**Policy Tracing: Ontario School Closures and Reopening**

**Rapid Policy Review: 2020 –2021 School Year, Ontario**

n=150 documents from Office of the Premier; Search term ‘school’; Date delimited: 30 June 2020-10 March 2021

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| Date as in effect | Policy Change | Regions/Municipalities/PHUs | Source |
| 8 Sept 2020 | Phased reopening of schools |  |  |
| 21 Sept 2020 | All schools to be open |  |  |
| 21 Dec 2020 | Provincial winter break  (De facto: all schools closed from 21 Dec 2020 – 11 January 2021) | ALL | 4-8 January was an extension of virtual learning. Schools technically opened on 4 Jan but no in-person so we shouldn’t have any cases until 11 January. |
| 4-8 Jan 2021 | Virtual learning for all schools (as part of Province-wide Shutdown) | While transmission in schools remains low, **all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools are to move to teacher-led remot**e learning when students return from the winter break on January 4, 2021. This action is being taken in support of the Government’s broader efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. | **Ontario Announces Provincewide Shutdown to Stop Spread of COVID-19 and Save Lives**  Government Providing Grants of up to $20,000 to Small Businesses Impacted by New Public Health Measures  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59790/ontario-announces-provincewide-shutdown-to-stop-spread-of-covid-19-and-save-lives> |
| Announced 21 Dec 2020  School protocols meant to be as on 11 Jan 2021 but there were some changes | Province-wide shutdown | New School Protocols  While transmission in schools remains low, **all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools are to move to teacher-led remot**e learning when students return from the winter break on January 4, 2021. This action is being taken in support of the Government’s broader efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19.  Schools located in the following Public Health Unit regions can resume in-person instruction on January 11, 2021 for both elementary and secondary students:   * The District of Algoma Health Unit * North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit * Northwestern Health Unit * Porcupine Health Unit * Sudbury and District Health Unit * Thunder Bay District Health Unit * Timiskaming Health Unit | **Ontario Announces Provincewide Shutdown to Stop Spread of COVID-19 and Save Lives**  Government Providing Grants of up to $20,000 to Small Businesses Impacted by New Public Health Measures (announced 21 Dec 2020)  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59790/ontario-announces-provincewide-shutdown-to-stop-spread-of-covid-19-and-save-lives>  As part of the government's efforts to protect the most vulnerable, boards will be required to make provisions for continued in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning for whom remote learning is challenging. |
| 7 Jan 2021 | Province-wide shutdown extended  Extended virtual instruction for all elementary schools in Ontario until 25 January 2021, and extending the shutdown in Northern Ontario, aligning with the shutdown in Southern Ontario. | …is extending certain measures to keep students, education staff, and residents of Northern Ontario safe. This includes extending **online teacher-led learning until January 25, 2021 for elementary school students in the 27 Southern Ontario public health unit regions and extending the shutdown in Northern Ontario for another 14 days**, aligning with the shutdown period in Southern Ontario.  In response to increasing community transmission, **in-person learning will be deferred to January 25, 2021 in Southern Ontario, which aligns with the planned return of in-person learning for secondary school students in these regions**.  **Elementary students and secondary students in the seven Northern Ontario public health unit regions will proceed with returning to in-person learning on January 11, 2021**. | **Ontario Extends Teacher-Led Online Learning Until January 25 to Keep Students and Staff Safe in Southern Ontario**  Province Also Extends Provincewide Shutdown in Northern Ontario (announced 7 Jan 2021)  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59890/ontario-extends-teacher-led-online-learning-until-january-25-to-keep-students-and-staff-safe-in-sout> |
| 11 Jan 2021 | Resume elementary + secondary in 7 Northern PHUs | January 11, 2021 for both elementary and secondary students:   * The District of Algoma Health Unit * North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit * Northwestern Health Unit * Porcupine Health Unit * Sudbury and District Health Unit * Thunder Bay District Health Unit * Timiskaming Health Unit | **Ontario Announces Provincewide Shutdown to Stop Spread of COVID-19 and Save Lives**  Government Providing Grants of up to $20,000 to Small Businesses Impacted by New Public Health Measures (announced 21 Dec 2020)  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59790/ontario-announces-provincewide-shutdown-to-stop-spread-of-covid-19-and-save-lives> |
| 14 Jan 2021 | Second State of Emergency + Stay-at-Home Order | Based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, schools in the following public health units (PHUs) will not return to in-person instruction until February 10, 2021:   * Windsor-Essex * Peel Region * Toronto * York * Hamilton | **Ontario Declares Second Provincial Emergency to Address COVID-19 Crisis and Save Lives**  **Province Issues Stay-at-Home Order and Introduces Enhanced Enforcement Measures to Reduce Mobility**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59922/ontario-declares-second-provincial-emergency-to-address-covid-19-crisis-and-save-lives> (Announced 12 Jan) |
| 25 Jan 2021 |  | Based on the most recent data and the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, elementary and secondary schools in the following Public Health Units (PHUs) will be permitted to resume in-person learning on January 25, 2021:   * Grey Bruce Health Unit * Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit * Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit * Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Health Unit * Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit * Peterborough Public Health * Renfrew County and District Health Unit   This means that all schools in the following schools boards will resume in-person learning on January 25:   * Limestone District School Board * Renfrew County District School Board * Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board * Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board * Renfrew County Catholic District School Board * Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board * Bluewater District School Board   Some additional school boards span across multiple PHUs and may have some schools that resume in-person learning on January 25 and other schools that will continue to teach remotely. The local PHU should be contacted on the status of schools in these boards:   * Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board * Trillium Lakelands District School Board * Upper Canada District School Board * Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario * Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic DSB * Conseil des écoles publiques de l`Est de l`Ontario * Conseil scolaire catholique Providence * Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir * Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Centre-Est de l'Ontario | **Over 100,000 Ontario Students Return to Class Beginning Next week**  **Additional Measures Put in Place to Keep Schools Safe**  **(Announced: January 20, 2021)**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/60033/over-100000-ontario-students-return-to-class-beginning-next-week>  Northern PHUs that were permitted to return to in-person learning on January 11, 2021 will continue in-person learning unless otherwise directed by local PHUs. Schools located in all other PHUs across the province will continue to learn remotely at this time. |
| 1 Feb 2021 | Return of more in-class:  280,000 students in four public health regions will return to class on Monday, February 1. | Elementary and secondary schools in four additional public health units (PHUs) will be permitted to return to in-person learning on February 1, 2021. This will bring the total number of students able to learn in-person to 520,000 across the province.  The four additional PHUs are:   * Eastern Ontario Health Unit * Middlesex-London Health Unit * Southwestern Public Health * Ottawa Public Health   This means that all schools in the following schools boards will resume in-person learning on February 1:   * Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario * Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario * Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien * Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Centre-Est de l'Ontario * London District Catholic School Board * Ottawa Catholic District School Board * Ottawa-Carleton District School Board * Thames Valley District School Board * Upper Canada District School Board   Two additional school boards that span across multiple PHUs may have some schools that resume in-person learning on February 1, 2021 while other schools will continue to teach remotely. The local PHU should be contacted on the status of schools in these boards:   * Conseil scolaire catholique Providence * Conseil scolaire Viamonde | **280,000 More Ontario Students to Return to Class**  **In-Person Learning Begins with Tougher Health and Safety Measures in Place (announced 28 Jan 2021)**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/60154/280000-more-ontario-students-to-return-to-class>  Local PHUs continue to have the authority to close schools based on their unique circumstances, and parents may choose to permit their children to continue learning remotely. |
| 8 February 2021 |  | Elementary and secondary schools in the following PHUs will return to in-person learning on Monday, February 8, 2021:   * Brant County Health Unit * Chatham-Kent Public Health * Durham Region Health Department * Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit * Halton Region Public Health * City of Hamilton Public Health Services * Huron Perth Public Health * Lambton Public Health * Niagara Region Public Health * Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit * Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services * Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health * Windsor-Essex County Health Unit | Enhanced Safety Measures in Place as In-Person Learning Resumes Across Ontario (announced 3 Feb)  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60228/enhanced-safety-measures-in-place-as-in-person-learning-resumes-across-ontario> |
| 16 February 2021 |  | Elementary and secondary schools in the following PHUs will return to in-person learning on Tuesday, February 16, 2021:   * Peel Public Health * Toronto Public Health * York Region Public Health | Enhanced Safety Measures in Place as In-Person Learning Resumes Across Ontario (announced 3 Feb)  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60228/enhanced-safety-measures-in-place-as-in-person-learning-resumes-across-ontario> |
| **Other relevant policy developments** | | | |
| **SPECIAL EDUCATION (BLUE)** | | | |
|  |  | In areas of the province where students continue to learn remotely, the families of frontline workers will be able to access emergency child care. Our government has also listened to the voices of the special education community by directing school boards to provide in-person learning for those students who cannot learn remotely, ensuring they receive consistent and full supports. We also have strengthened mental health and special education funding for all school boards during the pandemic by $42.5 million, including an additional $10 million to support the needs of children who face adversity during the pandemic. | **Safety of Schools Remains Priority Number One for Ontario**  **More Than 100,000 Students Return To In-Person Learning With Enhanced Safety Measures to Protect Against COVID-19**  **January 24, 2021**  [**https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/60085/safety-of-schools-remains-priority-number-one-for-ontario**](https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/60085/safety-of-schools-remains-priority-number-one-for-ontario) |
|  |  | The government will be expanding eligibility for the targeted emergency child care program to more frontline workers. This expansion helps the parents of school-aged children who may not be able to support their child's learning/care at home because they are performing critical roles in their communities and are required to report to work in person.  • Education staff who are required to attend schools to provide in-person instruction and support to students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning | **Expanding Eligibility for Emergency Child Care in Southern Ontario**  **January 9, 2021**  [**https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59910/expanding-eligibility-for-emergency-child-care-in-southern-ontario**](https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59910/expanding-eligibility-for-emergency-child-care-in-southern-ontario) |
|  |  | Financial support is also available for families during this temporary remote learning period through the [Support for Learners](https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-support-learners?gclid=CjwKCAiA_9r_BRBZEiwAHZ_v17kY1AvRa4dspIm0dHofMhWdEUBY90I9r90qoZLwGGpfwrwtGmAQHxoCShAQAvD_BwE) program. Starting on January 11, 2021, an expanded Support for Learners program is providing $200 for each child or youth up to Grade 12 and $250 for each child or youth up to age 21 with special needs. Applications will be open until February 8, 2021. | **Ontario Extends Teacher-Led Online Learning Until January 25 to Keep Students and Staff Safe in Southern Ontario**  **Province Also Extends Provincewide Shutdown in Northern Ontario**  **January 7, 2021**  [**https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59890/ontario-extends-teacher-led-online-learning-until-january-25-to-keep-students-and-staff-safe-in-sout**](https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59890/ontario-extends-teacher-led-online-learning-until-january-25-to-keep-students-and-staff-safe-in-sout) |
|  |  | Application instructions will be available on the Support for Learners web page starting in January 2021. Secondary school student applications will be open from January 11, 2021 to February 8, 2021. The application deadline for Support for Learners for children or youth aged 0 to 12 and for children or youth aged 0 to 21 with special needs is being extended to February 8, 2021. | Safer at Home Programs Provide Relief to Ontario Families Province Expands Support for Learners Program and Lowers Hydro Bills  **December 22, 2020**  [**https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59803/safer-at-home-programs-provide-relief-to-ontario-families**](https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59803/safer-at-home-programs-provide-relief-to-ontario-families) |
|  |  | This $380 million investment in families builds on the $378 million provided to parents during the first wave of COVID-19. So, for example, an Ontario family with three children, including one with special needs, would receive $1,300 this year to help cover the costs of an accessible workspace and technology to enable learning online. This is money well spent."  Parents or guardians residing in Ontario can complete one application per child to receive a one-time payment of:  ·       $200 for each child aged 0 to 12; or  ·       $250 if their child or youth is aged 0 to 21 with special needs | Ontario Providing Additional Financial Support for Young Learners Starting today families can apply for the funding online  **November 30, 2020** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59415/ontario-providing-additional-financial-support-for-young-learners> |
|  |  | $42.5 million to support students with special needs and provide student mental health supports; | $1.3 Billion Investment to Reopen Schools Safely **September 8, 2020** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/58294/13-billion-investment-to-reopen-schools-safely> |
|  |  | Special Education and Mental Health Supports Enhancement - $12.5 million   * Will allow boards to hire and train additional staff and provide more mental health supports for students. | Additional Funds Enhance Ontario's Robust Back-to-School Plan Funding will be used to complement provincial health and safety measures already in place  **August 26, 2020** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58135/additional-funds-enhance-ontarios-robust-back-to-school-plan> |
|  |  | Parents and guardians still have until August 31, 2020 to apply for Support for Families. Under this program, parents or guardians of children between 0-12 years old, or up to 21 years old for children and youth with special needs, are eligible for a one-time payment, per child, to purchase educational materials to support learning at home.  Over the summer, students and families took advantage of expanded summer learning across the province. Over 150,000 students enrolled in high school programs, including more than 21,000 students who took Reach Ahead credits. Elementary students participated in literacy and numeracy programs and students with special education needs and mental health concerns are participating in new targeted and transition programs in preparation for the coming school year.  Parents and guardians still have until August 31, 2020 to apply for Support for Families. Under this program, parents or guardians of children between 0-12 years old, or up to 21 years old for children and youth with special needs, are eligible for a one-time payment, per child, to purchase educational materials to support learning at home. | Ontario Releases Plan for Safe Reopening of Schools in September Province Providing Critical Investments and Resources to Keep Students and Staff Safe  **July 30, 2020** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57838/ontario-releases-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools-in-september> |
|  |  | **Special education:**The past several months have had considerable impacts on students in the province, and the government is providing additional supports to enable students a successful return to school. For students with a high-level of special education needs, the government is directing school boards to facilitate full-time in-school instruction, regardless of whether a secondary school begins the instructional year using an adapted model. The Ministry of Education will work with designated school boards to achieve this goal, and will review and approve requests by designated school boards to open small or specialized secondary schools or programs with full-time attendance. Additionally, the government is directing boards to consider the changing school environment and remote learning needs in reviewing and updating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to best-serve students. | Actions Taken to Keep Schools Safe During Reopening **July 30, 2020** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/57837/actions-taken-to-keep-schools-safe-during-reopening> |
|  |  | Key elements of the safety plan include:   * supports for students with special education needs; | Ontario Prepares for the Safe Reopening of Schools Province Releases School Safety Plan for the 2020-21 School Year  **June 19, 2020** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57309/ontario-prepares-for-the-safe-reopening-of-schools> |
| 24 Jan 2021 | General announcement for return of in-person of 100K students:  On the advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and following the introduction of additional and tougher layers of protection, more than 100,000 students will return to in-person learning on January 25, 2021. |  | **Safety of Schools Remains Priority Number One for Ontario**  **More Than 100,000 Students Return To In-Person Learning With Enhanced Safety Measures to Protect Against COVID-19**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/60085/safety-of-schools-remains-priority-number-one-for-ontario> |
| 29 Jan 2021 | Variants of Concern   * B.1.1.7 (501Y.V1) - variant first identified in the United Kingdom in late November 2020. * 501Y.V2 - variant first identified in South Africa at the end of December 2020. * P.1 - variant first detected in travelers from Brazil who arrived in Japan in January 2021. |  | **Ontario Takes Immediate Action to Address COVID-19 Variants**  **Six-Point Plan will Help Stop the Spread in Communities across the Province**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/60172/ontario-takes-immediate-action-to-address-covid-19-variants>  Ontario is also committed to providing Ontarians with more access to innovative testing options to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Based on successes seen from the use of rapid tests in select settings across Ontario to date, the province is expanding their use for more people in more priority settings to quickly identify cases of COVID-19 and support the safe re-opening of schools**. As part of the Provincial Antigen Screening Program, high-priority settings will include**:   * Long-term care homes * Retirement homes * Schools * Congregate living * High-priority communities * Land borders * Essential industry, such as manufacturing and construction   Related news release: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60176/ontario-takes-immediate-action-to-stop-the-spread-of-covid-19-variants-1> |
| 1 Feb 2021 | Expand testing at schools |  | **Ontario Expands Testing to Keep Schools and Child Care Settings Safe**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/60192/ontario-expands-testing-to-keep-schools-and-child-care-settings-safe> |
| 1 Feb 2021 | Phase II Release of federal funds provided for education |  | Ontar**io Provides Additional Funding to Keep Schools Safe**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/60191/ontario-provides-additional-funding-to-keep-schools-safe>  Ontario is providing an additional $381 million in funding to school boards through the Safe Return to Class Fund. The money will be used to further protect students and staff and support online as well as in-person learning.  The first installment of the funding, as announced on August 26, 2020, is being used to support priority provincial initiatives related to the safe reopening of schools.  The second installment of this funding will be allocated as follows:   * $65 million for health and safety costs, such as additional staffing and or board-funded or transportation-related personal protective equipment; * $50 million for additional investments in portable HEPA filters and other immediate options to optimize air quality and ventilation in schools; * $5 million to support safe and secure student transportation by addressing cost pressures relating to COVID-19; * $80 million for devices such as laptops and tablets to support students in remote learning; * $62 million to support learning gaps and improve math and reading programs, special education and mental health programming, and supports for underserved students; * $60 million to support improved online learning, including developing digital course content and technological supports; * $33 million set aside for expanded testing and additional supports for high priority areas; * $10 million to support the Student Nutrition Program to reach remote learners and address COVID-19 delivery challenges; * $10 million to continue to support the mental health of all students and support the implementation of the new School Mental Health Ontario Action Kit and funding for Kids Help Phone; and * $6 million in focused funding for equity initiatives, such as those supporting Black, racialized students, Indigenous students and students with special education needs. |
| 5 March 2021 | Vax program déroulement – essential workers unable to work from home include childcare workers and school bus transport staff BUT NOT teachers |  | **Populations Eligible for Phase Two COVID-19 Vaccination**  <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/60570/populations-eligible-for-phase-two-covid-19-vaccination> |