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## AN EMERGENCY PLAN FOR ONTARIO CHILD CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Goal: Protect educators, families and programs

**Action 1: Order the temporary closure of all early learning and child care, including home-based child care**

- ✓ Licensed child care centres are now closed but, in the interest of social distancing, home-based child care services should also be closed.

**Action 2: Provide emergency funding to closed programs so that staff are paid and parents are not charged fees.**

- ✓ Fund child care programs during closure so that operators can pay staff, not charge parent fees, and avoid financial distress themselves. This means flowing the usual grants and funds that programs receive, as well as *emergency funds to cover parent fees*.
  - This approach has several benefits, but the foremost is that it is by far the simplest method – for government, families, operators and educators. For government it means one allocation of funds per program, rather than funding to compensate each parent and/or educator. For programs it means that funding and payroll can continue as usual, and for staff it means not worrying about applying and waiting for EI.
  - It would be ideal if municipal, provincial and federal governments work together to provide this funding, but it is more important that funding be provided quickly. The province should act immediately.
- ✓ For those who would not be covered by this approach, we recommend collaborating with the federal government to lower the EI threshold and increase the benefit to at least 80% of wages to ensure all workers and families have immediate access to sufficient income.

**Action 3: Provide safe, emergency child care for essential service workers**

- ✓ Quebec has led the way in providing emergency child care for essential service workers, and it is a model that Ontario should follow.
  - Child care is provided free of charge;
  - Children aged 0-13 years are accepted;
- ✓ These programs need enhanced government support to operate safely.