

# Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY  
THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

ISSUED BY THE  
BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

813-820 Traders Bank Building, Toronto

Telephone: Main 3620.

---

*White Paper No. 14.*

*December 29, 1916*

---

SCHOOL STORY No. 9.

---

## **Facts and Suggestions as to Health Conditions in our Schools.**

---

---

FROM THE 1915 REPORT OF THE  
MEDICAL INSPECTION DEPARTMENT  
*of* THE BOARD *of* EDUCATION,  
AND FROM OTHER SOURCES.

---

---

Short paragraphs for the busy people whose  
children attend the schools.

### **In the 1915 Report of the Board of Education**

the officials, who are charged with the care of the health of pupils, describe graphically the methods employed, set forth fearlessly conditions which need to be remedied and make pertinent suggestions as to improved service.

On the following pages are reproduced some of the more striking passages from this public document, which is replete with material of intense interest to parents.

### **Pure Air for the Children**

"The ventilation generally was very satisfactory. In some of the schools, however, the ventilating system was very old and not very satisfactory. In these cases it would be better to do away with the system altogether and use open window ventilation."

"Fresh Air Intake: In practically all the schools the fresh air inlet is on the level with the ground. The fresh air entering the rooms, as it is drawn in from near the ground, is filled with dust and ashes, and foreign matter of various kinds. This is not a very sanitary condition of affairs and the breathing of this air is not conducive to the very best health of the children. To my mind, the air going into the school-room should be taken from a height of fifteen or twenty feet above the level of the ground."

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.

" . . . I find the air of 75% of our class-rooms loaded with impurities, enervating and devitalizing the children and teachers. It may be that no satisfactory system of ventilation has been devised, but both parts of all windows should be adjusted so as to open easily. Some windows cannot be opened at all, and others are very heavy and have light weights so that many lady teachers cannot raise them. A base-board should be supplied for windows when open so as to avoid draughts."

—Inspector Armstrong,  
Inspectoral District No. 7.

### **Pure Water for the Children.**

"Drinking Fountains: There are many varieties of drinking fountains in use in the public schools. Some of them are good and some are poor. In many schools the supply is inadequate, and in others I find only about twenty-five per cent. in working order. The matter should be gone into by the Board, and a decision arrived at as to which is the most serviceable and sanitary fountain, and that should be adopted. These fountains are also placed so high that many of the smaller children are unable to reach them. They should be placed so low that even the smallest child would be able to drink. These fountains should never be placed in lavatories."

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.



## How the Buildings Are Taken Care Of.

"I have visited practically every school in the city, and find the conditions fairly satisfactory. On the whole, I find the caretakers are doing their work in a manner which is very creditable indeed. Some, however, are working under great disadvantages, especially in the older schools where, owing to construction of buildings and the use of systems of heating, ventilation and plumbing, which have long since been discarded, it is impossible to get satisfactory results. Yet there are some caretakers who could do much better work than they are now doing."

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.

## Cloakrooms a Possible Source of Contagion.

"In every school the children's clothes are hanging in a cloakroom, which is practically a part of the classroom. This, to my mind, is very unsanitary. Many of these cloakrooms are very poorly ventilated. This might be a possible source of the spread of contagious diseases."

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.

## What is Good for the Weak Would be Good for the Strong.

"During the year I officially visited the United States with a view of acquiring a first-hand knowledge of the working out of the latest efforts and experiments in the schools of the larger cities of the Republic in connection with open air work. I visited New York, Philadelphia, Rochester, Cleveland and Buffalo. I found that across the line, at least in these cities, there is the same keen appreciation of the value of open air schools that we have of recent years attached to them in Toronto."

"While on my visit, I saw no open air schools as interesting as our own Forest Schools, yet in some of the cities they are using the roofs of buildings and other open spaces to get the same results for pre-tubercular, anaemic, and ill-nourished children. In others they use ordinary classrooms, with the windows so arranged that in a few minutes the

room can be converted into practically an open air school. In a large school, in one of the cities I visited, they used open window ventilators in every class room."

"In all these cases the results were the same. The children increased rapidly in weight, have not complained of uncomfortable draught, have enjoyed school life in every respect, have become more alert and advanced more quickly in their studies. Our own open air schools have taught us this fact. But their greatest service is not the good that can be accomplished in them to the few children at a considerable per capita expense but to the fact that they most emphatically teach this lesson, viz: all our school children may receive the greater part of this benefit at very little additional cost by adopting the wide-open window ventilation. Our duty is to place the child while in school in the most healthy environment so that he may make the greatest possible mental and physical progress."

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.

## Money and Effort Spent on Trying to Teach Hungry Children Are Money and Effort Wasted.

"In Toronto the matter of school feeding has been brought to my attention during the last three or four years. Principals of schools, especially those in the poorer districts, have told me repeatedly that many children come to school very poorly nourished owing to insufficient and improper feeding. This is due to poverty and partly to carelessness and indifference on the part of the parents. Children coming to school in this condition are not able to make the best uses of their educational advantages. The little mind is not able to absorb knowledge when its body is anaemic and ill-nourished, and the stomach craving for food. Does expenditure for the education of these children yield the greatest results?"

"In order to show the value of School Feeding, Dr. Roach of Boston a few years ago experimented with a class of 100 under-fed children. During the morning when those subjects are taught which require the greatest mental effort, these children were given a lunch. This was continued for five weeks and at the end of that time these children had averaged a gain of two pounds in weight and a gain of 10 per cent. in their academic work."

"In nearly every large American city school lunches have become a definite school proposition. In England school lunches were instituted many years ago. Here all necessitous children are fed free. In the American cities food is sold at cost price, usually about a cent a portion. A private fund takes care of those children who require feeding but are unable to pay. I prefer the American system for many reasons."

"Opponents of school lunches claim that it is not the function of Boards of Education to provide food for pupils, that the school is for educational purposes only, and not for those activities which actually belong to the home. They believe that it has a tendency to take the responsibility from parents and puts a premium on parental neglect and that parents may become indifferent to their home duties. This to some extent may be true, but school lunches not only provide the child with a properly selected diet at a minimum of cost but gives him a certain education. It teaches him the value of money, the desire for and the proper selection of good food which, if reflected in the home, will result in better feeding not only for the child but also for the other members of the family. If we are going to have children grow up with sturdy bodies and active minds we must educate them in the use of proper foods, and there is no place better fitted for such education than the school. By furnishing these children with a properly selected lunch at cost price, at the same time in a practical way teaching them the nutritive value of the different foods, we would be furnishing them with such knowledge which, if reflected in the home, would aid that home in carrying out its own proper function. During my visit to the American cities, I had many opportunities of observing the operation of school lunches from the simplest form to the most elaborate. I was very much struck with the easy manner in which they can be operated without disturbance of the school work and without expense to the Board of Education except a small cost for equipment."

"From the eagerness with which the children came forward to receive their lunch, I am led to believe that if a mid-morning lunch was furnished, in a few selected schools in the city, that instead of spending their odd coppers in candy and titbits which are often exposed to dirt and filth and grossly adulterated, they could be induced to spend them for a nourishing glass of milk or chocolate."

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.

## **Toilet Accommodations and Basements Should be Adequate and Clean.**

"In many of the schools where the old urinal troughs are used there is a strong odor of urine. This is due in some instances to bad drainage, to allowing crusts to form upon the trough, and **soakage through the floor.** Troughs should be abolished as soon as possible."

"The lavatory accommodations in many of the schools is inadequate, falling far below that required by the Regulations of the Education Department. There are many varieties of flush closets, but there seemed to be as good satisfaction from the automatic flush as from any other, particularly for the use of children. I think the Board should consider the advisability of putting some form of screen doors upon the closets, especially in the girls' lavatory, where there are large girls attending school. They should also consider the advisability of putting closet accommodation for the children on top floor of all new schools. In many of the older schools, there is not proper toilet accommodation for the teachers. This matter should be attended to."

"In the older schools, the caretakers cannot flush the basement floors, owing to the fact that there is no wash-out drain. **A wash-out drain should be placed in every basement where it is possible.**"

—Dr. Alex. MacKay,  
Chief Medical Officer.

---

## **Good Teeth Necessary for Good Health.**

"The problem of the prevention of dental caries (decay) includes questions of diet, mastication and oral cleanliness. These are matters requiring systematic instruction, and it is essential that **there should be active co-operation between the home and the school teacher, nurse and dental officer, if the best results are to be obtained.** The active sympathetic help of the teacher is most important in checking up the daily hygienic care of the oral cavity."

. . . . .



## Good Teeth Necessary for Good Health—Continued

" . . . The following tabulation indicates the results of the dental examination following the summer vacation of 1915:

6 schools graded excellent (1 to 1.75).  
54 schools graded good (1.75 to 2.50).  
24 schools graded fair (2.50 to 3.25).

"Not a single school was graded poor. This speaks eloquently of the work accomplished in the schools since the establishment of dental clinics."

" . . . It is worthy of note that as the children become older greater attention is paid to oral cleanliness—that is to say, the poorest oral hygiene grading was found in the kindergarten grades. This fact should be impressed upon parents as well as teachers."

"The Oral Hygiene Grades for the city, according to school classes, average as follows:

Senior IV.....	2.0
Junior IV.....	2.1
Senior III.....	2.1
Junior III.....	2.2
Senior II.....	2.2
Junior II.....	2.2
Senior I.....	2.2
Junior I.....	2.3
Kindergarten.....	2.3

"Following the examination of the scholars, those whose mouth conditions were graded low were given special prophylactic treatment and instruction."

"The average percentage of dental defectives is 65 per cent. (49,081 children examined). This compared favorably with the average of 95 per cent. defective previous to the establishment of dental clinics, but must be further reduced if we are to maintain the scholars at a proper degree of efficiency."

—Dr. Wallace Seecombe,  
Chief Dental Officer.

## The Time to Stop Disease is Before it Begins.

"A great effort has been made to concentrate on the correction of the more important defects and to teach the parents or guardians the treatment of minor defects in the home."

"Instructions were given the nurses to give their attention to the defects which positively menace the present safety of the child and his future general health and to more certainly secure the correction of chronic physical defects. Care has been given to the finding and weeding out of these defects before disease has set in, and to the improvement of those physical qualities which are the fundamental basis of usefulness. In carrying on this part of the work each little individual had to be studied, the result being that many were found to need a great deal of care, others not so much, from all which it is easy to see that the mission of the school nurse is no easy task, for upon her rests, to a great extent, the responsibility for the physical development of the children."

"It is, of course, self-evident that the lack of parental care is at the bottom of truancy. This has been taken into account at the time of the social service work of the nurse in the various homes and the effect in school attendance has been marked."

"A department of the work of the nurses which has given great satisfaction is that among the "Little Mothers" who, through the training and instruction they receive from the nurses, are proving of such assistance in the homes by the methodical and wise care they now give the little ones of the family. The "Big Mothers," too, are benefitting immeasurably by the instruction given, and to the improvement brought about through the medium of these two classes may be attributed no small share in the lessened death rate among the little ones."

"Testimony to the work of the nurses was given by the Principal in a school in one of our poorest districts, when he said: 'The reformation is wonderful. To go into one of our classrooms now is like going into a flower garden. A few years ago these children came to school filthy and diseased.'"

"In connection with the home it may be stated that parents are co-operating in a way that must be productive of much good. The homes are better ventilated and more sanitary in every way. There are fewer cases of contagious disease and greater attention is being paid to the eradication of flat chests, adenoids, poor nutrition, crossed eyes and other formerly quite common defects."

"In conclusion would urge that still greater effort be put forth in the interests of the feeble-minded and unfit, and to redeem the exceptional child by special opportunities for the gifted, and to give to these as well as the sub-normal every advantage that medical or social science can suggest."

—Miss E. M. Paul,  
Supervisor of School Nurses.

**In the 1915 Report  
of the Board of Education  
and elsewhere,**

the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Dental Officer, the Supervisor of Nurses, and one of the Inspectors of the Board, made the recommendations quoted in the preceding pages. Parents should be in a position, within three or four months at least, to know which of these recommendations have been adopted, and, of those adopted, what progress has been made in putting them into effect during 1916.



**For the protection of society  
every child  
must have a schooling.**

---

In justice to the children

their parents, and ourselves, if we make schooling compulsory, the school plant must be above suspicion from the health standpoint.

This does not require money so much as it requires care and commonsense. For example, recent studies have proved conclusively that a great deal of money has been wasted on expensive ventilating systems which didn't ventilate, or, if they ventilated, enervated at the same time. Fresh air is cheap and accessible, if we don't artificially make it inaccessible. Until the ventilation "sharps" finally make up their minds and reconcile practice with theory, why not save our money and our children by using the windows along the lines advocated, under certain conditions, by medical and educational experts in the 1915 Report of the Board of Education?