

Parents, child advocates weigh in on private childcare centre slated to open in south Winnipeg ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

A new type of childcare facility is scheduled to open in August.

At the centre's peak, director Cheryl Erickson said the Advantage Child Care Academy in south Winnipeg will house 96 pre-school and infant children.

"Infant childcare in particular is a huge demand and we wanted to provide child care in the city and we want to provide premium child care. We wanted to raise the bar," said Erickson.

That premium comes at a cost, ranging from \$50 to \$65 per day.

Despite the fees, Erickson said she's already getting calls for spaces and the centre is still under construction.

"I'm very confident that we will be full," said Erickson.

Right now, provincially-subsidized non-profit daycares charge far less - between \$20 and \$30 per child per day.

Childcare advocates said the new centre could help those parents who can afford to pay higher fees, and in turn open up less expensive spaces for others elsewhere.

Pat Wege from the Manitoba Child Care Association said that the new centre, however, won't be an option for a number of parents because the daily fees could equal a full day's wages.

"The minimum wage earner here in Manitoba would be earning maybe \$80 a day, before taxes," said Wege.

Unlike a lot of other daycares, the new centre will be open longer hours, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Parent Tamara Fricker said the extended hours could be a lifesaver for some.

"If a parent has got to work until five, 5:30 or even 6 p.m., they need that flexibility to put in that eight hour day - otherwise you're working part time," said Fricker.

She's stayed at home to look after her five-year-old and his brother because the wait list for daycare is too long.

According to the province's online child care registry, more than 8,700 kids are waiting for a daycare spot in Winnipeg.

A private daycare in downtown Winnipeg, meanwhile, said it is losing money.

The president of Kids and Company said it charges similar fees because for-profit daycares are not eligible for provincial subsidies that would lower the daily cost for parents.

She said they have a capacity of 100 and currently have 40 kids registered, 24 full-time.

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