

Corporate for-profit daycare comes to Winnipeg ^[1]

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EXERPTS:

In a few weeks the doors open on Winnipeg's first corporate for-profit daycare.

Kids and Company will open its doors downtown at Fort Street and York Avenue next month with 90 spaces, including at least 20 for infants. But the service will only be available to employees of member corporations.

"For the companies that are clients of ours, we will look after their children, they'll have guaranteed care," said CEO Victoria Sopik.

"But if we open to the public, we would be like the hospital emerg[ency] department with big lines outside and no one coming in, right?"

Sopik said 70 corporations each pay \$5,000 in annual memberships but that only guarantee spaces for their employees' children.

Employees are still responsible for footing the bill for the care, which is roughly double the fee that non-profit daycares are allowed to charge.

Infant spaces at Kids and Company will be about \$70 per day and pre-school spaces will be \$40 a day.

Parents keen

Toni Cubsey, who juggles daycare for her two kids, doesn't work for a company that has signed onto the service but would jump to pay the extra cost if it helped solve her problems.

"You know, when I hear that number, it seems so off the wall. But when you're sitting there not sleeping at night, trying to figure out where your children should go, or can go, it comes down to like, you gotta do what you gotta do," she said.

Kayla Kramps, who works at a national accounting firm that has become a Kids and Company member, plans to use the service part-time for her 19-month-old daughter.

She is relieved to have a daycare spot after trying unsuccessfully to find anything and relying on her mother's help.

But Kramps does feel badly for those people not able to take advantage of what seems like a two-tiered daycare system.

"I mean it's not like it's health care, it's child care and you know, my company wants to see me succeed. So it's almost like an employee benefit that they're willing to have a membership with Kids and Company," she said.

"I mean, I feel for anyone who's looking for a daycare spot and I feel for people who for whom this will be too expensive and I guess I'm just lucky that that won't be the case for me."

Non-profit daycare director concerned

But some who work in the not-for-profit child-care system say they worry the gap in fees could create a two-tier system.

April Kalyniuk, executive director of the Lord Roberts Children's

Programs, said she does not like the idea that people who can afford to pay more for child care can jump the queue to get a spot.

Kalyniuk said she also worries Kids and Company may lure staff away from non-profit organizations like hers.

"There is a definite shortage of ECEs [early childhood educators] in this sector," said Kalyniuk, whose program cares for about 120 children in two locations.

"I don't know how big this particular organization is going to be, like how many kids they're taking, but it'll take staff from somewhere or it'll take new grads."

Sopik said demand is already high enough that she is starting to look at another location in south Winnipeg.

Kids and Company already has locations in British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec.

- reprinted from *CBC news*

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