

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

**Biographical sketch:** Elmer Walter Sopha (1924-1982) 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 the 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. With his colleague Leo Troy, Sopha was one of two MPPs who voted against the adoption of the current Flag of Ontario – "Sopha argued in the legislature that the flag was not an appropriate symbol of Ontario's cultural diversity."<sup>[1]</sup> 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. He did not seek re-election in 1971. Following his term as MPP, Sopha returned to his law career and served on the governing body of the Law Society of Upper Canada from 1971 to 1975. He was unsuccessful in attempting a return to the legislature in the 1975 election. He tried again in the 1981 election, and lost to NDP candidate Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt riding). Elmer Sopha died suddenly on January 4, 1982 at the age of 57 years, while vacationing in Phoenix, Arizona.

**Scope and content:** Elmer Sopha fonds contains what is believed to be Sopha's only remaining records. 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 the *Northern Life* newspaper, as well as correspondence consisting mainly of letters written by Sopha to members of the Provincial and Federal Legislatures, and their responding letters. These documents provide insight into 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. His speeches offer a sense of how he positioned himself within the socio-political landscape of the time, both as a politician, and as an individual. The records of this fonds are a testimony to the dedication of Elmer Sopha to the cultural, economic and judicial concerns of Northern Ontario.

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

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

- : **Access/restriction:** restriction applies to some documents
- : **Finding aid:** [A listing](#) was created prior to 1996 by former Laurentian University Archives employees.
- : **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 records may contain complementary information:

P006-Floyd Laughren fonds

P019-Mike Solski fonds

P142-Angus Gilbert Collection

**Archivist Note: custodial history** : Mike Solski had Elmer Sopha's documents in his possession. A fire in his garage destroyed most of the files stored in the garage.