



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

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Immigration Canada

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For Immediate Release

The world comes home to the downtown core
*The Immigrant Women's Centre will host an open house to launch its
new downtown address.*

(Hamilton) – The downtown core's newest residents have a new home of their own. For more than a decade the Immigrant Women's Centre (IWC) has operated one of its three offices from the ground-floor apartments of a residential high-rise on Wellington Street North. Here, immigrant and refugee women learned English in bedrooms converted to classrooms while their children received childcare in adjacent rooms. Computer skills and driving courses were offered in makeshift offices while neighbourhood children gathered in a small apartment kitchen for a homework club. With around 100 newcomers served daily, the staff and clientele have now outgrown the Wellington Street apartments.

A new building at 182 Rebecca Street is now home to the growing services that continue to help so many families participate more fully in their new lives in Hamilton. The newly renovated 8,000 square-foot building boasts spacious meeting rooms and classrooms as well as a large and brightly decorated childcare area, complete with its own kitchen and laundry room.

"This is the kind of place these women deserve," said Wasan Mohamad, Site Coordinator for the last two and a half years. Mohamad described the new address as a huge upgrade but added the centre's future success will depend on something much stronger than bricks and mortar.

"There's a lot of heart and warmth here," she said while packing up her Wellington Street office. "And we are planning on bringing that with us."

Executive Director Ines Rios added she and her staff looked forward to improving their capacity to support clients.

"We are so excited to provide the services that immigrant women truly desire for themselves and for their families on their path to citizenship."

On Wednesday, March 25 at 11 a.m., the IWC will open its doors for an open house at its newest location. Staff, volunteers and clients look forward to introducing the community to a site they hope will continue supporting Hamilton's newcomers for years to come.

WHAT: Open house at Immigrant Women's Centre's newest downtown location

WHERE: 182 Rebecca Street (between Mary Street and Ferguson Avenue North)

WHEN: Wednesday, March 25. Opening remarks 11 a.m. Open house to run until 3 p.m.

BACKGROUND:

One hundred immigrant and refugee women and their relatives will receive settlement services every day at the Immigrant Women's Centre's newest site at 182 Rebecca Street. The move to a new building was made possible through the generous support of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The site is one of three run by the IWC. The organization also operates a mountain location at 1119 Fennell Avenue East and a downtown office at 8 Main Street East. Currently twenty different languages are spoken by the women accessing services at the Rebecca Street site.

Programs offered at the new site will include:

- Daytime and evening Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes with free childminding.
- Driving theory instruction
- Computer classes
- Homework club
- Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) which includes orientation and settlement services for newcomer families with childminding.

The Immigrant Women's Centre was formed in 1988 through the efforts of grassroots refugee groups and the support of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton as an informal response to the needs of hundreds of refugees arriving from Central America during the 1980s. The organization's focus at the time was to help newcomer families with immediate needs such as finding temporary shelter, orientation to the community and finding work. This grassroots, community-based association eventually evolved into a multi-ethnic and multi-service organization focusing on the specific needs of immigrant and refugee women and their families. Its services are designed to assist with the advancement of immigrant and refugee women in the areas of employment, education, skills training, and the growth and development of their children. In addition to these services, the centre advocates for the rights of immigrant and refugee women so they may fully participate in a just and supportive Canadian society. The centre serves approximately 2,500 clients at its three locations in Hamilton.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with staff or clients, please contact, Alina Rodriguez:
905.529.5209 x227

linc@stjosephwomen.on.ca