



Adult Literacy & Essential Skills

Tillsonburg & District Multi-Service Centre

History of the program in Woodstock (since 2000)

The upgrading offered to Ontario communities is determined through regular community assessment and the result of needs' identification, as determined by the Ministry governed Literacy Community Planning Committee. Members of the committee include representatives from the College, School Board and Community based organizations. In 2000, the Literacy Community Planning Committee, with the support of the Ministry, determined that programming offered by the Tillsonburg & District Multi-Service Centre, would be an asset for literacy/upgrading offered to the citizens of Woodstock. What made this added programming unique was that it offered "small group literacy" and "one-to-one tutoring". This service delivery accommodates clients at a lower level of literacy in a supported environment that the traditional class environment could not provide. With the support of Fanshawe College and Community Options for Justice (our first homes), we were able to open our doors to the Woodstock community. **Presently the Adult Literacy & Essential Skills Program operates out of Community Employment Services, 40 Metcalf Street, Woodstock.**

Based on the goodwill and support of Jeff Surridge, CEO of Community Employment Services (CES) our program was aptly located in an environment, very conducive to meeting the needs of clients. CES is a "one stop centre" for accessing a variety of employment related programs and services in Oxford County. All services are free and confidentiality is assured. Job seekers can receive assistance with:

- Résumé and cover letter preparation
- Job search strategies
- Interview skills
- Employment counselling
- Career exploration
- Training and self-employment information
- Labour market information
- Access to employer hiring incentives and wage subsidies.

Since our own Multi-Service Centre is aptly located within The Livingston Centre – also considered a "one-stop centre" – staff were very pleased to be housed in a similar facility. Woodstock residents can access employment services and receive upgrading concurrently. Referrals can be directly and freely made by literacy staff walking someone across the room to meet with a service provider.

Clients are accommodated promptly and comfortably in a facility which is familiar to them. The advantages of being located at CES are many:

- accessible for clients based on close proximity to the downtown core, Employment Services and Ontario Works
- collaboration with CES staff regarding Employment Workshops
- internal promotion of programs
- friendly, helpful and accommodating staff team
- reception assistance on full time basis.

Jeff SurrIDGE, CEO for Community Employment Services comments further.

“Many of our clients face significant barriers to employment and literacy issues are one of the most prevalent. When presented with the opportunity to house the Literacy and Essential Skills program within our facility, it was an obvious fit to address a gap in service that is essential for so many of our clients. The program has given us an in-house resource that ensures our clients receive the support they require and without a referral out of the building which may not be followed through on. We can case conference clients’ progress. Clients can continue on their path to employment while developing literacy skills within the same facility. Both programs benefit by providing a holistic approach to client service and generate additional numbers that would not be available in a non-located environment. Our partnership is a collaborative approach to enrich the potential of individuals and helps ensure they can be active participants in the local economy.”

Some have thought that our agency serves the Tillsonburg community only. Of course we provide service to Tillsonburg and the immediate tri-county area (Oxford, Elgin, Norfolk). The opportunity to provide service to the Woodstock community has broadened our horizons and allowed us to meet a literacy/upgrading need which was previously absent. We look forward to our professional liaison and continued service delivery within the walls of our partners and friends at Community Employment Services.