

# Child-care providers raise coronavirus concerns in letter to B.C. premier <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The B.C. Child Care Owners Association is raising concerns about the province's requirement to keep daycares open.

In an open letter to Premier John Horgan, association board member Pamela Wallberg says the organization is worried about the "absolute dearth of directions from your ministries despite weeks of requesting information."

"You were elected and placed into a position that is responsible for child care in B.C. and you are failing the children, families and child-care professionals throughout the province," Wallberg writes.

"We support decisions being made grounded in best practice and science. We understand that the decisions for child-care program operations must be made by the provincial health officer. This is as it should be."

One concern is that with staff in self-isolation, there are not enough educators and/or licences to operate facilities and meet the ratio.

The organization is also concerned about the shortage of cleaning supplies such as paper towels and sanitizer.

Wallberg is asking for help accessing supplies to ensure a full cleaning twice a day.

Daycares are also struggling to meet provincial demands around social distancing and banning gatherings of more than 50 people.

"We are unable to maintain social distancing. It is simply a developmental impossibility within groups of young children," Wallberg writes.

"How do you suggest we do so within our programs? Many programs are much larger than 50 children and educators within one facility. How do we meet the gathering-size mandate of less than 50?"

Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry says there are no requirements for all centres to stay open. Henry has made child care an essential service, particularly for parents who work in key sectors like health care.

"Certainly, some daycare facilities, it's very difficult to have that distancing, to have the measures in place and enhanced cleaning that you need," she said.

Henry said the province is actively working with the industry to develop best practices for child care and to address concerns about workers and high-risk individuals.

"What I have asked the sector to do is to look at how we can best protect everybody in the sector, both the child-care operators, the early childhood educators, as well as the families that provide those necessary services for the essential service workers and health-care workers."

Daycares are also raising the concern of parents refusing to pay fees and withdrawing children without notice. This leaves many operators in a space where they can't meet lease or mortgage payments.

The province is committing to help facilities put in this situation.

"There will be a legislative session next Monday," Health Minister Adrian Dix said.

"Some of these issues will be addressed because we are dealing with issues around supply and so on. You'll be hearing from the ministers responsible and, obviously, from the minister of finance on all that."

**Related link:**

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/04/child-care-providers-raise-coronavirus-concerns-letter-bc-premier> [2]

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