

Manitoba spending \$1M to create 68 fully subsidized child-care spots for newcomer families ^[1]

Families must be involved in Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce online employment hub

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EXCERPTS

The province is spending more than \$1 million on a pilot project that will create more than 60 fee-free child-care spaces for newcomers in Manitoba's labour market.

The funding announcement is a partnership with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, which earlier this summer launched an online newcomer employment hub that pairs newcomers with Manitoba employers, Early Childhood Learning Minister Wayne Ewasko said at a news conference on Thursday.

"This initiative will help newcomers find care for their children more easily, allowing them to find meaningful employment and enter into Manitoba's labour market," he said.

By April 2023, the entirety of the \$1 million will support 68 fully subsidized licensed child-care spaces for these newcomer families, Ewasko said.

The new spaces will be for those who take part in the newcomer employment hub program.

"This includes Ukrainians living in Manitoba on a permanent or temporary basis who have signed up for the hub program," Ewasko said.

Initially, 12 spots will open – which is big news for newcomers, said Shereen Denetto, executive director of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM).

"It's a huge increase in terms of access to child care for us, so we're really pleased with that number as a starting point," she said.

The news is especially welcome in light of the federal government's ambitious plan to welcome hundreds of thousands of newcomers to Canada every year for the next two years in order to expand the economy and fill labour shortages.

"We will have a lot of migration to the province, so the need is only going to grow," Denetto said.

There is currently no other program like this for job-seekers in the province, she said.

"A program where we're partnering with the idea of finding employment and addressing the barrier of child care is new to us, so we're super excited to be part of this pilot."

Spots only in Winnipeg

Depending on how the pilot project goes, more than 68 child-care spaces may open up, Ewasko said.

But at this point the child-care spots are only in Winnipeg, which won't help newcomer Olena Horchak, who just moved to the western Manitoba city of Dauphin from Ukraine.

She's looking for evening shifts at a restaurant or working in information technology, because she hasn't been able to find a daycare spot.

A child-care spot "would be a huge thing, so it would be a relief," she said.

It's also disappointing news for Don Tarrant, a resident and businessman in Dauphin.

He started the Parkland Ukrainian Family Fund with \$25,000 of his own cash in order to support one or two families who are displaced from Ukraine.

The fund has grown to half a million dollars, and is intended to cover housing, furniture and utilities for a year, a vehicle and fuel for six months, and food, electronic devices and internet for three months.

"Not one penny of our fund is from government. Everything is private people, individuals, companies, families, service groups," he said in

an interview with CBC News.

But that money isn't enough to fund permanent child-care spots, which makes going to work a challenge for the newcomers.

Most of the spots available to the Ukrainian newcomers in Dauphin now are in unlicensed facilities, he said.

"They're basically people that have stepped up and said, 'OK, I've done this before. I'm kind of retired, but I'm going to do it again,'" Tarrant said.

"The concern we have going forward is this fall is we just don't have enough spots. Right now they're kind of taken care of, but it's a Band-Aid effect."

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

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