

# Ontario government set to provide funding to child-care centres across the province <sup>[1]</sup>

Funding will go toward costs for additional PPE and staff, reduced attendance

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## EXCERPTS

The Ontario government is set to provide funding to cash-strapped child-care centres, which were given the green light to reopen as of Friday as the province continues to grapple with daily new cases of COVID-19.

According to Alexandra Adamo, spokesperson for Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce, a memo was sent to daycare providers Thursday night with details of the new funding.

That memo, which was obtained by CBC News, says providers can expect to receive funds to help with extra staffing, cleaning, personal protective equipment (PPE) and reduced groups of children.

Prior to Friday night's announcement, parents and daycare operators had raised questions about who will pay for those expenses ahead of the reopening of child-care centres. Partly because of those questions, many daycares remain closed even though the province says they can now operate, and parents are hesitant to send their kids to facilities that are open.

The province also said in the memo that day-care centres will not be allowed to charge parents more than they did before the pandemic.

"Operators will need to maintain parent fees at a pre-closure level (i.e. in March 2020) until the end of August," the memo states.

Additionally, federal supports provided under Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan must continue to be maximized, according to the note.

The memo notes that school boards will continue to abstain from taking rent from child-care or EarlyON centres located in schools until those schools reopen in September.

The province says it will also continue to provide funding to facilities that remain closed in the reopening phase in order to support eligible fixed overhead costs and EarlyON virtual programming.

The province noted that the memo was sent to the municipal licensing and overseeing bodies for daycares — not the daycares themselves.

It is unclear if or when those overseeing bodies alerted individual child-care centres to the province's announcement of new funding.

In a letter on Saturday, Lecce sought to reassure parents that child-care centres will only open when they are ready.

"We are providing child care facilities the flexibility to begin reopening, on their own timelines, once all of the strict health and safety guidelines have been met," he said.

Lecce said the centres will be allowed to reopen once strict health measures are in place to ensure the safety of staff, children and parents. These measures include:

- Cohorting, which means putting children and staff in groups of 10 or less.
- Screening of all staff and children before they enter the centres. Anyone feeling sick will be told to stay home.
- Enhanced cleaning before opening and frequently after opening.
- Daily attendance records of all children to support contact tracing.
- Only essential visitors will be allowed.
- Drop off and pick up that include physical distancing.
- All centres must have COVID-19 response plan in place in case a child, parent or staff member is exposed to COVID-19.

The City of Toronto — which had previously said it would wait to reopen its own facilities — made a similar move Friday, announcing that city-run child-care centres will start reopening as of June 29 with the help of municipal funding.

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