

Early Years Centres set to open in Scarborough

STAVROULA MEDITSKOS

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The provincial government's solution to one-stop shopping for childcare is coming to Toronto.

Twenty-two Ontario Early Years Centres, regional childcare facilities for children from birth to 6 years, will be opening this spring to provide free information, resources and services to parents and caregivers in local communities.

The centres offer a diverse range of programs, including early learning and literacy, pregnancy and parenting, and outreach activities. Other specialized programs such as nutrition, dental care and courses for children with special needs are also available and tailored to each community.

Forty-two centres have been operating in Ontario for the past year, including in York Region, Halton and Peterborough.

In addition to the Toronto-based centres, another 60 will be opening, bringing the total number of centres to 103 - one in each provincial riding.

Although exact locations for the centres are yet to be determined, Brenda Elliott, minister of community, family and children's services, announced last Thursday which community agencies would perform lead work in each centre.

In Scarborough, those include:

West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre at 313 Pharmacy Ave.,

Family Day Care Services at 710 Progress Ave.,

East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club at 100 Galloway Rd.,

Malvern Family Resource Centre at 1321 Neilson Rd.

Elliott said the \$46.6-million investment - part of the federal/provincial Early Childhood Development agreement - will benefit families by creating intimate learning atmospheres.

"Parents and caregivers of young children who regularly visit the 42 Ontario Early Years Centres already open, are a testament to what we've created, a community focus point for early child development information, programs and services," Elliott said.

The framework for the centres came from the Early Years Study, commissioned by the province in 1998 to find out how government, communities and parents can help children better prepare for success in school, work and society.

For more information, visit www.ontarioearlyyears.ca