

## War and Economic Expansion 1940-1950

Edmonton's economic recovery from the Depression began with World War Two. Unlike World War One, World War Two had a positive impact on Edmonton's economy because of the construction of the Alaska Highway, the Northwest Staging Route, Air Commonwealth training schools, and war industries such as Aircraft Repair Ltd. Another difference was that the federal and provincial governments had planned an orderly transition to peace, thus avoiding the postwar recession that had occurred in the early 1920s.

World War Two, despite its economic benefits, also imposed significant restrictions on the marketplace. The Edmonton Real Estate Association along with the real estate industry nationally became increasingly concerned about these wartime controls. The federal government's decision to prevent real estate agents charging a commission for selling land to veterans under the Veterans' Land Act was the final straw that prompted the creation of a national organization. The 1940s were also important because of the creation of the Alberta Real Estate Association (AREA).

The boom begun by the war was sustained by oil discoveries at Leduc in 1947. The oil boom began on February 13 at four o'clock when Leduc No. 1 blew in.

The drilling of other wells quickly followed. In 1951 more than three hundred wells were drilled.

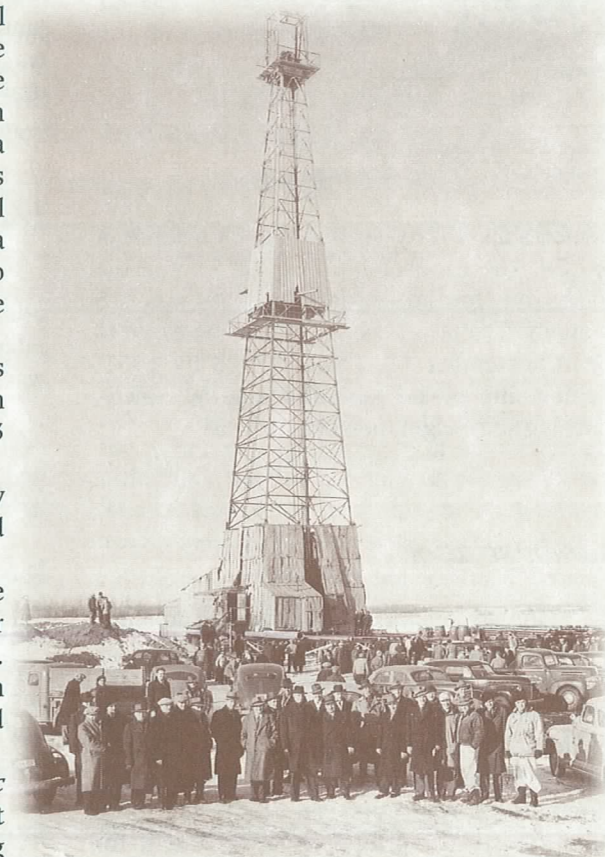
Housing for the oil workers became desperate. Edmonton, Leduc, and Calmar were able to partially fill the need. Construction of the future Town of Devon began during the winter of 1947-1948 and provided more housing.

In Eric Hanson's book *Dynamic Decade*, the Leduc discovery was important because it stimulated investment in finding other reserves. It made Edmonton a refining

and petrochemical centre and the main operations base for oil-industry contractors. As the scale of the industry grew in size so did the economic benefits for Edmonton.

A new generation of Edmonton real estate agents arrived in the mid-1940s and early 1950s. Many were either the sons of established Edmonton real estate agents or were people attracted to the city because of the economic opportunities generated by the development of the oil industry. Some war veterans who helped reconstruct the Edmonton real estate industry were Norm Winterburn, Stan Melton, Max Kaplan, and Don Spencer.

The Edmonton Real Estate Association began the Second World War with a



*Imperial Oil Leduc number one well was completed on February 13, 1947. This event was witnessed by government and company officials, media people, and citizens of Edmonton, all anxious to be part of the most important event in the post war history of Edmonton.*

(City of Edmonton Archives, EA-273-79)

*The Edmonton Municipal Airport in 1944 was a busy place because of its role in the war effort. It was the location of Air Commonwealth Training Program facilities and war time industry.*  
(City of Edmonton Archives, BL 725/5)



*Aircraft Repair Ltd. was one of the industries located at the municipal airport.*  
(City of Edmonton Archives, EA-10-3181.47.6)

membership of forty-six and a bank balance of \$67.58. The membership fee was \$1 and the honorarium for the secretary treasurer was \$15 annually. The membership fee was increased to \$2 in September 1943 and to \$25 by 1951. Membership in the Association grew slowly, reaching sixty-eight members in 1951.

### *Administration*

Standing committees continued to do much of the Association's work. The Legislative Committee worked to revise regulations for licence applications. The committee wanted the applications to be checked more carefully on who could be licensed as a real estate agent. Suggestions for revisions to the act were submitted to the provincial government for approval.

The Association continued to operate out of the offices of its members but in 1941 it began to acquire office equipment. In November the secretary asked for a steel filing cabinet with lock and key for keeping the Association's books, files, and supplies. At the January 23, 1942, executive meeting J. Sherwin was authorized to purchase a steel three-drawer filing cabinet for \$10.

### *Wartime regulations*

Government intervention in the market place was the new issue faced by the Edmonton Real Estate Association during the war.

Regulations included gas rationing, rental controls, housing shortages, land acquisition, and the administration of the Veterans' Land Act.

These regulations brought to a head a long-standing concern of the industry. As early as 1919 the real estate community had objected to being prevented from charging commissions on land sold to veterans. During the Depression Edmonton real estate agents had also objected to being excluded from the process of selling city-owned land.

The first indication for Edmonton real estate agents that wartime regulations would affect their business was when the Vancouver

and Calgary Real Estate Boards asked for help to get a better classification for real estate agents. The way they were classified would determine the amount of gas they could get under the rationing system then in place. Both Boards argued that they needed extra to continue their business activities.

Rent controls were a more significant problem for real estate agents. They were part of a comprehensive program to control inflation. Under these regulations a landlord could not raise the rent without the consent of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. Raising the rent was permitted when there was a substantial increase in taxes, substantial expense for improvements to the property, or wear and tear on the property.

In Edmonton the maximum rental charge was what was in effect on January 2, 1941. If the property was not rented at that time then the last rental fee in effect in 1940 would become effective. The regulations also prevented a landlord from reducing facilities or giving a tenant notice to vacate except on grounds set out in the regulations.

Initially, these regulations were not a great concern to the members of the Association since it was believed that they would not affect the rental situation in Edmonton. At a meeting of the Edmonton Real Estate Association in March 1942, George Bryan, the rental control administrator for Alberta, advised the members that these regulations were designed to "prevent the evils of inflation and unfair advantage being taken on tenants, particularly in areas where due to the presence of members of the armed forces there was a housing shortage."

In August 1942, Dominion Rentals Commissioner Cyril DeMara appealed to the Association for citizens with rooms available to charge the prevailing rental rates for the district. Since many real estate agents depended on rental income, these regulations became a source of concern.

The attitude of the Association changed drastically on December 10, 1942, when the government announced new regulations that required a tenant of a home that had been sold to be given at least twelve months' notice to vacate by the new owner. The new owner was required to prove that the property was needed for his or her own residence when the tenant left. The new regulations also clarified the position of tenants in homes that were not



sold. Under the old regulations, landlords could evict tenants on three months' notice by declaring that they needed the accommodation for themselves, a relative, or an employee. After December 10, a tenant could be evicted on three months' notice only if the home was needed as the landlord's principal residence. After December 6, 1942, the rental fee of any housing not previously rented was based on the October 11, 1941, fee as the going rate.

The Association called a meeting for December 12. Stuart Darroch told the press that many real estate agents might go out of business as a result of the new regulations. He pointed to three sales that had been cancelled because of the new regulations. One of the properties was a \$6,000 home in the west end. The other deals involved property in Jasper Place. A committee chaired by Andy Whyte took the Association's protest to Ottawa.

The rental controls were part of the larger problem of a housing shortage caused by no new construction during the Depression and by the influx of people to work in the war-related industries. One of the largest employers was Aircraft Repair Ltd. The plant at the municipal airport employed 500 people.

Action on the housing shortage issue by the Association began in May of 1943 following a presentation by A. J. Brown of W. H. Clark Co. and Dr. G. M. Little, City of Edmonton medical health officer. Brown discussed the extent of the housing shortage while Dr. Little explained the health implications of the situation. He said that families of four or five were living in one room in Edmonton apartments or rooming houses.

*Sewer construction is shown here in 1946. Although many people feared a depression after World War II, the economy actually expanded.*

(City of Edmonton Archives, EA-273-82)

Following their presentation a resolution was passed asking the provincial government to urge the lending institutions to make loans available to Edmonton citizens to encourage new home building. If necessary the federal government might set aside the necessary funds under the National Housing Act to enable the lending institution to operate in Alberta.

The Association also supported efforts by the City of Edmonton to obtain wartime housing. Wartime Housing Ltd. was a Crown corporation with a nationwide mandate to provide housing for workers in war-related industries. Edmonton's application was finally successful and in June 1943, the sod was turned for the construction of these homes in the Ritchie district in south Edmonton. The homes erected under the project were four-, five-, and six-room dwellings.

Another concern involved land transactions for veterans. Clause 33 of the Veterans' Land Act eliminated commissions for real estate agents who sold land to veterans. This provision was designed to

### Canadian Real Estate Association

In the absence of any national real estate organization, real estate agents in many Canadian cities before 1943 participated in the activities of the National Real Estate Association, an American-based organization established in 1892.

The 1913 convention of this organization was held in Winnipeg where a code of ethics was adopted.

Members of the Edmonton Real Estate Association attended a meeting on the founding of the Canadian Association of Real Estate Boards, now known as the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) in January 1943. Delegates from various parts of Canada attended the meeting held in Ottawa. Andy Whyte and Stuart Darroch represented the Edmonton Real Estate Association as well as the real estate boards in Medicine Hat, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Calgary.

Andy Whyte was particularly enthusiastic about this first step on the national level towards organized real estate. In an article in *The Canadian Realtor* published twenty-five years later, Whyte recalled that: "to own one's own home [was] a growing desire and real active real estate boards should be on the alert to sense the trend [in building styles] and layout of districts and many other features which we have not, up to the moment, thought of."

A joint meeting followed between these delegates and the Ontario group, and CREA was officially created shortly thereafter. At the founding meeting, Andy Whyte was elected to be the first regional vice-president for the West, which in 1943 included all the territory west of Thunder Bay.

With Edmonton's membership in CREA it could now make official use of various terms and logos. The terms REALTOR and MLS® and their logos are subject to strict guidelines on their use. The term REALTOR refers to real estate professionals in Canada who are members of the Canadian Real Estate Association and The National Association of



Downtown Edmonton in 1947 shows the new Canadian National Railways Station, and Queen's Avenue School, which had been built before World War One. (City of Edmonton Archives, EA-273-83)

facilitate their return to civilian life by reducing the cost of their land purchases. From the point of view of the real estate industry, this provision was another attempt to exclude real estate agents from full participation in the economy.

One success in their role as brokers at a time of government control came in the acquisition of land for Namao airport. In July 1943 the Association was asked for the names of two individuals who could provide an independent evaluation of the land to be acquired for the construction of the airport.



Housing constructed during World War Two by the federal government used standard plans.

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, BL 720)

Realtors in the United States. They subscribe to a high standard of professional service and to a strict Code of Ethics. The term is not a synonym for broker/agent or salesperson or for any other real estate professional calling. Members in Canada are licensed by the Canadian Real Estate Association to use the REALTOR marks in connection with themselves and their industry.

Local boards were discouraged from admitting people who were not engaged in the real estate business. The real estate business includes real estate brokerage, property management, mortgage financing, real estate appraising, land development, and building.

REALTOR and MLS® are registered trademarks licensed for use by REALTORS. Strict guidelines on their design and presentation highlight their status, significance, and special meaning to the public.

Edmonton hosted its first CREA convention in 1955. One of the significant developments at the 1955 conference was the founding of the Canadian Institute of Realtors (CIR). The charter members of the organization from Edmonton were Stan Melton, Bob Grierson, Don Spencer, Jack Weber and Norm Winterburn.

### Alberta Real Estate Association

Prior to AREA a provincial real estate association existed in Alberta. It was

established during the pre-World War One boom. Little information is available on its organization, membership, or activities. All that is known is that it survived through to the mid-1920s and was based in Calgary.

In the early 1920s some Alberta real estate agents and salesmen were part of the Inter-State Realty Association, which included the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, and the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. Its main objective was the passage of legislation providing for the licensing and bonding of real estate salesmen.

Interest in re-establishing a provincial association was evident during the 1930s. In March 1931, Frank Lorimer on behalf of the Edmonton Real Estate Association met with the Calgary Real Estate Board where he conveyed his hope of forming a provincial association. In October 1939, Sam Ferris in his presidential address suggested making arrangements for a provincial meeting. In February 1940, a committee was appointed to plan a convention for the spring. The meeting never took place.

The establishment of AREA began at a meeting held at the Buffalo Hotel in Red Deer on June 19, 1946. Andy Whyte organized it. The Edmonton delegation consisted of Andy Whyte, J. C. Kenwood, president of the Edmonton Real Estate Association, J. Sherwin, Mark Cummings, Stuart Darroch, Sam Ferris, Sid Lawrie, and Luke Winterburn.

At the meeting, Andy Whyte reviewed the first attempt before World War One to establish





Meeting of the ladies section of the Canadian Real Estate Association at the Hillcrest Country Club, September 21, 1955. (Edmonton Real Estate Board)

a provincial real estate association. Whyte then called for opinions from the delegates on the need for a provincial real estate board. The Edmonton delegation was unanimous in its support. Sam Ferris thought that real estate agents and sales staff should be organized as chartered accountants, doctors, dentists, and lawyers are and that the provincial organization be linked with CREA. Kenwood thought that the industry through this organization could help the provincial government draft legislation for the mutual benefit of real estate agents and the general public.

Given the unanimous support for an organization, the meeting moved on to the work of creating AREA. This work involved dividing the province for organizational purposes, setting membership fees, and writing a constitution. It was agreed that Edmonton would organize the territory north of Didsbury. The issues of fees was to be resolved by the board of directors, who were to be elected at the next meeting.

Mark Cummings introduced a draft of a constitution that included a code of ethics based on the Ontario Provincial Real Estate Board and the Ontario Licensing Act. He continued his work as chairman of the

Constitution, Bylaws and Code of Ethics Committee.

With the success of this planning meeting, they decided to call a general meeting for all licensed real estate agents and salesmen of the Province of Alberta for September 7, 1946, in Red Deer.

The reasons for creating an organization as outlined by Whyte remained consistent with those defined as early as 1909 and 1926. These reasons were:

1. To assist in desirable legislation affecting real estate;
2. To raise and unify the standard of the real estate profession;
3. To cultivate acquaintanceship and good will among the real estate brokers of the province;
4. To sponsor fair dealings in real estate transactions;
5. To acquaint the public with the prevailing high ethics of the real estate profession;
6. To increase confidence and security for the investor of Alberta real estate both urban and rural in their transactions with bona fide brokers.

The meeting also elected officers for the new Association. The executive consisted of a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary-

treasurer, and five directors. The nominating committee recommended Andy Whyte for president but he declined in favour of Kenneth Lyle. In recognition of Whyte's contribution to organized real estate he was nominated for the position of honorary president, which he accepted. (Whyte would remain active in the Association until he was ninety-four, serving on a variety of committees.) Other Edmontonians elected to the first executive were Lou Weber, who served as vice-president, Mark Cummings, Stuart Darroch, and Sam Ferris, all of whom served as directors.

In addition to Edmonton real estate agents serving on the executive, Tom McGee also served on the interim Constitution, Bylaws and Code of Ethics Committee chaired by Mark Cummings.

One of the final acts of the meeting was to set the dues at \$2 per year, which were collected immediately by Sam Ferris and turned over to the new secretary-treasurer, Howard Kelly.

The newly elected executive of AREA first met at the Hotel Macdonald on November 1, 1946. A uniform commission schedule for the province was discussed. The Edmonton Real Estate Association and the Calgary Real Estate Board were to be approached on conforming with AREA's schedule. Lou Weber also suggested a membership drive and he volunteered to write a letter to all licensed salesman and agents in the Edmonton area encouraging them to join.

Edmonton real estate agents also contributed to the second general meeting of AREA. Mark Cummings spoke on the constitution and bylaws prepared by his committee. Stuart Darroch, successor to Andy Whyte as the regional vice-president of CREA, discussed the history of real estate boards and encouraged Albertans to participate in the national association. CREA complimented him on his role as their representative by sending him a telegram: "congratulating the real estate men of the West for their speedy advances."

Lou Weber then presented an interim commission schedule, which was approved after revisions were suggested from the floor. Andy Whyte reported on the success that the Association had achieved via the Legislative Committee on revising the new Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act. Whyte reported to the meeting: "that the fullest Government Co-

operation was being given to the REALTORS, [which was in turn] soliciting the REALTORS co-operation . . . to bring in this new act."

Other Edmonton representatives at this meeting introduced issues that reflected local interest in national concerns. Luke Winterburn suggested that AREA should write to Mr. Donald Gordon for immediate relief on rent controls. The president noted that there was a letter on file from CREA stating that they had a committee working with Ottawa and asking them not to make any individual appeal at this time.

At subsequent meetings of the Association during the 1940s, new listing forms were prepared based on the forms then in use in Calgary and Edmonton. The Association continued to strengthen its links to CREA by appointing Andy Whyte to the board of CREA to represent AREA.

The participation of Edmonton real estate agents in AREA did carry with it certain hazards. At one meeting Stuart Darroch presented a motion resolving that: "Premier Manning and the Minister of Public Works be informed of the most appalling condition of the highway between Edmonton and Red Deer and that the Minister of Public Works be instructed to take immediate action to correct this situation and that tourists be warned of the condition of the road in the meantime." The motion was lost.

The first annual convention of the Alberta Real Estate Association was held in Calgary in 1947. (Edmonton Real Estate Board)



1st Annual Convention Alberta Real Estate Association, Palliser Hotel, Calgary, Oct. 3rd 1947

PHOTO COURTESY OF AREA

Edmonton hosted its first AREA conference on September 24, 1948. At this meeting Sam Ferris was elected president and Andy Whyte honorary president. Sid Lawrie

was elected secretary-treasurer and Norm Winterburn was director.

The AREA conference had presentations on the national Housing Act; Fred Scott spoke on legal points. The convention included a reception followed

by a banquet at the Hotel Macdonald.

The total cost of the convention was \$616.33. This sum included \$497.55 for the banquet. Sundry expenses for printing of tickets and programmes were \$78.78, and Fred Scott's expenses and his fee to attend the conference totalled \$60.

By 1946 Edmonton had 147 licensed real estate agents as members of AREA — the

largest number from any community. In 1955 Edmonton still had the largest contingent in AREA, with 162 members out of a total membership of 439. In 1956 Edmontonians made up 211 of the membership total of 515.

The Edmonton Real Estate Association during the 1940s shifted from simply surviving to aggressively pursuing a number of objectives. It participated in the formation of CREA and AREA. It also helped the effort to oppose the clause in the Veterans' Land Act which prevented the charging of commissions. It also took an interest in the wartime housing problems of Edmontonians. Housing had become a problem during the Second World War because of the lack of new construction during the Depression, restrictions on new house construction, and the influx of workers and military personnel involved in the war effort.

Despite the economic recovery of the 1940s which was continued after the War by the discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947, the membership remained small. Organized real estate, however, was poised for a spectacular period of growth as the extent of the Leduc discovery became known in the 1950s.



*Stony Plain Road and 149 Street in 1948: 149 Street was the boundary between Edmonton and Jasper Place prior to annexation in 1964.*  
(City of Edmonton Archives, EA-10-166)



*In 1948, the Alberta Real Estate Association Conference was held on September 24 at Hotel MacDonald.*  
(Edmonton Real Estate Board)

## A Golden Age for Edmonton Real Estate 1951-1981

**I**n 1951 Edmonton entered a golden age of spectacular growth, unprecedented in its history. A population explosion, a new civic centre, new subdivisions, and new suburbs transformed this city and the metropolitan area. Edmonton became a major centre for the petrochemical industry and expanded its traditional role as a government, educational, and transportation centre. Expectations since the early 1880s that a great city would be built on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River were realized.

Edmonton's expansion was reflected in the rapid growth of the real estate industry and substantial changes in its organization. The Edmonton Real Estate Association was replaced by an entirely new organization. The Edmonton Real Estate Board Co-operative listing Bureau, established in 1952, dramatically increased the services offered to its members. It established permanent offices to carry out its expanded role within the city of Edmonton and the province.

### *Edmonton in the golden age*

The economic expansion of the golden age was partly due to ongoing oil exploration and development. This discovery phase reached its peak in 1952 when 551 wells were drilled. The last major discovery of a conventional source of oil during this era was the Pembina field, located 85 miles (137 kilometres) southwest of Edmonton. The first large-scale efforts to develop the oil sands in the Fort McMurray area began in 1964 with the construction of the Great Canadian Oil Sands plant. It went into production in 1967.

Added to the direct economic benefits of the oil boom were increased construction and expanded educational facilities. Student enrolment increased at the University of

Alberta and its infrastructure grew. New additions to the campus included the Henry Marshall Tory Building (1966), which was named after the first president of this institution.

The Northern Alberta Institution of Technology (NAIT) opened in 1963. NAIT's courses were designed to train students in practical ways that were directly applicable to the job market.

New provincial government services and jobs also contributed to Edmonton's booming

*The postwar boom transformed downtown Edmonton. The new buildings in this 1967 photograph include the CN Tower, City Hall, and the Centennial Library.*

(Provincial Archives of Alberta, J 97/2)

