

Remote Learning to Continue across Ontario for the Remainder of School Year

Ontario Accelerating Vaccinations to Support a Safer Summer and Return to In-Person Learning in September

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[Office of the Premier](#)

TORONTO — To best protect Ontario families from the fast growing B.1.617.2 variant, and to allow for higher rates of vaccination of students, staff, and families, the Ontario government has made the difficult decision to continue with remote learning for all elementary and secondary students across the province for the remainder of this school year. This will allow the province to continue its focus on accelerating COVID-19 vaccinations to support a safer summer and return to in-person learning in September for the 2021-22 school year.

Details were provided today by Premier Ford, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

“At a time when our top priority is putting the third wave behind us so that we can safely enter Step One of our Roadmap to Reopen, we can’t risk increased cases and potential downstream impacts on hospitals and ICUs,” said Premier Ford. “Making this tough decision now will allow kids to safely enjoy camps and outdoor activities this summer, and a safe return to school in September.”

Recent modelling presented by the Science Advisory Table revealed that if Ontario reopened schools to in-person learning the province could see an increase of six to 11 per cent in the number of new daily COVID-19 cases. It is unknown how many of these would be the new, more dangerous B.1.617.2 variant first identified in India, which has entered the province through Canada’s borders.

An increase in cases and the spread of variants would also threaten Ontarians’ hard-fought progress in beating the third wave and could delay the safe return to many summer activities for kids, including day and overnight camps, sports leagues and public pools, among other important activities that support children’s physical and mental wellbeing.

“While this decision was not made lightly, it has been done with one aim: protect the summer for families and deliver a stable and safe September for students,” said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. “We are looking forward and taking action by getting all education workers and students vaccinated with both doses ahead of September, while investing an additional \$2 billion to ensure students and staff are safe.”

Ontario’s plan supports the largest investment in mental health and the largest summer learning program in Ontario history, with supports available to students through the summer and when they return to in-person learning in September. The government is working to ensure that students can look forward to a return to normal and enjoy outdoor and extracurricular activities as soon as it is safe to do so.

School boards will continue to have safety plans in place for students who are experiencing or could be expected to experience mental health challenges. This will help them to have continued access to remote or in-person services through the school, community child and youth mental health service providers or local health care partners. Schools will continue to remain open for in-person learning for special education students who cannot be accommodated through remote learning until the end of June. Students, parents and families also have a number of mental health resources that are available to them through their school board as well as through other providers, including Kids Help Phone, which offers 24/7 counselling and referral services across the province, as well as resources through School Mental Health Ontario and services through child and youth mental health agencies across the province.

Vaccines remain the best defence against COVID-19 and to date, more than 9.36 million doses have been administered in Ontario and a plan to accelerate second doses has just been released. Youth aged 12 and over are currently eligible to schedule a COVID-19 vaccine appointment through the [provincial booking system](#) and call centre, as well as at [select pharmacies](#) administering the Pfizer vaccine.

To book an appointment online, these individuals must already be 12 years old as of the date of their booking. Individuals who are not 12 years old at time of booking can book an appointment for a later date through the provincial call centre or directly through public health units that use their own booking system. The Pfizer vaccine is currently the only COVID-19 vaccine that has been authorized by Health Canada for use in individuals aged 12 and over. In addition, the province is encouraging eligible family members who have not received a vaccine to attend these clinics to get youth and their families vaccinated as quickly as possible.

Offering the protection of the vaccine to youth aged 12 and over is a significant milestone in Ontario's fight against COVID-19. The province expects to reach all youth aged 12 and over who want a vaccine with a first dose before the end of June and with a second dose by the end of August 2021. Following prioritization of education workers with a first dose this spring, the province also expects to reach all education workers with a second dose by the week of August 15, if not already eligible earlier by age cohort or other eligibility. This is subject to vaccine supply.

These measures will ensure that all Ontarians aged 12 and older who want to will be fully vaccinated by the end of summer, including students and educational staff.

Students have worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic, with important milestones like graduation ceremonies impacted. Ontario students deserve this positive conclusion to their academic journey, safely. The government will allow school boards to invite graduating students in elementary schools (by class) and secondary schools (by homeroom/quadmastered class) to return to school in June for a short, outdoor celebration, where physical distancing is possible.

With schools in Ontario closed for in-person learning, emergency child care (ECC) will continue until the end of June to align with the end of the elementary school year. Before and after school programs will remain closed and will continue to not charge parent fees, which is prohibited during the remote learning period. Licensed child care centres may resume serving school-aged children for full-days in programming over the summer months, in accordance with the Ministry of Education's health and safety guidance. Those before and after school programs that operate as a camp over the summer will be permitted to do so, and will follow health and safety guidance from the Ministry of Health.

Quick Facts

- Ontario's school reopening plan was endorsed by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and funded with \$1.6 billion dollars in COVID-19 resources to protect students and staff.
- Get tested if you have symptoms compatible with COVID-19, or if you have been advised of exposure by your local public health unit or through the COVID Alert App. Visit [Ontario.ca/covidtest](https://ontario.ca/covidtest) to find the nearest testing location.
- To find the right supports, visit COVID-19: Support for People, which has information about the many available and free mental health services and supports.
- To stay safe, you can download the COVID Alert App free from the Apple and Google Play app stores.
- The emergency child care (ECC) program has been an important support for parents of school-aged children, who are frontline workers that are unable to support their children's learning at home while they are required to go to work. During the latest round of emergency child care, more than 11,000 school-aged children have been accessing programs across the province each day.
- Child care for non-school aged children (i.e. children aged 0-4) will remain open. This includes child care offered in licensed child care centres, and in home-based settings.
- To date, 65 per cent of Ontarians have received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Additional Resources

- [Ontario Expanding Mental Health Services for Children and Youth](#)
- [Visit Ontario's website to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19](#)
- Learn about [Ontario's vaccination program](#) to help protect us against COVID-19.
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