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Monday May 11 COVID-19 Update

Dear neighbour,

I just learned this weekend that Nish Dish Cafe, one of Toronto's valuable Indigenous-led businesses, [is closing its doors](#). They are not alone. As I walk around our neighbourhood, I see more and more "for lease" signs on commercial properties that just weeks ago was the home of a local business.

This pandemic should not be a time where main street is destroyed and big box stores reign. This pandemic must be a time for us to recognize the huge inequalities in our economy and work to make things more fair now. I will continue to advocate for our immediate [Save Main Street plan](#), which includes rental subsidies and a ban on evictions, disconnections and lockouts, and we will continue to pressure the Federal Government to make their commercial rent subsidy program useful for commercial tenants.

Moving forward, we have called for the Ontario Government to set up an [all-party committee to plan](#) the economic recovery. We will be beginning consultations in our riding in the coming weeks to ensure your voice is heard.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Bell".

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

In this newsletter:

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Jessica Bell, MPP University-Rosedale
invites you to attend an online townhall:

Long-Term Care and COVID-19

Thursday May 14, 6:00-6:45 PM

With special guests:



Jane Meadus
Lawyer with Advocacy Centre for the Elderly
25 years experience working with long-term care



Helen Lee
Caregiver for her late grandmother who died in a
COVID-19 outbreak in her long-term care home

Join in live to hear from MPP Bell and her
guests here (no account required):

 facebook.com/UniRoseJessicaBell

We will take some questions live, but will
prioritize those submitted in advance here:

 jessicabellmpp.ca/LTCtownhall

Townhall on long-term care during COVID-19

Residents of long-term care homes and their families have been hardest hit by this pandemic. That's why I'm hosting a townhall on long-term care **this Thursday May 14th from 6:00-6:45pm**, featuring two special guests:

Jane Meadus is a staff lawyer and institutional advocate with the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. She has 25 years experience working with long-term care.

Helen Lee was a family caregiver for her grandmother Foon Hay Lum, who passed away on April 24 at age 111 during a COVID-19 outbreak in her long-

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Please submit your questions by tomorrow, Tuesday May 12, at noon [online here](#). We will also be taking questions live during the townhall. To participate, like and follow my page on [Facebook \(Jessica Bell\)](#), and [visit it](#) at 6pm on Thursday to join in live. More information on how to join here: www.jessicabellmpp.ca/LTCtownhall

SAVE THE DATE: On May 19 at 6:00pm, I will be hosting *Work in the Time of COVID-19*, an online townhall with the Workers Action Centre's Deena Ladd and MPP for Sudbury Jamie West so workers can ask questions about their rights and what can be done to improve work during and after the pandemic. Please RSVP and send us your questions in advance at jbell-co@ndp.on.ca

We need a public inquiry into long-term care now

The COVID-19 crisis has disproportionately affected long-term care homes. Many long-term care homes were left under-staffed and under-resourced with virtually no regulations in place to protect them from outbreaks. This tragedy has been exacerbated by multiple governments failing to regulate, fund, and support long-term care.

[Recent data released by the Ontario Health Coalition](#) demonstrates a significantly higher death rate due to COVID-19 in long-term care homes owned by for-profit corporations (9%) when compared to non-profit homes (5.25%) and public municipal homes (3.63%). The idea that frontline funding is being taken away to ensure profits for multinational corporations is unacceptable.

I stand with Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath in [demanding a thorough and independent public inquiry](#). We owe it to long-term care residents and staff and their loved ones to make major changes to protect every life, including ending for-profit care.

Showing up in support of healthcare workers

On Friday I headed to Queen's Park

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support for frontline healthcare workers. **All healthcare workers deserve COVID-19 pandemic pay and access to basic protections.** Every day they are risking their lives for us. The Ontario Government needs to stop *saying* workers are protected, and start actually protecting them.

Pandemic pay website released

We believe that anybody who is risking their health and safety by working right now should be entitled to access this pay. The Government of Ontario has created a [new webpage](#) for people to give feedback, make inquiries, or get information on Pandemic Pay from civil servants.

What is Ontario's plan to resume surgeries and non-COVID health care?

On May 7th, the Ontario Government announced a framework to help hospitals begin planning to resume surgeries and procedures. This framework sets out criteria for prioritizing surgeries. You can read more about this framework [here](#).

This is welcome news as we have heard from many constituents that they are deeply concerned and anxious over the delay of lifesaving procedures, from dialysis to lung cancer treatments. Ontario's Financial Accountability Office recently said that about 52,000 procedures have already been cancelled or avoided. They have also warned about worsened health outcomes. A report by

It is critical that we begin to perform crucial surgeries and procedures again and ensure that they are being done as safely as possible. Unfortunately, there is no timeline for this proposed framework. I will continue to fight for clarity on this issue, and to advocate for the expansion of health care to non-COVID patients as soon as possible.

Electricity rate relief extended until May 31

On May 6th, the Ontario Government announced it will be [extending emergency electricity rate](#) relief to families, farms and small businesses until May 31, 2020. Customers who pay time-of-use electricity rates will continue to be billed at off-peak price, regardless of time of day until May 31st.

Ontario eases restrictions on certain businesses

Starting today, retail stores with a street entrance can begin offering curbside pickup and delivery, in accordance with the Ministry of Health's [Guidance Document for Essential Workplaces](#) and occupational health and safety requirements.

We are calling for the Ontario Government to introduce [enforceable rules](#) for businesses to ensure workers and customers are safe, not just guidelines.

In addition to easing restrictions on retail, the government is also expanding essential construction to allow below-grade multi-unit residential construction

Provincial parks begin opening today

The Ontario Government is opening provincial parks and conservation reserves for limited day-use access. The first areas will open today and the remaining areas will open on Friday May 15, 2020. At this time, recreational activities will be limited to walking, hiking, biking and birdwatching. Day visitors will also be able to access all parks and conservation reserves for free until the end of the month.

Before planning your trip, please visit www.ontarioparks.com/park-locator to check the status of your local provincial park.

Rising incidents of Anti-Chinese and Anti-Asian racism

Across the country there has been a disturbing increase in racism and hatred towards Chinese and Asian communities, similar to what was experienced during the SARS public health crisis and other health crises. It is morally wrong, and we must speak out about it.

Chinese and Asian Canadian organizations, including the [Chinese Canadian National Council](#), are collecting incidents so they can plan collective action to combat racism and hate. You can [report an incident](#) on their website.

Our office and the Ontario NDP will continue to work with the Chinese-

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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 jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca



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