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33



Struggles and sit-ins

The early years of Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre and child care in Canada

Julie Mathien, June 2021

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About the author

Julie Mathien is a long time child care advocate and parent of two child care “graduates”. She was a proud participant in all building occupations organized by the Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre. For most of her career, she worked in local and provincial government in Ontario developing and implementing children’s policy and programs as well as designing, conducting and managing research. She is particularly interested in the intersection of child care and kindergarten/primary education. She retired from the position of Director, Early Learning and Child Development Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Province of Ontario, in 2012. Julie has a BA in History from York University and an MA in the History of Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Her thesis is titled, *Children, Families and Institutions in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Ontario*.

Foreward

This paper documents and records the roots of modern child care policy in Canada, the beginnings of the Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre (CCCDCC), the rise of community-based child care in Ontario and the first wave of child care advocacy. The goal was to create an accurate and publicly engaging document to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the co-op, which was founded by a group of feminists in 1969. Participation in both the centre and in the politics of the day was life-changing for many of us who were involved.

CCCDCC was the first child care centre on the University of Toronto campus and one of the first of the new wave of child care centres, which, for the first time, were operated by parents and communities, adding to the small number of existing centres operated by municipal governments, charitable organizations and private, for-profit operators. Child care itself provided the impetus for the development of new and contested social and education policy. Middle-class parents who, for the first time, were starting to use full-time child care, demanded to be involved in both policy and programs.

Readers may notice the lack of footnotes or endnotes. The paper was written in an informal rather than a formal, academic style. Where necessary, sources are cited within the paper and readers will find a list of [primary and secondary sources](#) on pages 61-64.

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude:

The past and present children, parents and staff of
Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre;

The “Founders”, who, 50 years ago, decided to “do something” instead of just sitting around and talking;

John Foster and Kathryn Petersen, the two “Founders” who saved the documents that made it possible to tell the whole story;

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The University of Toronto which, in the end, took campus child care on board as a critical support for the children of faculty, staff and students. Never too late.

Maybe when they grow up, the toddlers playing in the sunshine on Devonshire Place will be able to tell their own children how they helped to occupy a building at the University of Toronto.

— Kathleen Rex. *Globe and Mail*. September 7, 1972

In 1969, if you wanted to break new ground and set up a parent co-operative child care centre in your community, Toronto wasn't a bad place to do it.

We were and remain, a city of neighbourhoods. In the late '60's and early 70's, a wave of municipal activism was rolling across what was, pre-amalgamation, the City of Toronto. As happened in a number of large, North American cities, citizens pushed back against the uber-development that was responsible for taller buildings, expressways and the destruction of heritage sites. Families were moving back downtown and buying the large Victorian houses that had been abandoned to rooming house landlords in previous decades. A civic activist named Jane Jacobs moved from New York to Toronto and had a profound influence on city planning here.

The 1971 municipal election tossed out the pro-development old guard on City Council and ushered in a group of young reformers led by Mayor David Crombie, who, early in his first term, persuaded City Council to limit heights on new buildings to 40 feet and decentralized municipal planning by sending planners out of City Hall into neighbourhoods. That same election also greatly increased the number of reform trustees on the Toronto Board of Education, which proceeded to work at building a more egalitarian school system and, along the way, developed a network of parent-governed school-based child care centres.

You also would have been able to build on Toronto's history of programs and services for children. Toronto Public Health had been a leader in child population health since the early 20th century. The City, along with community-based children's organizations, were early supporters of supervised playgrounds. The Hospital for Sick Children, established in 1875, was known throughout North America as a pediatric care and research centre. In 1881, The Toronto Board of Education was the second school board in North America to establish public kindergartens. Settlement houses supported newcomer families and children. The Institute for Child Study at the University of Toronto, founded during the heyday of the "scientific" child rearing era, had focussed on research and programs for young children since 1925.

Perhaps most important in this case, Toronto was one of two cities in Canada to receive federal and provincial funds for the development of child care centres during World War II. When the war ended and the federal funding disappeared, Toronto parents fought back and persuaded the City to partner with the Province of Ontario and keep many of the centres open. These centres formed the backbone of the network of municipal child care centres that played a major role in the development of the child care movement, and still exist in Toronto.

At the provincial level, in 1946, largely as a result of the push-back against the attempted closing of Toronto's wartime day nurseries, Ontario passed the first "day nurseries" (or, in contemporary language, child care) legislation in Canada. *The Day Nurseries Act* defined child care, outlined the funding framework and set the standards for licensing facilities and programs.

This isn't to say that Toronto was free of racism and class bias or that it was a paradise for all children and their families, but the structure for change existed and in 1969, change was very much in the wind, both here and internationally.

From the mid-sixties onward, teenagers and young adults, born in the population boom that occurred after World War II, took unprecedented command of popular culture and built alternatives outside the mainstream. This age group had developed its own culture for centuries, but the sheer numbers of the huge demographic known as the “baby boom” or the “bulge in the boa constrictor” made it a force that the rest of society simply could not ignore. While commitment to changing society wasn’t a guiding motive for all boomers, it was for the founders of Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre.

Many in this new generation across North America and Europe rejected the norms and expectations established by authority figures by very publicly using drugs, having sex before marriage or simply not getting married and working to break down previous class and gender role restrictions. At an age when their parents had settled into nuclear families, many lived together in groups and volunteered and bought food and other necessities at non-profit co-ops. In downtown Toronto, on the edge of the U of T campus, an entire high-rise apartment building called Rochdale, after the town in England where the co-operative movement began, was devoted to communal living. It isn’t entirely co-incidental that the Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre and the Woodstock Festival celebrated a 50th anniversary in the same year.

Some boomers took a sharp political turn left and, with their peers, were a prominent force and a challenge to existing institutions. A few groups described themselves as revolutionary, and visibly and forcibly battled class discrimination and racism. Some, such as Weather Underground and the Black Panthers, engaged in armed struggle.

Throughout North America and Europe, students in high schools, colleges and universities challenged both government and the governing bodies of their institutions. Student movements in North

America and Europe differed in their demands. Canadian and American campuses were consumed with opposing the war in Viet Nam and racial discrimination at home. Canadian students often allied themselves with the new wave of Canadian nationalism.

In the US, the killing of unarmed students by the National Guard at Kent State University and the occupations at Berkeley and Columbia were prominent in the media and in the public mind. However, Canadian universities were by no means immune to student action. Simon Fraser University in 1968, was the site of demonstrations and occupations and, ultimately, the firing of a department chair and eight faculty when students and professors decided on collective management of the Department of Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology. In early 1969, to escalate a complaint of racism against a professor, two hundred students at Sir George Williams University occupied the computer centre on campus for several days. When the police broke down the doors, a fire broke out, computers were destroyed and the building sustained \$2 million in damage.

Students in Europe too focussed their attention on breaking down the rigid structures in government and in broader society, structures based on older and more traditional norms. Nineteen sixty-eight was a critical year when European campuses exploded and students rioted demanding, with some success, more equitable power-sharing across generations and social classes.

However, whatever the international differences, student movements had in common collective action, opposition to class, racial and gender discrimination and demands that universities tear down their real and metaphysical walls and engage with communities on the other side.

Especially for white, middle-class kids, universities were crucibles of change. Post-secondary education expanded post-war, as did

student enrollment. Students in that era, usually from relatively privileged families and often living away from home for the first time, were bombarded with new ideas. In addition to the broader movements for political and social reform, students demanded that universities change the way in which they organized themselves and educated students. This included broadening curricula, making way for stronger student governance and changing admission criteria to support a more diverse student body.

Although it would be decades before campuses looked more racially diverse, in many countries, more women enrolled. As happened after World War II, when governments paid veterans to go back to school, some university students were parents. Unlike the immediate post-war experience, young mothers, at least in Canada and the US, were starting to return to school to finish their degrees after having babies.

What we now know as second-wave feminism emerged from the confluence of the broader equity-seeking momentum of the student movement and at the time, more mainstream feminism that promoted equal gender relations in the family and fought discrimination against women, especially in the workforce. While the two streams were, at least initially, sometimes at odds, both supported equal pay and equal access to employment as well as reproductive choice, and a childhood free of gender stereotyping. Both fully understood the critical role that child care could play in supporting equal rights and opportunities for women. However, unity in support of LGBTQ women took some years to achieve.

Education for children and youth in elementary and high schools was also affected by the wave of change. The idea that schools should be organized in ways that fit the needs and talents of individual children rather than the prevailing, more industrial “one size fits all” approach had slowly made its way over from England, where Summerhill School was founded in 1921 by Alexander Neill,

while proponents like John Holt were having an impact on North American schools.

The Premier of Ontario, William G. Davis, appointed Emmett Hall, a federal Supreme Court Justice and Lloyd Dennis, a former school Principal, to head a commission tasked with providing recommendations to transform public education from “the lock-step practice of past times” to a recognition of student “natural curiosity and initiative”. Private schools such as Everdale, located outside Toronto, provided more student autonomy and choice. The Toronto Board of Education established alternative secondary and later, elementary schools within the public system. Education reformers, some of whom were connected with both Everdale and early campus-based child care, started a national magazine titled *This Magazine is About Schools*.

So, the local environment in Toronto was at least friendly, and broader social movements informed and encouraged individuals and organizations who were fighting for change. However, this is also a story of how hard it is to make change and how long change can take.

In the early spring of 1969, a bright, orange leaflet, authored by the Women's Liberation Movement-Toronto, circulated throughout the University of Toronto campus. Headlined "Campus Community Day Care Centre", it stated that all women had a right to work, that day care should exist for everyone and that "childrearing should not be the sole responsibility of women, but should be shared by the whole community...". The flyer included contact information for three of the future founders, a graduate student, a staff member of the U of T Students' Administrative Council (SAC) and a community organizer, so that parents who wanted to use or volunteers who wanted to help establish a "cheap, safe and well-run cooperative Day Care Centre" could be in touch. The founders also wrote letters to student and staff organizations and received 40 registrations for a centre that had yet to exist. When asked why this particular group decided to start a child care co-op, one of them, Sarah Spinks, said simply, "Other groups were doing a lot of talking and we decided to actually do something."

On September 22, 1969, the Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre opened its doors as the first child care centre at the University of Toronto. Since the original flyer, the group had repeatedly and unsuccessfully asked the university for space for a child care centre to serve the campus and surrounding community. The founders decided that the new centre would serve infants and toddlers, as very few centres existed for these age groups. Federal maternity leave benefits weren't established until 1971, so unless a new mother could negotiate leave with her employer or afford to leave her job, she needed to have some form of child care available soon after her baby was born.

Members of the founding group had entered through an unlocked window at the back of a university-owned house at 12 Sussex Avenue and spent the weekend putting down carpet and moving in supplies and equipment to welcome the children and their parents

who arrived that first morning. Later, Spinks wrote, in an undated article in *This Magazine is About Schools*, “Monday came and about ten babies were carried in...The parents looked a little dubious. A few of the volunteers talked about revolution, had very long hair and generally looked a little scruffy to handle their pink-knit babies. But the day was so jubilant that they swallowed their fears and brought in their little bags of food, diapers and clothing.”

Since the centre was a co-op, everyone pitched in. To assist the two paid co-ordinators, all parents contributed to the centre’s operations by either doing a weekly half-day shift “on the floor” (literally and figuratively) or cleaning the centre after it closed for the day. The co-op (staff, parents and volunteers) members were expected to participate in bi-weekly meetings to plan, problem-solve and discuss the centre’s direction. Keeping the staff contingent at six adults every half-day meant that a volunteer co-ordinator managed 30-40 people a week.

Understanding that parents and other volunteers (most of whom weren’t, at that point, parents) were unlikely to have had experience with children, especially babies, in a group setting, everyone involved received a handbook. The mimeographed document had meticulous instructions on things like changing a diaper without sticking a pin in the wearer, managing individual feedings for babies and group meals and snacks for older children, as well as using the big blackboard in the main playroom to track diaper changes, naps and feedings. Instruction on behaviour guidance was somewhat less detailed. Regarding adult intervention in child interaction, the early handbooks state, “At the moment, there’s no guide except your own judgement about what should be done. The point is that each individual acts according to his own feelings. We should talk about these things and be consistent in our reactions.”

Like most infant/toddler programs today, the centre’s activities revolved around individual child schedules which changed as they

moved along through the days, months and developmental stages. It may have been a measure of initial lack of both experience and existing program models that the activity section of the first handbook was two out of a total of 21 pages. Organized or semi-organized activities were described as an alternative to “doing nothing” and consisted of a list and basic instructions for water play, music, reading, dressing up, walking to the park and talking with the children.

Much of both available versions of the handbook (the first version prior to the spring of 1970 and the second afterwards) outline the political values and principles of the new centre. The handbook and documents such as meeting notes show how hard the fledgling group worked to build a better child care centre and a better world.

The goals of the centre showed a sincere desire to do the right thing for children and for broader society. They were:

1. Programs that reflect the skills and values of our community for the benefit of the individual child;
2. No aim beyond the best and most sensitive care for children;
3. Free child care of the highest quality for everyone;
4. No conflict of interest resulting from day care centres at places of work. This makes the worker too vulnerable;
5. Our children, our money, our control.

Although the handbooks acknowledged that parents choose child care for many reasons, both versions state that: “All the needs and desires boil down to one hard-core thing as far as this day care is concerned: we are trying to build a community – a co-operative community – for the kids, parents, staff and volunteers that make the centre work”.

Building a community included “a whole new approach to family structure”. The second handbook contained a brief critique of the nuclear family and adds that, “a parent-controlled, co-operative centre should be a community which, in a sense, becomes a family with everyone in that community sharing responsibility for the children and the children relating freely as individuals to each other and to adults.”

The founders were intent that the centre be “more than a drop-off babysitting service” and a place where parents would become involved in “in thinking and talking about the concerns that we face in bringing up our children.” The handbook went on to state a vision for the new program, which was that it be “an extremely important base for learning about, and beginning to change, the attitudes of society in raising children in a nuclear family, to giving and sharing according to one’s needs, and being a part of a co-operative group sharing responsibility for each other’s children, learning co-operation and finding friendship and help.” From the start, the new centre was committed to expanding co-operative child care across communities and providing it to all families at no cost.

Founded by feminists, Campus Co-op was also strongly committed to an anti-sexist environment and relations between and among adults and children. Not only were children encouraged to play with a whole range of toys and to choose activities on the basis of what they wanted to do, not according to adult expectations of what girls or boys should do, adults were expected to be examples by divesting stereotyped male and female roles and behaviour to create a more egalitarian child care centre, community and, ultimately, society.

Not for want of trying, this was (and remains) easier said than done. The concern about lack of success in this area was ongoing,

especially as children grew older and acted on one of the other fundamental philosophical pillars of the centre, child autonomy. One of the original parents said in an interview, “Some kids found it too chaotic...If an unstructured environment isn’t managed, the most aggressive kids, usually boys, rise to the top.”

The task of shifting the influences of a society based on different and unequal roles and expectations according to gender continues today. Our group realized, and fretted about, the inability of one small group to make more progress in this area. An undated document titled, “Sexism and Sussex-Devonshire, a Working Document” expressed great concern that pre-schoolers “can now tell us that they are little “girls” or little “boys” ...Now they can talk and explain things and we can see how affected they are by the society around them. The girls dress up and play in groups and act as nurturers.” Spinks’ piece in *This Magazine is About Schools* said bluntly, “...our children are not isolated from the surrounding community and they frequently express sex-stereotyped behaviour. We have not been able to combat this behaviour in a consistent and positive way.”

3

The Campus Community Co-operative approach of building a new type of community rather than simply starting a service, although shared by other university and community-based child care centres that were beginning to emerge, was unusually intense. The politics (“It’s our view that matters of staff and standards should be decided by parents and not arbitrarily imposed by ill-informed governments”) put groups like Campus Community Co-operative on a collision course with the government departments, both provincial and municipal, that enforced the law and regulations related to child care.

The centre was not alone. It was influenced by the Louis Riel University Family Co-op, which arose from student political action a year earlier at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. Melodie Killian, in her position paper on child care, *Children Are Only Little People*, describes a centre named “The Family”, which was “non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian and communal in theory and in practice.” Closer to home, parents who were students at York University started a co-operative child care centre in 1969. By the fall of 1970, they had acquired space from the university and were operating a licensed child care centre for 37 children. Klemmer Farmhouse Co-operative, at the University of Waterloo, was organized by campus parents, also in 1969. By 1971, there were 23 campus child care centres located across Canada in six provinces, the largest number being in Ontario.

Our group was sure-footed when it came to politics. Operating a child care centre on a daily basis was a different matter. Translating the commitment to community-building into the operational details of providing what was, in effect, a service, was a difficult task. Meeting notes from the early-mid 1970’s indicate both competing goals and a gradual shift in emphasis from the broader politics to the difficulties associated with running a good child care centre.

Tensions arose very soon after the centre opened. The communal nature of child care was appealing to people who believed in the importance of collective action. However, this political context and the structure needed to operate a co-operative child care centre were, at times, in conflict with more counter-culture, laissez-faire approaches. In addition, parents leading a more mainstream life-style found co-op participation and meetings onerous time-wise, especially if they were raising kids on their own.

At a January 11, 1970 (a Sunday) volunteers meeting, the three main points of discussion were:

- Ideology behind the setting up of the centre;
- Moving those involved in the centre to become politicized;
- Making the centre a public demand, including relationships with the University, the provincial Day Nurseries Branch, employers and other centres.

The problems are described as:

- “The co-operative does not touch our lives.” Some use the service but don’t become involved; volunteers feel like “service people” and not co-op members; some parents see the centre as “cheap babysitting”.
- How do we create a revolutionary day care?
- Possessiveness – i.e private possession of food or clothes.

The solutions involved research and education, e.g. critiques of magazine articles on women, children and families, posters on walls and encouragement of parents to interact with all children, not just their own.

Even early on, the parents and other centre supporters understood their vulnerability in simply existing as they were. At this meeting,

the group agreed to ask the university for better, larger premises. It also decided to establish “crisis machinery” in case the centre was “in danger of sudden closure.”

The meeting closed with encouragement to join at least one of three committees: Research and Education, a group to set up the new “creative room” and another group which was proposing to work with parents at the York University co-op who were writing an alternative version of *The Day Nurseries Act*, the provincial legislation that covered child care.

By April, each parent and many of the volunteers were assigned to one of 10 committees, all of which reported to the general meeting. A partial list of committee names appeared in a newsletter: the Services Committee, which looked after administrative details; the Research Committee, which was established to research child care operations, child care courses and communal child rearing in other societies, and the Handbook Committee.

The newsletter also reported that toys needed to be renewed and that volunteers should arrive for each shift with a program idea to implement. There was concern that the centre cleaning was inadequate and a plea for someone to co-ordinate the clean-up volunteers. The two volunteers who came in every Sunday for the weekend cleaning asked for assistance. The volunteer co-ordinator was moving on and a replacement was being sought.

A day care seminar (sponsor unknown) was planned for a Saturday in early May. Workshops included: Day care in other countries: What exists and how is it financed?; Existing legislation: How relevant is it for co-ops and what changes are required to promote and facilitate the setting up of co-ops?; Needs of working class and welfare women and how they differ from the needs of middle-class women; Needs of children for day care and the concept of tribal parenting.

A section of the newsletter titled “Ideology” was about the children’s program, not the broader political context. Assigned to both the Research Committee and the Handbook Committee, the newsletter presents this ongoing area of debate as a binary issue rather than a continuum when it states:

“Any discussion of programme, day-to-day operations, complaints or suggestions eventually leads to the same underlying problem of conflict between two ideologies:

1. The idea that the programme should be unstructured, relaxed and free;
2. The idea that there should be more detailed scheduling and a learning environment created.

This question should be thoroughly discussed and written about so that a consistent Day Care policy (sic) can be formed.”

Recent interviews with parents and staff from these early days indicate a difference in approach. Staff were more comfortable with a laid-back approach than some parents, especially as their children grew older.

Funding was an ongoing issue. Without a licence to operate a child care centre, which was still three years away at this point, the centre couldn’t apply to Metro Toronto for a contract to provide publicly subsidized child care spaces, so the centre was trying to subsidize internally. The original revenue was generated by charging \$30.00 per family per month. Higher income families could contribute over this amount if they wished. The total raised by this method wasn’t sufficient to meet the cost of operation and certainly didn’t allow the group to be the model employer that it wished to be. For example, the two paid co-ordinators made less than \$300.00 a month.

The Service Committee introduced a sliding fee scale based on net family income and number of adults and children in the family. Starting at \$4,000 per year and moving up the income ladder to \$14,000, the base fee started at \$40.00 per month and ended at \$80.00 with a surcharge for each additional child.

Unfortunately, although the general meeting agreed to implement the new scale, the July newsletter reported that many families didn't pay the increased fees, so the centre had to adopt a \$10.00 per month flat increase, which, as the newsletter pointed out, wasn't fair to lower-income families. The newsletter implied that some higher-income parents were reluctant to pay the increased fees.

If this sounds like a lot of work, it was. Even today, starting a new child care centre isn't easy and in the late 1960's it was an enormous challenge. The early parent-run centres, with their desire to do things differently, were new to communities, new to government and new to early childhood education. Add the commitment to feminism, class and racial equity, collective decision-making and alternative family structures and child-rearing plus a mistrust of government and authority – and you had an intense environment.

Our group had no program models to emulate, especially for infants and toddlers. In fact, initially, there were no post-secondary early childhood education programs that had an infant/toddler specialty and the qualifications acceptable to the provincial government (e.g. Canadian Mothercraft Society, British nanny training or pediatric nursing) weren't acceptable to the people starting up this new breed of child care centre.

Assistance might have been available through government or the expanding post-secondary ECE training programs, but the existing ECE profession was, early on, leery of full-day child care, and even more so for children under age two. Campus Community Co-operative had no hierarchy, no qualified staff and with its



philosophy and style, was unlikely to reach out for institutional help. It likely just bewildered the provincial inspectors who may have been well-meaning but were used to working with municipal staff, “Mom and Pop” private operators and nursery schools.

Moreover, it was assumed at the time that “nursery school teachers” would be female. A contemporary recruitment leaflet circulated by the province’s Day Nurseries Branch, asked, “It’s a profession for women. Can you guess what it is?” and listed a number of advantages to becoming ECE-qualified including: “...you are preparing yourself for marriage”; “you are also preparing yourself for successful parenthood...”; “...you can work at it before and after you are married” and you can either “take your children to work or open a nursery school in your home.” The male volunteers at many of the campus and community-based child care centres were an innovation, to put it mildly.

While government couldn't regulate parent and community politics or lifestyle, it could and did enforce Ontario's *Day Nurseries Act* and regulations, which, since the late '40's, has contained the standards for operating child care centres. These included, among other things, physical plant, program and, most critically for our group, staff training. This last, in particular, would set the stage for a major dispute with the provincial authorities about whether Campus Community Co-operative qualified to obtain a licence to operate.

4

By the early 1970's, the centre was fighting for survival on two fronts. The regulatory bodies started to visit the centre almost as soon as it opened and provided a list of necessary health and safety renovations, which our group couldn't afford, along with a demand, based on legislation, that it hire a qualified supervisor. In addition, the group's hold on the house that it had occupied was threatened by the university.

Despite the documented demand for on-campus child care and unlike its colleague institution, York University, the U of T refused to consider the centre's request for a guarantee of long-term occupancy of 12 Sussex or a larger building that could accommodate the growing population of two-year-olds who were ageing out of the infant-toddler program. The house was scheduled for demolition at an undetermined future point to make way for the new Innis College building.

The matter came to a head in late February, 1970 when the parents received a letter from Crown Trust, the university's property manager, demanding \$300.00 rent, even though they had no lease and believed that they were still negotiating occupancy. This was followed by a letter on March 20 from university staff stating that, although the centre could stay at 12 Sussex until April 30, 1972, there was no guarantee that another location would be made available and that the university would not make or finance the renovations needed to obtain a licence to operate a child care centre. (As a historical note, 12 Sussex was not demolished and is still standing.)

By this time, 15-20 families were participating in the co-op and depended on the centre to care for their children while they worked. The lack of a stable home was unsettling.

At meetings in the days after the receipt of the university's letter, parents and volunteers decided to organize an on-campus rally and demonstration to publicize their cause. Flyers went out across

campus to meet at the main Faculty of Arts and Science building, Sidney Smith Hall, at noon on March 25. *The Varsity* campus newspaper published an extra issue promoting the event. The centre demanded guaranteed, rent-free space large enough to accommodate an expanding enrolment and renovated to comply with licencing requirements. The cost of renovations was estimated at \$23,000.

A crowd of about 300 demonstrators gathered at Sid Smith and, after some brief speeches, the march across St. George St and over to Simcoe Hall, the university's main administrative building which housed the senate chamber and the office of President Claude Bissell, was underway.

The demo stopped outside Simcoe Hall, which, uncharacteristically, had a line of security at the entrance. President Bissell refused to come out and speak to the crowd. At that point, the wave of demonstrators surged through the imposing, dark green double doors into the small foyer and up the marble stairs to the second floor.

The first major sit-in ever at the University of Toronto began.

Media response was almost immediate. The next morning, the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's morning newspaper, ran front page, above the fold coverage with huge headlines and additional photos and articles inside the paper. According to the *Globe*, "The occupation began when an assortment of mothers, babies, teachers and students shoved their way past campus guards and forced open the doors of the senate chamber." *The Toronto Telegram* blared, "Mothers with Babies Lead U of T Protest." A bit confused, the "Telly" stated that the centre and the demo were sponsored by the Women's Liberation Front (WLF) or the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) and various other left-wing organizations. A *Toronto Star* editorial called the situation a "Bizarre Sit-in" and

described President Bissell as being “suddenly besieged by angry women and squalling babies.” The focus on women, mothers and babies was a theme in the coverage, even though there were very few children involved.

Accounts vary regarding what happened throughout the 22-hour sit-in (the *Globe and Mail* described what it believed to be a takeover by hard-core leftists), but accounts are consistent that the President initially declined to put a verbal commitment to fund the child care renovations in writing and demanded that the crowd leave Simcoe Hall. The demonstrators refused to leave until they had a written commitment and settled in for the duration. A number of faculty members and the Students Administrative Council supported the sit-in. SAC voted \$500 towards the expense of keeping the occupation going. Perlmutter’s, a local bakery in nearby Kensington Market, donated bread, bagels and buns.



The stalemate lasted until later on March 26, when President Bissell announced to the crowd, which had now grown to 500, that he was giving his personal guarantee that the funds to renovate 12 Sussex for child care would be found, although he would not commit that the university would officially provide on-campus child care. Chanting, “We won! We won!”, demonstrators began to clean up the senate chamber and ended the occupation.

The editorial response in two of Toronto’s major papers did not support the occupation. The *Toronto Star* called it “illegal and an unacceptable way of resolving campus problems”, minimizing the action by hypothesizing that, at the end of the school year, seizing buildings was “more fun than it is to hit the books and put ordered thoughts to paper”. The *Globe and Mail* was also negative, stating that the win showed that “those who showed up from the ranks of every activist organization on the campus” could force the university authorities to back down. It also implied that the demonstration had been taken over by “elements that have their own purposes” and criticized the organizers for involving children. The *Globe’s* final assessment was that the demonstrators were lucky in that “they were able to assert their control eventually” and that they were “dealing with a cool, accommodating man”. On April 6, an editorial cartoon by Duncan Macpherson, the dean of political cartoonists in the Canadian English-language press, was less complimentary to President Bissell. It showed the President, in full academic garb with a pacifier in his mouth, pushing a pram carrying a pot-smoking, Marcuse-reading bearded student wearing sunglasses and a baby bonnet. The caption read, “Once more around the campus, Claude.”

The *Globe* editorial was consistent with the coverage of the occupation by their journalist on the scene, Ross Munro. From the start, and despite strong denials from Campus Community Co-op spokespeople, which included a steaming letter published by the

Globe, Munro described a scene where the child care demonstrators had lost control of the occupation to “...radicals – Maoists, Trotskyists and their supporters...” Following the occupation, he had an exclusive interview with President Bissell. Titled “Ending a sit-in... with minimum of evil”, the piece published on April 2, revealed the university’s account of how parents and their supporters came to stay overnight in Simcoe Hall.

Apparently, the President had no idea what was going on when he looked out his window and saw the protestors at the front door. He didn’t go down to speak to them because he didn’t quite know what to say. This does seem a bit disingenuous, considering that there were flyers all over campus and the *Varsity* had printed an extra issue devoted entirely to the plight of Campus Community Co-operative. It also ignores the question of the security at the door of Simcoe Hall, which was by no means the norm.

Munro blames middle-level university staff for the President’s lack of warning that child care had become more than just an administrative issue. His article describes a situation where the file had moved from the office of the Vice-President, Academic (which he stated had been helpful) to the Vice-President Non-Academic, whose office had sent the March 20 letter to the centre. Evidently, when there was no immediate response from the child care centre, staff assumed that all was well and didn’t give President Bissell’s office a heads-up. Munro also refined his analysis of the role of the left during the occupation. At this point, he reported that the groups he considered to be the hard left, e.g. Maoists and Trotskyists, were a nuisance and were eventually outnumbered by the child care participants and the more moderate new left, in which there was, actually, significant overlapping membership.

In fact, President Bissell, told the *Globe* that the university was so alarmed by actions such as the identity checks established temporarily by one of the vanguard groups, that it had an injunction

ready to go if the occupation participants had turned down the promise of funding. He stated, “Once a sit-in like that starts, you can’t make a right decision. You can only make a decision that has a minimum of evil consequences.”

While the use of the word “evil” may seem excessive about an occupation demanding funds for child care, it helps to bear in mind that, until this time, U of T had seemed immune to the unrest that had occurred on other campuses. A year previously, Simon Fraser University, emulated by Campus Community Co-operative, had exploded with challenges from students and faculty members, some of whom were subsequently fired. Only a few months before the Simcoe Hall action, students took over a building on the Sir George Williams (now Concordia University) campus in Montreal, resulting in extensive property damage. So, if, as the *Globe* maintained, the demonstrators were “lucky”, it was quite possible that the university was scared.

Later, the source of Munro’s information regarding the politics of the sit-in became clear – it was President Bissell. In his memoir, *Half-way up Parnassus*, written and published post-retirement, he stuck firmly to the reds-under-the-beds (or in the Senate Chamber) description of the occupation. Moreover, when he wrote of inviting the Campus Community Co-op negotiators, Dr. Lorenne Smith, a parent and Dr. Natalie Zemon-Davis, a sympathetic history professor, to speak with some of the understandably upset U of T Governors, he referred to them as “the ladies” and chided them retrospectively for speaking about women’s rights and child care because this didn’t help soothe the Governors. Although both women were PhDs and tenured professors, he did not use their professional designations, preferring “Mrs. Smith” and “Mrs. Davis”.

Most who participated in the Simcoe Hall child care sit-in will acknowledge that some more doctrinaire leftist organizations were

present – they always arrived at any event with publicity potential – but they were never in control. The inaccurate version of extremist hoards at the gate could not have allayed the anxiety of the Board of Governors and may have come from multiple places: fear, a need for a fig leaf when the university acceded to the sit-in demands and/or an inability to believe that a group led by a bunch of parents, mainly women, could successfully lead and control a sit-in.

5

The child care centre at 12 Sussex started at a time when community-based child care was in its infancy. Although Toronto was ahead of many places in Canada regarding amount and type of service, its legacy was the wartime day nurseries and charitable creches from the late 19th, early 20th century. Many of the former were operated by government to support the war effort and the latter by organizations that were dedicated to working with families in poverty or functioning under other types of stress.

In all cases, the assumed clientele was children in families where the mother “had to” work, often due to unfortunate circumstances. For example, Lady Moss and a number of her friends established Victoria Creche (later Victoria Day Care Services) in 1890 for children of domestics so that they wouldn’t bring the little ones to work. Many of Toronto’s wartime day nurseries, originally established so that women, including mothers, could work in critical areas of the economy when men were serving overseas, had stayed open due to parent opposition to their planned closure when the war ended.

In 1969, according to a report presented to Metro Council by the Toronto Social Planning Council (SPC), Toronto had 46 child care centres to serve all children under age 12. Nine centres, most of which came onstream during the war, were municipally operated; five were charitable centres, which also received funding from the United Way; and 12 were non-profit centres operated by volunteer boards or churches. The largest single type of child care were the 37 centres owned by individuals. The era of for-profit child care chains had not yet emerged and, with a vacuum in provision of service, small-scale entrepreneurs, some of whom had early childhood education qualifications, had stepped in to fill the demand. All licenced programs were located in the pre-amalgamation City of Toronto.

Cost-shared (provincial/municipal) capital funds were available to municipalities, “Indian Bands” and “Associations for the Retarded”. Funds were flowed, also on a cost-shared basis, via fee subsidies for children in families assessed as needing financial assistance. There were no capital funds available to community-based, non-profit child care programs, although if such a centre were granted a license, it could request to enter into an agreement with the municipality in which it was located to provide publicly funded subsidized spaces for families in financial need.

Since 1972, the federal government had contributed funds to the provinces for child care through the Canada Assistance Plan, a landmark national program that modernized social welfare in Canada. The availability of cost-shared federal funds encouraged Metro Toronto, the municipal upper tier government, to support expanded access to child care, both through the construction of new municipal centres and the provision of subsidized spaces in both municipal and privately sponsored centres, both commercial and non-profit.

In response to a report by the Toronto Social Planning Council, which made the case for more and better child care, Metro staff agreed that expansion was, indeed, necessary because “working mothers will continue to be a larger proportion of the labour force”. Nevertheless, the idea of universal child care, or even partial funding for all families, was not evident in public policy at the time.

Metro Toronto’s priority groups for support with access to child care, including assistance with fees, were narrowly defined and limited to:

1. children of working parents (single working mothers; families where the father’s income was inadequate);
2. children with special emotional or social needs;

3. children with intellectual disabilities, who, at the time, were classed as “retarded” and attended special half-day nursery schools.

The new centres built by the municipality were almost entirely in or near the new, post-war public housing developments. Although there were a limited number of half-day nurseries, usually in low-income neighbourhoods that had been grand-parented for funding, the plan was to not increase them until full-day child care services had reached a satisfactory level.

While working outside the home was still, in many families and in the public mind, considered a last resort for mothers, especially those with children under six, there was a growing sense in some parts of government and in social research organizations that change was underway. In 1970, the Women’s Bureau of the Canada Department of Labour published *Working Mothers and Their Child Care Arrangements*, a statistical study based on data specially collected in 1967 using the federal government’s monthly Labour Force Survey. It surveyed married women or women who had been married at some point, who were in the paid labour force and had children under age 14.

According to the report’s data, while maternal labour force participation varied according to age of children in the family, on average, 540,000 or 21% of all Canadian mothers were in the paid labour force, most (68%) working 35 hours or more a week. Ontario led the pack, with 230,000 mothers, or 25% of all mothers, working outside the home.

Working mothers represented 908,000 Canadian children, the majority (63%) of whom were in school. Families of younger children, on the whole, did not use group child care. 64% of children in families where the mother was employed were cared for in their home, usually by the father or another relative. Of the 15% cared

for outside their home – just over half of whom were aged 0-5 — only 1% of the total age cohort were enrolled in a child care centre or nursery school. The percentage rose to 3% for 3-5 year-olds only, so the number of families using infant or toddler group child care was miniscule nation-wide. Regarding fees, 69% of families did not pay anything for child care, although this was skewed by the large number of families with children aged 6-13 years in this category.

In September, 1969, at the same time that our group was trying to figure out how to operate a campus infant-toddler child care centre, The Vanier Institute of the Family held a seminar titled *Day Care, a Resource for the Modern Family*. The purpose of the invitational seminar was to discuss the “full range of child care services needed in a modern community to suit the varying requirements of today’s families.”

The seminar papers covered emerging family patterns, the effects of early childhood experience and an overview of child care in Canada. Participants agreed that the need for increased and improved child care was already well-established due to a continued climb in maternal workforce participation and further, that services must be available to a full range of families, not just those in financial need or experiencing crisis. The summary notes also flagged the need for a more egalitarian relationship between parents and staff and the benefits of play-based programming. The seminar report concludes with the statement: “Supplementary child care services should not be regarded as second-best to the family, but rather as a means of improving the quality of family life.”

In February, 1967, the federal government established The Royal Commission on the Status of Women to “...inquire into...the status of women in Canada...to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society.” The commission

reported in 1970. Although child care was not specifically listed in the nine areas of study, it is featured in the section of the report titled *Parents and Society*. While today we would consider the report cautious, it stated, “There has been what we believe to be misguided opposition to the suggestion that the state play a part in the care of the child...The need for wider community assistance in the care and education of very young children emerges from our findings in improving the position of Canadian women.” Equally important, the report cited well-planned programs during the pre-school years as a contribution to human intellectual development. In 1970, the Royal Commission’s report was released, including six major recommendations for a national child care program.

Finally, in 1972, the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) released the findings of the first national study on the state of child care. Based on a survey from a sample of child care centres and nursery schools taken in early 1968, it provides a detailed account of the state of child care across Canada. The study noted that, in Ontario, programs were skewed towards half-day nursery schools, which were attended by children from higher-income families and was critical of the narrow eligibility criteria for enrollment in municipal child care centres. The study also outlined the child care legislation across Canada, much of which was fairly sparse at the time, and expressed concern about standards and program quality.

The CCSD study contained a mini-report on campus-based child care, in which it was stated, “Generally it would appear that university administrations regard day care as of low priority in comparison with other claims on their funds and building space that have a more direct educational purpose.”

During this period, child care was on its way to becoming one of the most contested social and education programs in post-war

North America. Setting the stage for future debate, the CCSD study stated, "...acceptance of child care as a normal, community service for the normal child in the normal family has had to contend with the persistence of early attitudes associating day care with "welfare and "abnormal" situations."

Child care was on a cusp. The number of mothers in the paid workforce had increased to an extent that government and social research organizations had started to take notice. Since 1966, limited federal funds had been available to the provinces for both capital and operating costs. However, expansion was slow. Whether due to opinions about working moms, about who could and should qualify for assistance or simply a desire to control demand, provinces and in Ontario, municipalities, developed narrow criteria regarding which type of organization would qualify for capital funds and which type of family would qualify for a child care subsidy.

On the demand side, families where the mother worked outside the home had yet to embrace child care centres as an option. Although the number of working mothers was rising, it was still less than 30% of all mothers. As the data from the Women's Bureau study pointed out, most children in families with working mothers were cared for at home and moreover, at no fee.

To want something enough to make a major change, you have to know about it and, in the case of something for your children, you want to know that it works. Licensed child care was scarce and was largely an urban service, so access was an issue. So was affordability, since a fee subsidy was the only public funding available and the financial criteria in most provinces excluded all but the most low-income families.

The small number of centres, the limited assistance with fees and the history of the service as care for children at risk rather than

early childhood education meant that many parents, as well as the general public, were unfamiliar with child care. Many viewed it as something institutional for families with no other option – not themselves. Quality was not assured in every province. No wonder the community-based child care pioneers took matters into their own hands and tried to build something new.

It would take 15-20 years for multiple, intertwined phenomena to combine and generate the strong demand for decent, licensed child care that we see today: participation of mothers in the workforce as the norm; a better understanding of the effects of good child care on children (i.e. knowing that it works); improved quality regulation and enforcement based on research; better (although still not enough) public funding; a perceptual shift that moved child care from a welfare to an education context; a steady increase in use of child care by families (critical mass); and 50 years of child care advocacy.

It was within this context that, with the funds for necessary renovations secured, the Campus Community Co-operative could move on to its next task – obtaining a licence to operate, which would allow it to stay open and also offer fee subsidies to families that qualified financially. The process lasted two and one-half years.

From the start, staff of the Day Nurseries Branch of the province's Department of Social and Family Services and the two relevant City of Toronto departments, Fire and Public Health, visited frequently. They outlined the many requirements needed to bring a slightly run-down Victorian house, that had never been intended to be used for anything other than a family home, up to child care standard. Although they likely held off over the spring and summer of 1970 while the renovations were completed, the licensing activity ramped up in the fall.

On September 9, 1970, two of the founders, Dr. Lorenne Smith and Sarah Spinks, met with Elsie Stapleford, the Director of the Day Nurseries Branch and one of the branch inspectors who visited 12 Sussex on a regular basis. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a brief that the centre had submitted earlier. By this point, the centre had also formally applied for a licence.

The brief (undated) outlines the position of the Campus Community Co-operative parents, staff and volunteers regarding changing the *Day Nurseries Act* in “the ways required in order to make the Act consonant with the need and demand for parent-controlled child care centres”. Most full-day child care centres at this point were operated by an organization – mostly government, charities and commercial operators - *for*, not *with*, parents and their children. The *Day Nurseries Act* both reflected and enabled this.

Like some of the more forward-looking social policy and research organizations at the time, the centre, in this brief, tried to normalize child care by creating an environment where parents and staff

were partners in child rearing and making it a program that all families would feel comfortable using.

The brief argued, correctly, that the legislation and regulations did not adequately support “parent-controlled” child care centres. The fact that capital funding was available only to municipalities, “Indian bands and associations for the retarded” (sic) left child care expansion, at a time of increasing need, in the hands of government or commercial owners, who could borrow funds. Non-profit and co-op programs had no source of funding to build a centre or renovate existing premises for child care.

It also observed that the *Day Nurseries Act*, while strong where health and safety were concerned, was weak in measures that would make child care centre environments more pleasant. Again, groups like the Vanier Institute of the Family and Canadian Council on Social Development agreed.

Finally, the brief focussed on the main difference of opinion between the centre and the province: the issue of who was qualified to be staff in a “parent-controlled” child care centre. Here, the centre had two main arguments, one philosophical and one practical. The philosophical argument was two-fold: first, parents needed to be able to choose their child care centre staff to feel comfortable leaving their children for the day and second, that the graduates from the formal early childhood education programs didn’t have the attributes that Campus Community Co-operative was looking for: “a relaxed manner, an ability to deal with a flexible programme and, most important, that in looking after the children, they considered themselves the equals of the parents and the volunteers.” In short, the centre’s salient principle was that “parents and parents alone have the right to decide who should care for their children.”

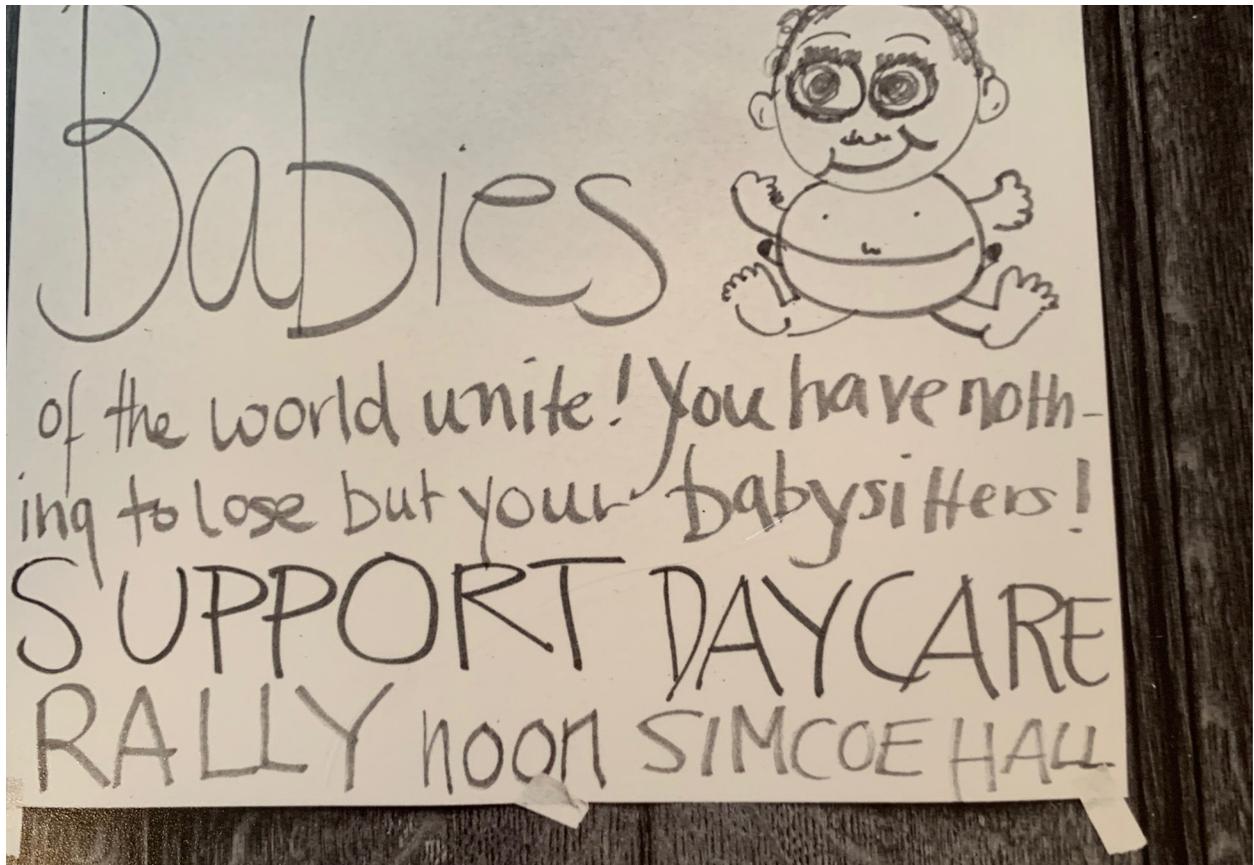
The practical argument was very real; there were, at the time, no post-secondary early childhood education programs in Canada

specializing in programs for infants and toddlers. The brief further stated that programs to train staff for working with the younger age groups should be developed and that the students should do placements in “parent controlled” centres.

According to the notes from the September 9 meeting, even the provincial staff agreed that the lack of training opportunities was a problem, but nonetheless, they would not certify either of the two 12 Sussex Co-ordinators, directing the centre towards British or European-trained staff or graduates of the Canadian Mothercraft Society, a two-year program with a grade 11 entrance requirement.

In fact, at this point in Ontario, early childhood education programs for children of any age were just emerging as part of the post-secondary education system. Along with the two longstanding programs: the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto and the three-year non-degree program at Ryerson, the community colleges, the site of most Early Childhood Education training programs, were just ramping up. Graduates had not yet entered the field in large numbers and the Canadian Council on Social Development as well as the Toronto Social Planning Council flagged staff training as an issue affecting child care program quality.

The notes from September 9 indicate that Ms. Stapleford asked Smith and Spinks directly if Campus Community Co-operative wanted a licence. When they said that it did, she confirmed that this would be contingent on our group hiring a supervisor approved by the Day Nurseries Branch. The centre representatives returned from the meeting and recommended that the centre refuse to comply, with the full understanding that it would be denied a licence to operate. It could appeal and remain open during the appeal process, which would probably involve a tribunal with both sides represented by legal counsel.



The centre's media outreach had already started with an August 18 op-ed by Dr. Smith in the *Toronto Star* titled: "Why Can't Mom and Dad Control Child Care Centres for their Kids?"

The province issued a refusal to license at the very start of October, 1970 for 10 reasons running the gamut from the finishes on walls and ceilings to the primary area of dispute, staff qualifications. The centre prepared for an appeal. Fred Zemans, the Director of Parkdale Community Legal Services, a new legal aid clinic serving low-income and underserved clients, agreed that he and his team of law students would represent Campus Community Co-operative at the hearing.

The appeal hearing started in March, 1971, before a Board of Review consisting of a Chair and three members. It adjourned after three days to recommence at the end of October. The panel

sat for a gruelling eight days during which witnesses for both sides were examined and cross examined. Provincial staff testified to the centre's violations under the *Day Nurseries Act*. Campus Community Co-operative parents, staff and volunteers spoke in detail about how the centre worked, its importance in their lives and those of their children and the effectiveness of co-operative child care. The hearing then adjourned, giving itself an optimistic one-month deadline to report.

Unlike the media coverage for the occupation, the coverage was neutral to supportive where the dispute with the province was concerned. As previously noted, while there was an emerging understanding of the role that child care could play in providing women with more options, it was not yet regarded as a mainstream service that most families would like or be able to use. However, journalists who visited 12 Sussex saw a program where the children were happy and well cared for and even though no one directly questioned the province's insistence on qualified staff, there was a real sense that more parental involvement in child care couldn't hurt. It's also possible that the history of half-day co-operative nursery schools in Ontario was helpful, despite initial qualms about full-day programs.

In addition, the media were becoming more knowledgeable about child care, which may have helped shift public sentiment. In early January, 1971, the *Toronto Star* held a forum on child care. Titled "Parent-Run Child Care Demanded", the coverage featured Dr. Smith, who outlined the difficulties that community-based centres had getting established and complying with the *Day Nurseries Act*. John Anderson, Metro Toronto's Commissioner of Social Services, admitted, "Maybe we don't know enough about involving parents" and a parent in the audience, whose child attended Victoria Day Care Services, declared that parent involvement was "very real, very fair and very necessary."

On November 12, right after the appeal hearing had concluded, Alexander Ross wrote a sympathetic column in the Toronto Star where he described the somewhat freewheeling nature of a morning at 12 Sussex and concluded, “There is no question, even among the officials of the Day Nurseries Branch, that it’s a useful experiment.” He ends the piece with the statement, “If the centre is forced to shut down, it will mean the end of a particular approach to child care which suits a number of working parents. And I would say, their kids”.

The Board of Review did not report until March 6, 1973 at which time the decision of the Director of the Day Nurseries Branch to refuse a licence to Campus Community Co-operative was confirmed. The list of regulations under dispute had shrunk to two,



the primary one being the issue of staff qualifications. Disagreement with a regulation was not an accepted rationale for non-compliance and so the *Day Nurseries Act* and regulations prevailed.

However, by the time the licensing decision came down, a lot of water was over the dam. Our group had occupied another building on campus and was operating a pre-school child care centre, also unlicensed. In addition, in the 16 months since the hearing ended, virtually all of the conditions leading to the refusal to license the infant-toddler centre, still operating at 12 Sussex, had resolved one way or another.

In its brief to the Day Nurseries Branch in 1970, Campus Community Co-operative had recommended the development of more programs to train staff to work with infants and toddlers and that students do practicum placements in parent-operated centres. That's exactly what happened in the period between the initial refusal to license and the board report. Seneca College had added working with infants and toddlers to its curriculum and under the guidance of faculty member Margaret Kidd, sent student placements to 12 Sussex, one of whom was hired as the first qualified staff person.

Our group would not appeal the decision of the Board of Review. Time and circumstances had allowed a solution – the parents were able to hire a staff person who met the legislated requirements for a licence to operate a child care centre. The centre had turned a corner; it could remain open and could now offer fee subsidies to parents who qualified.

7

With the licensing issue in hiatus after November, 1971, our group was able to turn once again to the need for space for the ever-expanding group of over-two-year-olds. Not only did the centre have a waiting list for infants and toddlers but the older cohort was outgrowing the space to the extent that the kids could use their co-operative child care skills to do things like team up and attempt to open the heavy, orange fire doors. In desperation, eight pre-schoolers were moved, with staff and volunteers, to what everyone hoped would be a transitional location, which was not licensable. Parents loyally stuck with the centre during this somewhat unstable time

Once again, the university received multiple requests for space from our group and once again, it dangled potential locations, only to decide, repeatedly, that none of them was available. In one case, two buildings were demolished while the centre thought that they were still under consideration. While the search for an additional home was taking place, our group made the children's plight known across campus. By this time, the search had zeroed in on one location, an unused club house with a huge yard behind the university Meteorological Building on Devonshire Place. University staff had previously shown the building to child care representatives and then withdrawn it as a possibility.

SAC continued its support, as did the Varsity. On March 27, 1972, Robin Ross, university Vice-President and Registrar, replied to a letter written a month previously by the SAC Executive, which supported the centre's quest for more space. Vice-President Ross's response ruled out university assistance with either space or funding and expressed ambivalence regarding "willingness on the part of the University to accept the principle of a larger role in day care", citing the upcoming start of the first U of T Governing Council and budget cuts as a rationale.

The letter makes two proposals, neither of which was realistic at the time: first, to ask the municipality, which could obtain provincial capital funds, to consider establishing a municipal centre “with special provision for the university community” and second, to work with SAC to underwrite or assist in obtaining a loan so that the child care centre could acquire and/or renovate permanent space.

On March 29, the centre organized “Day Care for a Day”, in a roped off area in the foyer of Sidney Smith Hall, to show the university community what child care looked like and generate additional support. Staff and volunteers set up the area like a play room and strollered the children down to Sid Smith for an outing. They went back to 12 Sussex for naps. Many students were in awe, the kids had a great time and seated discreetly off to the side were three strangers who looked like either plainclothes police or child welfare workers.

Acting President John Sword was invited to the event and his assistant attended. A meeting with university staff had been scheduled for the afternoon where child care representatives once more asked to establish a centre for over-tuos in the Devonshire Place location. They came away empty-handed.

There were now 11 other universities in Ontario with campus child care centres and some, like York, were significantly more supportive to the request for campus child care. Given our group’s talent for occupying buildings and the fact that it had identified a specific site for a new centre, the University’s lack of attention to the matter is a bit surprising. In hindsight, the institutional reticence may have been based on not wanting to reward what it considered to be bad behaviour by a group that had very publicly disrupted campus two years earlier. In addition, 12 Sussex was not yet licensed although, at this point, it was operating legally since the provincial board had not yet made a decision on its licence and wouldn’t for another

year. On the other hand, the University could, once again, have simply underestimated our group's determination.

The centre had been requesting more space since May, 1971. Almost a year later, with eight kids in temporary space, the parents decided that it was time to act. A small number of staff and parents met as an organizing team and hatched a plan to occupy the empty club house on Devonshire Place for another child care centre.

Reconnaissance indicated that the above-ground windows were easily opened and that no one was watching the building on a regular basis. On April 6, 1972 at 2:00 AM, two parents and one staff person met at the club house, opened a window and scrambled into the building. Once in, they put a piece of masking tape on a window pane to signal that they had made it into the building to a third parent, who rode by on his bike at 6:00 AM. His job was to go to the pay 'phone at the corner of Bloor and Devonshire to start the telephone tree that would tell the parents of the over-tuos to meet at 12 Sussex at 8:00 AM, from which point, they would proceed, with their children to the new child care centre. Thus began one of the longest occupations of a university building.

It was a bright, very cold spring morning and the kids were wearing snowsuits as their parents carried them in the door. Despite the filthy floors and somewhat decrepit interior, the building was sound and full of light from the rows of windows on both sides of the large main room. It was also heated, there was a basement room that could be turned into a kitchen and the bathrooms worked. A pick-up truck carrying a 'fridge and stove arrived soon after the occupiers. Everyone was elated.

Parents and soon, volunteers, looked after the kids, washed floors and met to discuss how to hold the site day and night while a solution was negotiated with the university. When somewhat baffled meteorology students arrived to check instruments located in the

club house yard, one of them called the university administration. By that time, a member of the occupying group had contacted sympathetic media via the pay 'phone.

With the building secured, members of our group fanned out across campus to solidify support and recruit volunteers. A flyer declared in 40-point font: "Join Us Here Immediately" and provided a small map with the location of the new centre. The university assigned a security guard who sat in a one-room outbuilding at the club house entrance for many months and handed anyone who went in a slip of paper informing them that they were trespassing.

Opening discussions with the university administration did not go well. It remains unclear whether Vice-President Ross's March 27 letter was actually written, sent or received by SAC prior to the March 29 meeting with staff, but it set an unfortunate tone. By April 5, the centre had responded to the letter, refuting the university's rationale for lack of support and demanding that child care representatives be present at all future meetings. In an April 10 meeting with child care representatives, the Vice-President reiterated the contents of his letter and stated that the occupation had to end before further discussions could take place. Likely in an attempt to avoid direct discussions with Campus Community Co-operative, the administration continued to negotiate with SAC throughout April and into early May. The centre, in the meantime, distributed a flyer titled, "We Are Still Waiting", pressing its case with the university and broader community.

The university was, at this point, in a period of transition. President Bissell had recently retired and his replacement, Dr. John Evans, had yet to take office. The newly-created university Governing Council was barely up and running. And, just when our group occupied the clubhouse, the student body elected a new SAC, which tended to be more supportive of the administration. The environment provided multiple opportunities for confused process.

The university responded to the ongoing occupation in stages. On May 16, when it became clear that the occupants of the Devonshire site had no intention of leaving, it appointed a university Day Care Board to report to the Internal Affairs Committee of Governing Council on the future of campus child care. The board included representatives from SAC and the organizations representing faculty, staff and part-time graduate students. The Graduate Students Union sent an observer.



On May 17, the administration pre-empted the new board via a media release issued by Vice-President Ross. The release, reproduced in the U of T Bulletin, which was distributed weekly throughout campus, outlined a proposal for a university-operated child care “pilot project” to serve the children of students and staff, due to the “clear and undeniable need” for increased child care. The Devonshire club house, the university now believed, was “eminently suitable” as child care space and could be made available at least temporarily, for a centre. The release reiterated that the university did not accept a broader responsibility for, or a role in, child care.

Co-incidentally, there were now two university-related child care centres looking for space: Campus Community Co-operative and St. Andrew’s-University Day Nursery. This child care centre had been informed that it would lose its space in St. Andrew’s Church on Bloor St. east of Bay, due to redevelopment in the next few months. It was licensed and prioritized the children of U of T staff and students, although about 30% of the families did not have a university affiliation. In the university’s eyes, it was a much more suitable group to operate campus child care, even on a “pilot” basis.

The media release outlined the conditions under which the “pilot project” would operate. It would have to be licensed, be governed by a board of directors composed of representatives of various sectors of the university and a representative of the Toronto Social Planning Council Child Care Committee – but no parents. Priority would be given to those connected to the university. The proposed board of directors would manage the centre, including admissions. The club house would be rent-free for three years and the university would pay for renovations. The proposal would be open to review at any time by U of T Governing Council.

Calling the proposal “a fraudulent trick”, Campus Community Co-operative responded, pointing out that the Devonshire building

already was a child care centre, with 18 children now attending. It also did the math regarding number of child care spaces in the proposed centre. Even with a capacity of 50 spaces, it would still come up short because the combined enrollment of the two existing centres was now over 70 children so there would be a net loss of campus and community child care services. However, the proposal foreshadowed the university's decision a few months down the road.

As the weeks passed, the occupation at the Devonshire site entered into a routine. Between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM, Monday-Friday, Campus Community Co-operative provided a child care program for an increasing number of pre-school children. By late afternoon, the parents and other volunteers scheduled for the night shift would start to arrive, some with children and some without. Depending on the day, the child care kitchen provided supper and breakfast or occupiers brought their own. Fear that the university would either reclaim the building or, worse still, have it cleared by police was constant for the first few months, especially given the administration's thrashing about for alternatives.

The occupation of Simcoe Hall in 1970 had been sharp and swift. This one was not. Our group was operating two child care centres heavily dependent on volunteer assistance, holding down a building 24/7, participating in frequent meetings, seeking support in and outside the university, organizing on-campus demonstrations, writing briefs and letters, maintaining media relations, keeping on top of the activities of university administration and committees and above all, holding a community together so that it could remain strong and democratically make the kind of strategic decisions necessary for survival and moving forward. This was an exhausting challenge. News that rumours of club house orgies were circulating in the university administration elicited some concern, but mostly incredulity.

Despite the quite specific child care proposal outlined in the university's May 17 media release, the university Day Care Board met throughout the summer to resolve the issue of what to do about the two child care centres that the university itself, had put in the position of competing for the same building and to pave the way for a university child care policy. It would submit its report to the Internal Affairs Committee of Governing Council in mid-August.

Concurrent with this process, Campus Community Co-op and St Andrew's, encouraged by the same day care board, joined forces and developed joint recommendations for future co-operation. On July 24, the two child care organizations recommended to the board that the university provide separate facilities for each centre, agreeing to share space temporarily during construction. They also asked that the board, in future, be expanded to include parent representatives from each centre, the nursery school in the student family residence on Charles St. and campus union locals. There was, in fact, another "eminently suitable" building available for a second centre – an old coach house across a parking lot just to the south of the club house.

On a separate track, just before the centres submitted their joint proposal and three weeks before the day care board submitted its report to the Internal Affairs Committee, Vice-President Ross sent the committee a confidential memo. Dated July 21, the memo was somewhat less than candid about the process between the university and Campus Community Co-operative leading up to the occupation. However, possibly as future guidance for the committee or possibly because the administration knew of the joint proposal coming down the road, it also outlined arguments pro and con regarding the university's broader support for child care as a campus service as well as options for future action by Governing Council. These included the proposed "pilot" but not the two-centre solution proposed by the co-op and St. Andrew's.

Through all of this, Campus Community Co-operative didn't stray from its principles: that the university grant it a lease to have a child care centre in the Devonshire Place clubhouse; that the university agree to pay for renovations to the building; that the centre be open to both university-affiliated and community parents. It agreed that the new centre would be licensed.

The media response was, on the whole, supportive to neutral throughout the summer and fall. On April 8, the *Toronto Star* ran an editorial supporting campus child care. It pointed out that the university had, in recent years, erected quarters for married students without, apparently, considering that "married students sometimes have children." A September column by Alexander Ross titled, "The longest-running illegal occupation – and the quietest" ended with the sentence, "It's a sad commentary on the ways of large institutions that they" (i.e the parents) "had to resort to illegal tactics to create a facility that everyone agrees is badly needed." From the outset, the *Globe and Mail* reported on the occupation and the university decision-making process in a tone sympathetic to both Campus Community Co-operative and St Andrews. The *Varsity* was fully supportive. Alternative media produced a comic book titled, *A Day of Care*, and someone wrote a song that begins:

*"I've got the 12 Sussex Blues and I don't feel right
Because I just turned two and I graduate tonight
A little child like me can't help but feeling low,
Mr. Ross doesn't want me and there's nowhere to go.
I've got the Occupation Blues and I'm blue as I can be."*

The university Day Care Board reported to the Internal Affairs Committee of the university Governing Council on August 16 – or at least the report was tabled. None of the board members attended the meeting. The report had gone through a couple of drafts, both of which supported two child care centres: one recommended that Campus Community Co-operative stay in

the Devonshire club house and St. Andrew's be allowed to rent a building on or near campus and the other recommended the opposite. The final version recommended the latter approach, with cost-sharing for renovations available to both centres. If necessary, the centres would share space during construction.

Although sympathetic to the "pilot" proposed by the university in May, the report stated that one new centre might be "unrealistic and unnecessary" and that, at least for the time being, "the university should undertake to assist groups wishing to establish child care centres on this campus." Both child care centres supported the creation of two facilities. St Andrew's magnanimously recommended that Campus Community Co-op stay in the club house.

The absence of university Day Care Board members at Internal Affairs Committee may have indicated that they had a sense that the administration did not support their report. In fact, Dr. Evans, the incoming President and Vice-President Ross did attend the meeting and, according to Campus Community Co-op, argued against it. The co-op expressed concern that the board was being sidestepped.

There is no indication that the Day Care Board report ever resurfaced. Throughout the next month, a report with campus child care options developed by the university administration travelled back and forth between Internal Affairs Committee and Governing Council. Ultimately, at an end of September meeting, the Council approved the development of a centrally-managed university child care centre over the protests of the 100 or so Campus Co-op supporters.

Governing Council supported one university-operated child care centre for 50 2 - 5 year-olds located in the Devonshire club house. The university would contribute \$42,000 in capital funds and the child care centre would cover the \$15,000 needed for equipment,

amortized over 20 years if necessary. Priority for admission would go to university-affiliated families from Campus Community Co-operative and St. Andrews. The university would be assisted by an advisory committee consisting of campus employee organizations, union locals and an equal number of parents. St Andrew's supported the model; Campus Community Co-operative did not.

The university chose child care but didn't close Campus Community Co-operative Child Care. The more optimistic members of our group declared partial victory (the university had been persuaded to establish a pre-school child care centre) on which to base next steps.

Big institutions often move slowly and Campus Community Co-op was determined to stay in the club house unless and until it was offered comparable space. There was a brief flurry of activity while the university looked for alternate sites. These included 14 Sussex, the other half of 12, which the co-op would have accepted, but that offer was withdrawn and again, since no real prospects materialized, our group simply stayed put.

The university established an implementation committee to plan for the new child care centre. Campus Community Co-op sent representatives to keep a watching brief on the process and from time to time, remind the administration that it was continuing to provide pre-school child care in the club house. By the new year, President Evans appointed Professor Jill Conway, a feminist and member of the History Department as the university's first female Vice-President. She held the Internal Affairs portfolio and took over as Chair of the implementation committee in this initial period.

By this time, St Andrew's-University Day Nursery had obtained a reprieve on its eviction, meaning that there was no longer an urgent need to move into the club house. The pressure on the

university to rush to spend the funds allocated to renovations diminished. However, no matter who was providing child care in the building on Devonshire Place, renovations were essential for child care licensing. Campus Community Co-op, especially after the infant centre at 12 Sussex was licensed, wanted to operate Devonshire according to regulation. It also had no lease or occupancy agreement. The university was unwilling to spend its renovation dollars on what it saw as an interloper but had not yet acknowledged that use of the coach house on Devonshire Place next door to the occupied club house might be a reasonable solution for its own centre.

This stalemate continued until late 1974, by which time the environment had changed significantly. Enrollment at Campus Community Co-op quickly grew to 30 children, bringing the combined potential number of children at a new centre to 90-plus, at least 40 children over capacity for the club house site. A single university child care centre for 50 children was looking less practical. The same year, for the first time, the Province of Ontario made capital grants available to non-profit organizations, which opened the door for both the co-op and the university to apply for funding.

At that point, evicting Campus Community Co-op from the clubhouse, or even refusing the occupancy agreement needed to obtain funds, would have seemed spiteful. The potential for combining university and provincial funds pushed the U of T to reconsider renovating the coach house to accommodate the kids from St Andrew's when the need reasserted itself. Ultimately, both the co-op and the university were awarded provincial capital grants. Quietly and without drama, the two-centre solution first recommended by both campus child care centres and opposed by the university in the summer of 1972, became a reality in 1974.

The story of the Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre can't be told in isolation. This story is about one child care centre in particular but it is, in fact, about many. It is about communities, institutions and government. It's about pioneers who want to do things differently for good reasons and the challenges that they encounter making change.

The original goal of our small group of feminists, a goal now shared by many others, of achieving accessible, high-quality, affordable early learning and child care for all Canadian children has yet to be realized. As one of the founders stated, “There hasn't been that “ah-ha” moment, except in Quebec”, the only province with a system of affordable child care. With that understanding, were the sit-ins, the takeover of buildings, the demonstrations, the conferences, the research, the media attention, the government initiatives, the promises made, the promises not kept – the list goes on – been worth it? Let's take a quick look at what has happened over the last 50 years, especially in Toronto and Ontario.

To start at the beginning, our group and supporters succeeded in establishing a co-operative child care centre that is thriving half a century later.

Today's centre, attended by over 40 infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers every weekday, is buzzing with vibrant energy. It describes itself as creating and delivering ‘high quality, child centered programming that inspires children and emphasizes communication, decision-making and free choice.’

The 11 full-time staff, eight of whom are registered ECEs, and some of whom have worked at the centre for thirty years, continue to be organized as a non-hierarchical staff collective. Mandatory parent shifts ceased in 2004, much to the regret of past and current staff who report that they miss the close contact with parents. One of them also pointed out that the fees increased significantly without

parent volunteers, although the obligation limited access. The centre continues to enroll children of families with a university affiliation and those from the community at large.

It has weathered a number of changes. Campus Community Co-op operated on two separate sites: infants and toddlers at 12 Sussex and preschoolers at Devonshire until 1983, when the two programs were combined at the Devonshire site. In August, 1995, a fire caused significant damage to the building. The centre moved to a house on Huron St. in 2004 when a university high-performance athletic centre was built on Devonshire Place.

In those early days, the co-op was one of a number of fledgling centres on campuses and in communities. In Ontario cities and towns, non-profit, community-based centres grew in number and showed that there could be a different way of organizing child care, that parents could organize and govern centres according to what was appropriate for their families and their communities. These centres became the building blocks for today's child care sector in Ontario, where, unlike many other provinces, 79% of centres are non-profit.

Often organized around the needs of children, the new, community-based centres were early adopters of the curriculum and program changes that started in early childhood education during this period, due, in part, to the influence of the ECE faculty in the new community colleges. They were also the first wave of the "normalization" of child care, as described in those early research reports, operationalizing the insistence that child care could be a program that benefitted all children, not just those at risk for poor outcomes. Child care started to shed its "welfare" connotation.

There were ripple effects specific to Campus Community Co-operative. Right out of the gate, the occupation of the building on Devonshire Place generated two university child care centres: Campus

Community Co-op and, right next door, Margaret Fletcher Child Care Centre, named for a retired nursery school teacher from the Institute of Child Study.

Over time, campus child care centres at U of T have grown to a total of six, spread across all three campuses. The flagship is the three programs that comprise the University of Toronto Early Learning Centre. When the site on Devonshire Place was redeveloped in the early 1980's, the university constructed a large, purpose-built child care centre with the intention of combining Margaret Fletcher, Campus Community Co-operative, the child care centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Nancy's, a part-time child care centre, under one roof on the downtown campus. The co-op's refusal, on the grounds that organizational differences made a merger impossible, to combine with the other centres led to its current location on Huron St. in a building which the university owns and renovated for the centre. The other two independent centres are the facility at the Student Family Housing buildings on Charles St. and N'sheemaehn on the Scarborough campus. As well, the Early Learning Centre administers another licensed centre at the U of T campus in Mississauga.

Campus Community Co-operative was in the forefront of the beginning of organized child care advocacy in Ontario. Using federal funding from the Local Initiatives Projects (LIP) program, the co-op established the Day Care Organizing Committee. Originally developed to start co-operative child care centres in off-campus communities (it did, with much difficulty, start one short-lived centre), DCOC took on a broader advocacy role. In its quarterly tabloid called *Day Care for Everyone*, it pushed for more and better community-based child care. Parents and a former staff member of Campus Community Co-op were among the DCOC staff.

Little did the DCOC organizers know that the Ontario government, in the early summer of 1974 under pressure from the emerging

American for-profit child care firms, would attempt to lower the cost of providing child care by proposing changes to the *Day Nurseries Act* that would change staff: child ratios and impact – not in a good way - program quality.

The DCOC, due to its previous activities in communities, was able to move quickly and pull together an initial group that would become the foundation for Ontario's child care movement. The community and campus-based child care centres, along with other non-profits across the province and the municipal centres in places like Toronto and Peel, were the pillars of the new group, the Day Care Reform Action Alliance. The Alliance set the stage for future child care advocacy locally, provincially and nationally and was the root of current advocacy organizations such as the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and its municipal counterparts.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1974, the Alliance, which at the time was mainly Toronto-based, opposed the legislative changes and developed its vision of affordable, high quality, non-profit or public child care for all families who needed or wanted it for their children. The group held public meetings, planned local events, set up a communications network so that centres could be notified quickly of critical events, were active in the media and popped up at events where MPPs, especially Cabinet Ministers, were speaking. Activity came to a peak in October of that year when two thousand child care advocates – staff, parents and children - converged in Toronto from all over Ontario to express their opposition to the government's plans. Over the next few months, although the proposal wasn't formally withdrawn, it became clear that it wouldn't be implemented. The proposal vanished but the advocates didn't.

This period of advocacy resulted in changes to legislation that made it easier for volunteers to take the place of staff in co-op child care centres as long as at least one staff person was qualified as an early childhood educator. Capital funding was extended to

non-profit organizations. Government improved its communications with the field and developed measures to strengthen program quality.

After the mid-1970's, Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre retreated from the front lines of advocacy. This may have been because the more political members of the centre left for one reason or another or because the fight for the centre's survival caused it to turn inward and remain that way.

Child care and education systems began to merge during the 1970's. The Toronto Board of Education led the way in 1975 by encouraging the use of surplus school space for community child care governed by parent boards. The board provided staff assistance, funds and space at no cost to the centres until the six Toronto school boards were forced to amalgamate in 1997.

In 1987, the Ontario government of the day announced an initiative to include a non-profit child care centre to provide before and after school care from junior kindergarten on up in every new school. This brought child care to communities that were growing and often had little or no service and acted as a major stimulus to the development of non-profit programs. The initiative continued until 1995, when it was cancelled by the incoming Conservative government.

Even though acceptance by school boards and schools of a new education partner was and, in some instances, is still uneven, school-based child care increased. Slowly, child care came to be referred to as early childhood education and care, or ECEC and became a necessary and desirable part of early childhood education. The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) reports that responsibility for ECEC has now moved from a ministry or department usually associated with welfare to the education ministry in nine provinces and territories, including Ontario. Nine

provinces (not necessarily the same ones) provide kindergarten for the full school day to five-year-olds. Ontario and Nova Scotia include four-year-olds. In Ontario, kindergarten classrooms are staffed by a teacher/ECE team. Full-day kindergarten provides public funds and oversight for universal ECEC and shortens the pre-school period where parents are seriously challenged to find good, affordable programs, although integrated or “wrap-around” services outside school hours are often insufficient. Children’s need for creative, stimulating activity doesn’t stop after 3:30 PM.

Over 50 years ago, government and research organizations began to flag an increased number of mothers entering the paid labour force and recommended government action to expand and improve child care. With over 70% of mothers of children under 12 now working outside the home, maternal employment has become the norm rather than a controversial exception.

Early feminists and their supporters believed that child care was one of the pre-conditions for equal employment opportunity for women. In fact, female employment surged ahead of the development of the high-quality early childhood education and care that advocates still fight for. Demand far exceeds availability in most of Canada. The CRRU reports that, in 2019, there was a regulated centre-based space for 27% of Canadian children aged 0-5. Ontario, with the largest child population of any province, has coverage of just under 21%. Even Québec, with a more systemic approach, has a space for just over 42% of under-six-year-olds, the highest coverage in the country. The presence of for-profit child care, a marker for concern about program quality, is too high with seven provinces at or above (in some cases, well above) 50%. In a very mixed service economy, the private sector has stepped in to fill the gap left by lack of government support.

The child care pioneers would likely agree that all of the early toil and sweat, community organizing, meetings, demonstrations,

sit-ins, occupations, briefs, manifestos, deputations, conferences, research and publishing have been worth it. However, after five decades of advocacy, the change that they seek is by no means complete. What remains clear is that stronger government leadership – federal, provincial and, in Ontario, municipal - is critical.

As with any important public program, funding and regulation are essential to building a system with the kind of early childhood education and care that will support children as they grow and develop and allow parents to work without worrying about finding a space in a good program and paying for it. Expansion, when it happens, is too often a result of brief and time-limited moments of government support. Progress over 50 years is undeniable but frustratingly slow. There is still much to be done.

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The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU), a non-profit, non-partisan policy research institute, has a mandate to work towards an equitable, high quality, publicly funded, inclusive ECEC system for all Canadians. CRRU began in the early 1980s as a project at the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies and was initially funded by the Ontario government. In 1985, CRRU was funded by the Government of Canada under the Child Care Initiatives Fund. Over the next two decades, CRRU developed policy research expertise, expanded research capacity and resource provision. This came to include a resource and research library, publications and collections, *Early childhood education and care in Canada*, a bi-annual synthesis of available data on Canadian ECEC programs, and an extensive website used to make resources widely available and meet CRRU's goals and objectives.
