

## Centre creates new childcare spaces for Parkdale-High Park families

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As she stepped behind the podium at the opening ceremony of the new Windermere Early Learning Centre, a Child Development Institute facility, director of Healthy Child Development Bernice Cipparrone said she felt like she was at the Oscars.

"I have a lot of people to thank so please don't start the music," she joked.

Despite the dreary and cold weather, Wednesday morning's ceremony was a bright and cheerful one that attracted the likes of Councillors Bill Saundercok and Janet Davis, chair of the city's Children's Service Advisory Committee and vice-chair of the Community and Recreation Committee as well as journalist and children's book reviewer Arlene Perly-Rae.

As she prepared her remarks for the day care's launch, Perly-Rae said she was reminded of the film *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the story of a 1930s teacher and her unorthodox approach to education. In the film, she was played by British actor Maggie Smith, whom Rae attempted to imitate: "Give me a gal at an impressionable age and she's mine for life," Rae said. "Jean Brodie was right... millions of dollars have been spent on studies and the truth remains that those first five, six years of a child's life are crucial. They affect a child's entire development."

Windermere United Church is the interim location for the early learning centre, which has 52 new childcare spaces. As part of its residential development at Windermere Avenue and the Queensway, Cresford Developments' low- and high-rise complex will include a not-for-profit childcare centre, but because this facility will not open until Phase 3 (expected to be completed in the next four years), Cresford has provided financial support for the facility to open in Windermere United Church.

The church's basement was completely transformed with, among other things, new and larger windows, furnishings and equipment. Cresford also provided start-up funds. Its public investment was made in accordance with Section 37 of the City of Toronto Planning Act, which provides approval of development applications in return for the provision of community benefits in the form of capital facilities.

Saundercok recalled his last teaching assignment before being re-elected councillor. He taught a kindergarten class.

"I've never worked so hard as a teacher," he said, empathizing with the hardworking staff at the learning centre.

"I know there's a few more things to do. As your councillor, I plan to help you work out the wrinkles along the way," said Saundercok, citing parking as one of those wrinkles.

Child Development Institute (CDI), a registered charitable organization created in 2004, is the merger of two pioneering community agencies in Toronto: The Creche Child and Family Centre and the EarlsCourt Family and Child Centre. CDI continues their combined legacy of early intervention and care.

"We have a quarter of a million children who need day care spaces," said Davis. "We have a huge unmet demand for high quality, affordable day care."

Mayor David Miller, who played a crucial role in the early stages of the development, sent his wishes with Davis, who read from a scroll she presented to the learning centre.