

Parents 'freak out' when told of full child-care cost

People feel entitlement to cheap day care, but some centres must charge full prices because they don't get provincial subsidies

Evelyn Wajcer hopes to capitalize on the thousands of workers who commute to St. Laurent every day with the opening of her K.I.D.S. Technoparc.

The new private day-care centre will have space for 80 children – including 15 infants – of families who live or work near the high-tech industrial

zone off Highway 40.

The snag: Quebec turned down her request for subsidies, so parents will have to pay the full \$40 a day.

"Try convincing people to come to a full-fare centre when they hear that others are paying \$7 – it's a hard sell," said Wajcer, director of K.I.D.S. Day Cares.

K.I.D.S. operates subsidized day cares at six other locations in Montreal and Laval. Fees at those locations are higher than the basic \$7 a day, but they include specialty programs, like music, science and dance.

Many subsidized day cares charge more than the flat \$7 a day because Quebec permits them to add on the cost of such extra services as breakfasts, special activities and outings.

K.I.D.S. Technoparc is now open for registration for mid-September, Wajcer said, but

many parents are hedging their bets, waiting to see if they land a subsidized spot elsewhere.

"When they hear \$40, they freak out," she noted.

Few stop to think that \$7 doesn't come close to paying the full cost of day care, and that it is taxpayers who foot the rest of the bill, she said.

"There is this sense of entitlement – they pay their taxes and get medicare, so why shouldn't they get this (\$7 day care)?"

Parents who pay full prices

can claim back some of the cost, Wajcer noted.

A single, low-income parent could end up paying less than \$7 a day, she said. Higher-income families could recover as much as 50 per cent of the full cost.

Wajcer says the government should be more equitable in awarding subsidy-status to new day-care businesses.

Despite the challenges, Wajcer said she loves her job.

"There are few places you can work that the clients kiss you."

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