



Family Law

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LAWYER

Q

My wife and I are fighting because of the kids. I want them to go to school in September and she wants to home school them, but we need two incomes to pay the bills! Can you help guide us here?

A

The hard fact of our current Covid times is that the institutions we counted on, can no longer be relied on in the same way. A key part of what schools provide for society, is childcare while parents work. A plan for the reopening of schools in Ontario has been released, but it is not one-size-fits-all, and other issues such as pre-and post-school daycare and busing have not been resolved.

There are three options: a normal school day with health and safety protocols; a modified school day, allowing for physical distancing, and "bubbles" or cohorts of students in groups of 15, which clan together with a single teacher; or at-home learning through remote education, with some direct teacher contact as well, called synchronous learning.

While \$4 million is available for cleaning and an additional \$736 million is to be provided through the school board's *Grants for Student Needs* (GSN) program, I am not aware of any funding cushion allocated to

families who lose an income when one partner home schools, beyond the one-time \$200/child 12 and under, \$250/special needs children to age 21, payment through the *Support for Families* portal [<https://www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/FamilyAppWeb/public/index.xhtml>.]

Responses may vary regionally and depending how the Covid numbers develop, there is no certainty in assessing the health risks. For most families and most children, studies show that even the best homeschooling does not provide the educational development of the school environment with its socialization and peer to peer contact, and safety net for emotional and mental health.

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