



March 18, 2020

Ref: 248027

Letter from the Minister

During the past few days, I have received many messages as this situation has changed rapidly and continues to evolve quickly. I thank everyone who has shared your thoughts with me and my office – please know that although I have not been able to reply to you individually, I have been reading all the feedback and sharing your stories with our team as we develop our plan on next steps.

I also thank our Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) team who have been working long hours looking for solutions and a way forward during this unprecedented time.

Today, Dr. Bonnie Henry is advising parents who can, to care for their children at home.

The health and safety of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and that of the children they care for, is paramount. Workers and providers have the right to take all necessary precautions.

Thank you to the ECEs who are the backbone of our child care system and continue to be highly professional during this difficult time. Dr. Henry maintains that child care centres can safely care for children if they are following the prescribed health protocols.

At the present time, subsidies that families and child care providers receive to operate will still be flowing. There is no change to that.

I want to assure everyone that the ministry is working on a policy and financial support package that will assist you through these unprecedented times.

We also need to support essential services workers at this critical time. We have heard from many child care providers and ECEs who are willing to stay open to support families and essential service workers – thank you. We are working on strategies to support the work you do.

Our goal is to ensure that childcare providers who stay open receive incentive payments while those who need to close are financially supported to ensure they are ready to get back up and running when they are able. Details are in the final stages of being worked out and we appreciate your continued patience.

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Government is currently looking at changes it would like to see in the federal Employment Insurance Act that will allow families to care for their children, self-isolate as required, and not lose revenue for their home budgets. We are assessing the plan from Ottawa and will work with the tools available within it to fill in those gaps.

There is much to figure out going forward. We recognize that there are more questions than answers at this time, and for many this is unsettling. Rest assured that MCFD is actively reviewing these policies in light of COVID-19, to see how we can best support both providers and families.

We appreciate your patience as we work through these complex issues in the coming days, and we will communicate new information as soon as it is available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katrina', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katrina Chen
Minister of State for Childcare