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Wednesday April 29 COVID-19 Update

Dear friend,

Canadian public health officials released [new modelling numbers](#) yesterday, which show Canada is making progress in slowing the spread of COVID-19, though thousands more cases and deaths are expected by early next month, and Canadians are urged to continue physical distancing measures.

While the increase in new cases slows down, Canada's forecasted COVID-19 fatality is higher than was initially predicted due to [widespread outbreaks in long-term care and seniors' homes](#), including outbreaks here in University-Rosedale.

In today's newsletter I want to recognize Foon Hay Lum. Foon Hay died from COVID-19 at age 111 while living at Mon Sheong Home for the Aged at 97 D'Arcy St.

Lum was a tireless advocate for Chinese-Canadians. She fought for reparations for the 81,000 Chinese-Canadians who were subject to the Chinese Exclusion Act and the \$500 Head Tax, a policy which kept her family separated until 1959. After 20 years of activism, she secured an apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2006.

Two weeks ago, Foon Hay's granddaughter, Helen Lee, [contacted me](#) asking me to help advocate with her to acquire more personal protective equipment and staff to help residents and stop the spread of COVID-19 at Mon Sheong.

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did not do enough and is still not doing enough to stop the spread of COVID-19 among our most vulnerable, including at Mon Sheong, and the many long-term care homes, retirement homes, shelters, assisted living facilities, jails and refugee centres in our riding and across Ontario. This is a preventable tragedy. After the pandemic there will be a reckoning on what went wrong and why. For now, the government must do everything it can to protect our most vulnerable.

My thoughts are with Foon Hay Lum's family at this time.

Yours,



Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

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Ontario releases initial plan to reopen economy

This week, the Ontario Government [released A Framework for Reopening our Province](#), which outlines the criteria Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts will use to advise the government on the loosening of emergency measures, as well as guiding principles for the safe, gradual, phased reopening of businesses, services and public spaces – [read the full document here](#). The NDP supports this approach.

We are also calling for:

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- Proactive and on-site inspections of re-opened workplaces to ensure physical distancing and infection control.
- Dramatically ramping up testing of people in the community, including asymptomatic people. Ontario continues to have the lowest testing rate in the country.
- Expanding the availability and use of personal protective equipment in workplaces that are re-opening.
- Dramatically ramping up containment efforts in long-term care and other congregate care settings to save lives.

New pandemic top-up pay for front line workers

The [Ontario Government](#) has announced a \$4 an hour pandemic pay top-up for front line workers.

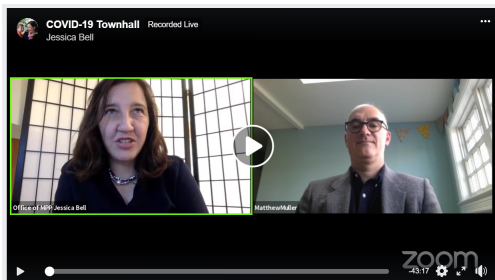
On April 28th, the Ontario Government [expanded eligibility](#) for pandemic pay to include paramedics, public health nurses, respiratory therapists, and addictions and mental health workers in hospitals and congregate care settings. These workers will be added to the list of workers previously announced, which included staff working in long-term care and retirement homes, emergency shelters, supportive housing, social services, congregate care settings, and corrections institutions and youth justice facilities; home and community care providers; and some staff in hospitals.

This is welcome news. We are working hard to determine who exactly qualifies and what is the process for qualifying. We are also calling for Ontario's pandemic payments to be retroactive to the beginning of the state of emergency.

Watch our online townhalls on COVID-19 and Housing

COVID-19 Townhall

The first townhall featured infectious disease specialist, Dr. Matthew Mueller, who shared the latest health information on COVID-19 and answered questions shared live from constituents.

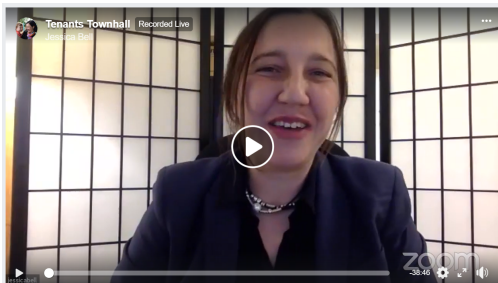


[Watch our COVID-19 townhall on facebook here.](#)

(Note: you may have to turn on the volume in the bottom-right corner of the video).

Tenants Townhall

May 1 is fast approaching, rent is due again, and still the Ontario Government has provided no rent relief for tenants. That's why we hosted a housing and tenants townhall last night with lawyer Melissa Jean-Baptiste Vajda from Kensington Bellwoods Community Legal Clinic to help tenants understand their rights during this tough time.



[Watch our tenants and housing townhall here.](#)

(Note: you may have to turn on the volume in the bottom-right corner of the video).

Save Small Business

an [online town hall](#) to raise awareness about the dire situation facing many small businesses across our riding, and what we can do to help them survive.

The Ontario Government must do more to help small business. As part of our [Save Main Street Plan](#), we are advocating for a 75% commercial rent subsidy up to \$10,000 a month, a freeze on evictions, disconnections and lockouts, and a freeze on utility payments.

Want to help out? Support the advocacy work of your local BIA and the [Toronto Association of Business Improvement Association](#) (TABIA). Buy local. Here's a list of the BIAs in our riding. Many of the BIAs list businesses that remain open.

[Bloor Annex BIA](#)

[Bloor Yorkville BIA](#)

[Kensington Market BIA](#)

[Chinatown BIA](#)

[Harbord Street BIA](#)

[Koreatown BIA](#)

[Little Italy BIA](#)

[Mirvish Village BIA](#)

[Rosedale Main Street](#)

[Yonge Bloor Bay Association](#)

New BusinessTO Support Centre

The City of Toronto has launched the [BusinessTO Support Centre](#) to provide virtual one-on-one support to Toronto businesses during this unprecedented time. The BusinessTO Support Centre provides one-on-one virtual support to help businesses complete applications for the Government of Canada COVID-19 funding programs and get general business advice.

Feds release commercial rent assistance plan

provide forgivable loans to qualifying commercial property owners that cover 50 percent of the rent for three months. These loans will be forgiven if the property owner reduces tenants' rent by at least 75%, and the tenant pays up to 25% of the rent. In sum, the tenant would be responsible for covering 25%, the property owner 25%, while the federal government and provinces would share the remaining 50%.

Our office has heard from so many small business owners who are fearful of losing everything they have worked so hard for. They were waiting anxiously for a rent subsidy program to help get them through these next few months. Unfortunately, this program is overly complex and completely reliant on landlords to choose to apply. That's why we are calling on the Ford Government to fill these gaps [now](#). As NDP critic for Economic Growth and Job Creation Catherine Fife points out, "Supporting small businesses is supporting Ontario. If Mr. Ford continues to fail to do that, it'll cost our province dearly."

City opens up some roads to pedestrians

This week, Mayor John Tory announced a new program called [CurbTO](#), developed by Toronto Public Health and Transportation Services to open up some roads to pedestrians and 10-minute parking pickup zones. This is a good move. I look forward to the program being expanded quickly during the pandemic and beyond. [Here are the first 10 spots](#).

Schools closed until May 31

This week, the Ontario Government announced that schools will remain closed until May 31. We continue to advocate for the Ontario Government to regularly consult with teachers and parents on its Learn from Home plan, provide additional support to families who have limited internet and computer access, and share more information on its plan for the September school year. Please

Ontario's nurses win victory for more worker protections

[The Ontario Superior Court ruled in favor of the Ontario Nurses' Association](#)

(ONA) and its members working in long-term care facilities, ordering four long-term care homes to provide workers with personal protective equipment (PPE). The ruling also determined that PPE and other health and safety measures that are required in delivering care to a resident are to be made by nurses, based on their assessment.

Community gardens now permitted

On April 25th, the Ontario Government [announced it will permit](#) the use of allotment gardens and community gardens across the province. NDP critic for the environment, MPP Ian Arthur, has been calling for community gardens to be allowed to proceed during the pandemic because they provide fresh food and help address food insecurity.

Local medical officers of health will provide advice, recommendations and instructions that the gardens must meet in order to operate, such as physical distancing, and cleaning and disinfecting commonly used equipment and surfaces.

Today's COVID kindness feature

Today I want to highlight two of the many University-Rosedale businesses making reusable masks available at-cost to the community.

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Pacha Arts, a local Indigenous family-owned store has masks available for sale online [here](#).



The Poop Cafe at 706 Bloor St. W. has converted their dining area into sewing stations to make low-cost masks. Simply stop by between 8am-8pm any day to buy one.

Have ideas for acts of [#COVIDkindness](#) I should feature? Let me know! I am also sharing these regularly on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Note that this email and all previous COVID-19 updates are available at: www.jessicabellmpp.ca/coronavirus

As always, if you require urgent assistance from my office, please contact my team at 416-535-7206 or email us at jbell-co@ndp.on.ca



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