

An (Im)Balance of Expectations: Civil Defence in Ottawa, 1951-1962

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Abstract

Throughout the Cold War, the world lived with the fear that international tensions might lead to the outbreak of a devastating nuclear conflict. This fear drove Canadian policy makers to pursue civil defence, which entailed the organization of local communities and patriotic citizens to assist with the defence of their country by preparing for a nuclear conflict. Ottawa, as the national capital, was a possible target of a nuclear strike by the Soviet Union. From 1950-1962, the high watermark of civil defence, the city uneasily managed to reconcile the competing interests of stakeholders and the public with its civic responsibilities, evolving circumstances, and changeable federal policies. In the end, however, municipal squabbling pushed balance over the line into imbalance, and Ottawa's civil defence program came crashing down.

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Introduction

On 1 January 1951, as residents of Ottawa rang in the New Year, a Soviet bomber flew overhead. It immediately dropped its 30 kiloton payload over Centretown. Twelve city blocks were instantaneously engulfed in an atomic fireball, while a blast wave flattened the entire downtown core. Citizens within three kilometers of the blast suffered third degree burns, as fires erupted throughout the city. With little having been done to prepare, citizens fled the city in unorganized masses while medical professionals struggled to handle the sheer numbers of wounded. Those who evacuated the city found themselves in communities which were completely incapable of supporting their numbers. Looting and theft became commonplace. Firefighters, in the immediate aftermath of the blast, scrambled to put out the flames, but serious damage to infrastructure and overuse of the water system caused long delays. In the following days, food and shelter were scarce, and exposure to the elements began to take its toll on survivors as Parliament, and the downtown core, sat in silent ruin.

These events never took place, but they could have. The daunting prospect of Armageddon was ever present throughout the Cold War. Faced by an increasingly hostile world environment, policy makers were forced to consider the unthinkable and prepare for nuclear war. From 1948 to 1963, the Canadian government launched a public and controversial program to prepare for this horrible eventuality called civil defence (CD).¹ At its core, CD was tied intimately to the belief that citizens had an obligation to defend their country.² Civil defence also represented a form of psychological assurance in the face of nuclear terror, as it attempted to normalize the atomic bomb by providing citizens

¹ Andrew Burtch, *Give Me Shelter: The Failure of Canada's Cold War Civil Defence*, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012), 1

² *Ibid*, 4-5

with a visible, community based solution to the threat of nuclear war to which they could contribute, providing a creative outlet for their fears and concerns.³ This thesis is the first detailed discussion and analysis of the city of Ottawa's role and participation in civil defence from 1950 to 1962.

The idea of citizen defenders was a concept which was prevalent throughout Canadian history. James Wood, in his work *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier*, postulates that this idea was a “reconciliation of otherwise conflicting societal values – in the public mind, disinterest in war and militarism combined with the citizen's sense of duty and patriotism to create a distinctly ‘unmilitary’ soldier.”⁴ Many Canadians, often disinterested by the idea of a professional military, instead chose to believe in the strength of the country's citizenry and its ability to defend the country in times of conflict. This was especially true during the First World War, where Canadians viewed “the Canadian Corps as an army of citizen soldiers and a symbol of the nation in arms”.⁵ While this notion was reshaped throughout both World Wars, it remained in place as a “popular memory of ‘democratic armies’ marching to victory against autocratic enemies with huge professional forces.”⁶ Civil defence, in a sense, represented a re-birth of this idea, as it actively sought to engage the common citizenry with the defence of the nation.

It must be noted, however, that the use of atomic weapons represented a shocking and debilitating new form of warfare, one which both policy makers and the public

³ Tracy C. Davis, *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 1

⁴ James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921*, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2010), 1

⁵ *Ibid*, 240

⁶ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 6

struggled to accurately conceptualize.⁷ The atom bomb gripped the imagination of the public and cast a long shadow throughout the Cold War. In response, drills were publicized, evacuation routes were drawn, and volunteers were trained in an attempt to assuage public concerns.⁸ In the words of the author Tracy Davis, a specialist in performance theory, civil defence “was not the art and entertainment known as ‘the theater’ yet it was staged;... [it] was not ‘performance’ yet it was performative”.⁹ CD had a target audience and carried with it a rehearsed message. This performative element was essential to CD planners, who sought to put public concerns to rest through visible displays of preparedness.

At its most basic, CD consisted of personal stockpiling of emergency supplies, including rations, clothing, and first aid materials, and family plans for evacuation. Given the destructive nature of nuclear arms, government action was required to supplement personal efforts.¹⁰ Most levels of government, however reluctantly, became involved with CD planning in some shape or form. Efforts ranged from the creation of evacuation routes, and the installation of air raid sirens and emergency rescue drills to city wide evacuation rehearsals and the formation of a federally-operated civil defence college.

As the national capital, Ottawa was one of 13 cities designated by the federal government as a potential target in the event of a war with the Soviet Union. The city was often the target of hypothetical bombs in the drills run by civil defence planners. As the seat of the federal government Ottawa was an important urban center, and a likely

⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 26, 47, 61

⁸ Anne Fisher, "Civil Defence in Canada, 1939-1965: Garnering Public Support for War and Nuclear Weapons through the Myth of Protection", Master's thesis, (Lakehead University, 1999), 2

⁹ Davis, *Stages of Emergency*, 4

¹⁰ Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12-15

candidate for the creation of its own CD organization. However, civil defence was a complicated issue for Ottawa from 1951-1962. This was largely because of changeable federal policy; consequently, it is important to explain the three stages of CD policy that the federal government pursued.¹¹ All of these stages had an impact on lower levels of government, especially the municipalities. The responsibilities that came along with the implementation of a CD program were broad, and the municipalities relied heavily on federal guidance and financing. Thus, a change in federal policy was often enough to derail municipal efforts, or as was regularly the case for Ottawa, force municipal officials to wait. Any discussion of municipal civil defence efforts must be contextualized within the federal efforts being made at that time.

The first stage of CD planning took place from 1948 to 1954. During this time, the federal government espoused the idea of self-help. This concept stressed that the atom bomb was “just another bomb, albeit a powerful one,” and that a country “could absorb its blow and survive.”¹² As such, early civil defence planning drew heavily from British and German models of firefighting, first aid, and rescue, which had been adapted during the Second World War to combat bombing campaigns.¹³ This meant that self-help planning often relied heavily on public recruitment of volunteers and community engagement. Accordingly, civil defence efforts were largely contained to potential target cities, meaning communities that were industrially or politically important enough to warrant the expenditure of an atomic bomb, which included Ottawa. With direct links to

¹¹ Mark Davidson, "Preparing for the Bomb: The Development of Civil Defence Policy in Canada, 1948-1963", *Canadian Military History* Vol. 16, no. 3 (Summer 2007), 29; Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 1-4

¹² Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 1-2

¹³ *Ibid*, 1

community groups and the public at large, the municipalities represented a crucially important resource for civil defence recruitment.

In order to drum up interest, and to put public concerns at ease, the self-help approach was directed at recruitment, education, and training of “volunteer firefighters and wardens who could save life and property in their community.”¹⁴ The use of volunteers put early civil defence efforts on a prominent public stage, as recruitment drives were an essential part of planning. CD needed to be in the public eye if it had any chance of being successful. Without public interest and awareness, the available pool of volunteers would have dried up, and many federal, provincial, and municipal plans would have been rendered obsolete. Furthermore, “Nuclear bombs [had] shifted the theater of war to the home front”, making it essential for the government to be seen as being prepared.¹⁵ Otherwise, it was feared “that extensive media coverage, and the failure of early efforts to institute international control over the atom, would lead to unchecked ‘atomic anxiety.’”¹⁶

The second phase of federal planning began to take shape in 1954, in response to the United States’ first successful test of a hydrogen bomb.¹⁷ Also known as thermonuclear weapons, these devices carried detonation yields far larger than the atomic weapons which had preceded them. While the atom bomb had been seen as ‘just another bomb,’ or different from Second World War era high explosives only in scale, the hydrogen bomb was capable of wiping out entire cities in a single blast. In response, the federal

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 3; Note: For more on the cultural impact of nuclear weapons, in an American context, please see Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, (New York: Pantheon, 1985)

¹⁵ Davis, *Stages of Emergency*, 4

¹⁶ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 21

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 3

government gradually supplemented the idea of self-help with evacuation strategies. This stage of planning was centered on the mass evacuation of city centers in the wake of an attack warning, and required the municipalities to prepare “provisions to feed, shelter, and care for nuclear refugees in reception areas in rural municipalities surrounding the target city.”¹⁸ Volunteers remained an important part of this approach, however, as auxiliary police officers were necessary to direct traffic out of city centres, and volunteers were needed to administer welfare services for evacuees.

During this stage of planning, public rehearsals, while rare, often drew the public’s eye. One of the prominent examples came from Calgary’s Operation Lifesaver which, planned “to evacuate 48,000 to 50,000 citizens from Calgary” in order to find solutions to any problems that erupted during such a mass exodus.¹⁹ This exercise also served a secondary, but equally important role, of educating Canadians on how to respond to an emergency situation.²⁰ Thus, during the second stage of Canadian civil defence planning, public exercises remained important, both as a means of testing policy and as a method of educating the public and displaying civic preparedness.²¹

Like the self-help foundation that the evacuation strategy had been built upon, this approach had its own problems. Over time, warning times grew smaller and smaller, as aerospace engineers hastened the delivery speed of Armageddon. In addition, the deadly effects of fallout, which was expected to blanket the countryside, were slowly being

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 3

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 89

²⁰ *Ibid*, 88; Tracy Davis, "Between History and Event: Rehearsing Nuclear War Survival." *TDR* 4th ser., 46 (Winter 2002), 20

²¹ Frances Reilly, "Operation "Lifesaver": Canadian Atomic Culture and Cold War Civil Defence", *Past Imperfect* 14 (2008), 48-49

understood. This caused huge problems for CD planners, and invalidated evacuation as a feasible policy.²²

Both the first and second stages of federal planning were overseen by Major-General Frank Worthington, and, for a brief time following his retirement, by Major-General George Hatton. Worthington guided government policy throughout much of CD's early development. Appointed Federal Civil Defence Coordinator (FCDC) on the 7th of October 1948, General Worthington had been a strong proponent of CD's self-help foundation. During his tenure as FCDC, he "urged municipalities and community groups to organize themselves for the worst in peacetime, since they could not depend on the armed forces or other government services to help them in the first stages of a nuclear war."²³ Following Worthington's retirement, CD was dramatically restructured, in an effort to face the potential technological threat posed by the Soviet Union.²⁴

As a result, CD planning entered its third and final public stage. Officially announced in the House of Commons by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker on 23 March 1959, the government's new policy direction "shifted focus from an evacuation to a 'national survival' strategy."²⁵ This change had been hinted at by a number of announcements, the most important of which was an inquiry by retired chief of the general staff Howard Graham into Canadian CD policy. This commission was launched by Diefenbaker's government in early 1958. Fallout, which is the radioactive particles carried into the atmosphere following the detonation of a nuclear weapon, posed a serious threat, as it could endanger communities many miles downwind from a blast site. Combined with the

²² Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 3-4

²³ *Ibid*, 110

²⁴ Richard Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 84-95

²⁵ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 4

devastating strength of modern thermonuclear weapons, the unpredictable and far reaching nature of fallout, drove the government towards a more comprehensive approach to CD. This new approach dictated the creation of Continuity of Government procedures, which were designed to ensure that the government would survive an attack, and remain capable of directing the country's survival efforts after a nuclear exchange began. In addition, the government announced greater military involvement with civil defence, and stressed that citizens should build their own private fallout shelters in their homes.²⁶

This comprehensive approach represented a substantial break from earlier efforts. Previous policy direction had always relied on the basic principle of civic engagement as “the cost of citizenship in the nuclear age.”²⁷ However, the new direction adopted by Diefenbaker in 1959 was a top down approach to CD, which relied heavily on government and military involvement. With the exception of the government's recommendations for the construction of private fallout shelters, public participation was reduced, though volunteers were still needed. While this new policy direction was driven by the changing nature of nuclear armaments, it was greeted with skepticism by the public at large, and by 1962 interest in CD had vanished.²⁸ Furthermore, many municipalities took the government's decision to involve the military as a sign that they had been freed from their CD responsibilities, and many programs faded into non-existence.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 4, 116, 123; Canada, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates Second Session Twenty Fourth Parliament* Vol. 2, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1959), 2129

²⁷ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 110

²⁸ *Ibid*, 4

Throughout the period covered in this thesis, Ottawa was dwarfed by other major Canadian cities in terms of size, and industrial importance. Nevertheless, due to its capital status, CD planners believed that it was crucial that the city prepare itself for a nuclear strike. The federal government spent years petitioning the municipality to act. Yet, throughout the period covered in this work, very little was ever achieved. The city's failure to implement an extensive CD organization served as an embarrassment for federal officials, though Ottawa's response to federal petitions was never apathetic. Faced with the threat of nuclear devastation, the municipality had to balance the expectations of both the federal government and the public. Throughout all of the policy changes, the city attempted to cooperate with federal officials, hoping to put the concerns of its citizens to rest.

The first stage of federal planning overlapped with the period covered in the first chapter of this thesis, which examines municipal civil defence under Charlotte Whitton, then Mayor of Ottawa, from 1951-1956. During this period, the municipality generally clung to the idea of self-help, later augmented by the evacuation strategy, and reached out to local groups in an effort to set the groundwork for a volunteer-based civil defence program. However, frustrated with a lack of financial support from the federal government, the municipality maintained a 'behind closed doors' approach to civil defence. This meant that many municipal departments did in fact draft CD plans; however, these policies never saw the light of day as the municipality refused to make a serious financial commitment to the cause. In the municipality's eyes, the federal government had not provided enough financial and organizational support to warrant the monumental efforts required to see the city through a nuclear assault. Consequently

Ottawa's citizens were never treated, with the exception of several private federal events, to any preparedness performances. This drew the ire of both the federal government, which argued that the city had not lived up to its responsibilities, and sections of the public, which grew concerned by the city's seemingly token preparations. Yet at no point did the municipality dismiss its responsibility for CD. Rather it attempted to do its best in light of the paltry financial support and leadership offered by the federal government. Whitton, frustrated with a lack of federal financing and guidance, established departmental emergency plans on the cheap, rather than creating a costly public CD organization.

The second chapter begins in 1956 with the acclamation of George Nelms as Ottawa's 51st mayor. During Nelms' tenure, the city came close to integrating CD into its municipal structure, as both the public and the federal government pressured Ottawa to act. In fact, the city, under Nelms' leadership, went as far as integrating CD expenses into its budget for 1957. However, his time in office coincided with the federal government's sweeping reforms to CD. Early announcements made by Diefenbaker's government, which hinted that the military would take an active role in CD, confused the municipality. Nelms pulled back, and put all of the city's plans on hold until the government could clarify its position. This inaction drew heavy criticism from community groups. A perplexed Nelms was hesitant to commit to Diefenbaker's reformed vision for CD, as professional squabbling and policy revisions made him reconsider his commitment. Nelms, who was more cooperative with the government, pushed for the creation of Ottawa's own organization, but drastic changes to CD policy delayed action.

The final chapter covers Whitton's return to municipal politics in 1960, and the brief rise and unceremonious fall of the city's Emergency Measures Organization (EMO). Though Whitton remained in office until 1964, the city's CD organization lasted just two years, fading into obscurity by 1962. This ironically coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis, the closest the world came to nuclear conflict during the Cold War. The chapter covers the reasons for the city's early steps forward in 1960, and discusses why the organization's relevancy vanished. During the period covered in this chapter, CD lost a substantial amount of its public appeal, as the hydrogen bomb, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), and the dangers of fallout caused many members of the public to question CD's effectiveness. Finally, inaction and egos spawned a political crisis which severely damaged the reputation of the city's EMO. Despite rapid advances, Ottawa's CD program was ultimately dealt its death blow by municipal politics and bickering, which took place in the context of declining public interest and municipal responsibility for CD.

The daunting threat of nuclear devastation is no longer a major policy consideration. However, its spectre was ever present throughout the Cold War. Civil defence was seen by some to be the most prudent response possible. Its implementation was a confused and frustrating matter in Ottawa, as the national capital grappled with fickle federal policy. However, few city officials ever challenged CD's importance. Instead, the city attempted to interpret the vision put forward by federal policy makers, while navigating the everyday pitfalls that came with managing a major metropolitan center. While the municipality of Ottawa did regularly cooperate with the federal CD planners, it failed to meet the federal government's expectations. Nevertheless, the city took the matter seriously, and attempted to balance the expectations of the public and the federal

government, against financial and organizational realities. Political bickering, financial burden, and declining public interest resulted in the nation's capital sitting defenseless from 1951-1962.

1.1 Literature Review

The Cold War, as a topic of historical analysis, covers a wide range of subjects. Spanning half a century, this period of history had an effect on every aspect of society including domestic politics, international relations, economics, and culture. The historiography of the Cold War is as varied and diverse. For a long time, the bias in the literature of Canada's early Cold War, heavily influenced by the writings of former diplomats, was towards a portrait of a middle-powered country dispensing enlightened leadership during a golden age of Canadian diplomacy. More recently, a nuanced and variegated scholarship has emerged describing Canada as a Cold War security state, a steadfast ally of the United States, and a cautious secondary power navigating a dangerous bipolar world.²⁹ The civil defence literature is, however, quite limited, particularly in the Canadian case. The three major works which cover Canadian civil defence are Tracy Davis' *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense*, Andrew Burtch's *Give Me Shelter: The Failure of Canada's Cold War Civil Defence*, and Tarah Brookfield's *Cold War Comforts: Canadian Women, Child Safety, and Global Insecurity*.

Tracy Davis' *Stages of Emergency* discusses the performative nature of civil defence practices. Her work argues that civil defence activities were inherently theatrical because

²⁹ See, for example Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984*, (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2007); Hector Mackenzie, "Golden Decade(s)? Reappraising Canada's International Relations in the 1940s and 1950s", *British Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 23, No. 2 (2010), 179-206; Reginald Whitaker, and Steve Hewitt, *Canada and the Cold War*, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company), 2003

of their reliance upon rehearsal and public performance.³⁰ According to Davis, CD exercises actively rehearsed responses to a potential threat, mimicking the war games carried out by the military. Davis makes this argument in the hopes of showing “not that everything was ‘performance’ but... that theater (and not merely spectacle) had a utility in twentieth-century governance, education, and social life central not only to how anxiety was expressed but more importantly to how people envisioned ways to identify and resolve anxious problems.”³¹ Civil defence thus represented a theatrical means to assuage public concerns and fears about the atom bomb. Performative practices were indeed an effective and commonly understood means of expression in everyday life throughout the twentieth century.

Davis’ work does not pretend to be an institutional history of civil defence, but instead presents itself as a “historical treatment of how problems were investigated through theatrical techniques and rehearsal methodologies.”³² The book is a comparative study of CD efforts in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, and does not focus on the policies of any one nation.³³ Davis’ work casts a broad net. Her work clearly demonstrates an underlying purpose that was attached to CD activities and policies. Civil defence, on the surface, was meant to represent a rational and reasoned response to the threat posed by nuclear arms. Yet CD, as Davis argues, was also designed to mollify public and private anxieties that existed in the atomic era with the use of theatrical rehearsals.³⁴

³⁰ Davis, *Stages of Emergency*, 5

³¹ *Ibid*, 4

³² *Ibid*.

³³ *Ibid*, 3

³⁴ *Ibid*, 4-5

This understanding is important when discussing the history of CD in Ottawa, as it helps to explain the public's reactions to the city's inaction. Throughout much of the period covered in this paper, Ottawa did not have its own CD organization; consequently, it was never able to placate public concerns with theatrical displays of preparedness. Community groups felt cheated, petitioned the city to act, and pushed for greater municipal involvement in civil defence.

The most vocal community groups were often local women's groups. Their role in civil defence is covered in Tarah Brookfield's *Cold War Comforts*. This work does not exclusively cover civil defence, opting to examine the role of activist Canadian women in the Cold War. Brookfield does this by discussing disarmament movements, child welfare groups, and international adoption, in addition to CD. Her work explains why women were so actively engaged with civil defence, arguing that they used it "to establish protection from Cold War insecurity while concurrently demonstrating their right as citizens to actively contribute to matters of foreign policy and national defence."³⁵ Brookfield acknowledges that the CD responsibilities given to women often reinforced their conventional maternal roles, but points out that "the life and death circumstances of civil defence could also be seen as empowering."³⁶ While much of *Cold War Comforts* examines areas outside of the scope of this thesis, the book helps to explain the interest of and prominence of women's groups in Ottawa's CD thinking and planning. Given Brookfield's broad scope, she is only able to discuss the activities of a small number of groups, with particular attention paid to women's groups in Toronto. This leaves the stories of other women's interactions with CD untold.

³⁵ Tarah Brookfield, *Cold War Comforts: Canadian Women, Child Safety, and Global Insecurity, 1945-1975*, (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 28

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Andrew Burtch's *Give Me Shelter* represents the most comprehensive work written on Canadian CD planning. The book examines federal efforts related to CD from 1945-1968, and includes a brief synopsis of Canadian CD efforts made during the Second World War. *Give Me Shelter* argues that Canadian efforts failed for many reasons, including a disinterested and sometimes hostile public. It also notes that the public often "pointed to imperfect plans as an excuse not to participate."³⁷ This work was essential in providing a clear picture of federal policy and efforts, and helped to place the story of Ottawa's municipal efforts within a broader context. The work uses case studies to illustrate broader trends, but its wide scope means that it contains very little in depth history about how individual communities grappled with nuclear preparedness.

All three of these works are important studies of Canadian CD efforts. However, none of them delve into how the nation's capital responded to the looming spectre of nuclear destruction. The City of Ottawa is often used as shorthand for the federal government, and its history is frequently overlooked. This work seeks to expand on the larger survey literature by examining and analyzing a single municipality, Ottawa. This is important, as it helps us understand how much security concerns affected local history, and how deeply nuclear concerns penetrated the day to day lives of Canadian communities. As a strategic target in the event of war Ottawa, one would presume, would have represented an important proponent of CD. However, the program faced serious difficulties in the capital. Furthermore, Ottawa's issues with the federal government's implementation of CD spoke to the difficulties that CD faced throughout the country. Major-General Worthington, while discussing the city, proclaimed that "if Ottawa declares itself, it will have a considerable effect in every reluctant city in Canada... [as I have had] a lack of

³⁷ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 224

Civil Defence in Ottawa thrown in my face”.³⁸ For these reasons, Ottawa represents an important case study when examining how Canada’s communities responded to the looming threat of nuclear annihilation.

1.2 Sources

Preparing for nuclear war was not a simple or straightforward task. Civil defence involved many sections of the government and the public. The documentation created by civil defence planners was varied, ranging from briefings on the vulnerabilities of the city’s water supply to public petitions for action. The local scope of this work meant that the City of Ottawa’s archives were used extensively; this allowed me to draw from CD material written by, drafted, and prepared for Whitton and Nelms during their time in office. This was critical, as both of these mayors played an important role in the development of Ottawa’s CD program. Material found in Library and Archives Canada has been consulted extensively by the works discussed above. As a result, the city’s archives represented an overlooked and expansive repository of material, which provided an important local perspective.

The great bulk of the primary documents consulted for this work consist of departmental briefs, meeting minutes, and professional correspondence drawn from the City of Ottawa Archives. Departments were instructed to draft plans, however, the Board of Control and the mayor were often reluctant to implement these plans without substantial federal assistance. This meant that municipal committees discussed these policies at great length. Even following the city’s formation of its own EMO, inter-departmental policy discussions were commonplace.

³⁸ "Civil Defence in Ottawa", Frank Worthington to Deputy Minister, Library and Archives Canada, RG 29, (March 7, 1957)

Municipal officials also received a significant amount of public correspondence about civil defence. Frustrated by the city's perceived 'inaction,' many community groups petitioned their mayor and councillors to do more. These exchanges show how the city's prudent decision to await a clear sense of federal policy direction, and substantial financial assistance, had the negative consequence of drawing criticism from several community groups.

It is important to note that, at the municipal level, mayors played a critical role in decision making. The fate of Ottawa's CD program had much to do with Charlotte Whitton, George Nelms, and then Charlotte Whitton once more, from 1951 to 1962. Many of the documents consulted within this paper originate from the archival fonds of Whitton and Nelms, found in the city archives.

Outside of private correspondence with public officials, I have also drawn heavily from *The Ottawa Citizen* and the *Ottawa Journal*. Both of these newspapers provided detailed articles on municipal efforts, and the public's opinion related to CD. By using these newspapers, I was also able to construct a clearer timeline of events, and make sense of many of the archival documents I consulted. In addition, these newspapers provided a clear idea of how the media was portraying the city's CD decisions. These two Ottawa papers were an important source, allowing for a fuller understanding of how the city's actions were perceived at large.

Chapter 1: Finances and Frustration: Charlotte Whitton and Self Help Defence 1951-1956

On 27 August 1951, the Mayor of Ottawa, Grenville Goodwin, collapsed while out for groceries and died shortly thereafter. Within six hours the city's Board of Control confirmed Charlotte Whitton, a permanent member of the board, as the new acting mayor of Ottawa.³⁹ Stubborn and tenacious, Whitton was a formidable politician, who had polled well in the 1950 municipal election.⁴⁰ While she obtained her office as a result of Goodwin's passing, she went on to win municipal elections in 1952 and 1954, holding the position for 5 years before attempting to enter federal politics. Whitton came to office in the early months of the Korean War, and during a period of escalating tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. Winston Churchill, two days after Goodwin's death, warned American senators visiting Europe that "the world situation hinges on how many atomic bombs the Russians have."⁴¹

The Cold War was a fact of everyday life by the time Whitton came to office. Western co-operation with the Soviet Union had effectively ceased. The Soviet development of the atom bomb in 1949 ended American monopoly over nuclear weapons, and suggested that any future war would be fought with these devastating bombs. Five years after Canada and the United States listened in relative security to news of devastation wrought by aerial bombing in Europe, everyone was a potential target. Every level of society would be affected by nuclear war. Civilians were faced with the daunting prospect of full scale nuclear warfare, and governments struggled to find a way to assuage the fears of their citizens. Ottawa, as Canada's national capital, was not

³⁹ "Charlotte Whitton Takes Over, Ottawa Mayor Dies", *The Toronto Star*, August 28th, 1951, 1

⁴⁰ Patricia Rooke, and Rodolph Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, a Feminist on the Right*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 150

⁴¹ "World's Future Depends on Reds' A-Bomb Pile", *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 29, 1951, 1

exempt from these concerns. Furthermore, its stance on CD had a symbolic value which made the city an important target for federal CD officials.

Whitton alluded to this fact in her first address to City Council 15 October 1951, stating that “the civilization which has so long served us and our fathers is changing and we are changing with it. In that change there is a tremendous shift of world power which casts our young country in a strategic role in human destiny, and thus makes this City one of the world’s vital centers.”⁴² By this time the Soviet Union and the United States had emerged as the world’s two greatest superpowers, and Canada had played a leading role in the formation of a western defensive alliance, in the form of NATO. As a middle power on the world stage, Canada had its role to play.⁴³ By extension, its national capital represented an important political center, a reality which Whitton highlighted by describing the city as one of the “world’s vital centers.”⁴⁴ While she was certainly inflating Ottawa’s importance in the global context, it cannot be argued that the city was unimportant on a national level.

Federal CD planners likely agreed with Whitton’s view of Ottawa’s importance when they listed the capital city as one of the 13 target cities likely to be attacked by the Soviet Union in the event of a future war. The idea of ‘self-help’ permeated CD thinking at the time. This approach to civil defence stressed that target cities could limit damage by adopting a “model of rescue, first aid, and firefighting that British and German cities had adopted to combat the bombing campaigns of the Second World War.”⁴⁵ The municipality was thus placed in a central role, as it was expected to coordinate the

⁴² "Charlotte Whitton, Mayor of Ottawa", *The Social Service Review*, (December 1951), 517

⁴³ Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, 89; Whitaker, and Hewitt, *Canada and the Cold War*, 9

⁴⁴ "Charlotte Whitton, Mayor of Ottawa", *The Social Service Review*, 517

⁴⁵ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 1

recruitment and training of a large crop of volunteers. Ottawa was unprepared and unable to shoulder the considerable costs that would have come along with such a program, but under Whitton's direction municipal departments prepared individual plans for how they could best prepare for an attack. While federal planners advocated for a public CD organization that performed rehearsals and high-profile drills, Ottawa consistently disappointed them on this score. Under Whitton's guidance the city pursued a closed door policy, a response to a lack of financial assistance.

In 1951 the City of Ottawa was a minor metropolitan center. Its population, standing at just over 202,000 people, was dwarfed by the comparable metropolises of Montreal and Toronto.⁴⁶ David McMillan, who would become chair of the City of Ottawa's Civilian Emergency Committee, was somewhat skeptical about whether the city represented a legitimate target for enemy bombers. He argued that "there does not appear to be any target in this immediate locality to give these cities [Ottawa and Hull] a high priority at such a long distance from the probable source of the attack, or to rate the expenditure of an atomic bomb."⁴⁷ However, McMillan admitted that "the danger of an attack on Ottawa and Hull, while remote, could not entirely be ruled out."⁴⁸ He argued that as a preparatory measure the city should take stock of its resources and adequately plan for such an eventuality.⁴⁹ This line of thinking was indicative of the city's early civil defence efforts. Something had to be done; however, the federal government was reluctant to work directly with the municipalities. Instead it had focused its efforts on the

⁴⁶ Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Department of Trade and Commerce, *Canada Year Book 1952-1953*, (Ottawa, Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1953), 135

⁴⁷ David McMillan, "Civilian Emergency Organization Report", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (February 25th, 1952), 1

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

provinces, which were uninterested in subsidizing municipal CD plans.⁵⁰ Ontario and Quebec, specifically, both felt that the “federal government had abandoned its constitutional responsibility to pay for the entire cost of Canada’s national defence”, and as a result were uncooperative.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Whitton, understanding the danger at hand, convened a civilian emergency conference on 10 January 1952.⁵² This conference set the groundwork for much of the civil defence efforts Whitton pursued during her first two terms as the mayor of Ottawa. In attendance were officials and representatives from the municipality and the community at large, including the Fire and Police Departments, the Ottawa Civic Hospital and the mayor of Aylmer.⁵³ The purpose of the conference was to “discuss the organization of community resources in the event of civilian emergency”.⁵⁴

At the beginning of the meeting city council member Len Coulter immediately raised the chief obstacle of preparation, which was its large cost. He argued that in “the matter of emergency planning... the expense could easily run into millions of dollars.”⁵⁵ In fact, Montreal’s CD coordinator had estimated that the city’s defence could cost nearly \$400 million.⁵⁶ While this claim was deemed excessive by most, it worried Ottawa’s municipal officials and left an example that they were eager to avoid. Whitton replied that, without federal leadership, planning was likely to require an uncontrollable budget, and that “the Board of Control could not assume further financial responsibilities unless much more

⁵⁰ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 37-38, 53-55

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 42-43

⁵² Ainslie Kerr, "Ottawa's A-War Defence Plan Unfolded", *The Ottawa Journal* (Ottawa), January 11, 1952

⁵³ “Civilian Emergency Conference Minutes”, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (January 10th, 1952), 5; Note: Aylmer was a small town outside of Hull, Quebec.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 1

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 5

⁵⁶ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 49-51

information was forthcoming from the Federal Government.”⁵⁷ There could be no municipal civil defence organization without substantial financial assistance. The mayor concluded the meeting by suggesting that emergency plans were essential, and formed a committee of departmental heads to coordinate emergency planning.⁵⁸ This meeting showed that the city was prepared to develop emergency plans. Nevertheless, officials remained skeptical, as they were uncertain how far their responsibilities reached, and how much assistance they could count on from the federal government.

Following the conference, various municipal departments went to work drafting their emergency plans and recommendations behind closed doors. One major component remained consistent throughout almost every department’s plan – the need for a large force of volunteers. This was in tune with federal policy, as it made use of the idea of self-help by relying on citizens to defend their homes. In fact, the city’s disaster traffic control plan relied heavily on the assistance of local volunteers. This plan defined the municipalities’ responsibility for establishing evacuation routes for citizens, and for controlling traffic during an emergency. The plan argued that traffic control represented a critical function of civil defence as “the great mass of... people in a large city must be taken in hand, as much for their own safety as to prevent them interfering with... [civil defence] operations.”⁵⁹ The document went on to state that

In spite of all the warnings which have been given, all the air raid drills planned and carried out, and in face of repeated assurances by authorities that the safest place under attack is in a well-constructed shelter, there will inevitably be a mad rush on the part of many, even in the most highly-organized cities, to get away from danger. Streets, roads, and highways will, it is feared, be choked with people fleeing in all directions and, in

⁵⁷ “Civilian Emergency Conference Minutes”, (January 10th, 1952), 6

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 6

⁵⁹ “Disaster Traffic Control”, *City of Ottawa*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (date unknown), 2

this mechanized age, this means that most cities will be faced with traffic jams beyond anything in previous experience.⁶⁰

In order to prepare for the predicted flood of evacuees, Ottawa's police force argued that two to three volunteer traffic controllers would be necessary for every uniformed officer. In order for both regular and auxiliary officers to be able to fulfill their duties, it was recommended that they should not be expected to act in any other capacity.⁶¹ The city's police force claimed that their function during an attack was impossible to carry out without a sizeable contribution of dedicated volunteers from the general public.

The Ottawa Civic Hospital (OCH), under the guidance of Dr. Douglas Piercey, its superintendent, echoed the police department's call for volunteers. In fact, Piercey knew that the hospital would require outside assistance in the event of an attack well before the January conference. Consequently, he informed municipal officials at the meeting that the hospital was only "accustomed to dealing with emergencies involving up to 100 cases... more than this number, would require the co-operation of other Departments and surrounding districts."⁶² The hospital's facilities would have been completely unable to handle the massive numbers of casualties that would follow in the wake of a nuclear detonation.

To prove this point Piercey drafted a report on the OCH's emergency preparedness in the wake of the conference. The report mentioned the hospital's success in handling an influx of 82 patients over a 45 minute period following a train derailment in Almonte in 1942. However, it argued that these numbers were insignificant compared to the resources required to treat the projected casualties of an atomic attack. Piercey

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5, 11

⁶² "Civilian Emergency Conference Minutes", City of Ottawa Archives (January 10th, 1952), 2

specifically mentioned that the hospital was only able to handle the Almonte incident because of war time emergency planning, which ensured an emergency medical organization had been set up, and extra supplies had been procured.⁶³ Given that the hospital estimated an influx of 20,000 to 40,000 casualties as a result of an attack, substantial planning would have been necessary to ensure they could handle even half of these numbers.⁶⁴ The hospital stated that it would require extensive aid “not only from citizens in the community, but... from surrounding communities and mobile support from centres which may be many miles from the disaster area.”⁶⁵ The document went on to list a number of duties which would be necessary in order to handle the surge of new patients which ranged from the evacuation of patients well enough to leave the hospital to their homes, “if they still exist”⁶⁶, to the establishment of auxiliary morgue space and the creation of temporary offsite facilities.⁶⁷ The hospital’s assessment highlighted a reliance on volunteers as an easy fix to the problems caused by the outbreak of a nuclear war. In order to ensure the hospital was running at peak efficiency, and aiding the wounded to the best of its abilities, tasks would have to have been carried out by a large force of unpaid workers.

In both the Police Urban Traffic Control Plan and the hospital’s briefing it was understood that preparing for a nuclear strike was a difficult task. Planners realistically laid out what needed to be done to prepare the city. However, neither plan was able to reconcile the large list of duties that would be required to do this with the available

⁶³ Douglas Piercey, “Emergency Hospital Services”, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (January 10th, 1952), 1

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 2

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 2-3

manpower of their institution. Volunteers were deemed necessary to complete nearly every task. These plans were in tune with federal policy, which recommended the recruitment of local volunteers to assist the municipality in its emergency plans.

However, the organization of such a large pool of volunteers was a more complex matter than these documents often let on. The recruitment and training of a substantial volunteer force would have required an organized civil defence organization to carry out courses and public awareness campaigns. Yet the city resisted the creation of such an organization as it would necessitate a massive expenditure of city funds, and the federal government was not prepared to provide direct assistance at the time.

A 1952 briefing on the Federal Government's Civil Defence Grant Programme, prepared by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, outlined how funds were distributed. While \$1.4 million had been set aside to assist the municipalities and provinces with the burden of civil defence costs, these funds were largely inaccessible to municipalities as they could only obtain these funds "through the medium of the provincial authorities."⁶⁸ The provincial government was also required to "contribute on a dollar for dollar basis with the federal government to the costs of a municipal project in order to bring it within the scope of the proposed scheme of grants."⁶⁹ In order for a municipal project to receive any federal money, the municipality had to send requests through provincial officials. In addition, the city also had to convince the province to help cover costs, as without provincial backing federal funds could not be requested. This was

⁶⁸ George Mooney, *Federal Civil Defence Grant Programme*, Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (Montreal, September 1952), ii

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

an impossible task as the province of Ontario was not cooperating with the federal government on CD.⁷⁰

To make matters worse, the amount of money which the federal CD office set aside was miniscule. While the total sum was \$1.4 million, allocation was on an 8¢ per capita basis, with an additional 6¢ per capita of population in designated target areas.⁷¹ The total sum allotted to the province of Ontario was \$492,008.00.⁷² This number amounted to roughly 0.01 percent of federal expenditures for 1952, surprising when expenditure on national defence amounted to 38 percent of the total federal budget for the year.⁷³

The disparity in spending on issues of national security confused municipal officials. With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, it seemed as though the danger of conflict with the Soviet Union had never been higher. To the municipalities, it seemed odd that very little of the \$5 billion set aside for rearmament made its way to civil defence.⁷⁴ If CD was a matter of great and pressing importance, surely it warranted a greater expenditure of federal money. However, without a greater federal commitment, in Burtch's words, "the resources required to develop plans and infrastructure to deal with an atomic attack exceeded what the... municipalities could reasonably afford to pay."⁷⁵

Added to the daunting financial burdens of civil defence was the municipality's lack of information on how to prepare for an atomic war. Nearly every department complained that they had no idea whether civil defence was a pressing concern or not. The city's water department complained that "Municipal authorities should be fully informed by the

⁷⁰ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 42-43

⁷¹ Mooney, *Federal Civil Defence Grant Programme*, ii-iii

⁷² *Ibid*, iv

⁷³ Canada, *Canada Year Book 1952-1953*, 1032

⁷⁴ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 39, 40

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 37

officials of the Dominion Government as to the world situation and whether or not they consider aerial bombardment imminent.”⁷⁶ McMillan, the chair of the city’s Civilian Emergency Committee, a month later, argued that “if the prospect of danger should become more pronounced, the Federal government would be first to recognize the danger and first to take appropriate steps in making adequate preparation for the protection of the Capital area.”⁷⁷ He implied that the federal government, if war was likely, needed to assist Ottawa, but also recognized that the city needed to make preliminary preparations to ensure its own safety.⁷⁸ The municipality was reluctant to act until it had more detailed information on the matter, and expected substantial assistance. Without federal money, and without some sort of assurance from the federal government that these preparations were of pressing concern, the municipality could not reasonably throw its full weight behind their implementation.

This financial frustration helps explain why Ottawa’s officials were reluctant to establish a fully-fledged civil defence organization. The city understood the importance of such an institution. This is clear, because it designed many of its plans on the federal model of self-help, relying heavily on local volunteers to ensure its own safety. However, it was simply not prepared to bear the burden of such an extensive organization without substantial aid. The level of assistance offered by the federal government did not make CD appear to be a pressing issue. Consequently, much of the planning created under Whitton remained on paper, to the frustration of the federal government which sought the

⁷⁶ W.E. MacDonald, “The Importance of Water Supply and Protective Measures for Civil Defence”, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (January 10th, 1952.)

⁷⁷ McMillan, “Civilian Emergency Organization Report”, 1

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

creation of a municipal organization capable of recruiting volunteers, running drills, and raising public awareness.

The mayor told the press, and the public, that the city was doing all it could to protect its citizens. Under her leadership, several municipal departments drafted plans to provide emergency services. In addition to the traffic control plan, the city's water works department, welfare services and fire department all drafted reports about how they intended to respond to an attack.

The city Water Works Department, under W.E. MacDonald, prepared a detailed brief, titled *The Importance of Water Supply and Protective Measures for Civil Defence*. In it the department explained some of the vulnerabilities which confronted the city's water supply, including its single source nature and the strain which an enemy attack would place upon the city's water system.⁷⁹ The department provided some realistic solutions to these problems. These included the installation of "gasoline or diesel driven pumping units which would function in the event of failure of electrical power" and the exchange of personnel with surrounding communities to ensure "intelligent direction of the water system" in an emergency.⁸⁰ While the brief did not claim that it would be possible to plan for every contingency, it did assess the situation in a pragmatic and rational way.

It is important to establish that commitment to this type of planning was evenly spread throughout municipal departments. By drafting these plans, the city had shown that it could cooperate with the federal government, despite concerns over funding. In a report to the city's Board of Control on 17 November 1952, the Fire Department, Police and Traffic Services, Welfare Services, Water Works, Transportation Services, and a

⁷⁹ MacDonald, "The Importance of Water Supply and Protective Measures for Civil Defence", (January 10th, 1952.)

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 2, 3

number of local schools informed city officials of their CD activities. This report clearly displayed that the city had actively investigated how to provide civil defence to the community. For example, Ottawa's Fire Department reported that nineteen members had already attended a radiological defence course, and that members had co-operated with federal civil defence organizations by giving lectures and demonstrations, training volunteer firemen, and participating in round table discussions.⁸¹ The Department of Transportation had also assigned responsibility for various types of transportation to a number of committee members.⁸²

This might not seem like much, but it is important to note that several of these organizations were hampered by bureaucratic delays that prevented further preparation. For example, both the Fire and Police Departments were forced to delay volunteer training because of a pending decision "on the payment of compensation to volunteers who might become injured during training."⁸³ While civil defence was hardly the top priority of any of these departments, it is clear that it was still taken seriously. Nearly every city department had worked out some sort of emergency plan, and was trying its best to ensure these plans were adequate to ensure the municipality's safety and were within the city's means. Some of these organizations had even made a serious effort to involve the community. Each department deemed important to civil defence planning formed committees to discuss their role and their plan, and these committees included representatives from dozens of different community groups.

⁸¹ David McMillan, "Report to: Board of Control and City Council Re: Activities of the Civilian Emergency Committee to date", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (November 17th, 1952), 1

⁸² *Ibid*, 3-4

⁸³ *Ibid*.

In the November 1952 report, Welfare Services informed the Board of Control that a committee had been established to discuss how to prepare the city's emergency welfare program. Representatives from a wide selection of groups sat on this committee, including the Ottawa Board of Trade, the Better Business Bureau, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Big Brother's Association, the Catholic Family Service, the Y.M.C.A., the Boy Scouts, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and the Department of Veteran Affairs.⁸⁴ This is important because it showed that the city was taking the concept of self-help, which stressed that local communities had to take responsibility for their defence, seriously. The bulk of planning was certainly taking place behind closed doors within the municipal government; however, some attempts were made to engage the public, as it was understood that its assistance would prove essential to municipal plans. By their participation, these groups showed that they shared some level of interest in civic preparedness, and were engaged with the city's development of civil defence policy.

The Canadian Red Cross Society serves as an excellent example. The organization was directed by R.H. Keebler, who sat as the Chairman of Red Cross Disaster Services (Ottawa). Keebler had agreed that his organization would assist the citizens of Ottawa any way it could in the aftermath of an attack. He promised, months earlier at the January 1952 conference, that "the Red Cross was prepared to supply food, clothing and temporary shelter on a mass care basis together with a system of registration and information, and a blood transfusion service."⁸⁵ While Keebler was not specific on the dollar value of such assistance, he mentioned that the Ottawa zone of the Red Cross

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 1

⁸⁵ "Civilian Emergency Conference Minutes", (January 10th, 1952), 3

stretched “from Hawkesbury to Deep River and as far west as Smith Falls and Perth.”⁸⁶ Today this area would cover the entire city of Ottawa, while stretching out to cover a substantial portion of the Ottawa Valley. Although Keebler specified that the Ottawa Red Cross would not have been able to extend aid across the river, this level of far reaching assistance would have proven critical to city plans.⁸⁷ With minimal resources to draw upon, the city would have struggled to provide evacuated citizens with food and shelter, and any outside assistance would have made a difference. This was especially true if an attack took place during winter months, simply because shelter would have proven essential to ensuring the evacuated populace did not succumb to the elements. Any form of medical assistance would have been welcomed by a medical infrastructure completely unprepared for the aftermath of a nuclear strike.

Engaging with these civic groups was deemed important, because it allowed the city to take advantage of existing organizations, rather than having to build its own from the ground up. As a result, the city could make an attempt to reach out to its citizens, without having to expend public funds to do so. By complying, the city was following the federal government’s initial advice. As Burtch writes, at the beginning of 1951, “federal guidelines for local organization asked local co-ordinators to refrain from premature public recruitment... instead [suggesting] that local [civil defence] officials contact existing voluntary service clubs in their community.”⁸⁸ The city was therefore willing to accept guidance from the federal government, when its suggestions would not overburden the municipality.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 44

The idea of a community focused CD programme, in and of itself, was admirable in the eyes of most municipal officials. McMillan, as the acting chair of the city's Civilian Emergency Committee, shared some of the federal government's vision of a robust CD infrastructure in Ottawa. At a meeting of the committee, McMillan stated that "In Britain... Everyone was trained in civil defence... They did not 'panic' and so could not be demoralized or defeated by attacks from the air. Similar preparation to that of Britain should be our aim."⁸⁹ McMillan was envisioning a disciplined citizenry that could stave off enemy attack through sheer determination and unanimous response. This type of planning meshed well with the federal government's espoused policy of self-help. The difficulty was that municipal figures simply were not prepared to commit the resources which would be required to fulfil such a vision.

The city's reluctance resulted in both the federal government and the citizens of Ottawa criticizing the municipality for its perceived inaction. Despite the best efforts of policy makers behind the scenes, none of their work was being displayed on a public stage. This was the greatest failure of Ottawa's early civil defence efforts. While the plans, in and of themselves, were sound, they meant nothing if the public was not aware that they existed. In addition, with no real financial backing, they were likely doomed to failure in the event of war, as no infrastructure would have existed to ensure the implementation of planning.

The public helped drive concern over the matter. In a letter to the editor on 12 May 1952, Alice Goodwin, an Ottawa mother, called for more to be done by the city on the issue of civil defence. Her concerns were well balanced, and she argued that the city should not dedicate an inordinate amount of resources to CD. However, she closed her

⁸⁹ McMillan, "Civilian Emergency Organization Report", 3

letter by stating that “If I were in Stalin’s place and contemplated dropping a bomb on North America I think I would say ‘Let’s drop it where it will do the most good. Ottawa has no protection, so let’s go.’”⁹⁰ This concern was a rational response to the prevailing political context of the time.

Even some community organizations, more involved with the city’s early defence efforts, had begun to grow concerned. For example, Whitton was contacted by the Acting Regent of the Elizabeth Tudor Chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.), Ethel Garvock. Garvock mentioned that members of her chapter had been asking how to get involved with the city’s civil defence plans. She affirmed her belief in civil responsibility for the defence of the state by stating that civil defence was “a matter of national interest, [and] any action we might initiate could have much wider implications than just the City of Ottawa.”⁹¹ Statements such as this make it clear that some citizens did believe that they had an important role to play in the defence of their homes, and that they wanted to make sure they could assist the municipality in any way they possibly could.

Both Goodwin’s letter to the editor and Garvock’s correspondence with Whitton showed that some members of the public were left wanting more from the municipality’s efforts. There had been no major displays of preparedness by the city, and the public was slowly growing concerned by the city’s perceived silence on the matter. This is important, as it showed that the municipality had not lived up to public expectations. As far as the mayor was concerned, however, the city was doing everything it could to protect its citizens from Soviet hostility. It had been unable to implement any of its plans

⁹⁰ Alice Goodwin, “Unprotected Ottawa”, *The Ottawa Citizen*, (Ottawa, May 12th, 1952)

⁹¹ Ethel Garvock, “Correspondence with Charlotte Whitton on the Matter of Civil Defence” City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (Feb. 27th, 1952.)

due to, what it contended, was a failure of federal leadership. In response to Goodwin's letter, McMillan wrote a brief reply. Published in the *Evening Citizen* four days after Goodwin's, McMillan's letter stated that the city was aware "that there is an element of danger in the world situation," and that a "plan is being worked out quietly by a committee composed of the heads of all major civic departments".⁹² Civic officials were aware of the concerns of citizens, and they were actively engaged in reassuring the public. Criticisms of inaction were taken seriously, and warranted a response. The city was not prepared to take the blame for civil defence's early failings and was dismayed by public criticism. In fact, McMillan began his response by expressing his desire to put public fears and doubts at ease.⁹³

Whitton's exchange with the I.O.D.E. was cordial and friendly, unsurprising considering that she had acted as the first regent of the Elizabeth Tudor Chapter of the organization.⁹⁴ However, she made sure to stress that civil defence was not a straightforward issue. Specifically, she dismissed Garvock's national interest colouring of the program, and stressed her belief that civil defence should be handled on a local basis.⁹⁵ Whitton went on to inform Garvock that the I.O.D.E.'s offer was generous, and suggested she contact the city's Social Service Commissioner.⁹⁶ As the representative for a local community organization, Garvock was re-directed towards existing committees.

Whitton was continuing to function as the federal government had originally suggested. She was making use of community groups to foster interest in civil defence,

⁹² David McMillan, "Civil Defence in Ottawa", *The Evening Citizen* (May 16th, 1952)

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ "IODE Ottawa", IODE Ottawa Primary Chapters - A History, Accessed April 25, 2015

⁹⁵ Ethel Garvock, "Correspondence with Charlotte Whitton on the Matter of Civil Defence", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (March 10, 1952.)

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

and to ensure that planning continued on a forward trajectory. With no civil defence organization of its own, and no money forthcoming from the federal government, Whitton saw no other option. To ask the I.O.D.E. to begin recruiting volunteers would have jumped ahead of the city's level of progress, and to dismiss the request would have discouraged the group or fostered resentment against the municipality. The mayor had two options, to continue with the city's sustainable, but admittedly insufficient, level of planning, or commit resources to civil defence that the city simply could not afford to spend. While Whitton agreed with many federal CD principles, specifically that the matter should be handled on a local basis, she had been forced to wait by a lack of financial assistance. If money had been forthcoming, the problem would have been easily solved in the municipality's eyes.

Federal criticism could be seen at a conference held in the Hull Armouries between the 21 and 24 April 1952. Organized and publicized by General Worthington and top civil defence planners, this conference was designed to act out a detailed scenario involving the detonation of an atomic bomb in downtown Ottawa. It was attended by city health, police, and fire officials as well as David McMillan. The *Ottawa Citizen* described the scenario: "At a nod from General Worthington, red lights representing cities will flash on a panel map of Ontario; telephone bells will ring, an air raid siren will whine, planes will drone, anti-aircraft guns will bark and men will shout commands... When the realistic attack is over a huge mushroom will hover over the Capital and rescue squads will go to work."⁹⁷

⁹⁷ "Civil Defence Heads Confer On Mock A-Attack", *The Evening Citizen*, April 21, 1952, 3; Note: See Appendix I for images of Parliament Hill in the aftermath of an attack that were used at this drill.

This event served several purposes. Worthington and city officials were attending a staged event which normalized the idea of the atomic bomb. A devastating weapon was being brought back down to earth as something which could be rationally responded to, rather than being feared for its destructive power. Events such as these helped to dull, or at least address, public concern about the haunting spectre of nuclear war. Their practical worth, while certainly a consideration for civil defence workers, was small. This was highlighted by the fact that Worthington slated the event to take place at six o'clock in the morning "because at that time we know where nearly everybody will be, and because it simplifies our problem. We could have set it for 12 noon or 5 pm but that would have complicated our plans."⁹⁸ Nevertheless, it displayed a level of preparedness on the part of the Federal Government. Here were government officials attempting to hammer out a detailed plan for emergency response in the wake of an attack. It also provided the federal government with ammunition with which to resist criticisms of inaction or ineffective leadership.

The drill was intended to place pressure on the municipality and force it to commit more heavily to CD, while also fostering a sense of cooperation. By 1952 federal publicity campaigns for civil defence relied heavily upon municipal collaboration. Wanting to avoid "negative publicity over federal-provincial conflicts about financial responsibility for [civil defence]", the government instead tried to focus on positive news, such as the number of enrolled volunteers and training courses completed. As a result, much of the responsibility for the publicity program was left to the municipalities "who could promote [civil defence] locally... [and] keep their organization relevant and in the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

public eye.”⁹⁹ With no such organization in existence, Ottawa was a black mark on federal efforts made all the more embarrassing because it was the seat of the federal government. Worthington’s display was designed explicitly to prepare “an operation plan which [could] be used in an emergency by any Canadian city.”¹⁰⁰ Here was the federal director of civil defence leading a widely publicized drill intended to set a clear framework for emergency planning in Canadian cities. City officials were present and took part in the drill. The fictional explosion even took place in Ottawa. It is hard to imagine a better way to highlight the city’s failure to establish a civil defence organization. However, by inviting city officials and designing a plan for the municipality to follow the federal government was displaying clear leadership. City officials, by attending, also showed that they shared an interest in CD. Nevertheless, Ottawa could not do more than it had without monetary assistance, and this drill provided none.

Frustrated with the situation, Whitton and Paul Martin exchanged a series of hostile letters. In 1955, near the end of Whitton’s first stretch as mayor, the federal CD office announced a mock evacuation of Ottawa scheduled for June 1955. During this rehearsal, 10,000 civil servants were slated to evacuate the city in the hope of gathering information on “the capacity of ‘escape’ routes leading out of Ottawa.”¹⁰¹ The event involved the federal Civil Service Civil Defence. This organization had been formed in an attempt to highlight Ottawa’s refusal to act, and make the city “appear disinterested or dismissive of the public’s safety.”¹⁰² The announcement of this drill caused a private spat between Paul Martin, the minister responsible for civil defence, and Whitton. She criticized Martin for

⁹⁹ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 60

¹⁰⁰ "Civil Defense 75 Experts Seeking Blueprint", *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), April 21, 1952, 19

¹⁰¹ Reginald Hardy, "10,000 Ottawans To Flee City In Evacuation Test" *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 3rd, 1955, 1

¹⁰² Andrew Burtch, "Don't He Look Funny?" Civil Defence in Ottawa, 1950-1959", Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives, (Ottawa, September 9, 2007), 9

failing to understand that, in the event of an attack, the civil service would be forced to evacuate the city alongside everyone else, and for failing to provide the city with adequate warning of the drill. Whitton continued by complaining that the reports on the event, which stipulated that Ottawa itself had no plans for the evacuation of its citizens, were completely false.

These complaints were legitimate. The article in the *Ottawa Citizen* ended by casually stating that “the Municipality of Ottawa itself has no integrated civil defence set up, nor any plans for the evacuation of its citizens.”¹⁰³ The organization of this drill highlighted the city’s failure to establish its own CD organization, and was meant to embarrass the municipality. Whitton was furious. While it was true that the city had not formed a civil defence organization of its own, this had been delayed by serious financial and organizational concerns. However, the Police Department had plotted out evacuation routes for the city’s populace in its traffic control plan. It had done so in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Hull Police, and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).¹⁰⁴ Whitton was all too happy to inform the Minister of Health and Welfare of this, as she stressed that the City of Ottawa had “for over two years...[had] its routes completely marked and on charts.”¹⁰⁵

Nowhere in her discussion with Martin did Whitton argue against a public display of preparedness. Instead she complained that the municipality had been cut out of the process. What mattered to her, and the municipality, was the perception that the city was inactive on the issue of civil defence. She informed Martin that the city was prepared to

¹⁰³ Hardy, “10,000 Ottawans To Flee City In Evacuation Test”, 1

¹⁰⁴ David McMillan, “Report to: Board of Control and City Council Re: Activities of the Civilian Emergency Committee to date”, 1

¹⁰⁵ Charlotte Whitton, “Letter to Paul Martin Sr.”, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-060-01, (Ottawa, May 4th, 1955)

co-operate with the Department of Health and Welfare in any way it possibly could, so long as officials were approached and notified. In fact, she closed the discussion by stating that “Not [Admiral Lord] Nelson’s men could answer better, ‘Ready, aye, ready’ when the Minister of Health and Welfare asks for a favour from the Mayor of Ottawa, or even for the *ordinary discharge of her duties*.”¹⁰⁶ Whitton made it clear that she was dedicated to fulfilling the municipality’s civil defence responsibilities, and called for federal assistance. She reiterated that the city was prepared to do its part. However, the federal government needed to cooperate with the municipality, and provide some measure of serious financial assistance.

In these letters, Whitton confirmed that she felt she had made a sincere and honest attempt to ensure that the city was prepared for the possibility of an attack. Furthermore, she openly and frankly displayed her frustration with the federal government. Over the preceding years, the municipality had conformed to the idea of self-help espoused by the government. It had drafted plans and attempted to prepare the city for the implementation of a broader civil defence program. Yet support was simply not forthcoming, and plans were left on paper. It was easy to assign blame to the municipality; however, doing so ignored the real logistical and financial concerns facing the city.

Through Whitton’s first mayoral term, the municipality made an earnest attempt to allay the government’s fears and concerns, as well as those shared by the public. Admittedly, very little in terms of concrete action took place. The initial efforts made by the city complied with the federal government’s preliminary expectations, which included coordinating efforts with local community groups. Planning had built off of the federal government’s idea of self-help, and called for the recruitment of public

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*; emphasis added.

volunteers. However, the city was quickly expected to implement these plans, and with no substantial financial assistance forthcoming, city officials were hesitant to create the organization necessary to train and administer these volunteers. Instead, the city continued developing plans on paper. This does not discredit the efforts that were made. Officials planned, communicated with the public, and attempted to prepare for the unimaginable. Their efforts were stymied by a lack of federal and provincial leadership. Nevertheless, the city attempted to balance the defiant stance of the provinces against the impatient pressure of the federal government, and managed to authorize what little it could achieve with no monetary assistance.

Chapter 2: Co-operation and Confusion: George Nelms and the Militarization of Civil Defence 1956-1960

On 3 December 1956, Ottawa went to the polls. George Nelms was acclaimed as the city's new mayor, having run unopposed, alongside the "first all-male Board of Control since 1950".¹⁰⁷ Whitton had stepped aside. She planned to enter federal politics, and came close to winning a spot in Parliament in the 1958 election.¹⁰⁸ Nelms the owner of George H. Nelms Opticians, who had sat on the Board of Control in previous years, now occupied the city's highest municipal position.¹⁰⁹ During his four years in office he cooperated with the federal government, in an attempt to develop a CD program for the City of Ottawa.

By the time Nelms came to office, the magnitude of detonation yields had grown exponentially because of the development of the hydrogen bomb. Following the Soviet Union's first successful test of the H-Bomb in 1953, an observer "reported that the size of the explosion 'transcended some kind of psychological barrier,' a destructive potential that lived solely in the imagination before the nuclear arms race made it a reality."¹¹⁰ Furthermore, delivery systems had grown more complex. During Nelms' four years in office, both the Soviet Union and the United States made great strides in the development of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). Previously the Soviet Union's nuclear stockpile was only deliverable via long range bombers, which planners hoped would

¹⁰⁷ "Ottawa's New Board of Control", *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 4, 1956, 1

¹⁰⁸ Greg Connelley, "Battling Charlotte Gives Nelms Notice", *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 1, 1958, 3; Rooke and Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart*, 159-161

¹⁰⁹ "Mayor George Nelms", The City of Ottawa. Accessed June 12, 2015.

<http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/arts-culture-and-community/museums-and-heritage/witness-change-visions-andrews-newton-13>.

¹¹⁰ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 77; Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 63; Note: The United States completed its first successful thermo-nuclear detonation in 1952, while the Soviet Union detonated its first thermo-nuclear device 8 months afterwards. However, weapons of a functional size were not devised until 1954 and 1955 respectively. For more please consult Richard Rhodes' *Arsenals of Folly*, and the Jay Walz article "Force Equal to Hundreds of A-Bombs".

permit enough time to evacuate major city centers. The missiles, however, could deliver a strike within a few minutes, and with very little warning.¹¹¹ Ottawa's civil defence planners faced the daunting challenge of potential attack by city-killing H-bombs and ICBM strikes. Civil defence programs across the country, as well as in the United States and the United Kingdom, struggled to adapt to the "changing nature of the international and nuclear balance."¹¹²

During Nelms' tenure as the Mayor of Ottawa, Canada's civil defence efforts pulled away from the self-help foundation of early federal planning. Faced by growing nuclear capability and increasing hostility on the world stage, the federal government was forced to provide greater financial support, and pressed a reluctant military towards direct involvement in civil defence efforts. Concerned by the growing threat, and bolstered by the federal government's renewed financial promises, Ottawa went beyond Whitton's 'closed-door' approach and began to build a CD organization that was meant to interact with the public. However, military involvement with civil defence muddied the waters considerably, as municipalities, including Ottawa, struggled with what the change meant for their plans and efforts to recruit and train volunteers. After all, if civil defence was intrinsically a matter of national defence, to be handled mainly by the Canadian Army, then surely financial and organizational responsibility for it remained at the federal level. While Nelms was more cooperative with federal authorities than Whitton, the drastic

¹¹¹ "Statement by the Government of Canada on Policy Concerning Evacuation and Shelters for Civil Defence Purposes", *Civil Defence Canada*, Vol. 2, no. 6, City of Ottawa Archives, RG-007-05-01, (November/December 1959), 2; Note: While ICBMs represented a new threat, manned bombers, for a time, were a continuing danger. For more see Sean Maloney's, *Learning to Love the Bomb: Canada's Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 62

¹¹² Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 77

changes implemented in federal policy led him to take a more conservative approach to CD in Ottawa.

By the time Nelms was acclaimed as mayor, interest in civil defence was waning across the country. The urgency brought to CD by fears of the Korean War's escalation had diminished, and the German question while fraught with problems remained momentarily stable.¹¹³ As a result of financial concerns and political objections to the program, both Victoria and Montreal abolished their civil defence programs in 1954.¹¹⁴ Many municipalities no longer considered civil defence planning a rational response to the problem at hand. In a *Financial Post* article brought to Nelms' attention not long after his election, Robert Moses, the public works administrator for the State of New York, argued that extensive planning for CD was likely harmful. In Moses's opinion, the costs for a program to provide for fallout or blast shelters were prohibitive, while plans for mass evacuation were naïve and unworkable. He instead suggested that, "if we are going to build something we might as well build something that will be useful now as well as in an emergency [such as]... additional hospitals, health centres and similar institutions."¹¹⁵ Cities across North America were re-evaluating their approach to CD; it would not have been surprising if Nelms had applied the same caution. Given the precedent that had been set by Montreal's abolition of its civil defence structure, and that the "civil defence organization in... Toronto threatened with complete breakdown", the abandonment of CD likely crossed Nelms' mind.¹¹⁶ Leading experts were presenting rational alternatives to civil defence, which would have allowed municipalities to funnel money earmarked

¹¹³ Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, 105-106

¹¹⁴ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 80

¹¹⁵ "Common Sense and CD", *The Financial Post*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (November 30, 1957)

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

for CD programs into items of everyday importance, as Moses suggested. This line of thinking was made all the more logical by the fact that Ottawa had experienced a nearly ten percent growth in population since 1951, making any civil defence planning all the more complex and costly to implement.¹¹⁷

By 1956, however, the federal government had updated its proposed scheme of grants in relation to civil defence. Under the five year old system, only 50 percent of a municipal project was covered with provincial and federal contributions, with 25 percent being covered by each.¹¹⁸ This meant that the largest cost remained with the municipalities. As discussed previously, this money was only accessible with provincial approval.¹¹⁹ The new scheme of grants, however, increased the federal contribution to 50 percent. Alongside provincial contributions, the municipalities could expect 75 percent of their civil defence costs to be covered by financial assistance.¹²⁰ The municipalities would have still required approval from both the provincial and federal governments in order to receive this funding; however, under these new guidelines, they were allowed to submit requests directly to both parties.¹²¹ Overall the process had been clarified and streamlined, and with the contribution of additional funding, the cost of civil defence appeared somewhat less daunting. This was a significant development, as Ottawa had borne long standing concerns over the costs of civil defence. With these concerns

¹¹⁷ Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Department of Trade and Commerce, *Canada Year Book 1957-1958*, (Ottawa, Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1956), 125

¹¹⁸ George Mooney, *Federal Civil Defence Grant Programme*, 2

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, ii

¹²⁰ Ontario, Department of Planning and Development, Civil Defence Branch, *Civil Defence Financial Assistance Programme Procedures*, By Edgar Bevis, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Toronto, 1957), 1

¹²¹ *Ibid*.

alleviated and with the government providing clear guidance, it appeared as though the city could finally implement a civil defence organization in tune with federal policy.

Nelms subsequently announced his conditional support for CD. He publicized, in March 1957, that the city had set aside \$7000 in its yearly budget for civil defence. Alongside federal and provincial contributions, the available budget for all civil defence programs in that year was to be \$28 000.¹²² Nelms made this announcement only three months after coming to office, making it appear that civil defence was going to be a priority issue for his first mayoral term. It was the first time the city had ever committed public funds to CD.

This announcement followed the Special Orientation and Briefing Forum on Civil Defence at the Arnprior Civil Defence College. The conference was held for the benefit of Nelms and a number of Canadian mayors, with the objective of presenting “the factors involved and means to be employed in the protection of the civilian population in times of national disaster.”¹²³ Paul Martin, Minister of Health and Welfare, was also present. Slated to run from 27 February to 2 March 1957, the conference was arranged to respond to a resolution passed by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities (CFMM) in 1956, and submitted to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The Federation called for the organization of a conference of municipal and federal officials to “acquaint those attending with the details of approved Civil Defence plans.”¹²⁴ The entire event had been put together “Because of the lively interest and vital concern which mayors have with regard to the implications of thermonuclear weapons and the effects of such weapons on

¹²² "City Plans CD Budget.", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (March 1957.)

¹²³ "Important Notice and Invitation Re Special Orientation and Briefing Forum for Canadian Mayors at Canadian Civil Defence College: Arnprior, Ont., February 27 - March 2, 1957", George S. Mooney to George Nelms, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (January 8, 1957)

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

civilian populations... and because of the particular role which the mayors play in the life of their communities.”¹²⁵ Behind its bureaucratic language, the Federation was frightened by the devastating effects of these new super weapons, and wanted to know how it could best defend its constituents.

The conference’s central purpose was ensuring cooperation between the municipalities and other levels of government. Municipal representatives were informed that they could expect briefings covering many issues, including the “international situation and the defence preparedness plans of Canada and allied nations.”¹²⁶

Representatives were also given a tour of the Air Defence Command Headquarters at St. Hubert, Quebec by officers of the Royal Canadian Air Force. This was done to show off the Continental Warning System, which was designed to alert authorities of any impending attack.¹²⁷ Municipal figures from all over the country were brought up to date on the federal government’s plans, in an attempt to drive home the fact that nuclear conflict was a new type of warfare altogether. Municipal figures were trucked out to Arnprior to be briefed on matters of national defence. By doing so, the government was showing these leaders that they mattered in the grand scheme of the country’s national defence efforts, and that by extension civil defence mattered in the greater context of the country’s defence. The government was attempting to lead the hesitant but concerned municipalities towards a more enthusiastic adoption of civil defence within their communities. Alongside the federal government’s increased financial assistance, in Ottawa’s case, at least for a time, these attempts to sell CD seemed to work.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ "Travel Instructions Re Arnprior Special Defence Briefing Conference", George S. Mooney to George Nelms, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (February 8, 1957.)

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

This conference was an important event, bridging the years-long rift between Ottawa and the federal government over civil defence. By arranging for this conference, the federal government was effectively acknowledging that there had been a lack of clear direction, and that it was seeking to rectify the problem. If Nelms wanted to dismiss the gesture, he could have avoided the conference. His attendance appeared to signify a new attitude toward a historically troublesome file. In fact, he claimed to have a “personal interest in this matter.”¹²⁸ Given that Nelms announced a municipal budget for civil defence that same month, it is clear that the conference with Martin had some effect on Ottawa’s plans.¹²⁹ By the end of March 1957, the city had even installed seven air raid sirens, provided by the federal government, throughout the city.¹³⁰ These sirens were an essential part of the federal government’s warning system, and were critical to ensure that the public received enough time to take action and save lives.¹³¹

When the federal government displayed leadership and clear vision, Ottawa was prepared to follow. Nelms had been shown the importance of civil defence, and that the municipality had an important role to play in its implementation. On the heels of the conference, he announced his first budget, which included a contribution to CD. While by no means lavish in terms of its dollar value, this contribution represented the first time the municipality committed resources to CD preparations. During Whitton’s first term, the federal government had expected too much, and as a result city officials had been skeptical of dedicating municipal funds to a civil defence organization that could have

¹²⁸ "Important Notice and Invitation Re Special Orientation and Briefing Forum for Canadian Mayors at Canadian Civil Defence College", George Nelms to George S. Mooney. (January 11, 1957)

¹²⁹ "City Plans CD Budget.", March 1957.

¹³⁰ "Civil Defence Air Raid Sirens", Charles Broadbent to George Nelms, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (March 12, 1957.)

¹³¹ Andrew Burtch, "Heralds of Doom", *Material Culture Review* 74/75 (Spring 2012).

cost the city millions. During Nelms' mayoral term, however, the government had finally managed to drive its point home.

Meanwhile, the public continued to lobby city officials to do more on the issue of civil defence. Following his election Nelms, like Whitton, was contacted by the I.O.D.E. The group was upset that no concrete civil defence organization had yet been established by Ottawa. While Nelms had committed city funds to CD, there was little to show for it yet. In a letter to the mayor on 25 March 1957, the organization communicated the following resolution: "(a) The Ottawa Municipal Chapter, I.O.D.E., regrets that there is no plan of civil defence in Ottawa; (b) They strongly advocate that steps be taken to form some plan of civil defence; and (c) They pledge themselves to work for and with any civic group set up to further such a plan."¹³² Nelms tried to assure the organization that plans were in motion, and specifically mentioned that money had been set aside for this exact reason.¹³³ He promised the organization that their pledge of support had been heard, that it was appreciated, and that the moment a civil defence coordinator was appointed their "very kind offer of participation will be made known."¹³⁴ Furthermore, he promised that an organizational structure was not far off. Clearly the mayor believed that continued progress was to be expected.

Nelms had been consulting with both provincial and federal officials on how to structure Ottawa's civil defence organization. The discussion spanned over the summer of 1957 and was carried out in consultation with General Worthington and Commander Bevis, the provincial civil defence coordinator for Ontario. The city also consulted with

¹³² J. E. Mackay to George H. Nelms, "Correspondence on Civil Defence", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa, Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire March 25, 1957.)

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Charles Broadbent, the provincial coordinator for civil defence responsible for Region 5, an administrative body within the province's civil defence scheme. This region covered the counties of Grenville, Lanark, Dundas, Stormont, Glengarry, Hastings, Lennox and Addington, Frontenac, Leeds, Prince Edward, Russel, Renfrew, and Carleton.¹³⁵

These officials tried to pressure Nelms into quicker action. This was a result of the city's earlier refusal to commit to federal plans it could not afford. In a letter to the mayor on 18 March 1957, Broadbent stressed that surrounding communities had been delayed by Ottawa's reluctance to act. In an effort to show this, he attached a letter from the County of Carleton which stated that the county, while inclined towards the creation of a civil defence organization for the region, was unprepared to act until they were made aware of Ottawa's stance.¹³⁶ In Broadbent's words, Carleton was "ready to bring in Civil Defence... when the City of Ottawa [was] ready to do the same."¹³⁷ Broadbent was trying to show that Ottawa's delays had wider implications than the city itself. In the event of an attack Ottawa would have been forced to rely on the assistance of surrounding communities, who did not have the resources to adequately prepare themselves. The smaller townships in turn, looked to Ottawa to take the lead on CD, much like the city looked to the federal government for guidance.

Nelms continued to cooperate. Worthington prepared a briefing for Nelms titled *Ottawa Civil Defence*, laying out the structure for the city's CD organization. The work that was done for this document drew heavily from the experiences of other municipalities. Its authors recommended the formation of a Civil Defence Executive

¹³⁵ *Hospital Distribution in Civil Defence Zones*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01 (April 1956.); Note: See Appendix II for a map of the counties encompassed by Civil Defence Region 5.

¹³⁶ H. E. Coldrey to Charles Broadbent, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (January 21, 1957.)

¹³⁷ Charles Broadbent to George Nelms, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (March 18, 1957.)

Committee, the appointment of a Civil Defence Coordinator, and the formation of both a Civil Defence Planning Committee and Advisory Committee.¹³⁸ Each of these committees and positions would fill a specific role. For example, the Civil Defence Advisory Committee was to be “composed of representatives of public and private organizations and representatives of industry, churches, etc.”¹³⁹ It was to function as an advisory body, which would contribute its expertise, where applicable, to municipal efforts.¹⁴⁰

Most important, however, was the federal call for the city’s appointment of a Civil Defence Coordinator. This position would be “regarded as the advisor to the Council on Civil Defence,” and would have responsibility for directing “Civil Defence training and planning and [ensuring] that municipal, provincial and federal financial aid [was] properly applied to Civil Defence projects.”¹⁴¹ Under Whitton, the city had never appointed anyone to this position, as it would have required the dedication of a yearly salary. Nevertheless, with the appointment of a coordinator, the city would have finally had on staff an official that could provide public leadership and act as a champion for the program within the city. Furthermore, the brief called for the appointment of a subordinate staff in the form of an Assistant Coordinator and a departmental secretary.¹⁴² It outlined the tentative salaries of each of these positions, which combined to a total, at maximum, of \$15,650 yearly.¹⁴³ This would have eaten up a substantial portion of the \$28,000 which the city had managed to procure for civil defence activities. However, it

¹³⁸ *Ottawa Civil Defence*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa), 1-3; Note: See Appendix 3 for a chart laying out the proposed organizational structure.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 1-2

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 1

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*.

must be noted that both the province and the federal government would have continued to provide matching funds for specific projects. This funding structure allowed the city another \$12,350 for the hiring of part time staff.

If the plan outlined in Worthington's brief had been implemented it would have represented a substantial leap forward for the city's civil defence scheme. While the municipality had drafted its own plans under Whitton, it lacked the organizational staff necessary to see these plans realized. With the appointment of an official Civil Defence Coordinator, there would be a dedicated civil defence official on the city's staff who could work with the community and manage projects. CD would become an everyday reality, instead of being hidden away in departmental briefs.

In the months following Nelms acclamation as mayor, the city had cooperated with federal and provincial officials. For the first time ever Nelms had dedicated city funds to CD, he had arranged for the instillation of several air raid sirens, and he had listened to the appeals of CD planners. This progress was not to last. The perception that the Soviet Union's nuclear stockpile had started to outpace the United States' arsenal was placing a greater strain on civil defence planners.¹⁴⁴ On 10 October 1957 Minister of National Defence George Pearkes, a member of the newly elected conservative government, announced that the Canadian Militia were to be trained in civil defence during the coming year.¹⁴⁵ They were expected to play an important role by forming "mobile flying columns for possible atomic and hydrogen bomb attacks."¹⁴⁶ This change came from the

¹⁴⁴ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 119-120; Note: While the concern was real, it has been argued that the Soviet Union's arsenal was much smaller than it suggested. For more, consult Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 68-72

¹⁴⁵ James Senter, "Militia in CD Role Army Shifts to Face 30-Day Nuclear War", *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), October 10, 1957, 1

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*; Note: Flying columns are a mobile and ad hoc form of military organization, which are meant to be extremely mobile and formed during operations, but limited in size.

realization that the militia, Canada's reserve force, was unlikely to play the same role that it had in previous wars because of rapid technological advances. Deployment in active combat zones was deemed unlikely. However, in Pearkes' words, CD represented a way in which the militia could continue to "render the same patriotic service... it [had] always done, rather than some phony, glamorous role which hardly exist[ed]."¹⁴⁷

This announcement confused many municipalities, which were troubled by the fact that they were being expected to shoulder the burden of CD when the government was tacitly admitting its responsibility for the matter. By involving the army, the government appeared to admit that civil defence was a military matter, despite claiming for nearly a decade that municipalities could not expect the military to help out. If this was the case, in the opinion of some municipalities, they were absolved from their civil defence responsibilities.¹⁴⁸

Nelms, and by extension the City of Ottawa, was caught off guard by the federal government's announcement of civil defence training for the militia. While city officials understood that danger still loomed, they also doubtless understood that if the federal government was admitting sole responsibility for civil defence, the municipality would be immune to criticisms of inaction. In the aftermath of the government's unexpected announcement, Nelms and his colleagues were confused. Out of their confusion, the old doubts about civil defence re-emerged, and Nelms' earlier enthusiasm began to waiver. The government's changeable approach to civil defence made dedicating substantial resources to the issue inadvisable. After all, only six months prior to this announcement

¹⁴⁷ Canada, House of Commons. *House of Commons Debates Twenty Third Parliament* Vol. 1, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1958), 38

¹⁴⁸ "Re: Role of the Militia in Aid of Civil Defence", George S. Hatton to All Provincial Civil Defence Co-Ordinators, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (November 29, 1957.)

the government had been stressing the importance of the municipalities' individual efforts, stating that civil defence was "everything we have but the armed forces."¹⁴⁹ Now, admittedly under the minority government of John Diefenbaker, the municipality was being told that the military was to begin taking a role in civil defence. This represented a substantial break from the self-help foundation which had been applied to early conceptions of civil defence. It is understandable that Nelms reacted with skepticism, as the municipality wanted to avoid implementing a civil defence structure, only to be informed by the federal government that the organization was obsolete. In the wake of Pearkes' announcement, Nelms turned away several applications for the position of Civil Defence Coordinator. He often cited the "confusion with respect to the Army taking over Civil Defence"¹⁵⁰ as the reason that the position had remained empty.

This hesitance to act opened the municipality up to criticisms from the public. As the years wore on, it had begun to look as though the city was simply ignoring its civil defence responsibilities. Given that the public had already been consulted through the formation of several committees under Whitton, and that several groups had petitioned the municipality to act, these criticisms were perfectly reasonable. Despite years of lobbying for action and Nelms' dedication of public funds towards the issue, the city remained without a CD coordinator. The matter was only made worse as the public grew aware of growing nuclear yields, and the dangers of fallout. However, these criticisms often failed to grasp the full scope of the situation. The reality of the matter was that civil defence, if properly implemented, was a massive undertaking. Furthermore, it would have required serious cooperation across municipal, provincial, and federal lines if it was

¹⁴⁹ *National Survival through Civil Defence*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, 1957, 4

¹⁵⁰ George Nelms to John Syme, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01 (October 28, 1957)

to be successful. Without proper leadership from the government, the municipalities could hardly be expected to shoulder the burden alone, and lacked the expertise and experience to do so even if they tried. Criticisms from the public only served to frustrate the municipality, as it believed the federal government was not providing consistent guidance.

Following Pearkes' announcement, Nelms was contacted by the I.O.D.E. once again. The organization was displeased that it had continued to hear of no progress in establishing Ottawa's own civil defence organization. The I.O.D.E. pressed Nelms for answers, stating that "it was moved, seconded and unanimously carried that a letter be addressed to you asking what is being done."¹⁵¹ The organization continued by asking for a prompt reply on the matter, and reiterated its belief in the importance of civil defence.¹⁵² Nelms, in his reply, was resolute that the issue was still being seriously considered by both himself and the Board of Control. He assured the I.O.D.E. that he was attempting to resolve any confusion over the matter, and that they could look forward to a prompt resolution.¹⁵³ However, Nelms insisted that the delay had been caused by the federal government's announcement "that 'The Reserve Army would be taking an active part'."¹⁵⁴

By 1958, Nelms' frustration with the situation was plain to see. Responding to demands for the appointment of a CD coordinator, and the formation of a local CD organization, made by the Ottawa Local Council of Women (OLCW), he argued, that "civil defence was a responsibility of the city and [that] the women's group wasn't

¹⁵¹ J. E. Mackay to George H. Nelms, "Correspondence on Civil Defence", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa, Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, November 12, 1957.)

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

helping matters by its attitude towards the subject.”¹⁵⁵ He continued by stating that the Board of Control was awaiting the results of the 1958 federal election, in the hopes that a “definite” policy would be laid out for the municipality. Attempting to placate the OLCW, he suggested that it contact local election candidates for a statement of their position on civil defence.¹⁵⁶ Nelms was waiting for the government to clarify the situation. Without a clear policy direction to guide the municipality, he believed that it was prudent to wait. Displeased with this response, and sick of delays, the OLCW pushed for a meeting with the Board of Control.¹⁵⁷

Nelms did not use Pearkes’ announcement to simply dismiss the municipality’s responsibility for civil defence. Instead he re-assured his constituents that the matter was under consideration, meaning that the city wanted the federal government to provide a clearer definition of the military’s role in CD. While Nelms never denied that there had been delays, he reiterated that these had been caused by matters completely out of the municipality’s control. Only a few months earlier, the city had been seriously considering the implementation of its own civil defence organization. Money had been set aside, and a rough sketch of what the organization would look like was discussed, but following Pearkes’ announcement the city had held back. Earlier cooperation had resulted from federal displays of leadership, including increased levels of financial assistance, and the municipality’s continued interest in CD. The city had been thrown off guard by the federal government, and been forced to reconsider its position. This opened the municipality up to criticism; however, Nelms’ cooperation with federal officials

¹⁵⁵ "Leave CD With City, Says Nelms", *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 18, 1958, 7

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ J. M. Beulon to Mr. Pearce, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa, Ottawa Local Council of Women, March 24, 1958)

demonstrates that the City of Ottawa, under his leadership, took civil defence seriously. If it had not, the mayor simply would have ignored the issue.

The OLCW would not back down. The organization was given a chance to present its case to the Board of Control on 27 May 1958. The OLCW arrived with a detailed brief which outlined their demands. This document was prepared with the help of the Council of Service Clubs, the Property Owners Association, the Ottawa Area Safety Council, and the Canadian Red Cross.¹⁵⁸ These organizations argued that their views were “based upon what [was] felt to be the opinion held generally and widely in Ottawa.”¹⁵⁹ Their briefing stressed that civil defence preparations were critical in order to avoid the city’s devastation in the event of a war. Its authors provided evidence for action, citing statements by both Paul Martin, who by this time was no longer the Minister of Health and Welfare, and Diefenbaker in favour of civic preparedness.¹⁶⁰ The OLCW also laid out its demands. These included the formation of a dedicated civil defence committee and the hiring of staff for the committee’s co-ordinator.¹⁶¹

Surprisingly, the document also stated that those presenting it did not hold the municipality at fault for its inaction, because these organizations understood that there had been confusion caused by “the change of Government and some uncertainty regarding the employment of the Armed Forces.”¹⁶² In the opinion of such community groups, this was not a sufficient excuse for further inaction. They believed that civil defence was a critical responsibility of the atomic age. The quote used to close the brief

¹⁵⁸ Browne, F. S. *A Brief Presented to His Worship the Mayor and the City Council of Ottawa*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (May 27, 1958), 1

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 2

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 1

showed this to be true, as it professed civil defence to be “one of the greatest and most inspiring [challenges] conceived by any nation.”¹⁶³

The OLCW’s briefing represented a clear expression of public concern over the city’s lack of action. It acknowledged that the city’s delay was not unreasonable, but could no longer be tolerated. The concerns expressed by these groups were legitimate, and they should not be dismissed. Nevertheless, the city could not be reasonably expected to act when events had shown, and would continue to show, that even the federal government was uncertain about how to proceed.

By 1958, the government was in the process of dismantling Civil Defence Canada and was advocating for increased military involvement with civil defence. These policy changes were driven by a realization amongst experts and policy makers that “no single municipality would be able to co-ordinate its own defence.” The hydrogen bomb, coupled with the growing development of ICBMs, evident by the Soviet Union’s successful launch of *Sputnik* in 1957, had invalidated the self-help approach.¹⁶⁴ Sensing that federal policy towards civil defence was being reformed, Nelms delayed implementing plans in tune with a policy direction that was growing rapidly outdated. If the city had listened to the requests made by the OLCW and pressed on with the plans which had been developed at that point, Ottawa would have implemented an out of date organization which stood out of step with federal policy.

By delaying, the city was exposed to legitimate criticism. With no civil defence organization to point to, the city had contributed to public fears of nuclear annihilation. However, as during Whitton’s term, the city had been placed in this predicament by the

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 2

¹⁶⁴ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 110-111

federal government. With its sudden reversal of policy, the government had rendered obsolete every step that the municipality had made. The city had acted shrewdly. Yet, with nothing done to ensure some sense of security in the public, the city had also fostered a sense of resentment and frustration in its citizens.

An example comes from discussions which followed the OLCW's 1958 presentation. Both the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the OLCW were in contact with Nelms at this time. These organizations continued to stress that more needed to be done. In a letter from the YWCA's President, Anne Redick, Nelms was informed that there was widespread concern within her organization over "the lack of trained Civil Defence personnel in our city."¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, she mentioned that the public at large was demanding more information on the city's civil defence efforts, while also declaring that mothers in the organization's Ladies' Day Out program were restless.¹⁶⁶ This letter was written following an explosion in downtown Ottawa, it caused serious damage to many buildings, and flying debris injured 40 people.¹⁶⁷ The YWCA cited this disaster as a reason that the city needed a comprehensive civil defence scheme. In this light, it might be easy to dismiss this appeal as a panicked response to a local tragedy. However, appeals such as this were not uncommon, which speaks to a deeper concern among sections of the public.

Most of the public demand for a CD organization in Ottawa was driven by women's groups. The historian Tarah Brookfield suggests that the activism of these groups in Canada's Cold War was the result of "a change in technology and warfare... [which]

¹⁶⁵ Anne Redick to George Nelms, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa, Young Women's Christian Association, December 9, 1958.)

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ "The Slater Street Explosion", The City of Ottawa, <http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/arts-culture-and-community/museums-and-heritage/witness-change-visions-andrews-newton-41>.

served to turn the home front into a battlefield... Furthermore, with the exception of the Korean War... Canadian men did not leave home in the Cold War, so there was no need for women to replace them in traditionally masculine spaces.”¹⁶⁸ Women turned towards public activism as a way of being heard “in the masculine worlds of defence, foreign affairs, and diplomacy.”¹⁶⁹ This explanation helps contextualize why Ottawa women’s groups were so involved and active in municipal affairs.

The OLCW, having already played an active role, continued to lobby the mayor for immediate action. They wrote directly to the Board of Control, stating that “Five months have gone by, nothing has been done, no assurance that it will be done, in the near future, if action has been taken or given any thought by the Members of the Municipal Government, we have not been informed or has the press given it any publicity.”¹⁷⁰ Given the OLCW’s previous efforts, and the continuing inaction of the municipality, it is easy to understand the mounting frustration.

Following the 1958 federal election, the federal government had commissioned a report from Howard Graham, the outgoing chief of the general staff. The report was intended to “provide a comprehensive review of existing [civil defence] policies at the local, provincial, and national levels and to suggest revisions... that would offer solutions to the ICBM threat.” The announcement of Graham’s review “caused paralysis at all levels of decision making from the federal [civil defence] headquarters down to individual volunteers.” Many feared that this report would invalidate their efforts, and

¹⁶⁸ Brookfield, *Cold War Comforts*, 5

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 7

¹⁷⁰ J. M. Beulon to Mr. Pearce, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa, Ottawa Local Council of Women, October 27, 1958.)

drive their programs into obsolescence.¹⁷¹ Awaiting the results of this report, the federal government remained all but silent on the issue of civil defence. Ottawa, reluctant to continue working on CD without a concrete understanding of federal policy, simply echoed the government's silence. Given the confused nature of civil defence policy leading up to the 1958 federal election, as seen by Pearkes' announcement on militia training and Nelms' response, this is not surprising. The municipality had no information on what the federal government expected of them. Graham's findings proved to vindicate Ottawa's cautious approach to CD, as his report resulted in sweeping changes to how CD was administered in Canada.

In March 1959, PM Diefenbaker himself announced in the House of Commons a series of sweeping reforms to the country's federal civil defence structure. This announcement was preceded by months of sparring between Paul Martin, then in opposition, and the acting Minister of Health and Welfare, Jay Monteith.¹⁷² On 23 March Diefenbaker, bringing the silence to an end, finally made a definitive statement on CD. He began by referencing Graham's report, which had been commissioned nearly a year earlier, stating that his findings had been reviewed. Then the PM detailed a number of changes. Firstly, he called for the army to "undertake primary and direct responsibility for a number of the technical civil defence functions heretofore carried on by civil defence organizations at provincial and municipal levels."¹⁷³ These tasks included providing warning of attack, monitoring blasts and fallout dispersal, assessing damaged

¹⁷¹ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 117

¹⁷² Canada, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates Second Session Twenty Fourth Parliament* Vol. 1. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1959), 245, 908; Canada, House of Commons, *House of Commons Debates Second Session Twenty Fourth Parliament* Vol. 2. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1959), 2073

¹⁷³ Canada, *House of Commons Debates Second Session Twenty Fourth Parliament*. Vol. 2, 2129

areas, decontaminating and clearing these areas, and rescuing injured citizens.¹⁷⁴ Yet the municipalities would still bear responsibility for welfare services and the maintenance of law and order in the aftermath of an attack.¹⁷⁵ In order to aid the municipalities, Diefenbaker announced that the government was prepared to expand its financial commitment to civil defence even further. He promised that “Provincial and local costs of approved civil defence projects will henceforth receive assistance to the extent of 75 per cent instead of the 50 per cent as heretofore... [this] will apply to projects in the fields of interest of national health and welfare, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and to other provincial and local projects.”¹⁷⁶ Lastly, the PM proclaimed that the Emergency Measures Organization was to assume responsibility for all federal duties related to civil defence which were not already assigned to other departments.¹⁷⁷ Some federal offices, notably the Department of Health and Welfare, thus continued to have some responsibility for civil defence.

This announcement had been a long time coming. Over the months preceding it, Ottawa’s city officials had been left completely in the dark as to how they should deal with civil defence. Finally, it seemed as though the federal government was providing some clarity on the matter. The government’s announcement of increased financial assistance was more than welcome. In an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, Nelms commented that the government’s new financial commitment was “as it should be.” He continued by stating that both he and the Board of Control were pleased by the government’s clear ascription of “definite responsibility” for civil defence to the military.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Note: Welfare Services covered a wide range of responsibilities including: Providing shelter, food, and medical services.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

By clarifying the situation, the mayor believed that the government had “at least made a step in the right direction.” He seemed confident enough to state that the city planned to incorporate its Civilian Emergency Committee into federal planning. The city would have finally had a concrete CD organization.¹⁷⁸

This revision of federal policy and the city’s response was significant for several reasons. Diefenbaker’s restructuring of government policy represented the end of self-help based civil defence programs. Faced by the damning results of the Graham Report, which argued that only the Canadian Army could possibly implement a functional CD strategy, the government had been forced to re-organize its entire approach to civil defence.¹⁷⁹ This new direction seemed to mean that civil defence organizations focused on the recruitment and training of large pools of volunteers had become outdated, and were to be replaced by the military in most functions. This, in turn, freed the city from many of its previous responsibilities, and made civil defence far less daunting to implement. Nelms’ positive response to the announcement showed that the city was prepared to cooperate, now that it was no longer being left in the dark. Because of a lack of information, and a clear sense that reforms were likely, the city had avoided the implementation of an outdated civil defence model. With the government’s increased financial commitment to the issue, it seemed as though there was nothing holding the city back.

Nevertheless, by the end of Nelms’ mayoral term, the city had still failed to implement a comprehensive civil defence program. This was largely the result of further organizational confusion which followed after the government’s re-organization of

¹⁷⁸ "City Warms To A Part in CD Plan", *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 24, 1959, 1

¹⁷⁹ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 119

federal policy. The announcement of the EMO's assumption of full responsibility for civil defence had caused problems. Civil Defence Canada, which had continued to exist under the leadership of General Hatton in after Worthington's retirement, had effectively been stripped of its role in the government. Furious over the organization's demise, Hatton resigned rather than accepting his transfer to the EMO.¹⁸⁰ His letter of resignation was made public a month after he resigned, and in it he damned the federal government's efforts. He argued that responsibility for civil defence had been "divided among various Government departments 'to an extent that will be ineffective in peace and disastrous in war.'"¹⁸¹ Hatton had always been a contentious figure, and was never officially appointed as Worthington's replacement, but his criticisms worried the city.¹⁸²

Nelms received a letter from Murray Heit, the Alderman for the Gloucester Ward of Ottawa, on the same day that Hatton's letter went public. Heit informed the mayor that the city's Civilian Emergency Committee had reported that it was not responsible for the implementation of civil defence.¹⁸³ This stood in contrast to the mayor's earlier suggestions that this committee would be integrated with the federal government's plans. Heit petitioned the mayor to create an organization committed to the implementation of civil defence, stating that "Notwithstanding that there have been no directives concerning this matter from the Federal Government as yet, it is my contention that there is still a large measure of responsibility which the City of Ottawa should take."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 127

¹⁸¹ Harvey Hickey, "Civil Defence Setup Disastrous in War, Ex-Director Charges", *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), October 9, 1959, 11

¹⁸² Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 113

¹⁸³ "Re: Civil Defence.", Murray Heit to George Nelms, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (October 9, 1959)

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

Nelms' response was brief, but spoke to the frustrations the municipality had experienced over the previous years. The mayor argued, that due to the government's changeable approach to CD, the administration had decided to wait for the establishment of a "definite trend of Federal direction" before pressing ahead.¹⁸⁵ In addition, the mayor highlighted the "squabble" that had taken place between Hatton and the federal government only a week earlier as an indication that leadership on civil defence was unlikely to be any clearer under Diefenbaker.¹⁸⁶ While in previous years Nelms had shown himself to be committed to civil defence when the federal government displayed clear vision and leadership, by 1959 the government's inconsistent guidance had worn on his resolve.

By the time Nelms left office, only one major milestone had been achieved when it came to the organization of CD in Ottawa. On 21 March 1960, Nelms managed to convince the City Council to approve a proposed budget of \$8,870 for the creation of the city's own Emergency Measures Organization. The vote passed largely as a result of the federal government's expanded financial assistance, as the city was only expected to cover ten percent of this budget, while the province covered fifteen percent, and the federal government covered the remaining seventy-five percent.¹⁸⁷ The Council's approval meant that the city could finally begin creating an organization wholly dedicated to the implementation of CD policy. This achievement had been delayed for years, as the municipality struggled to balance the expectations of its citizens, the province, and the federal government with the difficulties of managing an urban center. This was

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ "Ready for Emergency; \$8,870 Budget Okayed", *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 22, 1960, 3

supplemented by the appointment of Major Buck Walker as the city's coordinator in the summer of 1960.¹⁸⁸

During his time as the Mayor of Ottawa, Nelms had always acted carefully when it came to civil defence. Understanding the danger that the atom presented to the city, he was prepared to cooperate with the federal government. On the verge of implementing a dedicated civil defence organization early in his term, Nelms had been prevented by a muddling of the federal government's policy direction. The military's involvement with civil defence, even before Diefenbaker's announcement, redefined the municipalities' role. The mayor held off and waited for direction from the federal government, despite the fact that it opened the city up to serious criticisms of inaction. With nothing to show for these delays, sections of the public were frightened of the consequences of a failure to prepare. However, the city's decision to wait was a sensible reaction to the situation. Faced with a lack of experience and guidance, the city was unwilling to commit resources to a policy direction that was likely outdated and unlikely to achieve much of anything. By doing so they were forced to ignore local calls for action.

By the end of Nelms' term, the government's inconsistent guidance on the matter had made waiting the only feasible policy decision. He nevertheless managed to lay the groundwork for the creation of the city's own EMO, while ensuring that the bulk of the cost remained in federal hands. Nelms' efforts had seen him balance public and federal pressure to act against displays of inconsistent leadership and changing policy direction. He had erred on the side of caution, and saved the city a substantial amount of money, while preventing the implementation of an obsolete policy.

¹⁸⁸ "Ottawa Under Attack Described In Citizen", *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 16, 1960, 17

Chapter 3: Sound and Fury: Charlotte Whitton and Collapse of the CCEMO 1960-1962

Early in December 1960, Ottawa went to the polls to elect a new mayor. The election was hard fought, and Charlotte Whitton narrowly defeated Sam Berger, an owner of the Ottawa Roughriders and lawyer by trade. She returned to office four years after a brief departure from municipal politics, but her earlier tenure had not been forgotten. In an editorial published in the *Ottawa Citizen* the day after her election, it was stressed that “In the past, Miss Whitton did not receive... support because... [she] believed she had the only answer to every issue that arose, and regard[ed] it as a personal affront when anyone differed from her on any controversy.”¹⁸⁹ The newspaper emphasized that in order for Whitton to be successful, a “new more co-operative attitude [had to] be adopted.”¹⁹⁰

Given the cross-departmental nature of civil defence, and its reliance upon provincial and federal cooperation, an accommodating approach would have meshed well with the implementation of CD in Ottawa. In the past, Whitton had struggled with the federal government over the costs of CD. Consequently, she ordered city departments to prepare draft plans, but refused to commit financial resources or expend any political capital to promote CD in the city. By the time she returned to office, however, the federal government had drastically expanded its financial assistance. Early in Whitton’s term the city had made significant progress on the matter of civic preparedness. Yet, the years following Whitton’s re-election were increasingly filled with municipal bickering and controversy over CD, so much so that by 1962, interest and support for the program had faded away. Municipal politics figured heavily in the death of Ottawa’s troubled civil

¹⁸⁹ "Miss Whitton's Election", *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 6, 1960, 6

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

defence program, though its collapse was aided by years of ambiguous federal support and guidance, and by a gradual loss of interest on the part of the public.

Before Whitton's re-election, Nelms had laid the groundwork for the establishment of Ottawa's own Emergency Measures Organization. In addition to the \$8,870 budget allocated by the City Council, mentioned in the previous chapter, Major Buck Walker had been appointed as the City of Ottawa's Emergency Measures Co-ordinator. Originally from Edmonton, Walker served in the Canadian Army during the Second World War. Afterwards he worked as the deputy-secretary of the International Commission in Vietnam, which supervised the armistice arrangements in Indochina.¹⁹¹ Walker was a firm believer in the value of civil defence. In his view, CD could both save lives and act as a deterrent to Soviet aggression. He reported that "The Philosophy that the masses are expendable still exists there [in Russia] to some degree. That in itself may work heavily against [Russia] if [it] know[s] we will probably come through a bombing with most of our people alive and angry."¹⁹² Given his military background, organizational work, and his high level of interest in civil defence, Walker was well-fitted for the position.

In the months following his appointment, Walker managed to achieve several early gains for the city's civil defence program, even without a significant office staff or CD by-laws. Walker established an effective relationship with members of the military, including Brigadier Bailey, the commanding officer of the Army's Eastern Ontario defence area. This was essential, as Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's approach to civil

¹⁹¹ "Ottawa Under Attack Described In Citizen.", 17

¹⁹² Roger Appleton, "Show Shelter For Survival At CCEA.", *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 27, 1960, 27

defence had placed the military in a prominent role.¹⁹³ Walker also helped establish an emergency control network for the city. This linked the radio systems of various municipal departments, such as the police, fire, and waterworks, together under an emergency headquarters. This system was “the first of its kind in the province”, and represented a substantial step forward for Ottawa’s emergency planning.¹⁹⁴ In the event of an attack, this communication system would have allowed the municipality to properly communicate between emergency departments and coordinate defence efforts. These achievements came at a low cost, as the municipality was only expected to finance ten percent of the burden, with the remainder supported by federal and provincial matching grants.¹⁹⁵

Most importantly, Walker was a constant presence in the *Ottawa Citizen*, running a column every Saturday on CD-related issues. These columns varied in length and covered a wide range of topics. His first piece was titled “Must Understand Nuclear Horrors”, and it stressed the importance of nuclear education and the legitimacy of CD.¹⁹⁶ This public presence was vital. The military, the federal government, and the province agreed that volunteers were still an important part of CD planning, and the city’s co-ordinator concurred. While this had not been well articulated after Diefenbaker’s announced revisions to CD in 1959, by the time Walker had been appointed as Ottawa’s Emergency Measures Co-ordinator, the point had been made widely and abundantly clear by the Canadian Army. Civil defence analysts believed that the relatively small size of Canada’s armed forces meant that “hundreds of thousands of civilian volunteers were still

¹⁹³ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 127

¹⁹⁴ Patrick Best, “Control Network Here As Emergency Measure”, *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 5, 1960, 48

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ R.F Walker, “Must Understand Nuclear Horrors”, *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 17, 1960, 7

required to ensure the country's survival."¹⁹⁷ Maintaining a public presence was an important part of Walker's job. Without a dedicated core of volunteers, the municipality would have lacked the manpower to carry out welfare functions and supplement rescue operations following a blast.

The recruitment of volunteers was only made more difficult throughout the country by the fact that many Canadians, faced with the dizzying pace of the arms race and intensifying disputes between the superpowers, found civil defence wanting as a means of self-defence.¹⁹⁸ In light of the astonishing strength of thermonuclear arms, it was tempting to ignore the issue, or fatalistically think, as one contribution to the *Citizen* put it, "you're going to die anyways in an atomic attack-so what's the use???"¹⁹⁹ By 1960 sections of the public either rejected CD, or were outright hostile towards its implementation. Disarmament groups around the country often criticized CD as a stop gap measure, believing unilateral disarmament to be the only true protection against nuclear devastation.²⁰⁰

Officials, as a result, struggled to bring the public back on side, and attempted to put civil defence in the most positive light imaginable. Walker's piece, "Must Understand Nuclear Horrors", urged to readers that "we can and must significantly improve our chances of living through an attack and of surviving as a nation, thereby achieving a final victory over any attacker."²⁰¹ Taking this idea a step further, Doug Keddie, a chief instructor at the federal Arnprior Civil Defence College, described the surviving of a nuclear war as a romanticized adventure, in an article that ran alongside Walker's

¹⁹⁷ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 130, 136-138

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 4, 6

¹⁹⁹ Winston Mills, "We Can Survive CD--Life, Not Death", *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 17, 1960, 7

²⁰⁰ Brookfield, *Cold War Comforts*, 72-73

²⁰¹ R.F. Walker, "Must Understand Nuclear Horrors", *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 17, 1960, 7

column. He argued that “At least you’ll be alive—with your neighbours. You’ll have hands and brains to start all over again—break through the wilderness just as your forefathers did.”²⁰²

Published on the same page, these statements showed that the federal government and the municipality were attempting to cooperate on CD, even for promotional purposes. Trying to draw the reader in these articles painted civil defence as a patriotic, exciting, and vital component of the nation’s defence. They dismissed doomsayers who would allow their country to succumb to the devastation of a nuclear conflict, while providing a way for civic minded citizens to help their country. This approach was in tune with recruiting techniques that drew upon a “national identity forged from active patriotism.”²⁰³ Tracy Davis discusses this recruitment technique in *Stages of Emergency*, and concludes that “Membership, belonging, and fellowship were the ancillary benefits of taking part in the civil defense effort.”²⁰⁴ Walker and Keddie highlighted this by alluding to a sense of community and national triumph. Public statements such as these were designed to combat a growing apathy towards CD that was felt by many parts of the public. Walker’s public presence was directly in line with the mandate of his new position, over which he had been given a relatively free reign, and was critical to improving the reputation of CD amongst the public.

Walker’s efforts continued following Whitton’s re-election, and for a time Ottawa seemed to be heading in the right direction. While the coordinator’s activism came much later than the federal government would have originally liked, the city had made considerable progress in a relatively short period of time. Walker played an important

²⁰² Winston Mills, “We Can Survive CD--Life, Not Death”, *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 17, 1960, 7

²⁰³ Davis, *Stages of Emergency*, 35

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

role in this. In the past there had certainly been a general interest in preparing the city for a nuclear conflict amongst city officials. However, progress had been slow as a result of a poorly communicated policy direction on the part of the federal government, and the lack of a dedicated official on the city's part. With Walker's appointment, the city finally had an administrative position whose entire mandate was to prepare for a nuclear strike. The results that followed after his appointment spoke for themselves. Walker's work had ensured that the city had a CD communications network. He had even worked with the army to locate sites to install additional warning sirens across the city.²⁰⁵ All of this is to say, that despite the upheaval at the end of Nelms' term, Whitton inherited a small but promising CD program.

Walker was also an advocate for detailed planning that would draw upon the resources of neighbouring municipalities and counties. Almost every scenario drafted by the city's co-ordinator supposed that a considerable number of people would have evacuated the downtown core prior to a detonation, or that people who survived the initial blast would begin to move away from damaged areas.²⁰⁶ Accordingly, Walker argued that "The realization that there will be a mass exodus from target areas, requires that arrangements must be made to direct evacuees and displaced people to areas where they can be given temporary accommodation."²⁰⁷ Walker also stressed that Ottawa had to ensure that neighbouring counties were educated on how to support the city in an emergency.²⁰⁸ This approach to emergency planning placed surrounding counties and

²⁰⁵ Patrick Best, "Improved Warning Sirens", *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 5, 1960, 7

²⁰⁶ R.F. Walker, "Nuclear Evacuees Need Destination", *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 21, 1961, 36

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

municipalities in a particularly important role, and helped lay the foundation for the city's next step forward.

Before May 1961, all of Walker's efforts had been made without the assistance of an official organization built into municipality practice by by-law.²⁰⁹ The Emergency Measures Organization, formed with the \$8,870 budget approved under Nelms, had never been given a formalized organizational structure. Walker had effectively been working alone, and had very little outside assistance. Help appeared to be forthcoming in April 1961, when City Council voted to approve a \$55,335 budget for emergency measures planning, of which an estimated \$51,074 was recoverable through provincial and federal grants.²¹⁰ This was supplemented by Whitton, who on 15 May 1961, at a meeting of the City Council, signed By-Law Number 170-61, to "establish and maintain an emergency measures civil defence organization in and for the City of Ottawa and the County of Carleton."²¹¹ This by-law built upon Walker's suggestions, which were in tune with federal and provincial thinking, and created an organization that represented both the City of Ottawa and neighbouring county of Carleton.²¹² It also set out the organizational structure of the new City-County Emergency Measures Organization (CCEMO), defined the responsibilities of several advisory committees, provided a thorough description of Walker's role as co-ordinator, and defined the necessary expense sharing required for the city to maintain the organization.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Phyllis Wilson, "Emergency Equipment Order Will Be Rushed", *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 9, 1961.

²¹⁰ "Council Items: EMO Gets \$55,335", *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 14, 1961, 3

²¹¹ Ottawa, *By-Laws of the Council of the Corporation of Ottawa for the Year 1961*, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa, 1961)

²¹² See Appendix II for a 1959 map of Ontario counties.

²¹³ Ottawa, *By-Laws of the Council of the Corporation of Ottawa*, (Ottawa, 1961)

The document itself contained a number of important stipulations. The by-law required the city to maintain the CCEMO so long as “the Government of Canada has deemed it necessary.”²¹⁴ It also stipulated that the city was only prepared to shoulder ten percent of the organization’s operating cost, with the federal and provincial government matching grants covering 75 percent and 15 percent respectively. The conditional nature of Ottawa’s civil defence no doubt reflected uncertainty about future direction from the federal government, which had changed repeatedly and abruptly in the preceding decade. By incorporating these numbers directly into the city’s by-laws, both Whitton and the City Council ensured that the city could back away if the cost of CD became overly prohibitive. Further federal policy revisions were unlikely to cause problems for the city, because the municipality had the ability to terminate the organization if drastic changes were proposed. While the conditions being placed by the city certainly displayed a degree of skepticism, the result of years of frustrating delays, they were vital safeguards for city officials who did not want to see the program grow out of the municipality’s control. Caution was warranted, given the influence that both the provincial and federal governments had on CD planning, and the city’s previous interactions with Civil Defence Canada and federal officials.

Under the terms of the by-law, Ottawa’s civil defence fell under the CCEMO, whose stated mandate was to “co-ordinate duties and functions of government departments and agencies having responsibilities in a national emergency in the event of enemy action.”²¹⁵ The CCEMO was comprised of two separate bodies, the City-County Organization, and the Emergency Measures Committee. The City-County Organization included the heads

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

of nearly every major municipal department, and was designed to provide advice on policy decisions. The Emergency Measures Committee was comprised of the Mayor of Ottawa, the Warden of the County, and a total of ten appointed members, four from the county and six from the city. This committee was the executive body of the CCEMO, making all final decisions on policy direction.²¹⁶

In order to implement these decisions, the by-law created a full-time position of City-County Emergency Measures Co-ordinator. Importantly, it stipulated that the co-ordinator was subject to the policy decisions of the Emergency Measures Committee.²¹⁷ Walker, despite having strong opinions on emergency planning, was subject to the stated desires of the CCEMO, which meant that he reported directly to Whitton, who was the acting chair of the Emergency Measures Committee.

It is worth noting that the first national Tocsin Exercise had taken place from 4-6 May 1961, only nine days before Whitton signed the by-law into existence. This operation, carried out jointly by the federal Emergency Measures Organization and the Canadian Army, simulated a large scale Soviet bomber attack on Canada. It was designed to test emergency communications systems in the federal and provincial EMO headquarters, and expose any problems with planning.²¹⁸ One of its stated rationales was “To practice emergency arrangements for carrying on government at federal, provincial and *municipal* levels.”²¹⁹ Its results, in Prime Minister Diefenbaker’s words, were “less than... requisite” and revealed “many gaps... in... plans and preparations.”²²⁰ One such gap was

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 177

²¹⁹ Greg Connolley, "To Stage Rehearsals Of "Survival" Groups In Mock Atom Attacks", *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 4, 1960, 11; emphasis added

²²⁰ "PM Promises to Fill Gaps In CD Planning." *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 16, 1961, 12

at the municipal level, where the exercise exposed a lack of co-ordination between cities and surrounding municipalities.²²¹

Tocsin demonstrated that without significant cooperation and coordination with surrounding municipalities and counties, most urban centers would be doomed by an atomic attack. While the by-law had been in the works well before this display, its necessity had now been clearly exhibited to the public. Tocsin had also shown the provinces, and the federal government, that the country as a whole was unprepared. Attempting to remedy the situation in June 1961, two months after the CCEMO's formation, R.J. Wilson, the acting chair of the City-County Organization, was contacted by Wallace Betts, the Coordinator of the EMO of Ontario. Betts wrote to Wilson to suggest that the CCEMO expand to incorporate the County of Lanark. He felt that "both emergency planning and actual operations could be dealt with more efficiently and economically by grouping together the resources and manpower of neighbouring counties under a central control."²²² He argued that such a re-organization made sense, "particularly when these county areas contain only one large target city."²²³ The letter provided no guidance on how this should be done, only suggesting that "Mr. Walker... could make any necessary contacts."²²⁴ The incorporation of Lanark would have been especially convenient for the provincial EMO, as the County of Lanark had abolished its civil defence program in 1958. The county had complained that it could take "no active

²²¹ "Need For Emergency Measures Plan", *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 26, 1961, 6

²²² Wallace Betts to R.J. Wilson, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01 (July 13, 1961.)

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

part in civil defence until such time as some better organization or direction is received from [the] provincial or Federal level.”²²⁵

Wilson forwarded Betts’ request to Whitton. Her response, influenced by her previous experience with managing Ottawa’s emergency plans, was incensed. Seeking to go over Betts’ head, Whitton contacted Ontario’s Minister of Commerce and Development, William Nickle. She pointed out that

With very considerable difficulty, and after lengthy delay, as you know, we [the City of Ottawa] are just beginning our first meetings, trying to get the City pattern developed and, we hope, some integration with the County. It is therefore rather disconcerting to receive this letter proposing that we should link in with the County of Lanark. It comes as an entirely new idea to the Committee itself, and I am rather surprised that the province would have initiated it without approaching me and the Warden.²²⁶

Whitton dismissed the idea entirely, and suggested that “If this is to be the plan... [then perhaps] regional organization should be taken over by the province from the beginning.”²²⁷ She opposed Lanark’s incorporation into the CCEMO, because it would have placed an even heavier and unforeseen burden on the city. Taking on Lanark’s defence could conceivably have led to the province or other counties deflecting their responsibilities onto the City of Ottawa. Already tasked with co-ordinating the emergency plans of both the municipality and the County of Carleton, the CCEMO had its work cut out for it. This was especially true since the organization was only weeks old. Incorporating another county, in Whitton’s opinion, would have only further delayed the development of the city’s emergency plans.

Whitton was no more receptive to those who addressed her directly to take on more responsibility for civil defence. She was contacted by the Mayor of Wakefield

²²⁵ "Lanark Ends Civil Defence--No Direction.", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (March 25, 1958)

²²⁶ Charlotte Whitton to William M. Nickle, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (July 24, 1961)

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

Village, J.H.S. Geggie. Situated just outside of Hull, Wakefield was a small town on the other side of the Ottawa River. Geggie wrote Whitton in the hopes that the village could offer itself as a reception area in the event of an attack.²²⁸ Whitton was increasingly irritated with emergency planning. The expectations of the province and the federal government seemed to continually heap more responsibility onto the city. The mayor vented many of her concerns in her reply to Geggie, complaining that the Army, not long after the letter arrived from Betts, had informed her that, for the purposes of re-entry in the wake of a blast, Ottawa and Hull were to be treated as a single region.²²⁹ This expanded the scope of CD operations in Ottawa, as Hull had been considered a separate entity during earlier phases of planning.

Whitton also confided that she did not understand why these plans were being made when the city still had no idea whether it needed to “get under or get out.”²³⁰ She felt that it was a “completely confused situation,” and that the city was being left in the dark by federal and military planners.²³¹ She added, in memorable language, that under Diefenbaker’s reforms she did not “know where to turn, with civilian provisions falling over military; provincial tumbling over federal... and altogether something near chaos.”²³²

Whitton had some legitimate grievances. Betts’ suggestion to incorporate Lanark into the CCEMO could be seen as a simple attempt to communicate and discuss CD policy with the municipality. However, coming from a senior provincial official, it confused the municipality, which sought a clear definition of its role in emergency plans.

²²⁸ J.H.S. Geggie to Charlotte Whitton, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (September 11, 1961)

²²⁹ Charlotte Whitton to J.H.S. Geggie, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (September 21, 1961)

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

Whitton, in her letter to Nickle, pointed out that she thought it was “entirely premature to propose that we should spread out before we have dug in.”²³³ Whitton did not believe the city was prepared for an attack, and that it was unreasonable to expect it to take on greater responsibility for CD in the region. Better preparations were needed before the city could consider expanding its CD program. These changing expectations made planning difficult.

Whitton also felt that the government held an unclear stance on evacuation and shelters. By 1961, evacuation had been dismissed as official policy, because the risk of fallout had not accounted for.²³⁴ In addition, ICBMs, though few in number, threatened to drastically shorten the grace period required to evacuate a city. Nevertheless, the government continued to suggest that city officials should plan for the mass exodus of their citizens. In the words of R.B Curry, Director of the federal EMO, “voluntary evacuation on the part of citizens” was still expected “should the warning of attack be sufficiently in advance.”²³⁵ Curry’s statement was in tune with federal policy, which still expected that large sections of the public would likely attempt to evacuate into the countryside. Yet Whitton’s belief that the government was not giving clear instruction can be seen in her letter to the Mayor of Wakefield, where she questioned why the city had not been told to “get under or get out”, and in the minutes of a meeting of Ottawa’s Emergency Measures Committee on 6 September 1961.²³⁶

The federal EMO cannot be blamed for Whitton’s confusion in regards to its stance on evacuation. However, the government’s reliance on shelter policy was another

²³³ Charlotte Whitton to William M. Nickle, (July 24, 1961), 2

²³⁴ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 165

²³⁵ R.B. Curry, "Three Times Round", *Civil Defence Canada* vol. 2, no. 7 (January/February 1960), 3

²³⁶ Charlotte Whitton to J.H.S. Geggie, (September 21, 1961); "City-County Emergency Measures Committee Agenda", City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, 1961.

issue entirely. Concerned by the threat of fallout, the federal government advocated the construction of private family shelters. Simultaneously it had constructed several federal shelters meant to house government officials, and ensure a continuity of government after an attack.²³⁷ Fallout shelters would have been of no use to the city in the event of a direct attack, because they were not designed to survive a detonation.²³⁸ This fact was underlined in an article in the *EMO Digest*, by the federal EMO's chief of engineering, Stephen White. Simply titled *Blast Shelters*, the article pointed out that fallout shelters should not be expected to survive a blast, just as "an automobile is rarely criticized for being unable to fly... [or] is a television berated for its inability to dry the laundry."²³⁹ The federal government never claimed that these shelters would protect the public from an atomic blast, but attempted to convince citizens that they could save a substantial number of people outside of the blast zone. Blast shelters, which were designed to survive the detonation of an atomic weapon, were prohibitively expensive, and were never promoted to the public as a reasonable solution.²⁴⁰

Fallout shelters were nevertheless a vital part of planning, for both the city and for the federal government. From the city's perspective, this was only the case because the CCEMO's Interdepartmental Advisory Committee (IAC), responsible for providing the CCEMO with research to inform policy decisions, believed that Ottawa might not be subjected to a direct attack.²⁴¹ The IAC hypothesized that "a direct hit on the City of Detroit would result in the City of Ottawa and the entire County of Carleton being

²³⁷ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 166, 174; Andrew Burtch, "Simple Shelters?", *Canadian Military History* Vol. 20, no. 4 (Autumn 2011), 49-62.

²³⁸ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 172

²³⁹ Stephen White, "Blast Shelters", *EMO National Digest* April 1961, 7

²⁴⁰ "Statement by the Government of Canada on Policy Concerning Evacuation and Shelters" (November/December 1959), 3

²⁴¹ R.F. Walker, A Report on Radioactive Fallout and Blast Effects, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, 1

exposed to radioactive fallout in lethal doses on about 50% of the days in any year based on meteorological conditions.”²⁴² In this scenario, without proper shelters, the populace would have been exposed to harmful doses of radiation.

This caused problems, because many shelters would have had to be built on a private basis, and the public was never receptive to such a costly undertaking.²⁴³ James Allan, a local resident, wrote to the *Citizen* arguing that “a fallout shelter would make nothing more than a good crematorium” and criticized planners for “putting the cart before the horse as far as fallout shelters are concerned.”²⁴⁴ His argument appeared alongside a political cartoon picturing Douglas Harkness, Diefenbaker’s Minister of National Defence, chastising a disarmament protester from the safety of a bomb shelter and accusing the innocent protester of weakening the country’s defence program.²⁴⁵ The message was that the government, desperate to save itself, had constructed large shelters for its own people, and ignored the reasonable alternative of disarmament which had been gaining popularity amongst the public.

The utility of these shelters was not the only problem however, as most members of the public could not afford the cost of building a home shelter. The average cost ran close to \$500 for the materials alone, (approximately \$4000 today) and no tax breaks or public financing existed to persuade home owners. These costs were only made worse by the fact that a shelter could be deemed an improvement by home assessors, driving up the owner’s property tax. While this was a municipal tax, it was based on the Ontario Assessment Act, and required provincial action to be changed, though for its part the

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Davis, *Stages of Emergency*, 83-84

²⁴⁴ James Allan, "Fallout Shelters and Nuclear War", *The Ottawa Citizen*, February 3, 1961, 6

²⁴⁵ See Appendix IV

municipality was reluctant to petition the province to change the tax code.²⁴⁶ On top of all of this, Ottawa's IAC reported that "even with wide public acceptance of a private shelter program, substantial numbers of citizens would remain unprotected."²⁴⁷ Convincing the public to build private shelters was an uphill battle, meaning that the municipality temporarily considered public shelters as a reasonable alternative.

The IAC suggested that the city should survey buildings in the downtown core, and measure what degree of protection they might offer against radiation.²⁴⁸ This information would have given CD officials an idea of what buildings could be used to house public shelters. Municipal officials agreed that more information was required, and assented to such a survey. This would have required training a city official to measure the level of protection offered by buildings, and a substantial amount of time for the completion of a thorough report.²⁴⁹ Whitton contacted Diefenbaker on 23 October 1961. She asked the Prime Minister for access to an EMO study that had already surveyed federal buildings, pointing out that

Ottawa is situated quite differently from almost any other city in the country, by virtue of being the Capital. This would apply not only to Ottawa, but to Greater Ottawa, in respect particularly to one part of Emergency Measures provisions and planning. This is, that such a very large area, comparatively, of the City and metropolitan area, is occupied by federal government buildings, either of direct ownership and operation, or under lease.²⁵⁰

Diefenbaker agreed to provide access to this report but the Prime Minister's assistance meant little because the federal government was opposed to the

²⁴⁶ Don Peacock, "Avoid Centre of City, Nuclear War Warning", *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 15, 1961, 13; "Tax Exemption of Fallout Shelters", *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 26, 1961, 6; Burtch. *Give Me Shelter*, 188

²⁴⁷ R.F. Walker, A Report on Radioactive Fallout and Blast Effects., 1

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Charlotte Whitton to William Nickle. City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (October 23, 1961)

²⁵⁰ Charlotte Whitton to John Diefenbaker. City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (October 23, 1961.)

construction of public shelters. Surveys of public buildings to measure their level of protection against radiation were expensive, and took several years to complete.²⁵¹

Diefenbaker's government had stressed that emergency planning was essential to national survival. Resolved to prepare the country, the federal government had then gone on to reform the organizational structure of emergency departments, and had stressed the importance of private shelters. The significant portion of the public quickly turned against this policy, and stressed that they wanted "communal public shelters paid for through taxation."²⁵² Even those who wished to build a shelter faced obstacles since the municipality itself failed to advocate for tax exemptions, which may have helped convince the public to begin construction.²⁵³ The city's assessment commissioner opposed tax code revisions "holding that fallout shelters could be used as recreation or storage rooms."²⁵⁴ Public shelters seemed to be a reasonable alternative, but with no funding forthcoming, the issue was dropped. Evacuation was no longer a considered a workable policy approach, and no progress seemed possible on the issue of shelters, so the CCEMO remained inactive, waiting for some sort of direction.

Gradually, cracks began to appear in the CCEMO, with Walker's resignation on the 24 October 1961 being the first major sign of trouble. Walker had been unhappy with the city's inaction for some time. In an article in the *Citizen* in September, he called for the "whole-hearted co-operation of every elected representative, city official, and citizens generally" to help ensure the city was

²⁵¹ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 192

²⁵² *Ibid*, 190

²⁵³ "Tax Exemption of Fallout Shelters", *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 26, 1960, 6

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

prepared “to cope with any situation war may bring.”²⁵⁵ In the same article, Walker expressed frustration that the city had yet to decide “whether Ottawa’s people, in the event of an impending air strike, are to duck for cover or run for safety... [and that] the undue emphasis placed on this has done EMO more harm than good. (sic)”²⁵⁶

Whitton’s refusal to move forward without what she interpreted as proper guidance from the federal government had, in Walker’s eyes, resulted in the public being left in danger of total nuclear annihilation.

Believing his departure was the only way to shock the city into action, Walker held a press conference where he announced his resignation. He cited the Mayor’s disinterest and the Emergency Measures Committee’s refusal to listen to his policy recommendations as the major reasons for his departure. He claimed that his only available alternative was “to fight a continuous and losing battle or to sit back and enjoy a sinecure.”²⁵⁷ Walker went on to attack the mayor, claiming that “Meetings... with Dr. Whitton in the chair have become monologue in irrelevancy with time consuming wrangling over petty issues, and little or no consideration of vital and important matters.”²⁵⁸ Moreover, he accused the Mayor of attempting to downgrade “the appointment of co-ordinator to that of a junior official subservient to a committee of department heads.”²⁵⁹ His departure left a void in the city’s emergency

²⁵⁵ W.M. Arnott, "EMO Chief Says City Unprepared For Air Attack", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (September 27, 1961), 3

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ R.F. Walker, Resignation Letter, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-06-01, (October 24, 1961)

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

organization, because the deputy co-ordinator had been taken to hospital following a heart attack the night before.²⁶⁰

The CCEMO had achieved very little in the preceding months, and Whitton's stubborn decision to await further guidance had left Walker with little to do. As the city's coordinator, Walker wanted to see the municipality further develop its emergency planning. Both preparations for evacuation and the construction of shelters were important in his view. He often shared this opinion with the public both through his weekly column, and in CD news articles.²⁶¹ However, as a passionate believer in the value of CD, some of his claims were clouded by his devotion to his views. His function, as outlined in the by-law passed by Whitton, had always been defined as supplementary. None of the duties prescribed by the by-law involved the formulation of policy, and many were administrative in nature. The by-law specifically mentioned that the co-ordinator was "subject to the direction of the chairman of the City-County Organizations... [and] responsible for the implementation of emergency measures policy formulated by the Committee."²⁶² From Whitton's perspective, private shelters were not the answer, and evacuation was no longer advocated by the federal EMO. While she certainly never displayed the same enthusiasm for implementing emergency planning as Walker had, she had not ignored the problem.

The coordinator's resignation proved to be a defining moment for the CCEMO. Walker's criticisms resonated with many city councillors and the few remaining members of the public who advocated for increased emergency planning.

²⁶⁰ Roger Appleton, "EMO Chief Quits", *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 24, 1961, 7

²⁶¹ Peacock, "Avoid Centre of City", 13; R.F. Walker, "Ottawa Possible Target", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (February 17, 1961), 14

²⁶² *Ottawa, By-Laws of the Council of the Corporation of Ottawa*, (Ottawa, 1961); original emphasis

The day after he announced his resignation, the four city council members who sat on the Emergency Measures Committee, Aldermen Ellen Weber, Murray Heit, Kenneth Fogarty, and James McAuley, made a public statement of their support for the coordinator. They reported that they were prepared to leave “the door open for the committee to refuse to accept Major Walker’s resignation.”²⁶³ Whitton told the *Citizen* that “she was ‘not greatly concerned’ with Walker’s resignation and insisted ‘he had a greatly exaggerated view of the importance of his job.’”²⁶⁴ Without a coordinator, Whitton, as acting chair of the Emergency Measures Committee, held an even stronger position in the organization. Yet Alderman Heit, the representative for Gloucester Ward, quickly challenged her by asking that Whitton be removed from her committee post.²⁶⁵ The situation quickly devolved into a political battle, as Heit had defied the mayor’s authority. Heit proposed a vote of confidence, and Whitton “dared the alderman to test his popularity by running against her in the next election.”²⁶⁶ The mayor promised Heit that she would step down as chair of the Emergency Measures Committee if he defeated her.²⁶⁷ Exasperated, one committee member “threw up his hands in horror and took refuge in Shakespeare. ‘This is truly a tale of sound and fury, told by idiots and signifying nothing.’”²⁶⁸

Whitton did attempt to hold the organization together. Without the backing of the city council, she appointed Police Chief Reginald Axcell as temporary Emergency

²⁶³ Roger Appleton, "Four Aldermen Declare Support for EMO Chief", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (October 25, 1961), 1

²⁶⁴ "Controllers Disagree With Mayor on EMO", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (October 25, 1961), 52

²⁶⁵ Roger Appleton, "Heit Wants Mayor to Quit EMO Post", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (October 26, 1961), 1

²⁶⁶ Roger Appleton, "Whitton and Heit Hurl Vote Dares Over EMO Hassle", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (October 28, 1961), 1

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Appleton, "Heit Wants Mayor to Quit EMO Post.", 1

Measures Co-ordinator, informing city officials that they had no say in the matter and that she was notifying them “merely as a courtesy.”²⁶⁹ This was a controversial way to proceed, quite in keeping with Whitton’s personality, which antagonized her opponents further. She claimed her right to do so “under her emergency powers” and that the absence of a co-ordinator for Ottawa was an emergency.²⁷⁰ In addition, she rapidly improvised an emergency plan for Ottawa. Her program called for the creation of several evacuation routes out of the city. Municipal police would direct traffic, and provincial police would guide citizens to safe areas where food, medical aid, and temporary housing would be provided. This approach drew heavily upon Whitton’s previous experiences handling civil defence, and was based on a nine year old plan developed by the Ottawa police during her previous mayoral tenure.²⁷¹

These moves were imperfect solutions. Axcell, already serving as the police chief of a major city, was not meant to replace Walker in the long term. The evacuation plans put forward by Whitton were from another time, and did not take modern developments, such as the development of ICBMs and thermo-nuclear weapons, into account. The CCEMO was on the brink of disintegrating in the face of political bickering, and Whitton was desperate that the organization appear functional. So she had her way, which only drew further criticisms.

Army representatives argued that there would not be enough warning time to evacuate the city. ICBMs had cut response times down to an estimated fifteen minutes, and “With 15 minutes warning... Nobody gets out – everyone stays inside

²⁶⁹ Roger Appleton, "Axcell EMO Chief Over Council Opposition", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 8, 1961),

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²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Roger Appleton, "Ottawa's Disaster Program Unveiled", *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 11, 1961, 1

and dives for the closest shelter.”²⁷² A local resident, Estelle Bernstein, began to circulate a petition calling for Whitton’s removal from the Emergency Measures Committee. The petition declared that “Charlotte Whitton has proven herself incapable and unfit of holding such office. We believe that she has – because of her dictatorial methods and arrogance – hindered and destroyed the proper functions of the Emergency Measures Organization.”²⁷³

None of these criticisms took account of the fact that Whitton had received inconsistent guidance from the federal government. In fact, on 14 November 1961, the results of Tocsin B, the second federal test of Canada’s emergency survival network, showed that the Prime Minister had ‘died’ along with 3 million other Canadians.²⁷⁴ The absurdity of the exercise, coupled with a furious public backlash against it, helped discredit the CD policies of Diefenbaker’s government in the eyes of the public, and showed that annihilation was the likely result of a nuclear war.²⁷⁵ This vindicated the city’s reluctance to back the federal government’s promotion of private shelters, and suggested that the growing responsibilities being placed on the city were meaningless. Whitton’s delays, defensible as they were, had resulted in Walker’s resignation. This caused a political crisis, during which city councillors challenged the mayor’s authority. Whitton’s unilateral efforts, including the appointment of Axcell as coordinator and the implementation of evacuation plans, were a desperate attempt to keep the organization alive and reassert her authority. In effect, the mayor had been caught in an unwinnable situation.

²⁷² "Army Critical of Plan 'No 3 Hours Warning'" *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 13, 1961), 7

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Charles Lynch, "PM Among 'Casualties' As Toll Tops 3-Million", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 14, 1961), 1

²⁷⁵ Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 183-187

The bickering continued and many members of the organization began to question its value. Representatives from the county stated that they were unlikely to attend another meeting, “even if there was one”, and started planning for the creation of their own EMO.²⁷⁶ Despondent, Aldermen Heit and Weber put forward a radical proposal. They suggested that the municipality should contact R.B. Curry, director of the federal EMO, recommending that “the federal government must co-ordinate emergency planning for the whole Ottawa area.”²⁷⁷ Such a proposal had never been contemplated before, because the government’s policy was that emergency planning was the responsibility of the province and individual municipalities.²⁷⁸ Whitton, for her part, would not permit the aldermen to continue undermining her authority as mayor and chair of the committee. Instead, she announced that the CCEMO would no longer meet. She blamed the organization’s death on the two aldermen and Walker, and claimed that the Heit-Weber resolution was “beating the carcass of a horse so dead it crawled with maggots.”²⁷⁹ Her official reasoning was that the resolution should have been directed towards the province first, and that by failing to do so, the city was offering a direct insult to provincial officials.²⁸⁰

The Heit-Weber resolution was dramatically passed in a heated city council meeting on 20 November 1961, against Whitton’s wishes.²⁸¹ A meeting with Curry

²⁷⁶ Roger Appleton, "Rows Threaten to End Ottawa-Carleton EMO", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 15, 1961), 1; "Eastview Reeve Warns County May Quit EMO", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 16, 1961), 7

²⁷⁷ Roger Appleton, "Aldermen Seeking EMO Under Federal Control", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 16, 1961), 7

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ Roger Appleton, "Mayor Claims Aldermen 'Murdering City EMO'", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 17, 1961), 3

²⁸⁰ Roger Appleton, "Federal EMO Help Sought By Alderman", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 21, 1961); Tom Kerr, "Council 'Slaps' Mayor, Calls in Federal EMO", *The Ottawa Journal*, November 21, 1961, 3

²⁸¹ Appleton, "Federal EMO Help Sought By Alderman"; Kerr, "Council 'Slaps' Mayor, Calls in Federal EMO", 3

was arranged for mid-December. He called for Ottawa to establish a fulltime staff for Ottawa's EMO, and stressed "that it was of the utmost importance to have the tightest co-ordination between all levels of EMO because of Ottawa's unique position as centre of government."²⁸² Aldermen Heit attempted to drive his agenda onward, and suggested that the both provincial and federal representatives should become permanent members of the CCEMO. This proposal was turned down by the Emergency Measures Committee, which instead requested that senior delegates from the federal EMO be provided when needed.²⁸³

In the months that followed, the controversy surrounding the CCEMO slowly died away. The organization never really recovered. A new co-ordinator was not named until 17 March 1962. Even then his appointment was on a six month provisional basis.²⁸⁴ The organization was relatively quiet over the course of 1962. Despite the army's earlier dismissal of Whitton's proposed civil defence plans, they remained in place.²⁸⁵ One of the tensest moments of the Cold War took place not long after the political scuffle, with the world teetering on the nuclear edge from 16-28 October 1962. The Soviet Union attempted to station missiles in Cuba, in response to American efforts to destabilize the island nation's communist regime and the presence of American missiles in Turkey.²⁸⁶ The crisis provided the world with "a glimpse of a future no one wanted: of a conflict beyond restraint, reason, and the likelihood of

²⁸² Tom Kerr, "Strong EMO Chief For Ottawa Urged", *The Ottawa Journal*, (December 16, 1961), 3

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ "Jenkins Named To Head EMO", *The Ottawa Journal*, (March 17, 1962), 3

²⁸⁵ "Planning Evacuation Routes", *The Ottawa Journal*, (October 4, 1962), 3; "Evacuation Problem in Gloucester", *The Ottawa Journal*, (December 7, 1962), 19

²⁸⁶ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 72-78; Maloney, *Learning to Love the Bomb*, 275; Note: For more on Canada's involvement with the crisis, see Roger Sarty, "The Interplay of Defence and Foreign Policy", In *Canada Among Nations 2008: 100 Years of Canadian Foreign Policy*, edited by Robert Bothwell and Jean Daudelin, (Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 133-134, and Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, 166-169

survival.”²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, any substantial interest in Ottawa’s civil defence program had already died out in one last controversial flame. Leading up to the next municipal election, in an article discussing the major issues of the proceeding two years, the *Citizen* sardonically reported that “Even the Cuban crisis didn’t revive” interest in the city’s EMO.²⁸⁸

Tenacious, stubborn, and outspoken, Whitton had always polarized opinion. This was the case when she managed Ottawa’s CD program. From 1960 to 1962, she had overseen the creation of the CCEMO, the largest step ever taken towards preparing the city for a nuclear attack. However, with the abandonment of evacuation policy, and the public’s rejection of shelter policy, the organization was left without direction. In response, Whitton delayed, just as Nelms had before her. This decision, coupled with her overbearing personality, drove Walker to resign. This in turn spawned a political crisis that effectively stymied Ottawa’s civil defence efforts. While the municipality had ultimately dealt the final blow to the city’s CD efforts, the program’s collapse took place inside of a context of ambiguous federal leadership and public apathy. Ottawa had attempted to balance the growing expectations of the province and the federal government, against the failure of shelter policy. In the end, this imbalance saw the city’s CD organization collapse into irrelevancy.

²⁸⁷ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 78

²⁸⁸ Roger Appleton, "Election Campaigns Based on Personalities", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 8, 1962), 17

Conclusion

In 1951, Grenville Goodwin, Whitton's predecessor as mayor of Ottawa, had suggested that the city might consider digging bomb shelters out of the Gatineau Hills, or adapting new sewer lines to incorporate shelter spaces.²⁸⁹ These plans never saw the light of day. Yet the threat of war between two ideologically driven superpowers was ever present, and the specter of rapidly increasing nuclear stockpiles and detonation yields loomed over Ottawans. The federal government urged the provinces and the municipalities to prepare for nuclear war. Community groups and private citizens, fearful of the consequences of inaction, demanded that the municipality act. Sandwiched between these two groups, the City of Ottawa was forced to weigh and balance public concerns and federal expectations against the fiscal responsibilities of managing an urban metropolis, all the while attempting to do its best to ensure the safety of its citizens.

Throughout the Cold War, the technological capabilities of both the United States and the Soviet Union developed rapidly. Early on, weapons were only deliverable via long range bomber, and carried relatively small detonation yields. Policy makers perceived these weapons as similar to the explosives used throughout the Second World War. Early CD planning was therefore structured on the idea of self-help, where local communities, through comprehensive planning and recruitment, would ensure their own safety. Self-help drew heavily from the example of war time Britain, and was predicated on the belief that firefighting, first aid, and rescue operations would save lives in the aftermath of a detonation.

Charlotte Whitton was in office for just over four years, from 1951 to 1956, before taking a break from municipal politics. During her first period as mayor, she set the stage

²⁸⁹ Andrew Burtch, *"Don't he look funny?" Civil Defence in Ottawa, 1950-1959*, 7

for Ottawa's early CD efforts. Petitioned by the federal government to prepare the city for its own defence, Whitton turned to municipal departments to create draft plans of action. With little federal money forthcoming, she refused to proceed with the recruitment of volunteers, and pursued a 'behind closed doors' approach to CD planning. This decision drew criticism from both the federal government and the public. Civil Defence Canada, under the leadership of Frank Worthington, believed that Ottawa was shirking its responsibilities.²⁹⁰ Meanwhile, community groups in Ottawa, such as the IODE and the OLCW, demanded that more be done.

Whitton never put on any of the public displays of preparedness, such as rescue drills, or mock evacuations, that would have helped allay the public's concerns. However, she did promote the drafting of plans for the defence of the city. Whitton believed this to be the best possible course of action, as the federal government was not providing adequate financial support, partially because of Ontario's disinterest in the program. Her decision ensured that the city would have plans to implement if the federal government began to assist the municipality more substantially. Furthermore, in the event of an emergency, the city would have a rough guideline on how to react. This approach was a balanced response to the stated expectations of the federal government, and to calls for action from sections of the public.

The government's approach to CD gradually evolved. Initially focused on the basic principle of self-help, Civil Defence Canada slowly took up the evacuation model. However, following the development of the hydrogen bomb, both the public and the government realized that Canada's survival as a nation was at stake. Carrying detonation yields hundreds of times more powerful than the atom bombs that had preceded them, H-

²⁹⁰ "'False' Worthington Claims Irk City Civil Defence Boss", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (April 22, 1952), 3

bombs were capable of wiping entire cities off the face of the earth. In addition, the Soviet Union's development of the ICBM shortened reaction times, and made the evacuation of major urban centers impossible. Following their detonation, fallout would be spread far and wide, bathing towns many miles from the blast in lethal doses of radiation. The new threat posed by these weapons forced the government, under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, to adopt a more thorough 'national survival' approach to CD. This policy called for an increased military role in civil defence, and largely did away with the idea that communities could save themselves.

George Nelms sat at the helm of the Municipality of Ottawa during this transition. At the beginning of his mayoral tenure, he tentatively arranged for the formation of Ottawa's own civil defence organization. This decision was made in the context of the federal government's increased financial commitment, as well as renewed calls from the public for action. However, the announcement of Diefenbaker's 'national survival' approach to CD prevented Nelms from going forward. Unsure where this new policy would take the federal government, he stepped back, fearful that the organization he had sought to create would be dead on arrival. The military's increased presence in CD, for a time, seemed to free the municipality from its responsibilities. In addition, the very public resignation of George Hatton, Worthington's temporary replacement as the head of Civil Defence Canada, made Nelms doubt the government's seriousness. His reluctance to act was reasonable. He feared devoting resources to a program he had yet to fully understand. By the end of Nelms' time in office, these questions had been answered, and Ottawa allocated a portion of its budget to form its own Emergency Measures Organization and appoint Buck Walker as CD Co-ordinator.

Over four years, Nelms had seen sections of the public attack him for his inaction and skepticism. Nonetheless, his efforts had always been well intentioned, and at no point did he harbor ill will towards the federal government. He had simply wanted to ensure that the city would establish an organization in tune with federal policy, and which would best serve the citizens of Ottawa. While it may have appeared that the mayor had tuned out his public critics, he was well aware that they expected him to act, and by the end of his time in office, he did.

Nelms retired from municipal politics in 1960, and in the following election Charlotte Whitton returned as the mayor of Ottawa. Shortly after her re-election, she worked with the City Council to form the CCEMO, and appointed Buck Walker as the organization's co-ordinator. By this time, the federal government had done away with its evacuation policy, and had begun to advocate for private shelters. This policy was not well received, and as a result the CCEMO remained unclear on how much it could actually do. In addition, sections of the public had grown apathetic towards CD, and had begun to advocate for disarmament in the face of growing nuclear stockpiles and detonation yields. These same threats drove the federal government and the province to pressure the city into expanding its responsibilities. Walker resigned, tired of the delays caused by these deliberations, sparking a political crisis which was made worse by the mayor's blunt methods. The city's commitment to the organization would fade away in the following years, as public support had dried up. Municipal politics had played a prominent role in the CCEMO's demise; however, the federal government's failed shelter policy and the public's disinterest should not be disregarded as contributing factors.

Preparing for Armageddon was a daunting prospect. Sections of the public, alongside the federal government, often pressed the municipality for immediate results. In the words of a local school supervisor, the public did not want the right answers, because “nobody knows them. We want orders. We’ll follow them gladly.”²⁹¹ This is unsurprising, as the destructive potential of nuclear weapons represented a terrifying danger. The nature of the threat posed by these weapons was new, and imaginations ran wild when picturing their impact upon society. For this reason both the public, and the federal government, expected a response. The city did its best to manage these demands, and promoted emergency planning whenever proper guidance and financial assistance was provided. While political bickering between city officials effectively put an end to the program, public apathy and a slow but steady decrease in funding, made CD irrelevant by 1962.²⁹² As the military became more involved with CD, the municipality and the CCEMO became less important, and the organization’s rapid loss of stature represented little more than a ripple in a pond. The City of Ottawa attempted to balance the expectations of its citizens and the federal government, and in the end balance tipped over into imbalance and CD came crashing down.

²⁹¹ Starr Cote, "Lack of Emergency Scheme For Children Top Problem", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (November 17, 1961), 3

²⁹² Burtch, *Give Me Shelter*, 4

Appendix I



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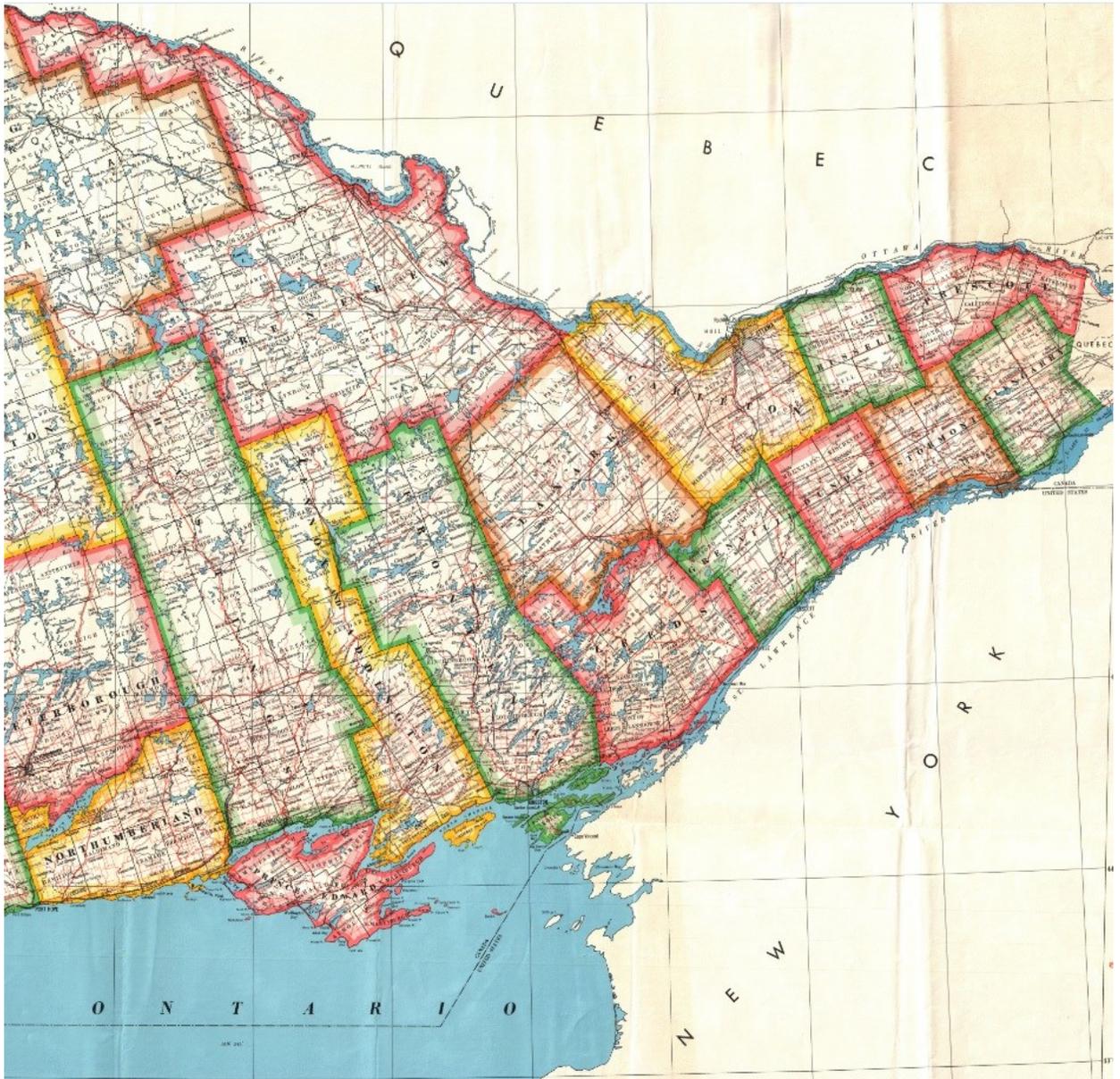
Canada Emergency Measures Organization, *Photo Illustrating Possible Effects of an Atomic Explosion in Ottawa*, Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada, Box SC/0023 (2000611034), MIKAN No. 4717351



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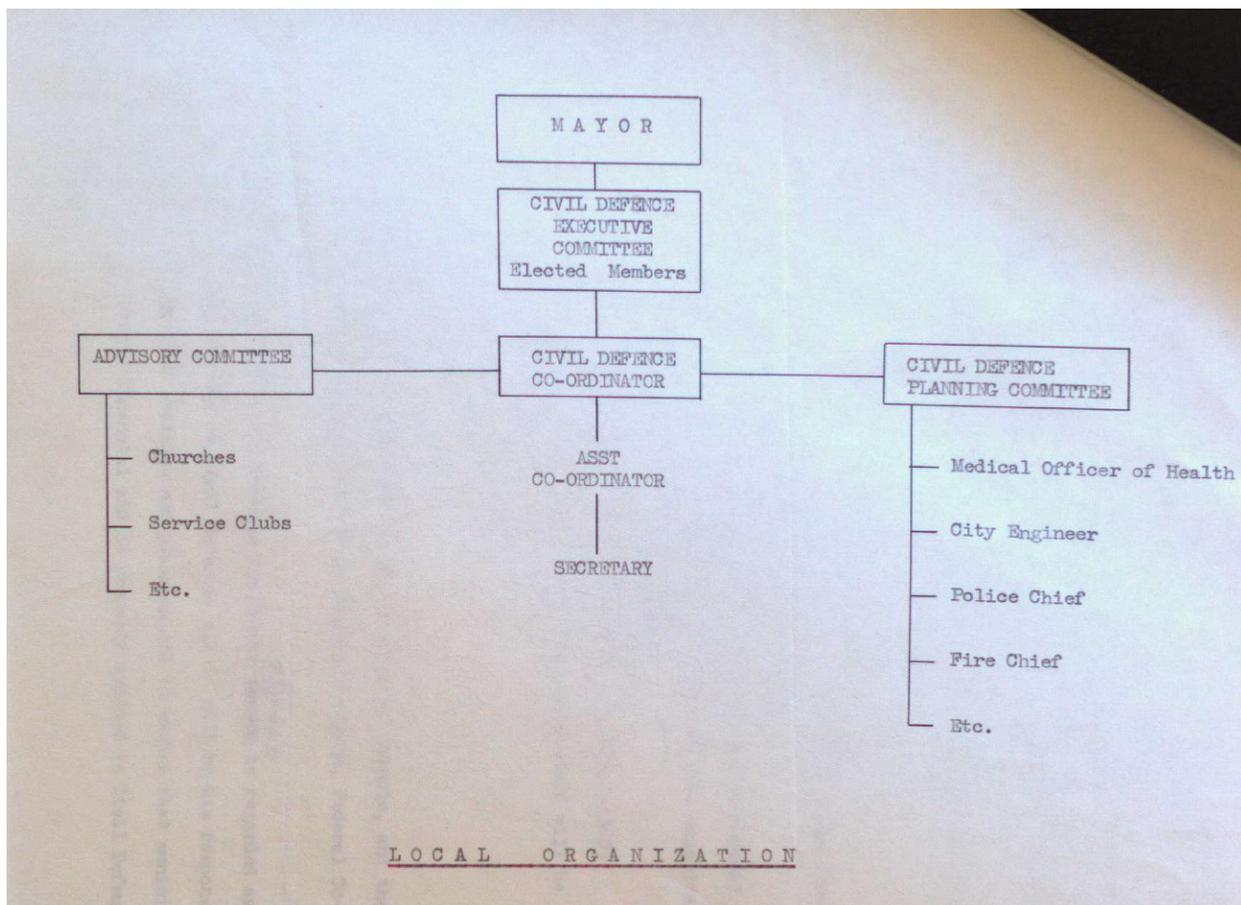
Canada Emergency Measures Organization, *Photo Illustrating Possible Effects of an Atomic Explosion in Ottawa*, Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada, Box SC/0023 (2000611034), MIKAN No. 4717353

Appendix II



William Barnard, and Ontario. Dept. of Lands and Forests, "The Southern Part of the Province of Ontario", Carleton Library, G3461.F7 1957.05 , 1957

Appendix III



Ottawa Civil Defence, City of Ottawa Archives, RG 007-05-01, (Ottawa)

Appendix IV



The Ottawa Citizen. "Ban the Bomb." Cartoon. February 3, 1961.

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