

Child-care centres in Ontario concerned about limited N95 mask supply from province ^[1]

Author: Ziafati, Noushin

Source: CP24

Format: Article

Publication Date: 18 Jan 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS



^[2]

Several Ontario child-care centres are raising concerns about limited supplies of N95 masks provided by the government, saying they have no indication on when they will receive more.

The province announced last week that it was sending the high-quality masks to all schools and childcare centres as Ontario fights a wave of the highly infectious Omicron variant. A government spokeswoman said Tuesday that an “ongoing and steady supply” of N95s will be provided to daycares.

Lori Prospero, CEO of RisingOaks Early Learning, said she's “really thankful” for the N95s the province recently provided but noted that the masks shipped so far are only enough to last staff about a week or two.

She said the organization's eight locations in the Waterloo region have received no word from the government as to when more N95s will arrive, how many they will receive, or how regularly supplies will be replenished.

“We'd like to know when we're getting more masks and if the number of masks coming will be increased, so that we can meet the one mask per day guideline that the ministry has set,” she said.

In the meantime, she said staff at the centres have been given the option to use UV sanitizing devices to clean their masks and store them in paper bags for potential reuse later.

“Until we receive more information about further stock from the ministry, (that's) sort of the creativity that we have to put in place,” she said.

Christa O'Connor, executive director of Creative Beginnings Childcare Centre, said her organization received 240 masks for 56 staff at its two locations in the Waterloo area, which would last them about four days if each employee used one a day.

O'Connor said the staff at those centres are also waiting to hear more from the government about upcoming N95 shipments. The organization received an additional 200 N95 masks from a local school, which they are going through as well.

“The province as a whole has kind of neglected the child-care sector from the beginning of the pandemic,” she said.

“I think they're the forgotten heroes, so to speak, we've never closed we've stayed open the entire time - when schools close and go to

online learning, child-care (centres) still stay open.”

In Toronto, Blossoming Minds Learning Centre executive director Maggie Moser said her daycare received 120 masks to supply a total of 40 staff - enough for about three days - despite asking the province for 1,000 masks.

Moser said her centre has gone ahead and ordered 160 N95s - the maximum that could be ordered from a certain manufacturer - for about \$300. She said the centre plans to order more in the future, depending on the number of masks supplied from the government, even though they come at a hefty price.

The masks “absolutely” make child-care staff feel safer doing their jobs, which involve close contact with many children who are too young to be vaccinated or masked, Moser said.

A spokeswoman for Education Minister Stephen Lecce said Ontario is “going above and beyond public health guidance to reduce risk” in supplying N95s to education and child care staff.

“An ongoing and steady supply of N95s is being provided on a regular basis to education and child care staff to protect staff, children and communities,” Caitlin Clark said in a written statement.

Clark noted that the initial shipment volumes of N95 masks “reflect either the actual order placed by the school board or child care centre or the monthly average order of surgical/procedural masks plus 25 per cent margin.”

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: health and safety ^[4]

government ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 19 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/01/child-care-centres-ontario-concerned-about-limited-n95-mask-supply>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/01/child-care-centres-ontario-concerned-about-limited-n95-mask-supply> ^[2]

<https://www.cp24.com/news/child-care-centres-in-ontario-concerned-about-limited-n95-mask-supply-from-province-1.5744740> ^[3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> ^[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/health-and-safety> ^[5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8941>