

WorkBC Centres set to sync

**Consolidation
should help jobs,
increase efficiency**

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Social Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux was in Mission last Thursday, along with Maple Ridge-Mission MLA Marc Dalton, to cut the ribbon on the community's new WorkBC Employment Services Centre.

It's one of 85 storefront offices opening province-wide to offer employment services through the Employment Program of B.C.

They were joined by the executive and staff from the Fraser Valley Employment and Support Services Co-operative, whose member groups offer employment preparation and support from Langley to Hope, and all the communities in between.

The province's Employment Program of B.C. launched on April 2 replaces 400 service providers that were run by provincial or federal labour branches.

"(But) not all of them would host the full suite of programs. By consolidating them, the centres will be able to provide the full suite, no matter if it is in a small town or big city," said Cadieux.

Consolidation will reduce administration and make the centres more efficient.

Cadieux said B.C. is the fourth province to go this route.

The large number of service providers also made it confusing for people to figure which offered the best ser-



From left, employment mentors Wayne Bampton, Con Van Laerhoven from Agassiz, Minister of Social Development Stephanie Cadieux, Robert Waycott from Mission and MLA Marc Dalton cut the official ribbon at the WorkBC Centre in Mission. The B.C. government opened 85 centres last week, including one in Abbotsford.

— CHRISTINA TOTH/TIMES

vices for their needs, especially for specialized groups such as immigrants, aboriginals, older workers, youth and disabled, she said.

Service providers, such as the Fraser Valley Employment and Support Services Co-operative, or Abbotsford Community Services, will also use their satellite and mobile partners, but those too will be able to offer a full range of services.

The value of the EPBC will remain about the same as before, at \$343.5 million, with the federal government contributing \$280 million.

Clients will get help in job search, career planning, workshops, self-directed services and free access to computers, phones, faxes and photocopying.

Clients may notice a difference in how they receive support, said Klaus Werner, CEO of Mission Community Skills

"We have access to people looking for workers, and we'll do our best to put them together."

— Stephanie Cadieux Social Development Minister

Centre, a member of the Fraser Valley employment co-op group.

The support levels may depend on the level of barriers to employment they may face, and that will be determined through an evaluation process.

"The higher the level, the more service will be provided," Werner said.

The centres are not a replacement for the Youth Employment Centres that were set up every spring for the last 40 years by the federal government, and included peer support.

The centres are intended for anyone looking for work, as

well as by employers looking for workers.

"We have access to people looking for workers, and we'll do our best to put them together," said Cadieux.

While the federal Human Resources and Skills Development has axed its Youth Employment Centres, it says it is expanding its online services at www.youth.gc.ca.

► Mission's WorkBC Centre is at 209 - 33123 First Ave. The number is 604-826-0626.

In Abbotsford, the WorkBC Centre is at 10 - 33255 South Fraser Way. Call them at 604-859-4500.

See more at www.workbc.ca.