

# Childcare resumption plan 'inadequate:' coalition <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access full press conference [38:31] <sup>[2]</sup>

Access Carolyn Ferns response video online [4:41] <sup>[3]</sup>

## EXCERPTED

The Ford government plans to allow all licenced childcare centres in Ontario to reopen on June 12.

Premier Doug Ford says the centres will have limits on capacity and “more cleaning and more screening” for infection.

“I want parents to know we will take every measure necessary to ensure the safety of their children,” Ford said.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce says all centres will be required to screen children for symptoms before entry, and take attendance each day to support contact tracing in case of an outbreak.

Centres will have to limit the occupancy of what Lecce called “a defined space” to ten people total, including kids and staff.

Certain toys likely to assist in the spread of the virus must be removed.

Each childcare centre will have to engage in multiple cleanings a day and visitors of any kind will not be allowed.

Lecce said his ministry will be conducting inspections and any centre found in violation of the new guidelines could be fined up to \$3,000 per attending child per day.

He said the plan was vetted by Ontario’s best.

“This plan was reviewed by the best public health and medical minds in Ontario – including doctors at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto.”

Ford said day camps for older children will also be allowed to reopen on Friday, with similar restrictions.

When asked if the capacity restrictions in each centre would lead to families being left without the childcare they had before the pandemic, Lecce said he believes some parents won’t be allowing their kids to return.

“The reality is not all parents will be putting their children back – so we believe this plan of ‘cohorting’ of up to 10 – no more than 10 kids and staff in a defined space, should allow operators should they want to, to optimize their full licensing capacity, some will and some will not.”

Carolyn Ferns of the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare said Tuesday’s announcement was completely inadequate.

“They’re asking childcare workers to do the impossible; they’re asking us to be miracle workers,” she told CP24. “How you could provide a program with a reduced group size, increased screening and cleaning but no new money, either centres are not going to be able to open or parents are going to be expected to pay more.”

Lecce said that the province is offering the sector “ancillary funds” to help pay for cleaning of childcare centres and purchases of personal protective equipment.

The emergency childcare centres run in many Ontario municipalities to support healthcare workers and first responders will be wound down between now and June 26, Lecce said.

Yesterday, the Ford government announced plans to allow malls, pools, outdoor seating in restaurants and other activities to resume outside of the GTHA and four southern Ontario regions on June 12.

Lecce said on Tuesday that any parent who refuses to send their child back to childcare will not be charged fees and will not lose their spot.

But a communique issued by the Ministry of Education said merely that parents who did not return their children to childcare would continue not to be charged.

Lecce, Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott all agreed that officials would have their eyes on the sector going forward, as an outbreak in a Yorkville emergency childcare centre eventually infected 20 children and staff with COVID-19.

Elliott said testing of children in childcare would have to occur as part of the province's ongoing surveillance program, with parental consent.

"If you're going to conduct a test of that nature clearly you need the parents' permission – and also you need to have specialists there because they're very delicate nasal passages," Elliott said.

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