

# Community

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Jason Merrimen was urged by Aaron Alfred to drink his milk at Ashworth Co-op nursery. The children were enjoying a nourishing hot meal at the co-op which is staffed by professionals but owned and operated by participating parents.

## Hazel McCallion:

**"Government is inefficient..."**  
Hazel McCallion, former mayor of Streetsville and a member of Mississauga city council, visited day care centres last week. She said she is compelled to do her own leg work and make her own comparisons between privately owned day care centres and municipal centres because she is disturbed about the price gap between the two.

She spoke out firmly against government involvement in operating day care centres because of demonstrable government inefficiency.

"Privately owned businesses are inevitably more efficient than government operations," she said. "This is reflected in day care costs. Excellent private centres charge as little as \$30 a week and still make a profit. Government centres are putting prices up to \$47.50 and certainly not making a profit. Any business operated by any level of government is always less efficient than private enterprise."

Her solution to the problem is to turn the existing municipal centres over to private enterprise with the government renting them the premises, and retaining the responsibility of licensing. Needy families would continue to be subsidized.

She indicated she is convinced the public would be offered an excellent service at a cost considerably lower than the government centres.



Dwayne Sullivan, 3, is only pretending to nap at the King St. day nursery. As well as providing facilities for outdoor and indoor play, day care nurseries must also arrange rest periods for the children.

# Day care: Who pays and how much?

By BETTIE BRADLEY

Once upon a time the issue was the necessity of day care. Opponents claimed children shouldn't be cared for by strangers; mothers of preschoolers belonged at home.

In the '50s and '60s the arguments were bitter because the real problem was not day care itself but the mass entry of mothers into the working world.

In the '70s the day care issue resolved itself — not by debate but by

the changing social and economic climate.

Day care became a necessary byproduct of the soaring divorce and separation rate. The resulting single parent families not only included the single mother but a new phenomenon, the wage-earning single father.

Even in two-parent homes the dual economic squeeze of climbing in-

flation and unemployment pulled mothers into the work force.

Further, the emergence of women's consciousness and a reluctance to be financially dependent on a husband made many women hesitant about leaving careers they had worked hard to build.

Day care quietly became a necessary and accepted part of contemporary life.

Today the urgent question is: Who pays?

## Private versus public

Privately-owned day care centres offer their services for as little as \$30 a week. Comparable government centres will be charging \$47.50 a week. The question raised is why does the government service cost more than the profit-making private service?

Michael Kinder, director of the Peel division of the community and social services ministry, conceded that requirements for both types of schools are identical, but suggested that perhaps government centres are more heavily staffed. Both private and municipal centres are licensed by the province.

Both must meet the same property zoning requirements. Both must pass fire and police muster. Both must adhere to the same rigid standards of teaching, supervision and feeding. At the moment, Peel is served by nine municipal schools, nine co-ops, 42 private and two for the retarded.

### MODEL OF EFFICIENCY

Mini-Skool is the largest of the day nurseries. We visited the Bromsgrove branch off Winston Churchill Boulevard which can accommodate 200 children.

Mini-Skool is one of the few day care centres that will accept babies. The well-equipped nursery, with a licensed nurse always on duty, cares for babies from six weeks. There is one supervisor for every four babies. The cost for baby care is \$40 a week.

Parents pay \$37 for children age two to three and \$34 for children three to six.

Mini-Skool likes to invite people from the community to speak to the children such as police officers or firefighters. The children may cook with a visitor for instance, so that they learn to taste and touch.

In the nursery, one tiny baby was being cuddled and rocked in a rocking chair, two were sleeping peacefully, one was gurgling happily in a reclining supporter and another was playing in a sandbox with special play-sand, and all was serene.

### "HAPPY FACES" CHARGES \$30

By chance, the visit of Hazel McCallion to a branch of Happy Faces Day Care Centre coincided with our visit. The Lolita Gardens branch, near Dundas and Cawthra, accommodates 65, is handled by a staff of nine and charges \$30 a week.

About 50 per cent of the children come from single-parent families that cut across a broad spectrum: Children from low and middle income families, a professor's child, a doctor's child. About 18 of the children are subsidized by community and social services. To obtain assistance, low-income families are interviewed by phone and subsequently visited in their home by an employee of community and social services department.

At the school the children are divided into groups by age with activities and crafts tailored to stimulate each group.

There are snacks morning and afternoon with a well balanced mid-day meal. Dietitian Ruth Woodruff, who managed her own hotel in England, takes great pride in the meals she painstakingly prepares.

Because children often dislike cooked vegetables, she camouflages them in thick home-made stews, soups and shepherd's pies all made from fresh vegetables and fresh meats. Raw vegetables are always served.

Margaret McIvor, owner-operator of Happy Faces, likes the challenge of occasionally working with a child with problems. A couple of years ago she accepted a child judged severely retarded and refused admittance by other schools. Last week, we observed that child, tidying toys, relating happily with the other children, responding to the attention of his teacher.

"Financially I didn't need to start Happy Faces Schools," she told us, "but you can see the real rewards when you talk to that one child."

### GOVERNMENT OPERATED NURSERIES

King Street Day Nursery is a municipal project — one of seven Peel municipal day nurseries. There are three in Bramalea and one each servicing the Streetsville area of Dixie-Bloor, Lakeshore-Cawthra and King-Hurontario.

The municipal rate will be \$47.50 a week.

We spoke with Noreen Bush who explained the staff of nine included five with early child education diplomas.

They accept children from age two if they are toilet trained. Again, play activities are well organized. Morning and afternoon snacks are served and the mid-day meal is hot. The nursery is open five days a week from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### CO-OP DAY NURSERIES

The third type of day care centre is the co-op. Typical is the Ashworth Square Co-op day nursery started and owned by participating parents. They charge \$30 and the money is used to rent space, buy materials and hire accredited teachers.

Currently three full-time teachers, one part-time, a supervisor and cook care for 26 children.

Children arrive at 7.15 a.m. and stay until 6 p.m.

Parents become deeply involved in the co-op. Fathers make repairs, build equipment and parents raise money for new supplies.

Photos by Ron Pozzer



Brandon Murphy and Christopher Blair play out of doors at Happy Faces day nursery, Lolita Branch. Day nurseries apportion outdoor play time both morning and afternoon. Most of the nurseries have a good assortment of sturdy equipment to encourage active play and maximum exercise. With constant supervision there seems to be minimum strife with strong emphasis on sharing the most popular pieces of equipment.



Children love visitors and are curious about strangers. Michael Somes peaked through the classroom door at Mini Skool on Bromsgrove Rd., ready to say hello and have a visit. Mini Skool encourages visitors and frequently invites members of the community to speak to the children or to give a demonstration to the

older children. The directors of the nurseries feel this contact with the adult world contributes to the child's curiosity about the world around him. A firefighter, police officer, storekeeper, schoolteacher may share his own experiences and outline a typical day to the great delight of the children.