



News Release

May 12, 2008

Surrey's new immigrant families welcomed at Surrey School District facility

Immigrant families and students have access to central, friendly, in-language assistance with today's official opening of Surrey School District's English Language Learner Welcome Centre.

The 5,000-square-foot leased facility at #120 – 7525 King George Hwy. in the Newton area of Surrey houses the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, including 20 SWIS workers and 15 Multicultural Workers who work together to support new immigrant families, including many refugees in the community and in district schools.

"It's hard to imagine the feeling of bewilderment and the challenge new immigrant families face upon arriving to a new country and a new community, particularly when they have limited English language skills," says Surrey Board of Education chair Reni Masi. "The English Language Learner Welcome Centre serves a very important need in our community and it helps students to be better prepared and supported in their education. Our board is very proud to support it."

The program has served more than 2,600 clients since being offered this school year. Clients are either referred from the community or by staff in the Surrey School District's 125 schools.

Welcome Centre staff provides services directly in 16 languages and enlists community partners for other languages. The SWIS program provides information workshops for clients at the Welcome Centre, including topics such as health, parenting, transportation, banking and income tax. SWIS workers also connect families to many school, community and government resources and services.

The SWIS program in Surrey is an initiative of the Ministry of Attorney General Settlement and Multicultural Division in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Surrey School District.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Doug Strachan
Manager, Communications
604-599-7468 (office)
778-772-5032 (mobile)