

Ryerson's Gerrard Resource Centre requests donations for emergency child-care services ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Ryerson University's Gerrard Resource Centre (GRC) needs to raise \$35,000 in order to continue to provide emergency child-care services in 2019.

For more than 30 years, the emergency child-care program has enabled parents and caregivers to use their drop-in services for various reasons, including attending medical appointments and job interviews.

If they don't raise enough money, the centre won't be able to provide these services in the future since the government will stop funding the program after December 2018.

The services, which are offered out of St. Simon's-the-Apostle Church and Ryerson, are being defunded a result of the implementation of the EarlyON Child and Families (EarlyON) program initiated by Kathleen Wynne and the former Liberal government in 2017.

Catherine Moher, the manager of the GRC, said she's "disheartened" about the GRC losing funding for the services next year since it has addressed a need for emergency or respite child-care since it was first established in 1982.

Both students and faculty from Ryerson use the services, she said.

"This is one of the most important and real critical services that we offer," said Moher. "It is a concrete support to families who are in stress and in crisis."

In a letter to soon-to-be EarlyON service providers, Toronto Children's Services wrote that providers like the GRC have to submit a transition plan, which adheres to the new guidelines and services in 2019, to an EarlyON consultant.

All providers will still receive funding for the new EarlyON program but the money must be used toward the new mandatory core services: engaging parents and caregivers, supporting early learning and development and making connections for families.

Due to emergency and respite child-care services no longer being in the mandatory core services, Moher is searching for other sources of funding to continue the program.

Currently, the GRC has raised \$5,000 through parent donations. According to Moher, this money will allow them to operate for another seven weeks in 2019.

Moher said that she is seeking other contributions from Ryerson community members in order to keep the program afloat after those seven weeks are up.

"It's very unfortunate for us as parents to hear these new updates for next year"

"I reached out to the Ryerson community through the United Way donor designation program...We have been successful in the past in getting donations to support us but they have been minimal," she said.

Moher said the GRC needs \$40,000 to operate the program in 2019, which would aid in compensating staff salaries, supplies and space costs for the program.

If she is able to secure the funding, Moher will run the service under the GRC instead of EarlyON.

"Respite and emergency child-care services, where parents are able to leave the premises, operate outside of the current scope of EarlyON programs," said Heather Irwin, senior media relations coordinator for the Ministry of Education.

"One of the requirements of EarlyON programs is for parents to remain on the premises during the program."

Emilyn Regal is a parent who has used the GRC programs for over a year. She said she was shocked to hear GRC's respite care is being defunded because it has helped so many families, including hers.

“It has allowed my son to do activities [and] learn how to be with other children,” she said.

“It’s very unfortunate for us as parents to hear these new updates for next year.”

Irwin said the new centres will offer free drop-in programs for children up to six years of age and their parents or caregivers. The new facilities are intended to support child learning, growth and connection, she added.

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