

Daycare for new Canadians could be shuttered because of no funding^[1]

Author: Gallant, Isabelle

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 18 Jun 2015

AVAILABILITY

Read online^[2]

EXCERPTS

An Edmonton child care centre created for newcomers to Canada may be forced to close its doors if it can't find long-term funding.

The Intercultural Child and Family Centre opened five years ago just north of downtown, at 9538 107th Ave. It's now home to 44 children spread over three rooms in the former McCauley School.

The non-profit centre's focus is to support families from various cultures by hiring caregivers with the same cultural backgrounds as the children, and having visible objects from many cultures around the rooms.

The centre's director, Jasvinder Heran, said creating a home-like atmosphere makes it easier for families who are new to Canada.

"It seems to be so much more of an easy transition ... to be able to instantly see this decompression of finding somebody that speaks their own language," said Heran.

The centre hasn't been able to secure enough funding to ensure it can stay open long-term. Though it offers affordable fees, from \$867 to \$982 per month for full-time care, in a location close to downtown, it is not at its capacity of 63 children.

"Right now, it's just getting our word out about who we are," said Heran. "We are sort of hidden within the school." The Edmonton Public School Board, which still owns the school building, said the centre isn't allowed to affix a sign to the outside of the structure, due to its architectural heritage.

"We actually want people to come in and really see and feel who and what we support," said Heran. "Anybody can walk in our rooms in the evening and talk to our parents and see our successes."

The centre's board has sought funding through grants and from the provincial government, and will consider applying for a fundraising casino through the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

Heran said she's had to cut caregivers' hours and turn away parents who can't pay their fees. She recently visited one mother at home who was in crisis.

"If she can't pay her bill and I shut the door on her, it's just not shutting the door on one, it's shutting the door on many," she said.

"You build these relationships with these parents and children, you become extended, and you want to help them to succeed ... it becomes really rough."

Ellen Genchez works as a caregiver in the preschool room. She's from the Phillipines and speaks her native language, Tagalog, with four-year old Omer Akgun.

"It's a great help," said Genchez. "There were times there was language he cannot explain, he cannot express, so he will just say it in Tagalog."

Genchez said having familiar toys and objects around for the children is also helpful.

"(Things) like Ethiopian baskets ... There were times that (some children said), 'Oh, my mom used to be using this one, I know how to use this.'" she said. "So there's a relationship and continuity from home to the centre."

The idea for the centre started with a group of mothers in the neighbourhood who came from Ethiopia and Eritrea and met in a parenting group.

Many were single mothers, working hard to support their families, and their work schedules didn't line up with a typical daycare's hours. They needed a daycare that could open at 6 a.m. and provide quality care. So, they started one themselves in an empty room in McCauley

School. The mothers soon found themselves on the steep learning curve.

"We didn't know what it takes to run a daycare," said Tigist Dafla, one of the founders. "That was foolish of us ... it was very hard work.

"Before we knew the law, we were each taking different days, the parents were taking food for their kids. Until the health inspector showed up and said, 'Where did this food come (from)?' and one of the mothers said, 'Actually, I brought it from home,' and he said, 'No, no, no!'"

Dafla, who is from Ethiopia, stresses the importance of the centre's intercultural nature.

"It's important (the children) know where they come from and where their background is, and their background is embraced in the system," she said. "Then they can fully participate in the Canadian society."

With more and more people moving downtown, daycare space remains at a premium there. At the end of May, city council passed a motion calling for bylaw changes that would make it easier to open new daycares downtown. The city says a survey showed 750 children are waiting for spaces downtown. A report is expected to come back to city council in October.

The Intercultural Child and Family Centre hopes some of those families will consider their centre, which is open to people from all backgrounds.

"Our parents and staff have ... really understood what quality care is and early learning is," said Heran. "To shut our doors on that would be devastating."

- reprinted from CBC News

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: funding ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/06/daycare-new-canadians-could-be-shuttered-because-no-funding>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/06/daycare-new-canadians-could-be-shuttered-because-no-funding> ^[2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/daycare-for-new-canadians-could-be-shuttered-because-of-no-funding-1.3116440> ^[3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7859> ^[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>