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PROPOSAL OF EDMONTON HOME FOR EX-SERVICEMEN'S CHILDREN
and INTERIM REPORT ON OTHER ASPECTS OF FACILITIES FOR
CARE OF CHILDREN.

A Report to: The Edmonton Community Chest

Prepared by: The Edmonton Council of
Community Services

March, 1955

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EDMONTON COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

REPORT TO EDMONTON COMMUNITY CHEST

March 1955.

Re: Proposal of Edmonton Home for Ex-Servicemen's Children and Interim Report on Other Aspects of Facilities for Care of Children.

In the spring of 1954 the Edmonton Home for Ex-Servicemen's Children asked permission of the Community Chest to hold a capital funds campaign throughout Alberta for \$250,000 for the purpose of building an addition to the present facilities. The Community Chest then asked the Edmonton Council of Community Services to study the general need for additional institutional accommodation for children in this community but with special reference to the children of ex-servicemen. The following report reviews the steps taken by the Edmonton Council of Community Services and the results of the study.

PROCEDURE

The Council appointed a committee of individuals who were qualified in the area of child care. After meeting and reviewing the large number of implications involved in the need for child caring facilities the committee returned to the Council Board for further clarification of its terms of reference. The revised terms were suggested as: to study the need for expanded services at the Home for Ex-Servicemen's Children; other factors which affected the study should be raised and documented where possible so that further study might be undertaken, likely by committees to be organized later.

In beginning its work the committee tried to establish some specific considerations which could provide an adequate basis for determining the need for expanded services at the Home. The following points were suggested:

1. Finding out the number of applications for admittance over a specified period (three months suggested).
2. Finding out the number of applications turned down showing the reasons and the categories. (Here it was suggested that the screening of applications might be carried out for the trial period with the help of trained social worker.)
3. Ascertaining and estimating the significance of the legal position of the Home for Ex-Servicemen's Children.
4. ~~Finding out the need or desire on the part of ex-servicemen to have a special institution for their children.~~
5. Recommending on the advisability of the use of the present site for a new building.

Meanwhile information on the experience of other cities which have faced a similar problem was obtained from the library of Canadian Welfare Council and studied. The chairman and the secretary of the Committee met informally with Mr. and Mrs. Peterson at the Home to find out more from them about the need for the new building as they saw it and to talk over some of the implications in the points raised above. At this meeting it was learned that the original plan to build a new building was being modified. An architect had been asked to prepare drawings and recommend on the possibility of making a modest addition to the present building. It then became apparent that the committee could not carry on with its plans until the new proposals were known.

In February 1955 the preliminary drawings were completed and turned over by the Home to the Committee so that they might be studied. These plans called for an addition on the east end of the building which would increase the capacity to 60 children and provide adequate dining space, recreational room, and the old building would be largely used as a staff residence. The estimated cost of the addition would be \$125,000 furnished.

The Committee found there were a number of questions posed by the plans. Certain standards of building recommended by the Child Welfare League of America for child caring institutions would not be met adequately. The Committee was especially concerned about the site and obtained a useful appraisal of the future of this location from the Town Planner Mr. Noel Dant. A set of questions which is appended to this report was drawn up. These questions were relayed to officials of the Home for study preparatory to a meeting between the Board of Directors of the Home and the special committee. (See appended agenda.)

DECISION RE PROPOSAL OF HOME FOR EX-SERVICEMEN'S CHILDREN

At the joint meeting held on February 24th, 1955 the Board of Directors of the Home presented its own estimation of the proposed plans in light of the study of the questions raised. Mrs. Peterson, President of the Board first of all reported her findings;

(1) She felt the location of the Home had proved suitable. It was originally established on the present site because of the many resources available - schools, churches, hospitals, doctors, and social agencies. It has enabled the children to continue an active contact with the outside world. Traffic has posed no problems. In fact the location may have helped children to become more self-reliant.

(2) If the Home continues to serve 36 children well it is doing more than its share in the community.

(3) Having a new addition would add a great deal to the operational costs. A conservative estimate would mean \$31,000 a year's operation. The deficit would then run to about \$11,000, leaving a need for a further \$6,000 grant from the Chest or other sources.

(4) If the group were larger it might be possible to make the undertaking.

(5) Staffing was thought to be one of the major problems with expansion.

(6) It is the desire to maintain the present home-like character of the Home, with no desire to become an institution.

(7) The building plans themselves posed awkward problems in construction and arrangement for supervision of the proposed new dormitories.

(8) The Home has a record of 62% of children remaining for less than 6 months compared to 46% for all other institutions in the city. Eighty-four percent of the children are discharged within a year as compared with 58% for all other institutions.

(9) Mrs. Peterson was concerned at the record of the average number of children in the Home:

| | | |
|-----------|----|----------|
| in 1951 - | 49 | children |
| " 1952 - | 52 | " |
| " 1953 - | 44 | " |
| " 1954 - | 43 | " |

It was pointed out by one of the Board members that a number of children are over 14 years of age. Mrs. Peterson said she hoped to operate within the licensed limit of 37 children, and noted that staff quarters were adequate for that number of children.

In view of the facts Mrs. Peterson felt it would be unwise to plan for expansion of the present building and proposed that the request for permission to hold a campaign (from the Chest) be withdrawn. Following that each of the Board members expressed opinions and agreed unanimously on the decision.

During the stages of the study the Board of Directors of the Council was kept informed through progress reports of the Committee chairman. At the March meeting of the Council Board the report was accepted and the committee instructed to inform the Board of Directors of the Community Chest about what had happened.

OTHER ASPECTS OF FACILITIES FOR CARE OF CHILDREN

Although the immediate concern about the plans for the Home for Ex-Servicemen's Children has been resolved, the general question of the need for additional child caring facilities has not been answered. Following is a list of some general factors which in the opinion of the committee, need to be considered in greater detail:

- 1) The need for a foster home bureau.
- 2) What can be done to encourage more uniform and more suitable screening procedures?
- 3) What are the implications of the lack of licensing of homes for private placements?
- 4) Can the present facilities in all child caring institutions be put to better use?
- 5) How permanent should placements be?
- 6) Where homes are understaffed and overcrowded what can be done to improve standards?

According to statistics available from August 1953 to November 1953 there was an estimated total capacity of the six Chest-supported child caring institutions of 431 children. In August, 347 children were registered at the end of the month, or 80.5% of the total capacity was being used. In September total child care days were 376 or 85% of the capacity. October, 390 child care days or 90.5% of capacity. November, 406 child care days or 94.2% of capacity.

In November 1953 (the last complete report) the placement of children in the six Chest financed child caring agencies was as follows: Of the total of 11,544 child care days - 42.1% of the children were wards of the province, 2% were sent from other municipalities, 11.4% came from the Edmonton Children's Aid, 23-3% were private placements where parents paid all or part of the cost of institutional care, 21.2% were not charged.

At the present time there is no central registry of foster homes. The City of Edmonton is interested only in neglected children and has its own department for locating and inspecting homes to be used. Parents who wish to place their children privately have to rely on such information as is contained in the advertisements in the newspaper. There is no way of knowing whether proper care will be given in a foster home selected in this manner. Homes are licensed for foster care only if 4 or more children are maintained at public expense. In this connection the committee asked that all advertisements

offering child care in private homes for the period from September to December, 1954 be brought together. The results showed in the four month period 119 unduplicated advertisements.

At the February meeting of the Council Board a motion was passed that a committee be formed to study the need for organized facilities and services for foster home care of children who are not wards of the government. Such a committee should represent Council organizations who are interested and concerned. Plans for organizing the committee were left with the Management Committee. After consideration, the Management Committee appointed a Steering Committee to provide direction for the study of foster home problems. This Steering Committee has held two meetings at which the present situation has been reviewed thoroughly and, as a first step, a general meeting of the Council will be held shortly after Easter.

Respectfully submitted,

K.L. Crockett, Chairman

W.M. Nicholls, Secretary

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, EDMONTON HOME FOR EX-SERVICEMEN'S CHILDREN

SPECIAL COMMITTEE - EDMONTON COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Meeting February 24th, 1955
at 8:00 P.M. at the Home for
Ex-Servicemen's Children.

A G E N D A

1. Introductory remarks.
2. Location of present building:
 - a) Location and anticipated business development of the area within the next 10 to 20 years.
 - b) Adequacy of play area for present number of children and the number proposed - effect of fenced play area.
 - c) Effect of traffic and noise.
 - d) Outside facilities - schools, parks and playgrounds.
 - e) Building restrictions?
3. Analysis of proposed plans:
 - a) Is there adequate provision for proper supervision of dormitories - especially for boys.
 - b) Dormitory type of accommodation - is it advisable?
 - c) Space for study and privacy.
 - d) Effect of use of four floors for supervisory duties of staff.
 - e) What would be the effect of adding a new unit to the old:
 - i structurally
 - ii aesthetically
4. Capital and operational costs:
 - a) How would the funds required for building be raised?
 - b) What would be increased cost of operation?

- c) What further increased cost if it were necessary to employ matron, assistant matron and male supervisor?
- d) How is present cost of operation met?
- e) How would anticipated cost of operation be met?
- f) Are there other alternatives to the proposed plans.

5. Other considerations:

- a) Is there a need for increased accommodation of this type? How is this established?
 - b) What efforts are made to screen applications and to assist in rehabilitation to normal family life?
 - c) What is the present and anticipated need for a special institution for care of children of ex-servicemen in keeping with the purpose of the Home. (next 10 to 20 years)
 - d) What limits re age and sex?
 - e) What would be the effect on the present home-like atmosphere if population increased?
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