

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
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RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL  
NO. 5-29

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RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL NO. 5  
(First Session, 1965)

SCHOOL FOR RETARDED CHILDREN - YELLOWKNIFE

The training of mentally handicapped children is an expensive undertaking, the whole costs of which most school boards in Canada are not in a position to accept. The special facilities and specially trained teachers required to educate very small groups of such children result in per pupil costs far in excess of those in regular classes. In most cases in local communities parents and other interested persons form a local association for the help of the retarded. When this is done they are assisted by the Provincial Association for Retarded Children or by the Canadian Association for Retarded Children. A local Association has been formed in Yellowknife and the Government of the Northwest Territories is asked to grant funds to assist this association in building a special day school at Yellowknife for the education of retarded children.

Definition

In this paper "retarded Children" refers to those children who can benefit from education and instruction but who are, for one reason or another, mentally retarded or physically handicapped. They are not so mentally retarded or so physically handicapped as to require institutional care but are handicapped enough that the ordinary public school is not equipped to handle them.

The Problem

Retarded children need special educational provision over and above what is available in the ordinary school if they are to develop to their optimum capacity. Special mixed academic and handicraft programs have to be designed for these children and suitable instructional materials and equipment provided. These children need individual attention and greater care and usually are taught in groups of four or five to eight or nine. For this reason the per pupil cost of educating retarded children is higher than the cost per pupil in the ordinary school.

There are no conclusive figures to indicate what percentage of children are retarded. There are wide variations in estimates.

Present Arrangements in the Northwest Territories

At present there are seven children attending a special class at Yellowknife. This class is sponsored by the Yellowknife Association for Retarded Children of which Mr. John Adderley is President. The Yellowknife Association is affiliated with the Alberta Association which in turn is affiliated with the Canadian Association for Retarded Children. The Yellowknife class is held in the Sunday School room for a small rental fee and desks and a blackboard have been loaned from the Public School Board. There is one full-time teacher, Mrs. Jean Arlint, who receives a small salary for her work. Mrs. Arlint is assisted by a number of part-time volunteers. Transportation is provided by a group of local men on a voluntary basis. Grants of \$700 per child are made by the Government of the Northwest Territories to the Yellowknife Public School Board in order that the Board may make these funds available for use by the Yellowknife Association for Retarded Children. The Public School Board consults with the Separate School Board on any necessary special arrangements for Catholic children.

In a letter to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, June 1, 1964, Mr. J. Adderley, President of the Yellowknife Association for Retarded Children, stated that the educational programme of the association had now been developed to where larger and more suitable school premises are needed if provision is to be made for possible increases in enrolment and for added instructional facilities for the various crafts as well as for supervised recreation. Mr. Adderley intimated in his letter that the work of the Yellowknife Association could be extended to meet the needs of all trainable retarded children in the N. W. T. and suggested that this possibility should be kept in mind when new school premises were being planned. Accompanying Mr. Adderley's letter is a tentative plan of a new school having five classrooms, a craft room, a Domestic Science room, an auditorium-gymnasium, a sick-bay, an office and

several utility rooms, making provision for a possible enrolment of 40 pupils. The estimated cost of this building is \$120,000. The site for the proposed new building has been offered at no cost by the Municipal District of Yellowknife. Mr. Adderley closes his letter by inquiring to what extent the Government of the Northwest Territories is prepared to help finance the construction of this proposed new school. The problem of living accommodation for children who would be brought into Yellowknife from other centres is not dealt with in the letter. It probably would mean an institution. This would be a major undertaking, quite unlike the school for local retarded children now operating. Generally speaking it is better to have a school arrangement which will permit the child to continue to live in his own home.

### Provincial Practices

All provinces grant aid in some measure to special classes for retarded children, but there is considerable variation in the amount of aid and in the manner in which it is granted. In Alberta, for example, special classes are administered by the Association, which provides the facilities and service, financed by:

- (a) The School Board to the extent of \$160 per child and 10% of the building costs
- (b) The Provincial Government to the extent of \$480 per child and 90% of the building cost; and
- (c) By funds raised by the Association from private sources.

In Ontario, the classes are administered by the Association, which provides facilities and service, and which receives from the Provincial Government \$300 per child under the age of 12 and \$500 per child from 12-18 years, plus 30% of construction costs. The remaining costs are subscribed by churches, municipal councils and service clubs.

In New Brunswick, classes are administered by the School Board, which provide the facilities and service and receive reimbursement from the Provincial Government for 25 to 85% of operating costs.

In a majority of the provinces, the classes are administered by the Association for Retarded Children. This arrangement seems to be logical in that the Association is normally able to organize the voluntary service that is probably essential in this work and to call upon the necessary special professional and technical skills. An Association may or may not contract with the School Board in respect of facilities and service.

### Recommendations:

- (1) The Yellowknife Association for Retarded Children be commended for the progress made in providing for retarded children.
- (2) The Association should not be encouraged to extend its service to the whole of the Northwest Territories but rather continue to provide and improve services for all retarded children in and around Yellowknife.
- (3) The Government of the Northwest Territories provide the special day school space and furniture for retarded children at Yellowknife to be used by the Association, but remain the property of the Territorial Government.
- (4) The space or facility be planned with the cooperation of the Association so that its needs and experience can receive full consideration.
- (5) The Association establish an operating board which is to include the regional Superintendent of Schools.
- (6) That action be taken in conjunction with the Department of National Health and Welfare to ascertain the need for specialized facilities for retarded children throughout the remainder of the Territories and to prepare a recommendation to Council on this wider aspect of the problem at an early date.