

Province outlines next steps for children and students ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Today, the Province of Prince Edward Island announced plans to support children, students, families and teachers impacted by school and daycare closures due to COVID-19.

To ensure the health and safety of students, teachers and administration, all schools across Prince Edward Island remain closed for in-person classes until, at minimum, May 11. Over the past few weeks, the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning has been working with the Public Schools Branch, Commission scolaire de langue française and teachers from across the province to develop at-home learning activities.

“This is a new situation that Islanders have not faced and we are trying to adapt quickly and work together so that all Islanders, but in particular children, have the supports they need to be healthy and safe. We are working to strike the right balance to ensure Island students are supported and that families are not overwhelmed. We will continue to work side by side to create solutions that support our families.” - Premier Dennis King

Starting April 6, teachers will be taking the lead on home learning activities for their students. A variety of online and printed home learning materials will be provided so that regardless of access to the internet, families and students can still practice skills and continue learning.

Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning Brad Trivers also announced that as a result of prioritizing the home learning program, a decision was made to cancel all provincial assessments for this year including the DELF French language skills assessment and the Early Years Evaluations which assess readiness for kindergarten.

To further support students, the province announced that school counselors and psychologists are available for any student needing support. For students and their families who are feeling vulnerable and need support during school closures are asked to contact 902-368-5155 or supportforfamilies@edu.pe.ca ^[3] (link sends e-mail).

Minister Trivers further announced that, in the absence of access to school breakfast and lunch programs with schools currently closed, the province is working with the Public Schools Branch, PEI Home and School Federation and Breakfast Club of Canada to assist families dealing with food insecurity. This is in addition to support from Pure Kitchen, Island food banks and community organizations currently supporting food insecurity for families.

Beginning this week, nutritious prepared meals and snacks will be provided to families who register for support. Families are asked to contact the Support for Families lines at 902-368-5155 or email supportforfamilies@edu.pe.ca ^[3] (link sends e-mail).

As well, Minister Trivers provided an update on the province’s plan to provide daycare services across the province to Islanders who work in essential services.

Center-based child care will be provided for children over 2 and who are not immunocompromised. Alternatively, in-home child care will be supported for these children and families as well. Staff of the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning has reached out to essential workers who filled out the survey and will continue to work with families directly to respond to their needs. Child care service for essential workers is planned to begin by the end of this week and will continue to roll out over the coming weeks.

The department has been working with the Early Childhood Development Association, its centre directors and staff and the Chief Public Health Office to ensure health and safety protocols are in place for centres that will be opening.

“I want to thank our partners for their continued collaboration and coordination to support the best outcomes for children, families and teachers at this time of uncertainty,” Minister Trivers. “Our main priority remains the health and well-being of children and families and we will continue to look at ways we can address gaps to ensure that all Islanders have the necessary tools and resources available so that families can thrive.”

The Province of Prince Edward Island encourages children and youth to call the Kids Help Line if they need help. Kid’s Help Phone provides 24/7 professional counselling, information, referrals and text-based support for young people in both English and French. The number is 1-

800-668-6868.

Background:

Supports for education

- Establishing a fund of up to \$2 million to support early learning centres and their staff, maintain child care spaces and ensure parents do not pay fees during the period of closures;
- Suspending repayments for provincial student loans for the next six months;
- Providing home learning activities for students for the duration of the confirmed school closures through the Public School Branch (PSB) and La Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) websites;
- Canceling all provincial assessments for this year including the DELF French language skills assessment and the Early Years Evaluations which assess readiness for kindergarten;
- School counselors and psychologists being made available for any student that needs support; and,
- Ensuring a school lunch program to assist families dealing with food insecurity.

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