

Building Citizens for Tomorrow: Postwar School Design in Ontario

Jessie Gamarra

In 1958, the national trade magazine known as *Canadian Architect* published a special issue dedicated to modern school design that featured an article titled “Schools for Today.”¹ Written by Toronto-based architect Cardwell Ross Anderson, it tracked the history of elementary school design in Ontario from ‘The Pioneer Period’ to ‘The Present Day.’ From the one-room log cabin, to the classical monument, to the modern modular school, Anderson assigned a different building type to each period and attributed these shifts to major educational policies produced within the same era. Beginning with the establishment of a public education system in Upper Canada in the late eighteenth century, he traced this shift in the built environment of the school as a discourse informed by pedagogical ambitions as well as architectural ideals. To represent the immediate past before the emergence of a modern vernacular, Anderson included the image of a traditional Georgian school in dark brick accentuated by light quoining and an open-gable roof. Similar, but larger schools can be found in urban settings, where enrolment was high enough to sustain these costly buildings. Like Huron Street School, constructed in 1890 for a “streetcar suburb” characterized by grid-like blocks on the furthest western edge of Toronto, these grand monuments often fit into their surrounding neighbourhoods of Victorian style homes.² Huron, a three-storey building that originally housed twelve maple-panelled classrooms in a centralized block, would be added to overtime.³ A six-classroom annex constructed in

¹ Anderson, “Schools for Today,” *Canadian Architect*, 3:5 (May 1958): 45.

² James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1985), 51-53.

³ Patricia McHugh, *Toronto Architecture: A City Guide* (Toronto: Mercury Books, 1985) 224-229.

1914 followed a similar style, was, with the original structure, deemed “substandard” in 1956 and planned for demolition.⁴ Though the additional wing was eventually saved by parents who pushed to upgrade the building’s infrastructure, the main building was replaced by “one of Toronto’s first early modern buildings, a low-scale ribbon of large windowed classrooms” designed by local architect, Irving Boigon.⁵ The new two-storey structure, distinguished by a white frame structure and broad expanses of windows, was decidedly modern.

Something had occurred in between the construction of Huron’s first structure and the later design by Boigon that Anderson could not pinpoint in his history of Canadian school design. He wrote about the twentieth century as a period that “contributed little or nothing to the field of architectural design,” but the case at Huron can be considered a signpost for a new direction.⁶ The grand scale and static layout of the original school had been somewhat contained in the annex—the heavy ornamentation that formed the facade of the original structure mostly discarded in the addition, either due to cost or style. According to architectural historian Christopher Armstrong, the predominant understanding of ‘moderne’ design that was adopted in Canada during the interwar period was more an accepted ornamental dressing that veiled the incorporation of advances in materials and technology.⁷ The form of functional modernism introduced by international architects would not cement itself until after the war, gradually adapting in turns into Canada’s urban landscapes throughout the midcentury.⁸

Though homeowners were still hesitant to adapt to its exterior features in the postwar years, modernism’s easy adoption in school design can be attributed to an ideological shift in pedagogy that envisioned transparency and functionalism as the answer to the social need for establishing and

⁴ McHugh, *Toronto Architecture*, 228.

⁵ McHugh, *Toronto Architecture*, 229.

⁶ Anderson, “Schools for Today,” 46.

⁷ Christopher Armstrong, *Making Toronto Modern* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 7.

⁸ Armstrong, *Marking Toronto Modern*, 9-11.

maintaining a modern democratic Canadian citizenship. In Anderson's coverage of 'The Present Day,' he identifies a contemporary policy document known as "the most important event of this century for school planning in Ontario," and points to one local school that exemplified its architectural goals. It was called Sunnylea.⁹

Sunnylea Public School opened to its small farming community on the western outskirts of Toronto in 1943. Built to replace the township's old brick schoolhouse from 1908, Sunnylea's new design was a striking departure from the typical school building of the early twentieth century.¹⁰ The rural schoolhouse model—of which the old Sunnylea is a good example—could no longer meet the needs of its expanding community.¹¹ Though its square-shaped, two-storey, two-room structure featured an impressive steeped roof with a belfry and chimney stack; tall, vertical sliding windows; and a high porch over a stone basement, the structure did not include such modern luxuries as running water or indoor washrooms until 1939.¹² It was eventually due to overcrowding that the community commissioned local architect, John B. Parkin, for a new school building nearby the old site.¹³

John Burnett Parkin was not new to school design—indeed, he previously explored the subject in an article penned for the September issue of the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (JRAIC) in 1942. This brief essay, titled "The Post-War Planning of Schools," laments the general lack of architectural development in Canada. Addressing the key parties who Parkin believed held the most "responsibility for action" in this field (the government, the architect, and the public),

⁹ Anderson, "Schools for Today," 46-47.

¹⁰ Denise Harris, "Sunnylea Avenue" on Etobicoke Historical Society website, accessed 15 January 2018 (<http://www.etobicokehistorical.com/sunnylea-avenue.html>).

¹¹ The neighbourhood was in the midst of a population numbered in the twenty-thousands at the start of the Second World War, would end the decade with nearly triple the residents; Denise Harris, "A Brief History of Etobicoke: From Township to Amalgamation," on Etobicoke Historical Society website, accessed 15 January 2018 (<http://www.etobicokehistorical.com/a-history-of-etobicoke-from-township-to-amalgamation.html>).

¹² Denise Harris, "Etobicoke History Corner: Student's contest win gave school, community, the name Sunnylea," *Etobicoke Guardian* (Etobicoke, 27 Feb 2015): 1.

¹³ Harris, "Sunnylea Avenue."

he chastised those who employed “antiquated practices in construction and architectural tradition.”¹⁴ Further warning of an impending “post-war surge” that would require a new approach to educational design, he stated:

The school building is the result of planning in relation to our educational concepts of a free and unhindered development of man. It should, therefore, express the type of system which it houses and, above all, the child, in his constant development, step by step, towards a social life...To realize a happy and healthy environment must be our ultimate aim in school design. To obtain this end one requires a deep and intelligent understanding of the child and the scale of his world.¹⁵

Like many young architects working in the midcentury, Parkin recognized that the postwar period held tremendous potential for societal change. His article was not alone. Accompanied by others like “Paving the Way to a Post-War Canada” by R.M. Smith, “The Back-Log of Post-War Construction Projects” by A.S. Mathers, and “Parks for Post-War Reconstruction” by E. Ingles, his essay engaged in a national dialogue on planning for postwar life.¹⁶ Architects and urban planners understood that the Canadian landscape would undergo drastic changes in the face of demobilization and modernization (ie. exponential domestic growth, and accessibility of new technologies and materials, etc.). Academic literature associates this perspective with a ‘culture of reconstruction’ that was especially prevalent in postwar architectural discourse in Canada, the United States, Britain, and other modern Western democracies that emerged from the Second World War. Defined by cultural historian Leonard Kuffert as an “environment and the accompanying complex attitudes, opinions, and aspirations directed (especially *during* wartime) towards the achievement of a more satisfying postwar society,” reconstruction efforts in Canada reflected the nation’s ideological principles, as well as its anxieties.¹⁷ Demobilization, the trend towards community or suburban planning in satellite towns, and the introduction of the automobile and mass media would thrust new patterns of living, moving, and

¹⁴ John B. Parkin, “The Post-War Planning of Schools,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 19: 9 (September 1942): 188.

¹⁵ Parkin, “The Post-War Planning of Schools.” 188.

¹⁶ *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 19: 9 (September 1942).

¹⁷ Kuffert, *A Great Duty*, 69.

communicating upon many Canadians. Under these conditions, architects, educators, and policy planners would position the school as an exceedingly valuable pedagogical tool in the development of young citizens. They would discuss its design and construction in architectural discourse and provincial policy as an example of the effect good design could have on society, which manifested predominately through the study of healthy environmental standards.¹⁸

According to Parkin, this could be achieved through a nearly scientific consideration of user-driven elements of the child's environmental needs. This included elements such as orientation, lighting, and ventilation, among others, which he covered in his article. Unable to provide any references to existing schools as examples, Parkin instead includes three diagrams of different school building styles. Similarly to Anderson's article, he attributes the change in style to different eras—but instead of pointing to educational policies, Parkin associates the shifts to periods of war. A tall, square, brick structure in the Second Empire style which features a mansard roof and small irregular windows, is identified as a Boer War-era structure (fig. 9); the second example, ascribed to the First World War, emphasizes the domestic impression by reducing the scale of the schoolhouse. The last example—a low, flat-roofed structure dominated by long horizontal windows, elevated upon pilotis—is presented under the subtitle 'World War Two'. These visuals, supported by their captions, bolster Parkin's argument that shifts in educational design must correspond to periods of change (here attributed specifically to large-scale military conflicts). His unillustrated recommendations for a child-centred design, based on the use of a free plan and classroom units, are ultimately brief. However the following summer, in July of 1943, he publishes another article on school design in the same journal. Titled "To-morrow's Schools," it echoes the same concerns about traditional school

¹⁸ In the June 1943 issue of the JRAIC, Honeywell's temperature control systems are tied directly to the war effort in the declaration that "out of this experience are coming developments in automatic controls...that will provide an effortless scientific comfort and efficiency, for post-war living and working"; similarly, an October 1944 advertisement for the Barrett Company's pre-fabricated roofing imagines an alternative for the future "ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN 194X," wherein the roof has been made into an elaborate space-saving playground "where the children are safe from harm," and able to see and be seen from the busy city street.

structures and future building needs, continues to encourage an efficient user-based design, but also includes actual examples of school buildings; quotes from educational officials and reports from across Canada; and photographs, as well as floor-plans, of the newly-built Sunnylea Public School.¹⁹

Designed “as a neighbourhood school,” Sunnylea’s modern plan introduced a number of key ideas to the discourse on school design in Canada.²⁰ Its long, horizontal, flat-roofed structure was unlike the old rural schoolhouses or urban school-halls; departing from traditional school forms in favour of modern building techniques, materials, and aesthetics. Sunnylea’s design was organized into modular classroom units that stemmed from centralized administrative services, coupled with an auditorium available for community use. Rather than the stacked, box-like classrooms which resided in the old monolithic structures, each of these self-contained classroom units featured large windows and chalkboards, exits to exterior gardens, and individual project workspaces with storage cupboards, counter space, and running water.²¹ Parkin included the possibility of an extension, which added an entire wing of classrooms off the administrative core, and included a kindergarten. He also recommended new furniture types—self-contained, mobile desks “[allowing] classrooms to be cleared for group activities”²²—as part of this whole redesign of the educational environment. “The average child,” he writes, “spends approximately one-third of the waking hours of his life within the confines of some educational institution. Is this period then to be considered a mere passing stage in the life of a citizen?”²³

Other architects were beginning to ask similar questions. In 1944, the JRAIC publishes its first issue entirely dedicated to school architecture. Inserted among articles such as “The School’s Relation

¹⁹ John B. Parkin, “To-morrow’s Schools,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 20: 7 (July 1943): 99-114; This included studies from Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland.

²⁰ Harland Steele, “Planning an Elementary School,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 21: 11 (November 1944): 251.

²¹ Burke and Grosvenor, *Schools* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 102.

²² Parkin, “To-morrow’s Schools,” 112.

²³ Parkin, “To-morrow’s Schools,” 112.

to the Neighbourhood,” “Some Aspects of Heating and Ventilating School Buildings,” “School Lighting,” and “Acoustics in Schools,” Sunnylea was featured as a model of modern school design that demonstrated the most up-to-date techniques employed by Canadian architects.²⁴ Their studies add depth to the issues that Parkin had brought up in his earlier works. In “Nursery Schools: Needs, Purpose, Method, Plan, Spirit,” for example, architect James A. Murray repeated the call for a new specialized educational environment developed from the child’s needs. Like Parkin, his cartoons also positioning modernist design in direct contrast with the old urban model.²⁵ Contractor and architect James Smith furthered the appeal to those democratic values of self-determination and collective living (supposedly embodied in modernist urban planning and by progressive pedagogy) in his article, “The School’s Relation to the Neighbourhood.”²⁶ He featured an idealized community complex with centralized administrative and health services placed with a kindergarten unit, and flanking separate primary and secondary schools.²⁷ “Designed for multi-vari use,” he writes, “[the school] can serve as a medium for participation in self-reliant living.”²⁸

An even more definite correlation to Parkin’s ideas may be found in the article by fellow Toronto architect Harland Steele, of Page and Steele Associates. Simply titled, “Planning an Elementary School,” it included a diagram of a classroom that drew inspiration not only from Parkin’s design for Sunnylea but also other international examples (fig. 21).²⁹ The modular classroom unit with movable furniture and project-space seen as a diagram in Steele’s article and as-built-reality in

²⁴ Steele, “Planning an Elementary School,” 250-51; *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 24: 10 (October 1947): 348-49; Other articles from this issue include “The School’s Relation to the Neighbourhood,” “A Flexible Plan for Rural Schools,” and “Modern School Buildings.”

²⁵ James A. Murray, “Nursery Schools,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 21: 11 (November 1944): 243-46.

²⁶ “Smith, James,” on the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, accessed 23 January 2018 (<http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/464>).

²⁷ James F.C. Smith, “The School’s Relation to the Neighbourhood,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 21: 11 (November 1944): 247-49.

²⁸ Smith, “The School’s Relation to the Neighbourhood,” 247.

²⁹ Canadian postwar school design certainly engages in a wider international exchange of the modernist aesthetic and theory which inspires its form—this is most evident in comparisons to other democratic nations like Britain and the United States.

Parkin's design for Sunnylea was derived from the innovative design at Crow Island Elementary School (Illinois, 1940)—“a borrowing confirmed with the Sunnylea School Trustees' minutes”.³⁰ Designed by modernists Eliel and Eero Saarinen, and architect Lawrence B. Perkins in cooperation with the actual staff and students of the school community, the school was based on their actual needs.³¹ The team organized the building into three sections articulated by individual L-shaped classroom units that included an open-plan class with additional project workspaces and exits to separate gardens. This structure built on a desire for the “open-air classroom”—exemplified best by the Ecole en Plein Air at Surènes, in France, built in 1934 by Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods—was tempered by North American winters.³² The appropriation of this relatively new pedagogical relationship between interior and exterior, translated into a simple module of planning based on shared needs, made this design plan appealing for architects to appropriate in a Canadian context.

Steele's article echoed Parkin's concerns about new pedagogical needs that shifted what was to be expected from the school environment. The realization that planning for postwar life could also mean planning a better future was a rousing notion for architects who believed in the power of space and the built environment to shape society. The JRAIC would go on to publish several more issues on school design in October 1947, April 1949, April 1952, May 1957, and February 1958, where these concerns could be further examined and worked out through design. Thus an idealized conception of the modern educational environment in Canada emerged from this architectural discourse, as a low modular structure that could be adapted for the suburban neighbourhood, urban renewal projects, or rural redesigns like Sunnylea. This strategy ultimately promoted a cost-efficient and flexible, functional design that considered the child's scale, their health, and community use of the building.

³⁰ Burke and Grosvenor, *School*, 102; Documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement,” accessed 1 April 2018 (<http://docomomo-ontario.ca/register/sunnylea-elementary-school/>); “Crow Island School, Winnetka, Ill. : Eliel and Eero Saarinen, Perkins, Wheeler and Will, architects,” *Architecturalforum* 75 (January 1941): 79.

³¹ Burke and Grosvenor, *School*, 99-100.

³² Burke and Grosvenor, *Schools*; “Une Ecole de Plein Air a Suresnes, Paris, France, Beaudoin & Lods” *Architecture-Batiment-Construction* 5: 45 (January 1950): 26-27.

Participating not only in a national but also an international discourse on school design, architects like Harland Steele and John Parkin informed the shift from traditional schoolhouse design, to a new postwar model.

It is not surprising, then, to see the name ‘John B. Parkin’ included in the varied list of architects, engineers, and other professional tradesmen who participated in the committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario.³³ Appointed by an Order-in-Council on the 28th of November, 1944, this body was tasked “to inquire into: the planning and equipment of schools; standard methods of construction; standards for mechanical services; [and] the useful physical life of school buildings.”³⁴ They submitted their Interim Report on May 28th, 1945—just twenty days after Nazi Germany surrendered to Allied Forces.

Parkin was not the only member of the committee to have engaged with educational design, modernism, or even postwar planning. Chairman Eric R. Arthur was at this point already at work cultivating a national discussion on modern design in Canada through his position as Editor-in-Chief of the JRAIC, which he held from 1937 until 1959.³⁵ Arthur also held a position in the University of Toronto’s School of Architecture as an influential professor; he had begun lecturing on historical and contemporary Canadian design shortly after his arrival from England in 1923 and continued to

³³ Parkin on “the government’s part”: should have a panel with government representatives, teachers, and architects, should recall existing school planning books and produce “a book showing existing schools,” which would consist of “photographs and plans accompanied by an outline of the problem and a criticism of the results” (...“surely there is no longer any need for each individual or group to go on learning merely by making the same mistakes that others have already made”)

³⁴ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools* (28 May 1945), 4.

³⁵ “Arthur, Eric Ross,” on the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, accessed 24 January 2018 (<http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/61>); It may go without saying that, with Arthur as its head, the *Journal* published the committee’s report in full in their September issue.

encourage the development of modernism in Canada until his death in 1982.³⁶ Other committee members include figures such as Jack Ryrie, who had been a student of Arthur's during his first year at the University and was later awarded a scholarship to attend the prestigious Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts in France.³⁷ George N. Williams worked as the Deputy Architect of Ontario for three years before they published the report—after which he was promptly promoted to lead Provincial Architect (a position he would hold until 1958).³⁸ Other members, such as Burwell R. Coon, James H. Craig, and Forsey Page (of the aforementioned firm Page and Steele), were rather well-versed modernists themselves, each having worked in school design before.

Though this committee did not represent the first provincial or professional effort to affect school design, it marked a clear distinction between modern school design in the postwar era and that of the past. Traditional design templates—included in notable publications such as John G. Hodgins' *Hints and Suggestions on School Architecture and Hygiene* of 1886, the Ontario Department of Education's *Plans for Rural School Buildings* of 1909, and *Modern Schoolhouses* (Ontario Edition) by Walter W. LaChance, a member of the Saskatchewan Architectural Association, from 1919—did not address the same functional or ideological concerns. These publications featured plans for the standard one or two-room brick schoolhouse, with tall vertical sliding windows, similar to Sunnylea's original school building of 1908 (fig. ??). In these types of schools, static classrooms of single rows of desks were often bolted to the floor, facing a chalkboard at the front of the room. The committee made their opinion on this matter quite clear:

³⁶ "Arthur, Eric Ross," on the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950; The most recent publication by the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* is a feature entirely dedicated to Arthur, which includes articles such as "Eric Ross Arthur: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition" by Michelangelo Sabatino, "Assaying Eric Arthur's Campaign to Modernize Canadian Design" by Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, and "Eric Arthur and the Introduction of Modernism to Canada" by Harold Kalman; *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 42: 2 (2017).

³⁷ "Ryrie, Jack," on the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, accessed 21 January 2018 (<http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2046>).

³⁸ Appendix of Public Work Architects on the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, accessed 21 January 2018 (http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/appendix_a).

[We take] the view that a school is something dynamic, rather than static, in which the teaching education may be carried on in an atmosphere that will develop and all that is best in the teacher, along with all that is latent and best in the child. It is our opinion that such an atmosphere can be created in an attractive workshop, and is less likely of fulfillment in a monument.³⁹

Their resulting Interim Report was methodical in its study. It outlined different parts of the school, such as the site, playgrounds, basements, and the general plan, before addressing the basic needs and requirements of a modern school building. These "needs" included topics such as ideal classroom dimensions, natural and artificial lighting, heating and ventilation, and the standardization of building practices and materials. The issues were worked out within the familiar classroom unit—here defined as a standardized “unit of planning” which accommodated the provincially-recommended amount of 40 students per classroom, “their exits and entrances to the outside and to corridors; the lighting on each row of desks; the hanging of clothes and the working space for projects.”⁴⁰ They offered three schemas (classrooms A, B, and C) which included individual coat closets and movable desks for each student; a communal project workspace with a table, counter space, storage, and a sink; ample room for tack and chalkboards; and appropriate heating, ventilation, and lighting amenities for each child.

This last topic—heating, ventilation, and lighting—necessitated a thorough and nearly scientific study. The committee’s final recommendations prioritized provisions for the installation of future technologies, accommodations for possible expansion, and even alternate uses of the building by the community, insisting upon minimum standards for maximum possible health conditions. They worked these concerns out in two appendices. The first, on lighting, maintained that artificial sources of light could only be considered supplementary to natural daylight, which offered a superior

³⁹ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 4.

⁴⁰ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 4; Sunnylea’s classroom units were designed to fit 30 pupils, but was also able to fit up to 40 students “in the transitional periods” (Steele, “Planning an Elementary School”).

quantity, quality, and distribution.⁴¹ This could be achieved most efficiently through the employ of a strategy called bilateral lighting, which required not only a large window on the classroom's outer wall, but also the addition of a clerestory window over the corridor roof to direct sunlight into the classroom.⁴² They included three cross-sections to display variant options for sloped or vertical clerestory windows, and one to demonstrate the refraction of light in relation to a user's 'line of vision'. This technique also necessitated specific site and building design considerations to prevent "undesirable angles," light obstruction, and to control the effects of glare.⁴³ Recommendations in this vein continued with a preferred of building axis of north-south, so that each classroom would receive the maximum amount of natural lighting as the sun passed from east to west; and the installation of fixed or movable baffles, shades, or anti-glare glass to diffuse direct sunlight.⁴⁴

Other health-focused design questions that concerned efficient, economical heating and ventilation methods were explored in the second appendix. The committee was ultimately hesitant to encourage the use of new technologies such as an efficient panel heating design over more traditional methods like hot water or steam heating, as it had yet to be tested in the Canadian climate. It was more important to meet the ideal standard of "approximately 15 degrees Fahrenheit above [the] recorded lowest outside temperature," rather than experiment with new but more economical technologies.⁴⁵

⁴¹ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 9.

⁴² The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 13.

⁴³ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 13.

⁴⁴ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 5.

⁴⁵ The Committee on Planning, Construction and Equipment of Schools in Ontario, *Interim Report on Elementary Schools*, 14-15; 10; This included a recommendation drawn from the regulations of the Connecticut State Department of Education's assertion that "15 cubic feet per minute of fresh air per pupil be supplied in each classroom." However, the committee lamented provincial standards that recommended a standard of 40 pupils per classroom as an obstacle in the provision of an ideal learning space (9-10).

Recognized as a valuable document by architects and policy planners, the Interim Report marked “a new exuberance” in school design following the publication.⁴⁶ The recommendations were later compiled into *Suggestions for the Layout and Construction of Schools in Ontario* by the provincial Department of Education, published at least once before 1950, and subsequently updated at least three more times in 1953, 1955, and 1962.⁴⁷ As the only rigorous Canadian study on contemporary school design that positioned it as a social technology, the Interim Report was also referenced in the first major Canadian educational review of the century: the *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, published in 1950.⁴⁸

Appointed by Lieutenant-Governor in Provincial Council, this committee’s five-year-long study began in March of 1945. Commonly termed the ‘Hope Report’ in reference to lead commissioner, Honourable Mr. Justice John Andrew Hope of the Supreme Court of Ontario, the committee research drew from former research, as well as briefs from professional groups and information from international visits. The final report, published five years later, expressed the province’s educational goals through explicitly architectural terms. Using the same architectural language as those modernist architects featured in the JRAIC and who contributed to the Interim Report to speak directly to pedagogical concerns about the educational environment in the postwar era, it indicated a clear break from the past. The monumental brick and stone schools of the nineteenth century were deemed “too permanent” and “obsolete for modern educational purposes.”⁴⁹ Rather, building upon the progressive

⁴⁶ Watson Balharrie, “Today’s School in Canada,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 26: 4 (April 1949): 100.

⁴⁷ This study’s analysis of provincially-mandated or recommended school design policy draws primarily from the Ontario Historical Education Collection held by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, hosted by the University of Toronto, which ranges from John George Hodgins’ 1886 text on *School Architecture* to a variety of pamphlets from a series of design workshops hosted by the provincial Department of Education in the 1970s. This may be considered a self-imposed boundary upon the scope of this project; The Hope Report references the text, it therefore follows that the *Suggestions* must have been originally published at least once before 1950.

⁴⁸ Referenced on 656.

⁴⁹ Ontario Royal Commission on Education, *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 655-56.

pedagogical theory of the whole child, the Hope Report recommended a “child-centred” approach to educational practice and design stating:

Much as been spoken and written about the glories of the “little old red school-house”; but this school was, in fact, often unattractive and unhealthy. Attractive schools engender a sense of beauty. Good lighting, heating, and ventilation make for better physical and mental health of pupils. Educators are interested now in the emotional life of the child, in the development of desirable interests and attitudes [...].⁵⁰

The Hope Report was a result of reconstruction policy reacting to societal, economical, and political stresses. Building upon educational psychology that promoted mental health and physical hygiene in the 1920s and 30s, discussions about school design in the midcentury were embedded in the discourse of progressive pedagogy, which gained new importance in the years following the Second World War.⁵¹

Perhaps best encapsulated by the American educationalist John Dewey’s theories, progressive ideology was expressly fitting in the postwar context, as it sought to cultivate good citizens through active teaching practices that met the child’s needs.⁵² The Hope Report explicitly and unabashedly expressed its goals for socialization in its opening pages, claiming: “the rapid growth in population, in particular that caused by immigration, [has] created many problems. Educational facilities must be provided not only for a greatly increased school population, but also for many thousands of person who do not know our language and culture.”⁵³ Its statement that “schools should be concerned, above everything else, with the kind of person they are helping to produce,” summarizes an pedagogical objective underlying school design in the postwar era.⁵⁴ These experts anticipated incoming migrants, domestic growth, and the effects of modern technologies on modern life, which presented the

⁵⁰ Ontario Royal Commission on Education, *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 35.

⁵¹ Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 27-28; Progressivism was primarily popularized in the nineteenth century by American educationalist John Dewey’s conceptions of the “whole child,” which increasingly found traction as provincial policies implemented mandatory schooling.

⁵² Kuffert, *A Great Duty*; Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 120-122; Rhodri Windsor Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino, *Canada* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 112.

⁵³ Ontario Royal Commission on Education, *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 6.

⁵⁴ Ontario Royal Commission on Education, *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 27.

opportunity for social reform through education.⁵⁵ A product of reconstruction-minded policymakers who researched and interviewed similarly-minded professionals, the Hope Report states in its opening pages:

Nations emerging from war have frequently made such reviews [of educational organizations]; indeed there is a direct relationship between warfare and educational development. In war, human effort is stretched to its utmost; emphasis is placed upon human and spiritual rather than upon materialistic values; and the national awareness of the virtues of loyalty, patriotism, co-operation, and sacrifice is renewed and invigorated. At such times, man naturally turns to the improvement of education, wherein lies his greatest hope for the realization of his ideals.⁵⁶

Firmly seated in the belief that progressive reform could better society, educational policy bridged the gap between progressive pedagogical objectives and the ideals espoused in architectural discourse by placing them in dialogue with one another. In theory, they were complimentary; modern functionalism echoed the concerns of educationalists in physical terms, incorporating new ideas about democratic learning through strategies that focused on the individual experience and its collective effect. The insistence on developing healthy and attractive environments for creative and physical activity was thus ultimately a part of the enterprise of nation, an intention to develop “well-adjusted and productive citizens” would manifest through the environment.⁵⁷ Through the postwar period, architects, educators, and policymakers seemed to have had a genuine and steadfast belief in the capacity for carefully studied *good* design to achieve this goal.

⁵⁵ Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*; Kuffert, *A Great Duty*.

⁵⁶ Ontario Royal Commission on Education, *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 3.

⁵⁷ Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 120.

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