

APPENDIX "C"

BRIEF TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
POVERTY

Submitted by the Saint John Board of Trade
August 1970

The Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce movement in Canada generally subscribes to the statement "What is good for the community is good for business".

No one should quarrel with the suggestion that every individual in Canada should have an opportunity to have a standard of living adequate for at least the minimum acceptable standards of health and well-being of himself and his family. Therefore, we might say that our biggest challenge and task is to provide those opportunities which are so badly lacking in so many areas of our country today. This brief submission will not attempt to suggest just how this might best be accomplished as the solutions are not easy ones; but it is imperative that all those responsible in one degree or another for providing opportunities for all individuals work actively and co-operatively together.

The Saint John Board of Trade is vitally concerned with industrial development, but not in a vacuum. Social development must go hand in hand with any industrial growth in this city. With the subject of poverty in mind and the numerous and complex social problems which contribute to it, the Board of Trade feels the future of this city from the point of view of infrastructure must include the consideration of these social problems.

Infrastructure is an essential element in any industrial development program and this development will undoubtedly attract large numbers of people from other areas. Such a migration may result in an increase in the number of social problems in Saint John. This probability must be considered in any government-supported infrastructure programs undertaken in Saint John.

Another most important consideration is that of social input in physical planning for redevelopment schemes in our metropolitan areas. Saint John is one of many Canadian urban communities undergoing extensive urban redevelopment and here again particular attention must continue to be given to those social problems which must be included in planning if redevelopment is to really be effective.

Federal involvement in a war on poverty is essential. However, before the federal government imposes any more social service programs on the provinces it should properly determine just what the provinces really need and are in a position to effectively implement. It has all too often been the case that the provinces haven't been able to find the money to meet their portion of federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangements. Each province, because it has its own peculiar circumstances to contend with, must be treated according to its abilities to pay. Cost-sharing arrangements must therefore be flexible and within financial reach.

Another challenging task of government and people alike is to change community attitudes concerning this matter of poverty—both those of the recipients and of the givers. Motivation must be given to initiate a continuing grass-roots dialogue that is positively action-oriented. And every effort must be applied to assure that all segments and voices in the community have an opportunity to be involved in such dialogue. Community education will mean a team effort and the Board of Trade is prepared to do its share particularly by involving the business community in social development action and encouraging it to play its proper role in such action.

Having committed the Board of Trade to the challenging task of changing community attitudes leads us to another vital matter. A consistent and major area of friction between the attitudes of the givers and those of the recipients is that of misuse, or alleged misuse, of social service funds including unemployment insurance. We are concerned that the subject of welfare could become a dividing force in our society unless obvious abuses are eliminated. While we believe Canadian taxpayers are quite prepared to support fully genuine cases of hardship, they are not prepared to support the growing number of perennial abusers of welfare assistance. The full recourses available for welfare should be directed to those having legitimate needs, all others should be identified and eliminated from welfare assistance programs. If we do not develop this kind of efficiency in welfare assistance the Canadian taxpayer, who after all bears the financial burden, will reject necessary programs and the whole concept of enlightened social assistance will be endangered. Can we build in some assurance that a