

## Ontario extends school and child care closures

Due to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 outbreak, the Ontario government announced that schools and child care centres will remain closed to protect the health and safety of students and staff. This extension is being made on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The announcement was made by Premier Doug Ford, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

To ensure continuity of learning, the government is launching the second phase of Learn at Home. Developed in conjunction with education partners, the government is establishing clarity for parents, enhancing education supports, and creating opportunities for teachers and educators to connect with students.

“The decision to extend school closures was not made lightly. We know from the medical experts that the next two weeks will be critical in the fight against COVID-19 and that’s why we’re taking further action to keep our kids safe and healthy by having them stay home,” said Premier Ford. “At the same time, we cannot put the school year in jeopardy. That’s why we’re providing additional tools for at-home learning and ensuring students from kindergarten to Grade 12 to postsecondary education can finish their academic year and get the credits they need to graduate.”

Public schools will remain closed to teachers until Friday, May 1, and to students until Monday, May 4. As these dates come closer, this decision will be re-evaluated based on public health advice. The closure may be extended if necessary to protect the health and safety of students, families and staff. Private schools, licensed child care centres and EarlyON programs will also remain closed until April 13, according to the Declaration of Emergency, which only allows closures to be extended for one 14-day period at a time. Select centres designated to support frontline health care workers and first responders will remain open.