

Company's coming [CA-NS]^[1]

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Source: Halifax Chronicle Herald

Format: Article

Publication Date: 4 Mar 2009

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

A large Canadian for-profit child care company is opening at least two daycare centres in Halifax. Kids & Company, which has more than 20 centres in Ontario and Alberta, will open its first daycare on Halifax's Barrington Street in April.

"This is our first venture into the Atlantic provinces," says company president and CEO Victoria Sopik, a mother of eight, who founded the Thornhill, Ont., firm in 2002.

Kids & Company describes its business model as a "corporate daycare service." It only sells child care spaces to employees of its member corporations or organizations, who are guaranteed a spot for their child.

It is attractive to many parents because it provides flexible hours and emergency child care, Ms. Sopik said during a visit to Halifax on Tuesday. The company already has 100 clients in Halifax, including Dalhousie University, the IWK and the City of Halifax. It also plans to open another daycare near Dal.

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But not everyone is happy about Kids & Company's arrival in Halifax. The Canadian Union of Public Employees sent out a news release Tuesday calling it "Big Box daycare." "We believe that we need not-for-profit child care in this province.

At Dal there is already a non-profit daycare facility that should be expanded," said Danny Cavanagh, president of CUPE in Nova Scotia. "If the government is going to sink money into child care, then it should be not-for-profit child care in this province."

Karen Wright, vice-president of CUPE Local 4745 in Halifax, which represents early childhood educators, says she has concerns about the child care being a money-making business. Studies have shown that lower salaries and higher turnover of staff are a concern in many for-profit daycare centres, she said.

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While she said Kids & Company is not a big-box operation, Ms. Sopik acknowledged its daycares look the same across the country – "kind of like McDonald's."

Dalhousie University is paying a \$5,000 annual fee so students, faculty and staff have access to a Kids & Company centre, said Katherine Sheehan, Dalhousie University's assistant vice-president of human resources. ...

- reprinted from the Halifax Chronicle-Herald

Region: Nova Scotia^[2]

Tags: privatization^[3]

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