabled or old-age supplementary allowances. Social Aid is a program the costs of which are actually shared by the three levels of government, Federal, Provincial and the municipality. A program being administered by the municipalities means that there are 800 places, approximately, in the province where a person can apply for social aid.

There are three categories of social aid recipients for which these present financial arrangements are made, as follows:

The first is, the municipalities are responsible for their own residents and they are re-imbursed to the extent of 75 per cent, by the Provincial Government, of the amount of aid granted.

The second category is the person living in one municipality who has legal residence in another municipalities for this category the granting municipality (at the present time we are speaking of) is re-imbursed 100 per cent by the Provincial Government, and the Government in turn bills the municipality of legal residence its 25 per cent of the share.

The third category is for people who have no legal residence in any municipality, and they become 100 per cent responsibility of the Provincial Government; that is, the Government bears the full cost of those people.

Except for those in the first category (those who have legal municipal residence) the administration of this program is, to say the least, cumbersome. It is time consuming and is very costly in man-hours and in money. All this contributes to the fact that our social aid program has many improvements yet which we can envisage and bring into operation.

Before I elaborate on some of the serious objections of the present social aid program, I want to say that it is essential, in my opinion, that social aid continues to exist as a municipal responsibility. I realize that municipalities need help in financing social aid, and the Provincial Government has shown its preparedness to carry a major portion of the cost; but if the Provincial Government continues to assume responsibility for administering social aid, as we are so doing now, in the inter-municipal and 100 per cent cases that I mentioned in categories two and three, as well as financial aid, social aid will soon cease to be a local responsibility.

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Complete control will pass to the Provincial Government and municipalities will be stripped of the very essential function, and we want to avoid anything of that nature.

The effect of exercising the responsibility by municipalities alone does not satisfy my concern about the program. As the program presently exists, it is not a good one. We, of Government, are not alone in seeing this. The subject has repeatedly been aired and discussed at municipal gatherings. You only have to look back at resolutions passed to realize what I am saying here. I outlined some of the most serious objections to our present social aid program to the Provincial-Local Government Conference held two years ago, last fall. The points I then brought out have not improved; if anything, the greater degree of unemployment, the ever-increasing mobility of people have caused them, to be come worse than they were at that time.

Under the program as it now stands, people are not getting help when they need it, and people are not getting the amount of aid that they need because, to a large extent, municipalities are too weak and small financially to support generous allowances. People are not getting aid when they need it partly because of the reluctance on the part of some municipalities to spend what they consider hard-earned tax money on people who, in their opinion, are undeserving. Aid for many people is delayed because of the residence factor or, it takes time and it falls on the Government's shoulders to establish the municipality of legal residence. Sometimes it takes still more time and effort to convince them that they are legally responsible for their share of aid that they themselves had no say in the granting.

If the Government did not do this, municipalities issuing aid to non-residents would have to bill the responsible municipality themselves and go to court to collect if the municipality that was responsible refused to pay. The only alternative would be to deny a person seeking it and let them starve and, of course, nobody wants that to happen. This problem is a substantial one when you consider that there are about 500 municipalities involved in inter-municipal cases, and that in the year 1957-1958, these cases received aid amounting to \$236,000. The whole residence basis of proportioning costs is most troublesome and will become increasingly so as the mobility of our population increases.

Absolute recognition of the drastic need to develop some radical alternative to free us all, provincial and municipal governments, from these complications was evident, a year ago, when I discussed with the Saskatchewan Association of Urban and Rural Municipalities the possibility of setting up a Committee with the Government to go constructively into the matter. Out of all the delving and study of this Committee to establish what would meet the present and future conditions as far as we were able to observe, and to portend a good social aid program, the basis of the legislation I am going to proposed today was evolved and mutually agreed to.

The setting up of this Committee gave us, in the Department, the 'green light' to bring to the fore many other criticisms of social

aid programs. These related to what I call the administrative practices. by this I mean such things, for example, as follows:

1. What steps are taken in applying for aid?
2. Do all people have a right to apply, or are some refused before they even make a formal application? Who decides to grant or refuse aid and on what basis does he decide? Is an objective measuring stick used and applied uniformly and impartially to all persons, or are decisions made according to the whim or the mood of officials who happen to be in charge? Is the amount of aid determined according to some objective measure, or is this, too, decided by how officials feel at any given time? Are applicants informed of the decision in such a manner that they can understand why and how the decision was arrived at?
3. How can the confidentiality of a person's circumstances be kept? This is quite important because often failure to make adequate provision for this has acted as a deterrent to people seeking aid. The program should help people who need aid get it, not scare them off by such things as unduly publicizing the situation.
4. What assurance do people have of fair treatment? does the person have a right to appeal a decision by the municipality and have a fair hearing?
5. How can the experience of accepting and depending on social aid be made least damaging to the individual?

These are extremely important considerations that are vital to a good social aid program which seeks to preserve self-respect of people and maintain or strengthen whatever capacity they may have for getting out of the difficulties in which they find themselves. Inherent in these bewildering questions, which all relate to standards of social aid practice, are multiple social aspects which are contemporary with the actual dollars of aid granted or refused, because many of these aspects can impinge on the wellbeing of the applicant and his dependants when aid is needed and long after the need is overcome, and we and the municipal representatives in the Committee were unanimously agreed that improved and uniform standards of practice in the administration of social aid throughout the province are urgently needed.

Before we look specifically at the new social aid legislation I wish to present, we must concede that we clearly recognize and accept our responsibility for those of our population who may need this aid; we are our brother's keeper, individually and collectively. For over 350 years the principle of the state's responsibility for its indigents has been established. The question is not whether we should accept responsibility, but how we can best discharge it.

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Our program must be anchored to a basic philosophy which serves as a guide and justifies our action. This philosophy must affirm a belief in the integrity and dignity of the individual, and must recognize that members of society are dependent upon one another, and that the well-being of all is dependent on the wellbeing of each. Accepting this philosophy we must recognize that a number of principles flow from it which should be carried into the policy and the administrative practices of the social aid program, and the principles are as follows:

1. Every individual should have a right to social aid when his need can be demonstrated, regardless of his race, creed, residence or citizenship.
2. No individual should have to meet a test of moral worthiness in order to receive social aid.
3. Every individual receiving social aid should have a right to plan his own life as he chooses, even though he has lost his financial independence. This means that he should have the right to decide such things as how he should use social aid, except if he fails to use it to provide the necessities of life for himself and his dependants. He should decide where he shall live and what services he wishes to accept.
4. The privacy of the circumstances of every individual receiving or applying for social aid must be respected.
5. Every individual seeking or receiving social aid should have the right to appeal any decisions, concerning his application, which he thinks unjust.
6. Every individual should have the right and the obligation to take as much responsibility as he can, in seeking a solution to his financial problems. This includes both the finding of employment and the establishment of his need for social aid.

It is with the purpose of giving effect to these principles and of enabling them to be brought fully into the operation of the social aid programs on a uniform basis throughout the province, that I am proposing the new Social Aid Legislation.

You have before you a copy of the new Social Aid Act, 1959, which I propose. This is an Act that provides for the granting of aid to indigent and certain other persons.

The reference to certain other persons, of course, is because, under the Act, we have the authority to issue supplemental allowances and mothers' allowances where they are needed.

I would like to preface my remarks pertaining to the representatives of the S.A.R.M. and the S.U.M.A. and my Department was set up last April to study the various proposals that would bring about improvements over the existing Social Aid Act, with the particular object of seeing what could be done to eliminate the very troublesome residence requirements. After much study and deliberation the Committee worked out proposals for eliminating the one-year residence requirement and for cost sharing based on municipal per capita of population contribution. These proposals were not only mutually agreed upon by the members of the Committee but were, in turn, supported most enthusiastically by the Executives of both associations. In other words, they favoured the elimination, the wiping out, of the residence requirement and the enacting of legislation whereby the municipal share of the cost of social aid will be borne by all municipalities on a per capita basis. The proposal then is as follows:

Municipalities will agree to issue aid to anyone within their boundaries who could demonstrate a need for it by some objective criterion regardless of how long the person has lived in the municipality. A municipal share of social aid cost would be determined not as a percentage of what is issued, as is the case now, but by a per capita of population levy which varies in direct proportion to the changes in the total provincial social aid cost. To establish a working base, 1956-1957 was taken as the base year. The per capita rates, on the 1956-1957 level of expenditure, would have been as follows: cities, 25 cents; towns, 20 cents; villages, 10 cents, and rural municipalities, 10 cents. If any subsequent year the total provincial social aid expenditure would increase or decrease by a certain percentage (50 per cent, we will say), the per capita rates would increase or decrease in direct proportion.

The question that naturally arises at this point is — how are these rates arrived at; and I think this is what the House will want to have information on. during the fiscal year 1956-1957, the actual expenditures made by the municipalities were equivalent to the following per capita rates: cities, 73 cents; towns, 37 cents; villages, 22 cents, and rural municipalities, 24 cents. With these figures before the Committee, the late Mr. Ferguson, who was at that time the Secretary of the S.A.R.M., proposed the following rates which were lower for cities and towns and higher for villages and rural municipalities than the 1956-1957 basis. His proposal was: cities, 60 cents; towns, 35 cents; villages, 25 cents and rural municipalities, 25 cents. Mr. Ferguson noted that even though this would result in the rural municipalities paying about \$5,000 more than they otherwise would, they would be prepared to accept in order to see the new arrangement established.

The next step was that the Saskatchewan Urban Municipal representatives argued that 60 cents for cities was too high. They pointed to a number of cities which would have to pay up to as high as 50 per cent more than they do currently, under the new arrangement at the figures suggested by Mr. Ferguson. They said that an acceptable arrangement would be to keep the

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per capita arrangement suggested by Mr. Ferguson, but to reduce the rate to the cities to 40 cents. This would make the following rate structure: cities, 40 cents; towns, 35 cents; villages, 25 cents and rural municipalities, 25 cents. These rates would have increased the Provincial share and decreased the municipal share by \$77,000 in that base year, had they been in effect then.

However, there was another adjustment that had to be made. If the proposals came into existence it would be no longer possible, since residences would be ignored, for us to identify the 100 per cent cases. Those were cases for which the Provincial Government was providing not only social aid but also the health services, and the various municipalities under the new arrangement would be required to provide the health services themselves. It was agreed that the municipalities would accept this responsibility if they were compensated for the additional cost that this would entail.

We determined that the cost of this share was \$127,000 in that year, or about 15 cents per capita of population. We suggested that it would be better to make this compensation by reducing the per capita rate for social aid, rather than by trying to continue to have the Province carry a medical program for these people who would have, in fact, lost their identities and whom we wouldn't be able to discover and service. This was agreed to. In fact the municipalities have agreed to everything that I am suggesting.

When you subtract, therefore, the 15 cents per capita figure from the rates I mentioned last, the result in the rate structure is as follows: cities, 25 cents; towns, 20 cents; villages, 10 cents and rural municipalities 10 cents, based on the base year 1956-1957.

Having detailed the proposed rate structure and how it was arrived at, I will go into the costs of the program or the proposal, as we see it, to see what the net increase in cost to the Provincial Government would be. The actual distribution of the expenditures for the year 1956-1957 should be compared to what the contribution would have been under the new proposal. In that fiscal year 1956-1957, the municipal and provincial governments combined expenditures on social aid was \$2,190,000. Under these conditions, the provincial share was \$1,854,000, and the municipal share was \$336,000. Now, had this structure that I am proposing today been in effect at that time, the provincial share would have been \$1,931,000 and the municipal share \$259,000. If you subtract the two (\$259,000 from \$336,000) you will get \$77,000, which is the increase that the Government makes as a contribution to social aid, based on that year.

The proposals I have described require the enactment of new social aid legislation which I am proposing. The new legislation will, among other things, permit the Provincial Government and various municipalities to enter into agreements which would be necessary. The Act and the Agreements under it, in addition to providing the necessary machinery for implementing the proposal, attempt to incorporate certain minimum standards into the program. Some of the minimum standards of administrative practices that municipalities will be expected to adopt, which I would mention was a step of the Committee



in which the municipal officials agreed to, are:

- (a) Every municipality or groups of municipalities administering social aid would set down in writing its social aid policies including a schedule of allowances it uses; what items of assistance are provided for; to whom aid is issued and how the amount of assistance is calculated etc.
- (b) Every administering unit whether it be a single municipality or a group of municipalities would agree to designate some one person who will have authority and be responsible for accepting applications and for issuing social aid immediately when it is needed.
- (c) Written application would be used when applying for social aid.
- (d) A definite procedure for determining eligibility for social aid would be set out and followed. The procedure would provide for visiting applicants in their own homes when necessary and for reporting all information gathered.
- (e) The budget deficit method of determining these as described in the Social Aid Manual, prepared by the Social Welfare Department, to be used.
- (f) Clients would be advised in writing of the decision concerning their application.
- (g) Where at all possible payments will be made in cash or by cheque. A definite procedure will be set out for determining continuing eligibility. A definite procedure would be established whereby applicants or recipients could appeal at the local level any decision regarding the allowances they consider unjust. A confidentiality of all records and the privacy of all investigations would be respected. The administering units in reporting on the program would supply the information and use the forms that are necessary. The Social Aid record of the administering units would be made available to the Department for purposes of auditing and evaluating the administrative practices.

We should also note another implication. Because of certain types of criteria which will be used for determining the amount of social aid to be paid, there might be a slight increase in the social aid expenditures. Those municipalities who now refuse to issue or who issue inadequate amounts may find themselves issuing more than they have in the past. We have no way, of course, of knowing that the increase is likely to be. Part of it, however, would be borne by the municipalities through an

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increase in their per capita levy rates.

The new regulations between the provincial and municipal governments implied by the proposals, suggests that some of our staff, namely, those engaged in administering social aid would be freed of this task. This is true, but it does not mean that this will result in a savings. However, the staff members who are still doing jobs they never should have been doing, will be used to perform essential jobs more appropriate to the function of the Department. In substance, rather than administering aid themselves they will be helping municipal officials do it according to the standards of practice agreements.

I do not doubt that there are questions arising in your minds. I admit the entire subject of social aid, to say the least, is tremendous; but I will answer two questions I feel you will likely be wondering about.

It is very natural to wonder what assurance there is that social aid costs will not sky-rocket because, under the legislation I am proposing, the municipal share is substantially reduced, and because it is not directly related to the amount of aid a municipality actually issues. To this I can say that at the present time, many municipalities are issuing aid to persons who are not residents for which they are being reimbursed 100 per cent, and in these cases we have not noted any extravagance in the amounts of aid issued.

We do not expect any different behaviour under the new proposals, particularly since any increase in the over-all social aid costs will result in an increase in the per capita rate for the municipalities. Further, under my proposed legislation, we would be entering into agreements with the municipalities which will require them to follow certain procedures, which would control the amount issued. These agreements would also give us the right to review their practices, and this review would enable us to discover any extravagances and to explore, with the municipality, ways and means to correct such. It is my opinion that most of our municipal councils are composed of people who have a high regard for their responsibilities to the taxpayer, and hence will not be extravagant.

The second question I believe I should clear is this: is it fair to ask municipalities to pay part of the social aid costs through a per capita levy, even though they may issue no social aid in any one year? In answering this I would stress that my proposed legislation has aspects that are in the nature of an insurance, whereby municipalities, in effect, purchase protection against unpredictable social aid costs at a later date. I think this is sound social aid practice. There is a precedent to this in the present arrangement for the T.B. levy on municipalities, where all municipalities make their contribution regardless of whether they have any, or very few, people from their municipalities under the care of the Anti-T.B. League.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have tried to give a very clear explanation without any side comments of any kind, because I thought that

the House would want to have that information in its mind prior to going into Committee of the Whole, on the Bill. With that explanation, I will move second reading of the Bill.

**Mr. Nicholson (Nipawin):** — Mr. Speaker, would you mind if I asked a question or two? I would like to ask a question for clarification. One question I would like to ask the Minister was: what will be the case with regard to people living outside of the province, and the province being billed for their social aid? That is one. Another question I am wondering about is the foundation on which you say 'paid cash' to the recipient.

**Hon. Mr. Bentley:**— I have no objection to answering, but these are questions that should be asked in Committee. the answering of the questions will bring some other thing to some one else's mind.

**Mr. Nicholson:** — Well, this is a matter of principle is it not?

**Hon. Mr. Bentley:**— They are not involved in the principle. The principles are standardization of practice, and the elimination of the residence clause. Those are the principles involved, the other matters are matters of detail in connection with the various items.

The motion for second reading of Bill No. 76 was then agreed to, and the Bill referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

The House adjourned at 10:00 p.m. o'clock.