

P005 Elmer Sopha fonds
1962-1981
25.5 cm of textual documents

Biographical sketch: Elmer Walter Sopha was born to Willard and Ethel Sopha in Cobalt, Ontario on April 18, 1924. He was one of nine children in his family that included: Carlyle, Lola, Beryl, Duncan, Thelma, Edna, Iris and Haig. While Sopha was on leave from service in the Royal Canadian Navy, he married Phyllis Edith St. Denis on January 31, 1945 at Cobalt. Together, they had four children: Denise, Lisa, Holly, and Mark.

Following his service in the Royal Canadian Navy, he studied law, and graduated from the University of Toronto Law School in 1953. He was called to the bar in 1955, and by 1964, Sopha became a member of Queen's Counsel. As a lawyer, Sopha gained a reputation for being cunning and aggressive. From 1971-1975, he was also a Member of the Governing Body of the Law Society of Upper Canada. His oratorical skills and his persuasiveness were attributes that were an advantage in his political career. From 1959 to 1971, Sopha served three terms as the Liberal Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for the Sudbury riding at the Ontario Legislature. He was dubbed "The Northern Gadfly" by the media in Southern Ontario, because of his commitment to the development of the North. Sopha also acted as the Official Opposition critic of the Ministry of the Attorney-General, and he was the Liberal Party spokesperson on constitutional affairs. Following his term as MPP, Sopha returned to his law career, and travelled extensively. Elmer Sopha died suddenly on January 4, 1982 at the age of 57 years, while vacationing in Phoenix, Arizona.

Scope and content: This fonds contains the only remaining records for Elmer Sopha. The fonds consists primarily of notes and transcripts of speeches delivered at various gatherings between 1965 and 1980, and also transcripts of daily radio commentaries aired at a local Sudbury station. The records also consist of transcripts of articles that Sopha wrote for journals and for weekly columns in *Northern Life* newspaper, as well as correspondence. These documents provide some insight to the private and public life of Elmer Sopha, and they emphasize his opinions on a variety of subjects. The documents also attest to the fact that Sopha was a respected lawyer and a popular guest speaker at numerous gatherings throughout Ontario. After he left the legislature in 1971, Sopha devoted time to interests outside of his law practice. His oratorical and critical skills are well represented in these records. The correspondence consists mainly of letters written by Sopha to members of the Provincial and Federal Legislatures, and their responding letters. The records of this fonds are a testimony to the dedication of Elmer Sopha to the cultural, economic and judicial concerns for Northern Ontario.

Note: Immediate source of acquisition: These records were donated by Mike Solski in February 1995.

: **Reproduction/publication:** The Copyright Act regulations apply

: **Related material:** A Master's thesis entitled *Cut and Thrust: A Political Biography of Elmer Sopha* by Paul Derro, and published in 1993 at Laurentian University, contains complementary material. The following fonds may contain complementary information:

P006-Floyd Laughren fonds

P019-Mike Solski fonds