

Province asking shuttered child-care facilities to re-open ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The provincial government is urging closed child-care facilities to return to work to help those on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19.

Families Minister Heather Stefanson put out the plea to shuttered daycares, calling on providers to help the “heroes” on the front lines.

“The early childhood educators and child-care centres that have stepped up to provide child care to health-care and other emergency services workers are truly heroes helping heroes, and I want to thank them for stepping up during this difficult time,” Stefanson said.

“There are still health-care and other emergency services workers who need child care, and today I want to call on child-care providers throughout our province to help those workers as they provide needed services during this pandemic.”

As of March 31, Stefanson said more than 1,200 children of front-line workers across the province have been matched with an available space.

But as a new public health order issued earlier this week changed the definition of critical services, the province needs more spaces to re-open and once again offer their services.

On April 14, all parents who work in critical services will be able to access child-care spaces available in licensed facilities, the province said.

“This includes support staff at hospitals and clinics, grocery store staff, farmers and farm workers, construction workers, bank or credit union employees,” a release said.

Parents working in these sectors who have been unable to make other child-care arrangements will be able to check which facilities have available spaces at <http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19> and ^[3] work directly with them to receive a spot.

Current child-care facilities are limited to 16 kids to support social distancing measures.

All child-care centres have also been asked by the province to reimburse parent fees if care has not been provided and to not charge parents to hold spots if they are not being used, Stefanson said.

The opposition NDP said Brian Pallister’s government is putting parents and childcare centers in an impossible situation, failing both.

“Forcing parents, including essential workers, to pay hundreds of dollars in fees or risk losing their spot while centres risk bankruptcy,” a statement from Danielle Adams, child care critic, said. “There is a simple solution: cover the cost of parent fees – this will help struggling parents, including essential workers, and will help centres keep their doors open and pay their ECEs. The Government is refusing to help parents and early childhood educators in a time when they are in desperate need. It’s time the Pallister Government acts and helps Manitobans.”

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