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## **MEMORANDUM**

**Subject: Closure of Early Learning and Licensed Child Care Centres due to COVID-19**

**Date: March 13, 2020**

**To: Licensed child care service providers, EarlyON service providers, Home child care licensed agencies, Special needs service providers,**

**From: Darlene Edgar, Children's Services, Community Services**

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On March 12, 2020, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, ordered Ontario schools to remain closed from March 14 through to April 5, 2020. This decision was based on advice from Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and experts at the provincial COVID-19 Command Table. This means that Ontario schools have been ordered to remain closed from March 14 to April 5, 2020.

The Ministerial Order did not apply to licensed child care, rather the decision on whether child care centres in schools will remain open or will be closed was to be made by local schools boards. On March 13, 2020, Niagara Region Children's Services received notice from local school boards that programs and services located in schools will also be closed. Therefore, all full day licensed child care centres, before and after school programs, and EarlyON centres located in schools will be closed for the three-week period.

In the case of community, based licensed child care centres (stand-alone centres not located within a school), the decision whether to continue to operate or close operations was at the discretion of the individual licensed child care service provider. Niagara Region Children's Services held a teleconference on March 13 to advise licensed child care service providers that the decision to continue to operate was at their discretion.

As explained during the teleconference, and as per this memo, Dr. Williams is asking all licensed child care service providers choosing to remain open, to actively check children, parents, staff and visitors for any symptoms and ask about recent travel history that may be related to COVID-19. With the focus on taking aggressive actions to contain the spread, families who have travelled outside of Canada or have family members who are not well, child care service will be declined, and parents will be required to keep children at home for 14 days.

In addition, because EarlyON Child and Family Centres are a non-essential service, all locations across Niagara will be closed from March 14 through to April 5, 2020.

For more information regarding COVID-19, including risks and symptoms, prevention, cleaning strategies, and frequently asked questions, go to:

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/default.aspx>

Niagara Region Children's Services will continue to monitor the evolving situation, with continuous contact with the Ministry of Education and Niagara Region Public Health, and will communicate any additional service delivery decisions as required.

Respectfully submitted and signed by;

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Darlene Edgar      RECE  
Commissioner