

Early Years Centre Sites Announced

Education and Early Childhood Development
August 22, 2013 11:42 AM

The province is opening early years centres in four communities to provide families with more access to services and supports for young children.

Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Ramona Jennex announced the locations of the province's first early years centres today, Aug. 22, at Rockingstone Heights School, the site for the Halifax Regional School Board's centre.

The other centres will be located at Jubilee Elementary School in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board; East Antigonish Education Centre in Monastery, Strait Regional School Board; and Yarmouth Central in Yarmouth, Tri-County Regional School Board.

"The first six years of a child's life are a crucial period for children and their families," said Ms. Jennex. "The programs and services offered through these centres will support children, their families, and their communities by providing them access to resources that will help prepare children for school while giving families the tools and knowledge needed to ensure their children have the best start in life."

The early years centres will be located in or near schools to make them accessible, convenient and familiar places for families in their own communities. Each centre will be tailored to meet the needs of its community by partnering with community organizations to offer programs such as early intervention, before- and after-school programs, regulated child care, early learning programs and parent education.

"I'm very excited to hear about this program now being offered in our school," said Rockingstone Heights School parent Crystal Jennings. "A lot of parents feel alone in their day-to-day struggles with raising their children, many of whom are single mothers. This news means many of those families will get the help and support they very much deserve and need."

Last month, the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation announced it would provide \$500,000 to help fund the establishment of province's first early years centres.

"Modern families need modern schools that respond to changing needs," said Margaret McCain, chair of the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation. "It is smart policy to use the assets Nova Scotians already own in their publicly funded schools to expand opportunities for children and families."

In April, the province announced it would establish three early years centres during the 2013-14 fiscal year. The decision to add a fourth centre was made to ensure Nova Scotian children and their families in all regions are supported through the early years.

The new centres are expected to open in early 2014.

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Ms. Jennex says the early years centres will support children, their families and communities and will help children have the best start in life.

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