

HISTORY OF THE DAY NURSERIES BRANCH, MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

PART I: BACKGROUND OF DAY CARE IN ONTARIO - 1873-1941.

In 1890 the first day care centre of which we have a record in Ontario was opened on the suggestion of Dr. J. L. Hughes. Dr. Hughes was the noted educationist who had instigated the opening of kindergartens on an optional basis in the public school system beginning in 1873. His interest in day care was prompted by Hester Howe, a woman who was the first principal of a public school in Ontario. She found that many of her pupils were bringing their younger brothers and sisters to class with them. She permitted these children to play at the back of the classroom because she understood how desperate was the plight of widowed and deserted mothers, and those whose husbands were serving jail terms. Thus in 1892 the "Creche" was opened. It is still operating as the "Victoria Day Care Services" and is still a pioneer in the field. Another pioneer was the "West End Creche". It is still operating in the first building constructed as a day nursery in 1909.

In 1920 the Mother's Allowance Act was passed in Ontario. These allowances were available to the mothers who had been using day care. It was considered socially more desirable for the mother to remain at home with her children, and this allowance made it possible for her to do so. Following the passage of this Act there tended to be a decline in the need for day care, and some centres were closed. The Creche and the West End Creche continued to operate, however.

In 1926, as a result of a grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Foundation, the Institute of Child Study was opened in the University of Toronto to study the development of young children. The Junior League of Toronto and the Welfare Council became interested in the idea of nursery schools for children, and opened a number of half-day nursery programs. In 1930 the Board of the West End Creche engaged one of the graduates of the Institute of Child Study, Mrs. Gretta (Gordon) Brown, to direct the program at the Creche, and to introduce into it the educational aspects which had been developed at the University nursery. The old pattern of custodial care of simply "minding" the children was thus replaced, as it was seen the children separated all day from their mothers were even more in need of educational guidance and an enriching environment than those sent to a nursery school for a few hours each day.

PART II: THE WARTIME DAY NURSERY PROGRAM - 1942-1946.

At this time the climate of public opinion was such that the only legitimate reason for a mother to go to work was dire financial necessity. A change in thinking was brought about with the Second World War. It has been estimated that during the First World War four persons had to be employed in war-related industry for every member of the fighting forces. In the Second World War, so complex had the necessary equipment become, eighteen workers were required for each member of the armed services. Eventually, there was no remaining source of labour except the mothers of young children. It became patriotic and praiseworthy for a mother to accept employment outside her home.

In the early part of 1942 the Welfare Council of Toronto and District called on the Provincial and Federal Governments to provide day care for the children of employed mothers. This proposal met with strong support from Mr. J. S. Band, who at that time was on the staff of the Department of Public Welfare, and later was for many years its Deputy Minister. The Council had made a survey showing that many mothers were working while their children had inadequate care. As things tended to move rapidly in wartime, by July of that year the Government of Ontario entered into an agreement with the Federal Government (Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nursery Agreement) for the provision of day care for children whose mothers were employed in an essential industry. Immediately the province appointed a provincial advisory committee, consisting of representatives of the Departments of Public Welfare, Education, Health, Labour, Public Works and the National Selective Service office. By September of the same year the Number 1 Wartime Day Nursery was set up at 95 Bellevue Avenue in Toronto under the administration of the province as a demonstration and training centre. The cost of the nursery was borne by a fee paid by the parent representing approximately one-third of operating costs with the remainder being shared 50-50 by the province and the Federal Government.

The Department of Public Welfare engaged the services of Miss Dorothy Millichamp, the Assistant Director of the Institute of Child Study, the University of Toronto, to be in charge of the Day Nursery Branch which was to promote and administer the program. In this way, the provincial government expressed its concern that the "Day Care" service provide a program of the highest standard aimed at the full development of the child. The policy adopted by the provincial government was that local committees consisting of representatives of Welfare, Education, Health, Labour and Fire authorities should be set up in each locality prior to demonstrating a need and putting forward a proposal for a day nursery. The school day care program was administered by the local Board of Education. By the end of the wartime period there was a total of 28 nurseries (1,200 children) for children 2 - 5 years of age, and 42 programs (3,000 children) for children 6 - 14 years of age being carried on throughout the province.

The Day Nursery Program for Children 2 - 4 Years of Age.

A training program was immediately instituted in the Bellevue Nursery with 34 students in training in the first few months of operation. The plan was to have 2 trained staff in each nursery, plus 3 trained volunteers to assist the staff. As the nurseries were open nearly 12 hours a day, it was thus possible to have a trained paid person on duty all the time assisted by volunteers. At the beginning of the program it was very easy to get an unlimited number of volunteers, and courses of lectures for them were given on an revolving basis. As more and more of these volunteers went into full-time employment because of the urgent need for their services, and as the number of nurseries increased, it became more and more difficult to depend so heavily on the volunteer staff. Gradually the third paid staff member was added to each nursery and eventually a fourth.

The program instituted in the nurseries for the children followed closely that developed at the Institute of Child Study. Great stress was laid on outdoor play of a vigorous, active nature, whereas indoors the play was quieter and fostered creative activities on the part of the children. During the routine periods for eating and sleeping, the children were taught to follow good procedures and develop independence. Close attention was paid to each child's emotional needs, as many of them felt keenly the separation from their mothers and were anxious for their return. This uneasiness predisposed the children to outbursts of anger if they were frustrated with the play equipment or by other children. They were helped to learn socially acceptable ways of controlling their anger. They received both a hot noon meal and a supper in the nursery, as well as snacks twice a day. The meals were under the direction of a nutritionist, and the children were taught to accept a wide variety of foods. The nursery staff was expected to maintain close and harmonious relationships with the parents of the children. The standards adopted were continually reviewed and approved by the provincial committee.

The following quotation from a leaflet entitled, "Day Care Centres and Pre-School Education" issued by the Welfare Council of Toronto and District gives a vivid picture of the nursery program:

"What does the child get from the nursery school or day nursery of high standing?

He gets first, a safe, secure place. He receives there constant, but unobtrusive supervision by persons who have studied and know children. He is safe from the dangers of the street and community.

He also has a regular, consistent program in which he has the best possible chance to learn healthy, desirable habits of eating, sleeping, washing, dressing and playing.

He receives supervision of his health with periodic thorough physical examination and daily inspection. He has meals planned by experts in nutrition, well prepared and served in pleasant surroundings.

He has the advantage of being in a building which is roomy, bright and attractive.

In the nursery, he learns how to get along well with other children, to take turns, to co-operate, to lead and to follow.

He acquires skills which should be a solid foundation for later learning. He learns to be self-reliant, to do things for himself. He learns to make choices and decisions, to "run his own life" satisfactorily.

He learns to be busy, to play happily and independently.

The nursery can provide space and equipment that is difficult if not impossible for the ordinary home to provide - space and equipment for play and habit formation. And above all, the nursery provides supervision by people who have made it their main business in life to know and understand children.

The nursery is valuable because it deals with those important early years. What the child learns or fails to learn at that time may make all the difference between a happy, healthy development and one leading to maladjustment and delinquency. The difference between a delinquent child and a well-adjusted child is often a difference in what has been learned or not learned. The nursery provides the chances for desirable learning in those years which are important because they come first and later development depends on what happens then.

In the day nurseries operating in Toronto and district, the majority of supervisors and assistants have been thoroughly trained for their work, and in many nurseries, a group of volunteer workers are also used. These volunteers are recruited and supervised by the Women's Voluntary Services and are given a course of training by the Institute of Child Study."

The 1944/45 annual report of the Department of Public Welfare notes that the day nurseries are being increasingly recognized as a valuable welfare service to preserve home life. The report also mentions that in addition to the nursery supported by public funds, 6 of the private nurseries were receiving per capita per diem grants for children whose parents could not afford to pay the full cost.

School day care under the local Boards of Education, and with leadership from the Provincial Welfare Department stressed good nutrition in the form of a hot noon meal, and a varied after-school recreation program suited to the wide age range of the children enrolled.

Appendix I of this report gives more detailed information about this program as carried on jointly by Boards of Education and the Provincial Public Welfare Department.

PART III - ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAY NURSERIES PROGRAM
1947 - 1966.

At the end of the war federal government support in day nurseries ceased when the War Measures Act expired. The general expectation was that all working mothers of young children would return to their homes. This was exactly what most of them wished to do and were able to do, but a number of mothers whose financial problems had been solved by the use of the day nursery did not wish to be deprived of this service. They realised not only that their children had benefitted in many ways from the nursery program, but also that they could make a necessary financial contribution to their homes if day nurseries were still available.

Due largely to the representations of these mothers, the provincial government passed the Day Nurseries Act in 1946. There were three important provisions. The first of these was licensing. Wartime experience had taught that unsupervised nurseries could be operated at a level that was detrimental to the children attending. Not only private operators, but often the boards of voluntary organizations failed to recognize the harm being done to apathetic children, passively accepting the barren environments of many nurseries. Hence it was required that all nurseries, regardless of auspices, must be licensed and have regular inspection to insure maintenance of standards. Secondly, provision was made for the payment to municipalities of 50% of the net costs of nurseries operated by the municipalities. These nurseries could be all-day or half-day programmes for children under six years of age. Thirdly, where a municipality sponsored an organization operating a nursery, the province agreed to reimburse the municipality 50% of the amount contributed to the nursery by the municipality. The municipal share could be a stated amount voted each year, or it could be equal to the net operating deficit of the nursery.

Over the years the total number of nurseries in the province increased as follows:

	All-day Programmes	Half-day Programmes	Approximate Total Enrolment
1947	25	139	4,000
1967	122	304	18,350

The nurseries in receipt of public funds increased as follows:

1947	21	3
1967	21	25

It will be seen that by 1967 public nurseries (in receipt of grants) formed less than 11% of the nurseries; private individuals and agencies have been chiefly active in the field in Ontario. This situation has put a heavy responsibility on the licensing body charged with maintaining an acceptable minimum standard. A good nursery is expensive to operate; a poor one can be lucrative for the owner. The responsible operator or board must be helped to the awareness of good quality care for children. Pride in providing such care rather than "getting by" on the minimum standard required for a licence must be fostered.

In the early years of licensing, nurseries were permitted considerable leeway in meeting the regulations. The result was that in the first licensing years only 45 per cent of Ontario nurseries were licensed. In 1956 90 per cent of the nurseries were reaching the required standard. In 1966, 98 per cent of the nurseries were licensed.

Towards the end of this period there began to arise certain challenges to the validity to the day nurseries standards. Some operators refused even to apply for a licence, while others demanded a licence without having met the standards as laid down. In one case the operator of a day nursery launched a civil suit against the director of the Day Nurseries Branch alleging that the powers invested under the Day Nurseries Act had been exceeded. This situation led to a revision of the Act to clarify the procedures under which licences were granted. In line with the recommendations of the McRuer Commission on civil rights a review procedure was set up so that the decisions of the director could be appealed to a Board of Review. In this way, applicants for a licence, and those whose licences were about to be refused, could be assured of a fair hearing before an administrative tribunal. The number of such hearings has been very limited, and to date all have been resolved in favour of the action followed by the Branch. A small number of prosecutions for operating without a licence has also been successfully carried out by the Branch. The reason for this record of upholding Branch decisions has been the thorough manner in which field staff have endeavoured to assist applicants and operators in every way to follow the regulations as set out by Order-In-Council.

In the original Day Nurseries Act the age limit was restricted to children below six years of age. The City of Toronto which operated the largest number of nurseries felt that it was necessary to continue the care of children up to ten years of age, and they did so at 100% municipal expense for a number of years. Otherwise, the school day care carried out in wartime was non-existent during this period.

During this twenty years the growth in the number of nurseries advanced slowly but steadily. In the first year of licensing there were 164 nurseries throughout the province, and twenty years later there were 441. This represents an average increase of 14 nurseries per year. This period of slow growth was helpful in assessing the problems associated with good child care and stimulating the development of training courses to fit young women to work in this field. The formation of the Toronto Nursery Education Association in 1946, and the Nursery Education Association of Ontario in 1950, offered a means of promoting training among the educational institutions of the province. The course at Ryerson proved to be the first of many courses now available in practically all colleges of applied arts. Shortly after the formation of the Ryerson course, the Nursery Association was also successful in stimulating extension courses at McMaster and the University of Toronto. These courses were also the forerunner of courses now available for early childhood at five or six of the Ontario universities. Because these courses were stimulated by the association of practitioners in the field there has always been a strong emphasis on the competence of the student teacher rather than the ability of the student to meet the academic requirements of the training institution. In fact, the Association instituted a voluntary system of certification after these students had at least a year's experience in a day nursery. These certificates were not required of persons working in nurseries, but were a means by which employers might be assured of finding competent staff. This policy on the part of the Association foreshadowed by many years the rising trend in the United States toward a "competency model" for developing teachers of young children.

PART IV - THE PERIOD OF RAPID EXPANSION, 1966 - 1975.

The 1966 amendment to the Day Nurseries Act marked the culmination of the years of slow but steady growth. By this time the licensing principle was well accepted by 99% of the operators, and procedures were beginning to be developed for the few who presented difficulties. Municipalities were becoming more interested in establishing day nursery services, but since mothers who stayed at home to look after their children were in receipt of the mother's allowance paid 100% by the province, there was a disincentive to the municipalities to take up the day nursery program requiring them to share 50% in both capital and operational expenditures. At this time only 10% of nurseries were receiving public funds, the remaining 90% receive supervision, encouragement, and practical help from the staff of the Day Nurseries Branch.

The main provisions of the 1966 Amendment were as follows:

- The provincial share for constructing new buildings remained at 50%, but for renovating existing buildings as day nurseries and for operating costs, the provincial share was increased to 80%.
- Indian Bands were now recognized in the same manner as municipalities for receipt of funds to provide day nursery services.
- Procedures for appeal from the decisions of the director of the Branch were enacted in order that applicants and operators might have a hearing before the already established Child Welfare Board of Review.

In 1968/9 a further amendment permitted municipalities to subsidize children in private nurseries and to recover 80% of this cost from the province. There was also provision for the establishment of a Board of Review specifically for day nurseries.

During this period the specific aims and objectives for the Day Nurseries Branch were formulated, and based on the accepted policies that have gradually been evolved. These objectives may be summarized as follows:

1. To ensure that all children while attending day nurseries throughout Ontario receive the care and guidance necessary for their optimum growth and social development. This has, in fact, always been the basic objective of the Branch since its formation.

2. To provide opportunities in day nurseries to compensate for the physical, mental and/or social deficits which characterize certain children so as to enable them to achieve their physical, mental and social potential. This objective has emerged from the experience over the years which has shown a great potential for the group setting under professional leadership in ameliorating handicapping conditions experienced by some children.
3. To enable parents of low economic means to take advantage of day care services to go to work, and in so doing to earn an income with which to lift themselves out of the poverty cycle. While during the war the motivation for helping the working parent was to provide more manpower for the war effort, as the war years went by it was apparent that the day nursery service is a program which is of great value to the group of persons frequently characterized as being the "working poor". These families have difficulty in raising children on one income. This also applies to the group of sole support parents who without day care would require public assistance.
4. To develop to the fullest extent possible the competence of parents in the care and guidance of their children in the day nurseries, which they, the parents operate, and which enriched the quality of life in the family and the community. This objective grew out of the activities of groups of parents themselves who voluntarily banded together to provide nursery experience for their children whether or not the parents themselves were working outside the home. The success of these nurseries stimulated the efforts of staffs in other types of nurseries to include the parents in planning the nursery program, and in gaining greater understanding of the needs of their children.

In 1971 a further amendment to the Day Nurseries Act recognized the local branches of the Ontario Association for the Mentally Retarded in the same manner as municipal councils and Indian Band Councils. Thus these Associations receive funds for the maintenance of day nursery services on a half or full day basis for handicapped children from 2 - 18 years of age. Many of these children were so severely handicapped that the only previous alternatives for them had been to remain at home with minimum stimulation or to be placed in an institution.

At the same time that this legislation was passed the Prime Minister of Ontario released the government's plan for economic stimulation during the winter and spring months. Among the programs announced was a ten million dollar capital works program for the construction of new day care centres throughout the province. Capital grants were increased to 100% for all day nursery facilities approved and established between November 1, 1971, and July 31, 1972. These capital funds were available to municipalities, Indian Bands and approved corporations providing day care for the mentally retarded. Under this project 44 municipal nurseries, 9 developmental centres for severely retarded children, and 9 nurseries on Indian reservations were opened. This program achieved its objective of contributing to winter works by providing one million man hours of employment, and at the same time gave a great impetus to the day nursery program by establishing demonstration centres of the highest quality all over the province.

An interesting project also carried out in 1972 was known as "Project 500". Under this plan 500 young people recently graduated from high school and university and unemployed were hired to work in day nurseries or homes for the aged for a period of four months with their salaries being paid by the government, and their services being a form of enrichment for the programs of the settings in which they worked. This plan was most advantageous both to the nurseries, and the young people who worked in them. Many of these young people later took training courses and continued to work in the day nursery field.

In 1974 the legislation was further broadened to include corporations for physically, as well as mentally handicapped children. A further important amendment permitted the recognition of approved charitable and co-operative corporations on the same basis as municipalities, Indian Bands and corporations for the handicapped. This amendment gave recognition to the work of parents in establishing co-operative nurseries for the benefit of their children. Previously this type of nursery had been possible only to middle class families who could contribute the funds required to set up the nursery and pay for its ongoing operation. Now it became possible for low income groups to establish such nurseries either on the half-day or a full day basis.

In 1974 a new capital project for day care was established with a special fifteen million dollar capital grant. These capital funds were divided among the four groups now recognized under the legislation, namely, municipalities (40 centres), Indian Bands (12), approved corporations for the handicapped (16) and approved charitable and co-operative corporations (17). Once again Government undertook to pay 100% of the capital cost of this program.

In this project emphasis was directed more to renovation of premises rather than creation of new premises due to the steep rise in costs of building. In fact, one of the effects of inflationary costs was the general questioning of the necessity for the staff ratios currently accepted in day nurseries. In order to review this problem and all other aspects of day care, a Minister's Advisory council on Day Care was established. This Council was chosen to be representative of various groups throughout the province concerned about it according to various geographical regions. It consisted of 12 members and met monthly for a year and a half. It served very much the same functions that the wartime provincial committee on day care had done at the very beginning of the program. It issued three reports on day care which will serve as blueprints for future developments.

PART V- FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While current economic conditions have placed limitations on the amount of public funds allocated to day care, it is apparent that the need for day care is, in fact, intensified in times of economic pressure. However, since the majority of nurseries throughout the years have never received public funding, the potential for increase in the number of centres still remains. Nevertheless, many groups of low income parents who were preparing to be recognized as private groups have suffered serious financial setbacks. It is to be hoped that economic conditions will soon permit an increase in allocation of funds for the establishment and operation of day care for low income families.

While the two special capital projects (ten million dollars in 1972 and fifteen million in 1974/75) were very effective, smaller amounts of money available on a yearly basis would make orderly planning easier to achieve. It is also questionable whether in the case of municipalities it might not be better to expect some local capital contribution, in addition to the requirements for local planning and administration. An on-going municipal share of 20% in capital expenditures might be considered. This amount could be decreased to 10% for construction performed during the winter months, thus restoring the winter works feature which was so successful in 1972. In this way initiative for the expansion of day care would be returned to the municipalities.

In the cases of the Indian Bands, corporations for the handicapped, and community groups, it must be recognized that these groups do not have a tax base, and have little capability for attracting private funds. Therefore, capital sums should probably be made available to them at 100% on an on-going basis.

PROJECT 500

This valuable program could very well be instituted as an on-going summer employment opportunity for young people. It would be particularly valuable for students planning to go into early childhood education, or during the summers between various parts of their courses. In this way, they would be able to earn part of the cost of their training, and at the same time derive more benefit from their training by actually applying it as their course progressed.

SCHOOL BASED DAY CARE

The plan adopted during the war-time program whereby schools accepted administrative responsibility for day care, and carried it out with strong emphasis on nutrition and recreation should be re-instituted in a more formalized manner. At the present time many schools have loaned their premises to community groups, such as the "Y", for programs of this type. In order to meet the full need for this type of service, it would be necessary for the Ministry of

Education and local school boards to play a more active role. Funding could continue on a needs basis by this Ministry. The cost should be reasonable, and many parents would be in a position to defray the whole expense. This day care program should have four distinct types:

- For Children Aged 6 - 10 in Full School Attendance. For these children the ordinary facilities of most schools would be sufficient, and no special space would need to be allocated for the program.
- Half-Day Program to Round Out the Existing Senior and Junior Kindergarten Programs. This program could be carried on in the school if additional class room space is available. If not, it could be arranged in nearby private homes.
- Loan of Available Space to Community Half-day Nursery Groups. These groups would in turn arrange private home half-day care for the children who require it. It is not recommended that schools arrange for space in full day nursery programs for children below 6 years of age because of the forecast of increases in the school population beginning with the year 1980.
- Day Care in High Schools - Where there is free space in the high schools it would be justified to establish full day care programs. In addition to serving the children enrolled, they could be used as laboratories in child development to give high school students practical understanding of the nature and needs of young children.

PRIVATE HOME DAY CARE

This type of program is rapidly increasing, and could be given more encouragement by the development of certain support systems to the day care giver. Radio and TV programs could be very helpful to her, and indeed to the mothers of all young children. Short courses, such as the one pioneered at Sheridan College, could be made available across the province. One day nursery is now experimenting with a mobile van to visit these homes with toys and advice to day care givers. In other circumstances, the day care homes are attached to a nearby nursery where they may visit with their children, borrow toys and seek fresh ideas.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PARENT-CONTROLLED NURSERIES

The trend towards the nursery administration and program by the parents themselves has many benefits in cost saving, spread of better child rearing practices, and the development of a neighbourly spirit in local communities.

DAY CARE COUNSELLING

This program was successfully pioneered at Queen's Park, and demonstrated that good child care could be found throughout the community, but that the parents felt more satisfied with the type of care they are receiving if they have practical advice from a counsellor who is thoroughly familiar with all types of day care. This service should be available in every municipality and, in fact, in municipalities which have not previously had day care it might be the first step towards setting up a day care service.

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer service is more readily available in our communities to-day than it was a few years ago. A plan for recruiting and training volunteers for use in nurseries should be demonstrated, so that groups of nurseries might band together and share a staff member who would undertake the continuing task of finding and supervising volunteers.

GROUP DAY CARE CENTRES

In the past public interest was largely focussed on these centres. Now we are beginning to look on such a centre as a nucleus from which a whole network of day care services may radiate - a demonstration of good child care, training of students, stimulation for private homes giving day care and attached to the centre.

Our growing knowledge of child development is relevant not only in the day nursery, but to all our child and family welfare programs, as well as health and educational programs. Our goal should therefore be to create a new type of setting combining welfare, health and education programs on behalf of young children and their families.

Such a setting would include the following:

- (a) Counselling services - pre-marital and marriage counselling, pre-natal classes, counselling about family problems, income maintenance, etc.
- (b) Health Services: Well child supervision and family health problems.
- (c) Group programs in home management and child care.
- (d) Day nurseries for mothers where it seems beneficial for the whole family that the mother take part or full time employment outside the home.

- (e) The first few years of the educational system might fit very well into a setting of this type - nursery school, kindergarten and the three primary grades.
- (f) The setting might also be used for family recreation, so that neighbourliness would develop, and families would know and help each other in times of crisis.

As most of these services are now available, but in a haphazard and co-ordinated fashion, the cost of combining them and thus making them more comprehensive and effective should not be too high.

Day care is playing an increasingly extensive and important part in the lives of many families and children throughout Ontario.

E. M. Stapleford

E. M. Stapleford, M.A.,
Consultant in Early
Childhood Education,
Ministry of Community and
Social Services.

May, 1976.