

Hundreds of GTA childcare centres to close amid effort to curb pandemic^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Hundreds of childcare facilities in the Greater Toronto Area will be closed for the next three weeks, following Thursday's decision by the province to shut all publicly funded schools until April and a recommendation from Toronto Public Health.

Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Director John Malloy says all of the childcare facilities located inside its properties would be closed until April 5.

He said the move is to ensure the province's original aim to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus through closures is successful.

An employee hands a toy to a boy at a child-care centre in this undated file photo.

"All childcare centres located inside TDSB schools will also be closed and all TDSB extended day programs will be cancelled from March 14 through to April 5, 2020."

All evening uses of TDSB facilities will also be banned during this time, including permitted uses and any other meeting of school employees on TDSB property.

"We think by closing our childcares as well as our TDSB extended programs is really in line with the provincial order and reflected by many boards across the province," board spokesperson Ryan Bird said.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) also says all before-and-after school programs and childcare centres will be closed during the two-week period. All March break camps will not operate during that time.

Toronto Public Health also recommended Friday that all licensed childcare centres be closed as well through April 5. The city said that accordingly, all city-operated day care centres would be closed.

While there is a recommendation for all childcare centres to close, there is not currently an order for non-city-run childcare centres to be closed.

YMCA of Greater Toronto also said all their childcare centres are closed and all their child and family development programs are cancelled until further notice.

Shortly after, officials in Peel Region recommended that all childcare centres, March Break camps and before and after school programs be closed during the same time period.

As well, officials are recommending anyone who has travelled anywhere outside of Canada to self-monitor for symptoms of the virus and avoid attending locations in Peel Region "where it is difficult to distance yourself from others, such as schools, workplaces and mass gatherings for 14 days."

York Region District School Board also says transportation services, continuing education, permit activities, before and after care programs and daycare would also be closed for two weeks.

On Thursday, Education Minister Stephen Lecce ordered all publicly funded schools to shut until April 5 on the advice of the province's top doctor, as a means of social distancing to stop the spread of COVID-19 infection.

Ministry officials say the decision to close childcare throughout the rest of the province will be left to school boards, in consultation with local public health units.

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Region: Ontario^[3]

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