

Ontario Extends School and Child Care Closures to Fight Spread of COVID-19

Province announces second phase of Learn at Home to support continuity of learning
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TORONTO — 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.

Today's 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, 2020, and to students until Monday, May 4, 2020. 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.

As previously announced, no student will have their graduation compromised by COVID-19 and the Ministry of Education continues to collaborate with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to ensure that there will be no barriers to accessing postsecondary education.

"We will do whatever it takes to keep students safe from COVID-19 - which is why we have extended the school closure period and why we have unveiled a teacher-led program that keeps students learning while at home," said Minister Lecce. "By providing clarity for parents, enhancing support for students and enabling the teacher-student relationship, we are ensuring our children continue to safely learn - providing some sense of stability and hope for them amid this difficulty."

The second phase of Learn at Home features a new set of expectations for the education community, including:

- Reconnecting students with teachers and other school staff, including mental health workers;
- Re-establishing teacher-led learning by grade groupings as follows:
 - Kindergarten-Grade 3: five hours of work per student/week (focus on literacy and math)
 - Grades 4-6: five hours of work per student/week (focus on literacy, math, science and social studies)
 - Grades 7-8: 10 hours of work per student/week (focus on math, literacy, science and social studies)
 - Grades 9-12: three hours of work per course per week for semestered students; 1.5 hours of work per course per week for non-semestered students (focus on achieving credits/completion/graduation)
- Leveraging digital resources and identifying alternative forms of teacher-student connectivity, such as phone and mail;
- Developing a program of training for educators to support them in virtual learning delivery;
- Requiring final report cards for all students;
- Prioritizing and supporting students on track to graduate;
- Distributing laptops and/or devices from schools as needed, while observing public health direction;
- Maintaining a responsive posture for health care and community partner requests; and
- Establishing formal COVID-19 working groups with education sector unions to work together, share ideas and to find solutions in the support of students.

"The province is taking extraordinary measures to stop the spread of COVID-19," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "As we do, we need every Ontarian to continue to do their part by staying apart. Please stay home as much as possible and keep your distance from others if you must go out. Stay home, stay safe, lives depend on it."

On March 21, 2020, Ontario launched [Ontario Together](#), an online portal helping organizations work with the province to meet the challenges of COVID-19. The government will leverage partnerships with the telecommunication sector to provide innovative, low-cost and high-impact

solutions to solve the equity challenges facing some students across Ontario. With this resource, the Ministry of Education has posted a new challenge that looks for learning solutions focused on:

- Free or low-cost learning resources and supports for students, parents and educators;
- Access to devices such as computers, tablets and portable wi-fi hotspots for families that need the supports; and
- Other ideas, goods or services, for example, to support mental health and students with special education needs.

QUICK FACTS

- English and French-language materials will continue to be added to [Learn at Home](#) on a regular basis to provide new and compelling content throughout this period. Recent updates include supplemental STEM learning resources created by third-parties and a parent resource that is focused on reading and writing.
- There are now 36 high-quality English courses and 47 French-language courses available for secondary students to review, refresh and extend their learning as part of independent study.
- TVO Kids offers educational programming throughout the day for school-aged children. Their broadcast schedule can be viewed [here](#). TFO also offers a range of educational programming in French throughout the day for school-aged children. L'horaire de diffusion est disponible [ici](#).
- [Mathify](#) provides real-time homework help led by OCT certified educators for students between Grades 6-10, six days a week, including weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- [Eurêka!](#) provides online learning support in French to students in Grades 1-12 with their school work and learning.

LEARN MORE

- [Learn at Home](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19

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