

May 8, 2020

To: The Honourable Stephen McNeil
Premier of Nova Scotia

The Honourable Randy Delorey
Minister of Health and Wellness

The Honourable Zachariah Churchill
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

Dr. Robert Strang
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Re: Emergency Childcare for Essential Workers During COVID-19

Dear Premier McNeil, Dr. Strang, Minister Churchill, and Minister Delorey,

We are Dalhousie medical students and organizers of the Dalhousie Students for Healthcare Providers initiative in Nova Scotia writing to express our support for the implementation of a provincial emergency childcare program for essential workers. We appreciate your work on crisis management and the continued education for children across the province. However, we want to bring to light an issue that must be addressed as the pandemic continues.

We ran the Dalhousie Students for Healthcare Providers initiative from March 16, 2020, after school closures were first announced, to May 1, 2020, to provide a stopgap measure for healthcare workers requiring childcare and other services^{1,2}. **By the end of the program, we received nearly 90 healthcare provider requests for childcare, with 80% of our requests rating their need as “would really help” or “urgent.”** While we have recruited over 80 students from interdisciplinary health programs to volunteer to provide temporary childcare, **we were only able to meet 24% of our demand.** Most of our volunteers are students with academic duties and attending online classes concurrently to volunteering. Because of limited capacity, we had heavily restricted our healthcare worker intake criteria in April and only operated within the Halifax Regional Municipality, and thus our childcare requests do not reflect the full extent of need in the province. **Please note that we had promoted our services to only healthcare workers, and many other essential workers have been left without childcare for months now.**

While searching for alternative childcare accommodations, we found that within the first few days of school and daycare closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Brunswick^{3,4}, Prince Edward Island^{5,6}, and Quebec^{7,8} were among the first provinces to provide emergency childcare support for essential workers. Ontario^{9,10}, Manitoba^{11,12}, Saskatchewan¹³, Alberta^{14,15}, and Newfoundland^{16,17} followed suit less than a week after. British Columbia left daycares open longer to support their essential workers and later introduced a similar initiative on March 31^{18,19}. Yukon and the Northwest Territories recognized the importance of childcare as an essential service in their region and have kept daycares open, especially for essential workers.^{20,21} Only Nunavut and **Nova Scotia have closed childcare services and do not offer any form of emergency childcare for essential workers.**

We have consulted with Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS) and the Nova Scotia College of Family Physicians (NSCFP). Both enthusiastically support the rapid development and implementation of a strategy to ensure childcare for essential workers. In consultation with DNS and CPSNS, we are recommending the following to address the needs of physicians:

1. Childcare for essential workers with no other options should be facilitated immediately,
2. plans for childcare outside of regular working hours should be considered, and

3. all childcare centres opened during the provincial state of emergency should take steps to increase social distancing and sanitation to protect the childcare providers and essential workers' families (e.g. reduced numbers of children permitted in care).

In a time where **staffing is already an issue** and retired physicians and nurses are being repatriated, we feel helpless hearing from essential workers and the users of our program that they feel **unsupported and have had to reduce shifts due to the lack of alternative childcare options**. As the government works to implement long-term and sustainable pandemic response measures, it is critical to consider childcare as an essential service and to integrate emergency childcare as part of contingency planning. We hope to work with you to help accommodate this pressing need as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Dalhousie Students for Healthcare Providers

Signatories

Dalhousie Students for Healthcare Providers

Kristin Robin Ko, Medical Student, Dalhousie University

Clara Long, Medical Student, Dalhousie University

Margaret Sun, Medical Student, Dalhousie University

Freddy Lee, Medical Student, Dalhousie University

Ellen Parker, Medical Student, Dalhousie University

Kathleen MacMillan, Medical Student, Dalhousie University

Doctors Nova Scotia

Dr. Gary Ernest, President

Nancy MacCready-Williams, CEO

Nova Scotia College of Family Physicians

Cathie W. Carroll, Executive Director

Maritime Resident Doctors

Dr. Leo Fares, President

Dr. Michael MacGillivray, President-elect

Sandi Carew, CEO

Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia

Allison Bodnar, CEO

Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union

Jason MacLean, President

Dalhousie Medical Students' Society

Freddy Lee, President

Michael Mackley, Past-President

Brett Ells, President-elect

Michael O'Leary, VP Academic

Adele Orovec, VP Communications

Tamara Selman, VP Internal Affairs

Emma McDermott, VP Internal Affairs-elect

Clara Long, VP External Affairs

Sidra Sarfaraz, VP External Affairs-elect

Natalie Horne, DMNS Sports and Wellness Representative

Rumana Rafiq, NS Global Health Liaison Sr., Student Diversity and Inclusion Liaison

Clarissa Brisseau, Chair of DMSS Council

Prathana Nathan, Class of 2022 Class President

Patrick Holland, Class of 2020 Class President

Physicians

Dr. Tanya Tulipan, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Eric Hyun, MD, PhD, FRCSC, Dalhousie University

Dr. Geoffrey K. Turnbull, MD, FRCPC, Dalhousie University

Dr. Adam Howes, MD, FRCPC, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Dr. Pippa Moss, MB, BS, FRCPC, Cumberland Medical Staff Association

Dr. Stacy MacDonald, MD, CCFP, Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia

Dr. Katherine Stringer, MD, CCFP, FCFP, Dalhousie University

Dr. Laurel Murphy, MD, FRCPC, Dalhousie university

Dr. Rob Harris, MD, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia

Dr. Brett Vair, MD, FRCSC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Kirstin Weerdenburg, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Kevin Carbyn, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Paul Freund, MD, FRCSC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Kailee Sutherland, MD, CCFP, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Richard Howard, MD, FRCP, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Dilruba Rahman, MBBS, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Mike Rivers-Bowerman, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Rachel Doucette, MD, CCFP, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Beth Cummings, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Amy Hendricks, MDCM, FRCPC, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
Dr. Ahmed Ghaly, MD, FRCPC, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Dr. Lorri Beatty, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Kiran Bains, MD, MBBS, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Arati Mokashi, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Nicole Herschenhous, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. W. E. Hanley, MD, Nova Scotia
Dr. Sidra Malik, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Gerald H. Schaller, CD, MD, FRCPC, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Dr. Daria Manos, MD, FRCPC, QEII Health Sciences Centre
Dr. Timothy Holland, MD, Fall River, Nova Scotia
Dr. James Clarke, MEng, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Elisabeth Gold, MD, MEd, MHSc, FCFP, Dalhousie University
Dr. Leslie Ribeiro, MD, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Dr. Laura Reardon, MD, CCFP, ABOM, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Sepideh Behroozan, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Allen Tran, MD, FRCPC, PGDi, Med Ed, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Farrell Nette, MD, FRCSC, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Dr. Aafiah Hamza, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Stephanie Lapierre, MD, FRCSC, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Dr. Scott MacNeil, MD, CCFP, Arichat, Nova Scotia
Dr. Andrew Hayward, MD, FRCSC, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
Dr. Annette Harris, MSc(OT), MD, CCFP, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
Dr. Elizabeth King, MD, Chester Basin, Nova Scotia
Dr. Heather Cockwell, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Satvinder Ghotra, MBBS, MD, MSc, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Christopher Cox, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Giselle Dugas, MD, CCFP, CFCP, Meteghan Center, Nova Scotia
Dr. Magdalena Kujath, FRCSC, MD, BSc, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Dr. Karen Angus, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Jolene Cook, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Stephen Miller, BSc, MD, MEd, Dalhousie University
Dr. George Kovacs, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Chris Poss, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Jason Emsley, MD, PhD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Andrea Lantz Powers, MD, MEd, FRCSC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Rachel Shaw, MD, MSc, BSc, Dalhousie University
Dr. Tracy Kok, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Vuthana Suon, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Janet MacIntyre, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Jennifer McVey, BSc, MSc, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Sarah Manos, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Hana Wiemer, MD, CCFP(EM), Dalhousie University
Dr. Nancy McNeil, MD, FRCPC, Colchester East Hants Health Centre
Dr. Ashley Sutherland, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Sherry Jain, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Stephen Curry, MD, CCFP(EM), Nova Scotia

Dr. Laura Mitchell, MD, CCFP(EM), Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Claire O'Donovan, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Valerie Ross, BSC(h), MBA, MD, CCFP(EM), Dalhousie University
Dr. Wendy Drake, MSc, MD, CCFP, FCFPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Yves Leroux, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Constance LeBlanc, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Jock Murray, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Chris McCrossin, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Heidi Budden, MD, FRCPC, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Dr. John Carter, MD, CCFP(EM), FCFP, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Nancy Murphy, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Michael Wadden, MD, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Dr. Ryan Henneberry, MD, CCFP(EM), Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Sam Campbell, MB, BCh, Nova Scotia
Dr. Lana Saciragic, MD, FRCSC, MPH, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Patricia Craig, MD, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
Dr. Aaron Stroud, MD, CCFP, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Dr. Robyn Doucet, MD, MMedEd, FRCPC, Dalhousie University
Dr. Rob Berry, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Robert Abraham, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Sian Iles, MD, FRCPC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. David Russell, MD, Bedford, Nova Scotia
Dr. Jens Heidenreich, MD, PhD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Natalie Cheng, CFPC, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Dr. Miroslava Kolajova, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Melanie MacNeil, MD, Wolfville, Nova Scotia
Dr. Edie M Baxter, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. David Cudmore, MD, Antigonish, Nova Scotia

Residents

Dr. Adrienne Henriksen, MD, BEng, BSc, Dalhousie University
Dr. Lauren Hanes, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Yasmeen Mansoor, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Patrick Murphy, MD, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Dr. Angela Po Chi Wang, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Priyanka Ravi, MBBS, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Rachel MacIntosh, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Jodie Villeneuve, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Beth Woodrow, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. Berit Dool, MD, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Dr. Syed Mohammad, BSc, MD, Dalhousie University
Dr. Kellie Cloney, MSc, MD, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Nurses

Johanne Solomon, BScN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Emily M. Smith, BScN, ENP, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jonathan Veinot, BScN RN, ENC(C), Halifax, Nova Scotia
Erica Alex-Doucette, RN, DPN, ENCP, BScN, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Jennifer Clarkson, BN, RN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Alycia Moore, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Kirsty Godin, BScN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Taryn Roberts, RN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Elizabeth LeDrew, BScN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Emily Gouthro, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Melissa Barrington, BScN, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Jenna F, BScN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jessica Weatherbee, RN, Amherst, Nova Scotia
Ashley Bourgeois, BScN, Amherst, Nova Scotia
Elyse Gould, LPN, Amherst, Nova Scotia
Allie Harris, RN, St. Francis Xavier University
Theresa martin, BNRN, Springhill, Nova Scotia
Danielle Lewis, Amherst, Nova Scotia
Lindsay Tennyson, BScN, MNP, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jenna Hayes, RN, BScN, CPN(C), Sydney, Nova Scotia
Laura Whitfield, BScN, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Jennilee Nelson, LPN, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
Barbara Jean Parland, RN, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia
Susmy Thomas, RN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Annette DeCoste, RN, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Jacquelyn Jamieson, BScN, RN, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
Molly Blackie, MN, IWK Health Centre
Ashley Sharpe, BScN, RN, Sheet Harbour, Nova Scotia
Barbara Hodgson, RN, CVAAC, Nova Scotia
Beth O'Leary, BScN, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia
Chelsea Coady, BSCN, RN, IWK Health Centre
Tracy Collins, RN, CL, Beaver Bank, Nova Scotia
Laura Crouse, RN, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
Shauna Marshall, LPN, Chapel Island, Nova Scotia
Jessica Duncan, BScN, Lake Loon, Nova Scotia
Chelsea Blair, BSc, RN, Nova Scotia
Marina, BScN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Gloria MacDonnell, RN, BcSN, Nova Scotia
Megan Scanlan, RN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Heidi Malone, RN, BScN, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
Sabrina Forrest, LPN, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Vaerie Sweet, BScN, Nova scotia
Amanda MacNeil, BSc, RN, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Michelle Steeves-Wall, BScN, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Denise Elms, RN, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
Joanne White, BSN, RN, CNCC(C), Halifax, Nova Scotia
Katrina Hand, BScN, RN, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Jessica Lambert, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
Carol Dauphinee, RN, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Sarah Dawn D'Entremont, BScN, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
Laurie-Anne Rankin, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Jen Thiele, BScN, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Taylor Jordan, Dalhousie University

Allied Health

Laurel Fry, Clinical Dietitian, IWK Health Centre
Jonathan Bennett, Paramedic, Nova Scotia
Amanda Strumm, Residential Support Worker, Aylesford, Nova Scotia
Jennifer K. Parker, MSc, SLP(C), Clinical Interventionist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
David Blomme, Sr. Communications Advisor, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Tania Angelucci, Occupational Therapist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Sarah Parsons, Orthotist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Shannon Bouchie, Business Analyst, Pictou County, Nova Scotia
Aidan Richmond, Medical Laboratory Technologist, NSTMLT
Carey Hann, Registered Pharmacy Technician, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jody Riggs, BA(Kin), CP(c), Certified Prosthetist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Kathleen Orsi Riggs, CO(c), MRSc, BSc(Kin), Orthotist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Satayesh Sabar, BSC Diagnostic Imaging, Radiographer, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Bryan Bell, Social Work, Outreach Worker-Mental Health, Dalhousie University
Michelle Macmillan, BHSc, Interventional Technologist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jill Conrod, RTR, BHSc, Interventional Technologist, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Wesley Young, RTR, BHSc, X-ray technologist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Patricia Adams, Residential Counselor, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
Katrina Boudreau, Radiological Technologist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Celene Andrews, BSc, BHSc, RTR, Interventional Technologist, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Leah Chiasson, Radiological Technologist, Bedford, Nova Scotia
Beth Murchie, RTR, Radiological Technologist, Nova Scotia
Lindsay Smith, RMT, Registered massage therapist, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Nicole Pestill, Behavioural Interventionist, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Students

Jessica Deveau, Medical Student, Nova Scotia
Michelle Trenholm, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Libby Morrison, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Alexandra Hetherington, MSc, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Taylor Bouchie, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Daniel Abdel-Malek, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Nick Bennett, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Brianna Cruickshank, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Adrianna Broussard, BSc, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Christopher Hung, BSc, PCP, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Yousef Bolous, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Stacie Smith, Kinesiology Student, Dalhousie University
Rodina Salem, BSc Undergraduate Student, Dalhousie University
Kirsten Weagle, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Marianna Saunders, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Amanda, Physiotherapy Student, Dalhousie University
Emily, Audiology Student, Dalhousie University
Adelaide von Kursell, Epidemiology Student, Dalhousie University
Nicole Hodder, Nursing Student, Dalhousie University

Tonya Hoddinott, Social Work Student, Dalhousie University
Caitlyn Southey, Nursing Student, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Ishani, Nursing Student, Dalhousie University
Jeana MacLeod, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Asuka Endo, SLP Student, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Lily Barton, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Caitlin Davis, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Emre Islam, Medical Student, University of Saskatchewan
Tiffany Richards, Medical Student, Halifax
Nataliya Pshenyshna, Bsc (c), Dietetic Student, Halifax
Victoria Landry, BSc, Medical Student, Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick
Diane Ramsay, MSc, Medical Student, Dalhousie University
Julien Courville, BSc Undergraduate Student, Dalhousie University

References:

1. McSheffrey, E. Dalhousie medical students start volunteer service for COVID-19 health workers. *Global News* (2020).
2. Dalhousie Students for Healthcare Providers. (2020). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/dalhelps/>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
3. Government of New Brunswick. Essential service workers can still obtain child care services. (2020). Available at: https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2020.03.0129.html. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
4. Hollingsworth, P. Daycare closures prove problematic for essential workers. *CTV News* (2020).
5. Government of Prince Edward Island. Emergency Child Care Services. (2020). Available at: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/emergency-child-care-services>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
6. Juric, S. More support for workers, daycares in day's 2nd briefing on COVID-19 in P.E.I. *CBC News* (2020).
7. Gouvernement du Québec. Emergency daycare services. (2020). Available at: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/emergency-daycare-services/#c46623>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
8. The Canadian Press. COVID-19: Quebec to offer free emergency daycare for healthcare workers. *CTV News* (2020).
9. Government of Ontario. Child care for health care and frontline staff. (2020). Available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-care-health-care-and-frontline-staff>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
10. Patton, J. Coronavirus: Ontario government to open child care centres for frontline workers. *Global News* (2020).
11. Government of Manitoba. Essential Services Worker Child Care Request Form. (2020). Available at: <https://forms.gov.mb.ca/GoMCovid19ESW/>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
12. Lefebvre, C. Manitoba suspending most child care services. *CTV News* (2020).
13. Government of Saskatchewan. Information for Workers Associated with the Pandemic Response Who Need Child Care. (2020). Available at: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/information-for-health-care-providers/child-care-for-health-care-provider-fam>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
14. Government of Alberta. Child care during COVID-19. (2020). Available at: <https://www.alberta.ca/child-care-during-covid-19.aspx>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
15. Romero, D. Alberta to reopen selected daycares to assist health care workers. *CTV News* (2020).
16. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Essential Worker Child Care Service Application. (2020). Available at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/essential-worker-child-care-service-application-form/>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
17. McSheffrey, E. Newfoundland issues stark warning as COVID-19 cases nearly double overnight. *Global News* (2020).
18. Government of British Columbia. Child Care for Essential Service Workers. (2020). Available at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-care-response-covid-19/child-care-response-covid-19-parent#essential-child-care>.
(Accessed: 4th April 2020)

19. CBC News. Child-care access for essential workers to improve, province says. *CBC News* (2020).
20. Government of Yukon. Child care centres and family day homes. (2020). Available at: <https://yukon.ca/en/child-care-centres-and-family-day-homes>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)
21. Government of Northwest Territories. Information on Licensed Early Learning and Child Care. (2020). Available at: <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/education-culture-and-employment-covid-19-updates/information-licensed-early-learning-and>. (Accessed: 4th April 2020)