

**ONTARIO REGIONAL OFFICE**

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Staff Reps Servicing Child Care Centers

**FROM:** Christina Gilligan – Associate Coordinator, Child Care

**RE:** Childcare and government measures to control the spread of COVID-19

**Cc:** Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, SSWCC Chair  
Athina Basiliadis, Kim Gilbert, and Carolyn Ferns - SSWCC Child Care Representatives  
Tracey Pinder, Assistant Regional Director

**DATE:** March 13, 2020

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Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends:

I am sure everyone has heard by now that on March 12, the Provincial Government announced it would close all publicly funded schools in Ontario for an addition two weeks following March break. They are scheduled to re-open on April 6. This measure is being taken to help slow the spread of the virus COVID-19 in Ontario.

Not surprisingly, there was no clear direction as to how childcare centres that operate in schools or in the community will be impacted. At this time, we have heard Minister of Education Stephen Lecce say that the decision whether to keep schools open and childcare centres operating would be up to the individual boards.

Members can be sure that CUPE is currently pushing back on this and we take the position that a closure should be a closure - **FULL STOP!**

But just to be clear: there has been no consultation between the CUPE Child Care Sector and the government of Ontario on the issue of childcare closures either in schools or in the community. If employers choose to stay open, we believe this will not only slow the government's efforts to control the spread of the virus, but that it puts children, families and workers at continued risk.

We continue to strongly recommend that the government apply the same initiatives to childcare centres that it has applied in schools and as well as provide full wage continuance for affected members.

In the event that childcare operators decide to close, we need to utilize the tools that we have – our collective agreement and layoff language – if employers are unable to continue to pay regular wages.

In the event that operators decide to stay open, again we have our collective agreement, as well and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

**MARK HANCOCK**

National President/Président national

**CHARLES FLEURY**

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

**DENIS BOLDUK, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, DANIEL LÉGÈRE, MARLE ROBERTS**

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

## CUPE locals in childcare centres in schools

We have just been advised that there are now Boards that are making the responsible decision to follow suit and close. So, we are asking CUPE locals that have childcare centres located in boards' schools and in the community to please report back on the following:

1. Has the school board advised your centre whether it will allow it to continue operating or will they also cease operations until April 6? (Should an individual board decide to keep its school open for other programs to operate, it would seem to be counterintuitive and counterproductive to the school closure.)
2. Are your employers considering providing care for school-age children that are being displaced because of the school closures? (Again, counterintuitive, counterproductive.)
3. What is your employer's plan if families travel to a country on Public Health Agency of Canada's [restricted travel list](#)? Will they be required to self quarantine for 2 weeks before returning to the child care centre?

## Joint Health and Safety Committees

CUPE is also asking its locals to work with their Joint Health and Safety Committees to review any pandemic plan or develop one if there is not one already in place. This plan will help to provide direction where there is uncertainty for employees and families. Below are points should be included in the plan:

- A statement that encourages workers to stay home if they have symptoms of infection
- The identification of decision makers within the organization and key personnel who manage the plan and monitor absence rates
- Measures and strategies to respond to staff shortages
- The identification of how the employer will screen visitors and clients for the disease before they access the workplace
- The contingency plan in the event of a public transit shutdown
- Personal protective equipment (individual requirements, training, and stockpile)
- The role of the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative
- Financial compensation for those who are required to quarantine, self isolate or required to take care of family members (special leave), if not covered in the collective agreement
- Mental health support for grieving workers or those suffering from anxiety or trauma
- Levels of increased environment/custodial cleaning practices and routines
- The identification of how the employer will communicate with the Public Health Unit, if required.

We will continue to provide updates when we receive them.

Sincerely,



CUPE National Representative  
Associate Coordinator- Child Care