

Ontario plans to provide funding to shuttered childcare centres to cover 'fixed operating costs'

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EXCERPTS

Childcare centres that have been shuttered for nearly two months amid the COVID-19 pandemic will now be able to receive funding to cover their “fixed operating costs,” Education Minister Stephen Lecce has announced.

The Ontario government ordered childcare centres to close in March and then a few weeks later introduced a separate emergency order prohibiting them from charging parents fees during their forced closure, leaving thousands of facilities uncertain on how to pay their bills going forward.

Today’s announcement means that the subsidies previously given to child care centres on a per-student basis can instead be directed to fix-operating costs.

The province says that it will also introduce a “straightforward application process” for the approximately 20 per cent of centres that do not currently receive provincial funding.

The funding will be only be given to centres that utilize other supports provided by the federal government, including the wage subsidy.

“Whether it is for profit, non- profit, faith based we want to hem to know that we want them to succeed,” Lecce said at Queen’s Park. “We want childcare spaces to continue to exist. It is so consequential to getting parents and families back in the labour market.”

At this point it remains unclear when childcare centres may be permitted to reopen, though Lecce said that whenever they do there will be “strict protocols in place that ensures the safety of both children, their families and the staff that work in these centres.”

He said that in the interim he expects the program being launched today to help keep centres in business.

“We are providing support for the coming months and will be taking this on an as-needed basis,” he said.

In addition to providing funding to cover operating costs, the province also says that it will waiving all fees for child care licensing applications and renewals.

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