

InsideToronto.com
Sep 10, 2009 - 3:27 PM
By Eric Heno

Feds announces funds for HIPPY program

After a decade of dedicated service to young immigrant families in Canada, the Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPY) program announced it had received a big anniversary present.

Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, attended a Toronto location of HIPPY Canada on Fairview Mall Drive on Thursday, Sept. 10 to explain how the nearly \$3.5-million federal investment will be able to help newcomers with young children.

"It's about helping moms and dads at home to improve their language skills and help them to integrate into Canadian society," said Kenney.

Founded in Israel 30 years ago, the HIPPY program is now active in 10 countries around the world and operates seven programs spanning Toronto. They provide specialized language services to families with young children, in order that they can be well adapted to Canadian culture and language when they enter school for the first time.

Viewing parents as the first and most important teachers of young people, the program helps immigrant families integrate in hopes that they will be able to pass their experience on to their families.

"Through their weekly visits to these families, HIPPY provides parents and newcomers with the necessary guidance and tools to prepare their children for success in school," said Kenney.

Over 600 families across Toronto are already receiving help from HIPPY and the extra funding will go toward expanding current services and helping develop ways to assist new Canadian families in need.

Due to language barriers, isolation, poverty and long hours at work, many new immigrants are not able to spend a lot of time with their families. HIPPY Canada board member Sheldon Ehrenworth hopes his organization can help avoid these burdens from being passed along to children.

"Newcomer families, regardless of where they come from, share a common set of settlement challenges that not only affect parents, but children and youth as well," said Ehrenworth. "Despite such overwhelming challenges, newcomers want to be included as full participants in economic, social and political life of their new homeland. This is necessary for Canada to fulfil its promise of multiculturalism while striving to become an inclusive and strong society.



Feds announces funds for HIPPY program. Federal Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney joins staff and participating families from the HIPPY Canada Program Thursday at the Working Women Community Centre.
Staff Photo/ERIC HEINO

A fairly recent immigrant herself, Farida Kapasi has worked for HIPPY as a home visitor for the past ten months. She spends her days helping families with English and teaching them about the services that are available to them. She has also learned a lot about herself through other immigrants.

"HIPPY has helped me to learn skills such as how to manage my life, to be able to make time for my children," said Kapasi. "I have much more confidence in my own skills to pass them on to my children and as a home visitor I now have the opportunity to work within my own community."

More information on how to get involved can be found at www.hippycanada.ca