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## Friday May 15 COVID-19 Update

Dear neighbour,

On Tuesday, I went back to Queen's Park for the first time since March 16 to extend Ontario's state of emergency. I and my colleagues asked the government questions we are hearing from you. **Why are so many seniors dying in LTC? What will renters do once this pandemic is over? What is your plan to save our small businesses?**

I also [recognized the life of Foon Hay Lum](#) and her advocacy for Chinese-Canadians. Foon Hay Lum was a resident of Mon Sheong Home for the Aged. She died of COVID-19 in isolation on the evening of April 24. Thank you for your work Foon Hay Lum.

Queen's Park will now be in session on Tuesday and Wednesdays until June 3rd. Please share your petitions, stories, and concerns so I can raise your issues directly with the government.

Yours,

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

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

## Work in the Time of COVID-19

**Tuesday May 19, 6:00-6:45 PM**

with special guests:



**Deena Ladd**

Co-founder and Coordinator of  
the Workers' Action Centre

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



[facebook.com/UniRoseJessicaBell](https://facebook.com/UniRoseJessicaBell)



**Jamie West**

MPP for Sudbury and lifelong  
advocate for workers' rights

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



[jessicabellmpp.ca/workerstownhall](https://jessicabellmpp.ca/workerstownhall)

## *Work in the Time of COVID-19:* **A Townhall for Workers**

The Ontario Government is moving forward with reopening the economy. Many workers will be returning to new working conditions, while others remain laid off or are caring for children at home. That's why I'm hosting a townhall on Work in the Time of COVID-19.

Do you have questions about..

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...what supports you are entitled to after being laid off?  
...whether you can take sick leave?  
...what to do if you have a workplace problem?  
...how to support fellow workers?

This townhall is for you.

It'll be live on [Facebook](#) this Tuesday May 19th from 6:00-6:45pm, featuring two special guests:

- **Deena Ladd** is a Co-founder and Coordinator of the Toronto Workers' Action Centre.
- **Jamie West** is the MPP for Sudbury and a lifelong advocate for workers' rights.

My guests and I will speak briefly as well as answer your questions.

► Please submit your questions by Sunday May 17 here:

<https://www.jessicabellmpp.ca/workerstownhall>

Some questions will also be taken live during the townhall, time permitting.

To participate, like and follow my page on Facebook ([Jessica Bell](#)), and visit it at 6pm on Tuesday to join in live.

More info on the townhall and how to join in (including for those without a facebook account) here: ► <https://www.jessicabellmpp.ca/workerstownhall>

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## Canada Emergency Student Benefit is now open

The application portal for the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) is now open. The CESB provides financial support to post-secondary students and recent post-secondary and high school graduates who are unable to find work due to COVID-19. This benefit is for students who do not qualify for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or Employment Insurance (EI). From May to August 2020, the CESB provides a payment to eligible students of \$1,250 for each 4-week period or \$2,000 for each 4-week period if you have dependents or a disability. You can find out more information on eligibility and how to apply [here](#).

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## May 19

On May 15th, The Ontario Government announced [the retailers, seasonal businesses and health and community service providers](#) that will be permitted to open or expand their services on Tuesday, May 19th, provided that the general trend on health indicators continues to improve as part of the first stage of the government's reopening framework. Additional seasonal services and activities will be permitted to open Saturday May 16th, in time for the Victoria Day long weekend. You can read more about stage one of the reopening framework [here](#).

While I understand many people are anxious to re-open, get back to work and to a sense of normalcy, we must ensure it is safe to do so. The Ontario NDP will continue to advocate for [more testing and tracing](#), for businesses to have access to personal protective equipment, and for physical distancing and infection control rules to be made mandatory, not just suggested guidelines.

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## One-time Tax-Free Payment for Seniors

On May 12th, the Federal Government announced that it will be providing a [one-time tax-free payment of \\$300](#) for seniors eligible for the Old Age Security (OAS) pension, with an additional \$200 for seniors eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). This measure would give a total of \$500 to individuals who are eligible to receive both the OAS and the GIS, and will help them cover increased costs caused by COVID-19.

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## May 15 is lockout day for small businesses

Today is the day when many commercial landlords have threatened to lockout commercial tenants who have not paid their May 1 rent in full. So many retail store fronts in University-Rosedale are vacant with "for lease" signs on the window. [So many](#) have [fallen between the cracks](#) of the supports that are

The Ontario Government has done next to nothing to support the small and medium businesses at the heart of our communities. We need a ban on evictions, lockouts and disconnections and a full range of supports so commercial tenants can survive this pandemic. [Sign our petition](#) for a [SaveMainStreet](#) plan that includes commercial rent subsidies and a ban on evictions, lockouts and disconnections.

## Watch last night's long-term care townhall



Thank you to everyone who joined my townhall last night on Long-Term Care and COVID-19. And a big thank you to Jane Meadus and Helen Lee for your incredible advocacy during this pandemic. The townhall can be watched in full [here](#).

More information about the townhall is [available here](#).

## New COVID-19 testing guidelines

Ministry is currently testing all staff and residents in Ontario's long-term care homes. Once complete, testing will be expanded to vulnerable populations, including those in retirement homes, shelters, group homes and other shared living spaces.

We continue to hear from residents and institutions that government directives are not being fully implemented. We will continue to push this government to expand testing as quickly as possible so everyone who needs a test gets a test.

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## New list of PPE suppliers

The government has launched a website to provide businesses with information on personal protective equipment (PPE) suppliers. The [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#) has an up-to-date list of Ontario companies and business associations that are ready to supply personal protective equipment.

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## Government can now take over LTC facilities

On May 13th, the provincial government announced an emergency order allowing the province to issue a mandatory management order for a long-term care home struggling to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak. This manager could be any person, including a corporation or a hospital.

While this news is welcome, it should have come much sooner. Especially troubling in this announcement is the language that suggests that corporations could be put in charge of these facilities when we know that there have been higher death rates in privately run long-term care homes. The Ontario NDP will continue to press this government for a public inquiry that includes evaluating the role of for-profit homes. You can read more about our demands [here](#).

## OW and ODSP recipients has been extended

The COVID-19 Emergency Benefit, which was introduced as a one-time benefit in April 2020, has been extended and is now available in each month up to and including July 2020.

This benefit is available for people receiving assistance from Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) who may have had additional costs related to COVID-19. This benefit will help cover the additional costs of emergency needs such as hygiene and personal protective supplies, cleaning supplies, non-medical transportation, or additional costs for staple foods. The amount is \$100 for a single person and \$200 for a family. To apply please call the Emergency Benefit Application Line at 1-888-444-2412.

## ODP prescription fees are being reduced

On Wednesday, the Ontario Government finally [announced that people on Ontario Disability Payment \(ODP\) will not be required to pay a co-payment until July 1](#) for any prescription of 30+ days. Based on the response from pharmacists it looks like the government is doing what we have been calling for all along – having the government cover these fees.

## Quiet streets are coming

John Tory announced the ActiveTO program developed by Toronto Public Health and Transportation Services [will start to be rolled out across the city](#) to provide more space for people to be physically active and improve physical distancing as part of the City's restart and recovery in the wake of COVID-19.



Many of these positive street changes should become permanent.

## Today's COVID kindness feature

Today I want to highlight a new mutual aid initiative developed by West Neighbourhood House to connect neighbours who can give with neighbours who need help.



Art: @nicoleMcomix

**YOU**  
CAN BE A  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
HERO

**VOLUNTEER FOR MUTUAL AID**

**WESTNH.ORG/MUTUALAID**  
**MUTUALAID@WESTNH.ORG**  
**(416) 532-4828**



Volunteers are available in University-Rosedale to help with grocery and pharmacy pickup, friendly calls, social support, information and referral, and other needs emerging in the community. With the same pod model that I know so many of you are already using, volunteers are self-organizing into neighbourhood-based groups. West Neighbourhood House is in turn providing training, problem-solving and support.



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[westnh.org/help](https://westnh.org/help). Alternatively, folks can email [mutualaid@westnh.org](mailto:mutualaid@westnh.org) or call reception at (416) 532-4828.

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**Note that this email and all previous COVID-19 updates are available at:** [www.jessicabellmpp.ca/coronavirus](https://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](mailto:jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca)



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