

TOWARDS EXPANDING QUALITY CHILD CARE IN ONTARIO

A Plan For Action

Prepared By

The Child Care  
Committee

of the

Ontario Status of  
Women Council

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A. Statement of Philosophy and Position

The Ontario Status of Women Council is committed to the belief that the availability of child care is an essential service if women are to achieve full equality within our society. Children are our greatest human resource and must have care that will ensure development of their individual potentials in a secure and stimulating environment.

B. Introduction

1. Benefits of High Quality Child Care

High quality child care has a major role to play in the prevention of social, behavioural and learning problems. The work of Burton White in child development has shown the importance of proper, positive care during the early years of life to avoid psychological and social problems in the years ahead. (1)

Extensive research completed by New York psychologists, Archie A. Silver and Rosa Higin, shows that many children with learning disabilities can be totally indistinguishable from their classmates by Grade 4, if their difficulties are detected at an early age and given suitable attention. (2) An alert, experienced child care staff can detect potential problems and provide access to professional help.

These aspects can obviously be translated into a saving of considerable dollars when one considers the costs of rehabilitation in later years. Today's costs for child care must be measured against tomorrow's costs for abandoned, battered, disturbed or delinquent children over generations. In a meeting of the Ontario Status of Women Council, Judge George Thomson, Associate Deputy Minister, Children's Services, addressed himself to this issue: "If we can get some money for seed (preventive) programs in child care, in five years we can save millions."

Harold Skeels, of the Society for Research in Child Development, has done a follow-up study of children who had been separated from their parents in infancy and placed in a non-stimulating orphanage. Half of these children were moved to a more stimulating environment. As young adults, all 13 who had been placed in the improved environment were self-supporting; some were in the professions. Of the 12 who remained in the non-stimulating orphanage, one died in adolescence while in an institution for the retarded, four were still wards of the government, the average schooling obtained was grade three, half were unemployed and, except for one, those who were employed were unskilled labourers.

The average cost to the government for those who were in the better program was \$1,000. each, while the other group had costs from \$7,000. to \$24,000. and the end was still not in sight. (3)

While this study does not deal directly with child care as we know it, it can give us certain insights into the preventive aspects of child care and the resultant cost benefits.

In addition, the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto did a study in 1976 stating that the cost for single parents to go to work and put their children in subsidized child care, was less than the cost of family benefits for the parents to stay home and care for the children themselves.

## 2. The Need for Expansion

If women are to have equal opportunities in our society, quality child care must be made available to them.

1. As early as 1973, a Statistics Canada survey indicated that 36% (i.e. 40,000) of the women in Ontario not working but desiring to work were unemployed because they could not make satisfactory child care arrangements.
2. In 1974, the rate of increase in child care spaces was 105.81%. In 1976, this had declined to 19.38%. (8)
3. As of January 1, 1978, only 53,238 licensed child care spaces were available in Ontario. (7)
4. Approximately 10% of the families in Ontario are single-parent households headed by women. (4)
5. Almost half the mothers of Ontario's children are in the labour force now. (5)
6. Economists and demographers predict that these trends will accelerate. By 1981, it is predicted that 678,600 children in Ontario will require full day care and 175,600 will require half day care. (6)

Despite the increased participation of women in the labour force and the increase in the number of single-parent households, the access to child care spaces has decreased.

### 3. Drawbacks to Expansion

There are several major drawbacks to the expansion of quality child care in Ontario today.

The issue of prohibitive costs to the consumer was dealt with in a resolution passed by the Ontario Status of Women Council in January, 1976. This resolution recommended that the Treasurer of Ontario include in the budget a graduated system of tax credits for child care expenses. This tax credit would be similar in structure to the property tax credit system and would recognize the need to provide financial relief for low income families. The resolution was rejected by the Treasurer on the grounds that this system was too costly to implement at that time.

In connection with prohibitive costs to the consumer, per diem rates for child care in Ontario can range from \$5. to \$20. The reasons for these discrepancies should be investigated and province wide guidelines for per diem rates established.

The lack of capital funds is dealt with in the proposal for widespread use of the community school which is described in section C of this brief.

The third and least quantifiable drawback to expansion is the prevailing attitude of society which designates child care a family responsibility, and usually the woman's responsibility within that family. To many, the term "working father" is redundant, while the term "working mother" implies a conflict of interest. Margaret Mead writes: "...the specific biological situation of the continuing relationship of the child to its biological mother and its need for care by human beings are being hopelessly confused in the growing insistence that child and biological mother ... must never be separated." (9)

Recent studies indicate that satisfied mothers - working or not - have the best adjusted children. (10) It is the quality of contact between parent and child rather than the quantity that is a decisive factor in the child's development.

The 1968 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women states: "The care of the children is a responsibility to be shared by the mother, the father and society." As Dr. Gail Robinson, Director of Post-Graduate Education at the Department of Psychiatry, Toronto General Hospital, in an address to the Association of Women Executives, points out, "Mothering is care, love and attention, and a child can get those from people other than a mother."

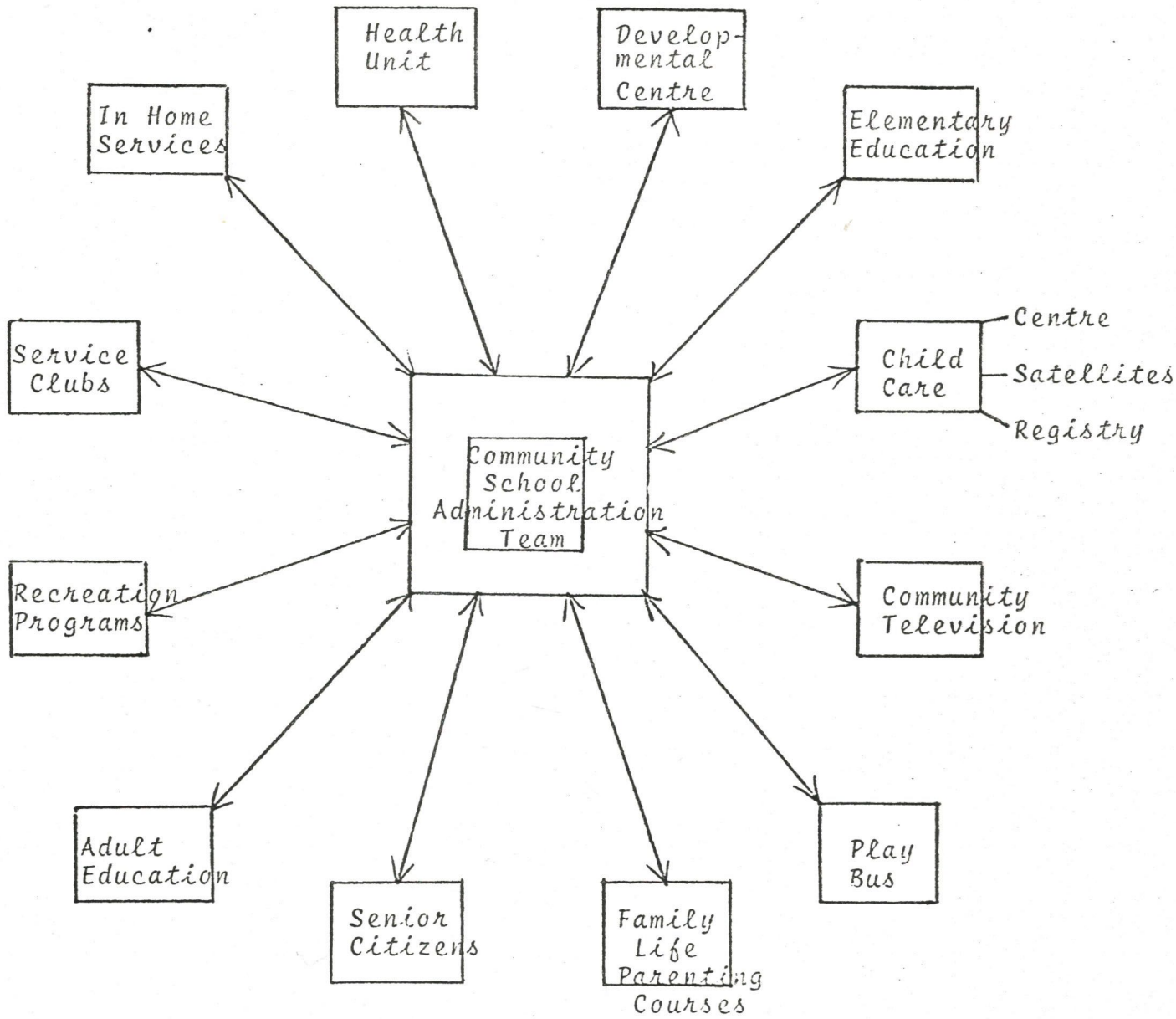
4. Summary

The preventive and developmental benefits of high quality child care have been scientifically validated and the increasing needs of society for child care established. Therefore, it is the purpose of this brief to recommend that existing facilities and services be used in a more efficient manner to increase the number of high quality child care spaces in the province of Ontario.



### C. The Community School

#### The Model



## 1. Definition

The community school is an institution which, under one roof, provides:

- . child care
- . elementary education
- . community centre programs.

The school fosters the social, emotional, physical and mental growth and learning of the individual and the family. It develops an intergenerational partnership, functioning as a support system in the community.

## 2. Components

### a) Location

The community school makes efficient use of community resources and available facilities. Declining school enrolments mean that many schools have empty classrooms and can easily be transformed into community schools. New schools being built can include extra facilities for child care and the community centre at low or no extra cost.

### b) Administration

The community school administration team is composed of the following members:

- . at least one representative from each program involved

- appointees from community agencies, for example, the Board of Health
- representatives from the local governing bodies, e.g., the municipal government, the boards of education, and the Children's Services committee.

The administration team is responsible for co-ordinating the various programs. It also works with the school board and the municipal government in establishing a formula for the costing of shared space and utilities. Program co-ordinators must recognize the necessity of co-operative functioning, equivalent program status and ongoing communications.

#### c) Programs

Community school facilities can integrate various programs:

##### Elementary School

Provides elementary education, kindergarten to eighth grade.

##### Child Care Centre

Provides child care for ages 0 to 10, co-ordinates satellite programs, registry for the satellites and centre, and play bus - a van which delivers materials and activities to the satellites, linking them to each other and to the school.

### Developmental Centre

Provides early identification, diagnosis and treatment of persons in the community with special needs, e.g., learning disabilities or speech impediments, and co-ordinates in-home services for handicapped children and adults. For areas with this resource the existing developmental centre would be included.

### Health Unit

Provides health services to the community, e.g., immunization, family planning services.

### Community Centre

Provides facilities for senior citizens' groups, adult education programs, recreation programs, service clubs (focal point for community television, family life and parenting courses for upper elementary, junior and senior high school students).

#### d) Funding

Joint funding agreements must be worked out between the Ministry of Education and Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Culture and Recreation and the Ministry of Health.

### 3. Implications for the Future

#### a) Cost Benefits

- preventive service for all ages involved,
- so costs of rehabilitation reduced

- . vandalism costs reduced as the building would be in almost constant use
- . shared existing facilities, ensuring their efficient use
- . shared equipment and human resources
- . shared maintenance costs
- . shared clerical staff.

b) Community Benefits

- . with the child care program feeding into the elementary school there is one continuous flow of experiences and education
- . child care staff and elementary school teachers can assist each other in recognizing learning disabilities; thus attention to special needs is more expedient as developmental services are functions of the total program
- . the person with special needs is normalized and integrated into the community. Both the handicapped and the non-handicapped benefit in their growth and understanding of humanity
- . the problems of alienation and loneliness, now prevalent in all age groups, are dealt with positively
- . prevention is a keynote
- . all involved feel the worthiness of their existence and contribution and have pride in themselves and in their community
- . the generation gap is bridged, reflecting the image of the extended family

- . the multi-culturalism of the community is reflected
- . there is increased communication, co-operation, and professional development via existing professional associations functioning with a common interest.

#### 4. An Example of a Community School

In 1970, with enrolment declining, the Thunder Bay School Board decided to tear down a large, old school in the centre core of the city, with accommodation for 700 students. A new school with accommodation for 250 students was built. The Ministry of Education, under Robert Welch, initiated a project whereby they undertook to cover 65% of the additional cost of transforming the lower level of the new school into a community centre. The rest of the cost was covered by the city's Parks and Recreation Department (25%), and the local school board (10%). (11) The northern section of the lower level was left vacant until three years ago, when the city's Social Services Department saw need for a child care centre and established one there through a lease arrangement.

The school functions under an operating agreement among the three parties, the elementary school, the community centre, and the child care centre. The Board of Education is responsible for the maintenance of the building; it is their facility. The other groups are responsible for any changes or capital improvements in their areas. Heat and light etc. are charged to the

individual groups as per their use of these utilities. Equipment and facilities are shared in a co-operative, goodwill arrangement.

Today, Ogden is a community school with a variety of resources to offer. The community centre regularly offers a variety of recreational and instructional courses for adults and children. A senior citizens' group meets three times a week in the building. The day school holds classes from junior kindergarten to grade 6. The child care centre provides for the care of children aged 2½ to 10 years. The programs are co-ordinated by the principal of the school, the child care centre supervisor, and the community school program developer of the City Parks and Recreation Department.

#### D. Child Care in the Community School

##### 1. The Child Care Centre

The child care centre in the community school offers care to all children who need it, ages 0 to 10. Recognizing that infant/toddler care is more feasible in the private home, the community school centre would have some space available for infant/toddler care when necessary, but most infant/toddler care would be handled through private home day care satellites. Other care available at the centre includes:

- all day early childhood education for pre-school children
- half day care for junior and senior kindergarten children
- before and after school care for school age children.

#### Advantages

- Transportation costs to and from child care centres are eliminated for the school age children as both school and centre are in the same building.
- The centre provides elementary school children with an audience for puppet shows and other dramatic ventures; the school children in return provide the centre with special programs.
- Senior citizens are available for repairs, volunteer services and perhaps an adopt-a-grandparent plan, broadening the horizons of both child and adult.
- The centre is an excellent resource area for upper school family life courses. These courses are valuable opportunities to teach effective parenting. Adolescence is the age for building attitudes for nurturing and enjoying young children. In order to make such courses effective, they must be based on experiences with real children. The centre provides this experience.



- . The community school is set up to adjust to many of the different forms of child care now available. The child care centre could vary from parent co-operative to Montessori nursery school.

## 2. The Private Home Child Care Satellite System

The expansion of private home child care can be a positive means of expanding child care. However, studies, including the recent joint study by the Community Day Care Coalition and the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Who Cares", indicate that more support for, and supervision of, home care is needed. Supervised private home child care in Ontario can provide excellent care for children as well as an opportunity for women working in the home to become an integral part of the mainstream of their community. The satellite system can provide the caregiver with the necessary support and supervision.

The private home child care satellite plugs into the community school through the child care centre. The centre provides the satellite with the following services:

- . back up care in case of child's or caregiver's illness
- . mobile services by bus or van, bringing toys, books and other services from an equipment resource bank at the community school
- . special enrichment programs at the child care centre

- regular supervisory visits to enable the satellites to grow and improve in quality
- group meetings of caregivers to exchange ideas, with specialized professionals invited to speak.

Private home child care is particularly suited to infant care where, under the Day Nurseries Act, the ratio of children to caregiver is excellent. As they grow older and as their socialization and spatial needs increase, the children can move to the community school child care centre. The satellite is also an outlet for child care centre children who are ill. Caregivers are considered part of the child care staff for purposes of further training and staff meetings. While functioning as a separate unit, they should be considered an integral part of the school with facilities and consultation available to them. This could be the means for improving the much maligned status of private home caregivers.

(See Ontario Status of Women Council report, Towards Expanding Quality Day Care in Ontario, November 1976)

### 3. Child Care Registry

The child care registry would be available at the community school for parents requiring child care facilities. It would provide the parents with a list of available spaces both in the satellites and at the centre, matching space with the parents' needs.

4. *Play Bus*

The play bus would visit the satellite child care homes every two weeks, bringing toys, books and educational materials for use in the home until the bus returns. Staff members can provide caregivers with planned activities for the children, as well as follow-up "idea sheets" for the caregiver. Trips into the community and countryside can be organized.

5. *Community Television Series*

This service would give guidance and demonstrate programs for mothers to carry out at home. It would also provide a correspondence service. The series could be produced by Ontario Educational Communications Authority, taped and shared province wide, with the introduction and purpose given by officials of the Day Nurseries Branch.

A community television series for the mentally retarded and handicapped would be established on the same basis as the above, with professionals visiting the home for initial instructions. This would be followed up with regular visits in addition to the child attending the Developmental Centre in the community school on a regular basis for socialization, evaluation, and progressive programming.

## E. The Role of Government

### Provincial

A strong endorsement for the principle of the community school is needed from the Government of Ontario. The provincial government should provide monetary incentive for the renovation of existing suitable facilities into child care centres which comply with the Day Nurseries Act. For the community school program to work successfully, inter-ministerial liaisons between the Ministry of Education and Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs are also essential.

### Local/Municipal Governing Bodies

The local government should endorse and introduce the community school concept to the community. It should determine the needs of the community in order that the school can fulfill them adequately. When the needs have been determined, the local government should establish the type of service required. In addition to these factors, the local/municipal government should provide:

- . incentive for private groups to make use of the school for weekend and evening activities
- . financial means testing for child care parents.

### Staff Training

The Ontario Status of Women Council would like to see the Ministry of Education and Colleges and Universities and Ministry of Community and Social Services, Day Nurseries

Branch, jointly agree on the training criteria to be employed in the various areas of the community schools program. We recognize the problems involved in high professional standards with respect to the child care issue, yet it is absolutely essential that optimal educational standards for staff training in the child care and elementary education programs of the community school be realized.

It is also desirable that early childhood education training programs in the community colleges across the province operate under set standards and are recognized as equivalents.

F. Recommendations

1. That the government of Ontario endorse the principle of the community school
2. That the government of Ontario provide monetary incentive for the renovation of existing suitable facilities into child care centres which comply with the Day Nurseries Act.
3. That the Social Development Secretariat set up an inter-ministerial steering committee for community schools composed of representatives from the Ministry of Education and Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.

4. That the government of Ontario investigate the reasons for the discrepancies in per diem rates for child care throughout the province and set province wide guidelines for these rates which can be adjusted according to area cost.
5. That the Ministry of Education and Colleges and Universities strive for equivalency in educational standards in early childhood education certificate programs and that this equivalency be recognized for purposes of transfer and/or further education.
6. That the Ontario Status of Women Council meet with the Provincial/Municipal Liaison Committee to present this proposal.

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