

Unemployed Help Centre opens child care for newcomer families ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Parents looking to attend the newcomer programs at the Unemployed Help Centre can do so without worrying about their children thanks to a new on-site child care service.

The Care for Newcomer Children program, funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, provides on-site child minding for children ages 19 months to six years at no cost, while parents receive education and training needed to help them integrate into the community and find employment.

The Unemployed Help Centre celebrated the grand opening Thursday morning with a guest speakers and a ribbon cutting ceremony. Costas Menegakis, parliamentary secretary of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, announced the investment of more than \$2 million for settlement services.

"This one was an easy fit for us," Menegakis said. "It's an all-inclusive, all-under-one-umbrella operation that provides much needed service to the community."

June Muir, the Unemployed Help Centre's chief executive officer, said this program is important for newcomer parents while they attend class.

Since opening Feb. 10 this year, 27 children have participated in the program which provides a safe atmosphere, with a play area, small kitchen and a playground outside, Muir said.

"They're having so much fun, they don't want to leave," she said. The child care services encourage each child's physical, social, emotional, communication, cognitive and creative development. Instructors promote multicultural experiences by introducing cultural celebrations and festivals, listening to multicultural music and reading multicultural books.

Muir said they assist children in developing a sense of the world around them, while helping their families settle into Canada.

"This is an invaluable addition to the newcomer programs we offer," Muir said. "It allows parents who would otherwise not be able to participate the opportunity to receive the training needed to get employment and integrate into the community."

The Newcomers Enhancing Employability and Awareness, Ready to Work and Language Instruction for Newcomer to Canada programs offer English classes, computer training and workplace essentials, and certification training which are used to secure jobs in customer-related fields including tourism and hospitality.

"As a government we have sustained the highest levels of immigration to Canada in the history of the country since the Second World War," Menegakis said.

The Unemployed Help Centre is a non-profit charitable organization that provides various programs and services, such as employment, educational and career counselling in Windsor-Essex.

Muir said her clients identified a need for a childcare service or they wouldn't be able to attend class. The centre applied a year ago and was approved.

"I have noticed a difference," Muir said. "Those who were waiting are starting to attend."

- Read online at the Windsor Star

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