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## Friday July 24 COVID-19 Update

Dear neighbour,

The legislative session ended this week, and its ending was marred by three bills that will hurt people, our environment, and democracy.

Premier Ford's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Omnibus Bill 197 did nothing to help any kind of recovery. It did nothing to help renters or homeowners keep their homes, nothing to help small businesses, from Kensington to the Annex, stay afloat, nothing to help schools and child care centres safely reopen, and nothing to help us create a new normal and build a green and fair economy.

Instead, this recovery bill made it easier for the cabinet to seize land and hand it over to developers to build big. This bill also made the environmental assessment process optional, instead of required, for big projects. The environmental assessment process exists to protect our health, our water, our land - which are the true measures of how we fare as a province. It should be strengthened, not stripped.

Second, Premier Ford's Reopening Ontario Bill 195, allows his government to keep the state of emergency powers, but he now doesn't have to seek approval for extensions from the legislature anymore, nor is he subject to the accountability and checks and balances that are a legislature's responsibilities. Instead, Ford only has to report to a committee, where the conservatives have the majority vote and they control the process and agenda. Bill 195, concerning, also extends the suspension of collective bargaining rights of our essential health care workers. This is not how we should treat our front line heroes. It is a dark day for democracy.

Finally, the eviction Bill 184 was approved, setting the stage for mass evictions at a time when unemployment is at record highs. This is cruel, and will hurt

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As your representative, I will continue to do my best to ensure public health stops the spread of COVID-19, our health care system heals those of us who are sick, schools and daycares can safely reopen, and our small businesses can thrive.

Yours,

*Jessica Bell*

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)



In a rush to close up shop for the summer, the Ford government rammed through three massive bills this week, some without going to committee or proper debate. Bills 197, 195 and 184 harm the environment, harm democracy and harm people.

[Here's why I voted no.](#)

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## An update on our office hours

Following the direction of public health, we closed our office in March and have been doing our best to serve you safely via phone, email, zoom, and in the legislature. Our constituency office is being renovated to ensure we can serve you while maintaining physical distancing. While we wait for those renovations to be completed, we will continue to offer service via phone and email. We will also begin accepting in-person appointments in August. If you are in need of an in-person appointment, please contact us at [JBell-CO@ndp.on.ca](mailto:JBell-CO@ndp.on.ca) or 416-535-7206.

As our office is being renovated, we ask that all in-person appointments be conducted outside at Christie Pits Park or at another convenient location nearby our 719 Bloor St office. Masks or non-medical face coverings will be required. It is our goal to resume full-time office hours in September, subject to public health guidelines and capacity.

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## Time to make schools safe for a fall reopening

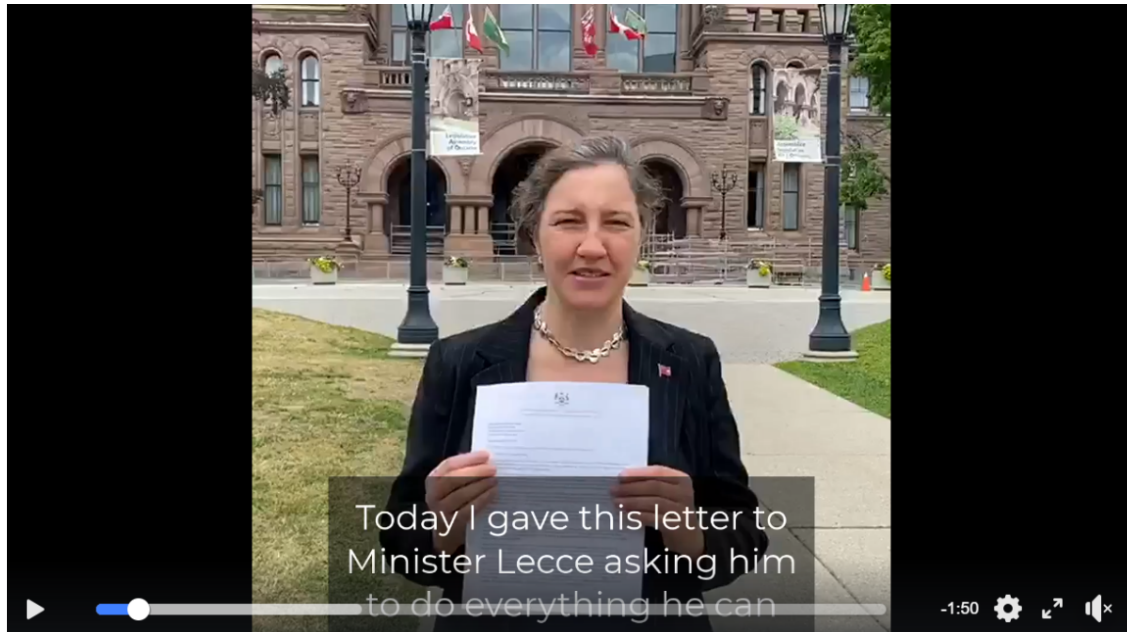
Parents, teachers and school boards have expressed [increasing frustration with the Ford government's failure](#) to provide details on a safe reopening of schools or funding to ensure schools can meet new health restrictions. The Education Minister, Steven Lecce, is expected to make an announcement on school reopening next week.

Premier Ford and Minister Lecce have put forward less than \$20 million dollars for the whole province to deal with the increased costs of infection control, smaller classes, improving buildings and more. This is not enough.

As I have said repeatedly, there can be no economic recovery without a safe return to school and child care. As it stands, families across the riding are telling me they are having to leave their jobs to care for their children. We are already seeing a dip in the participation of women in the workforce to 1980's levels. This has dire consequences for families and our economy. The Ford government should make this their priority #1.

I join my colleagues in calling for an [emergency action plan for a safe return](#) that includes more funding for schools and child care and job-protected leave for parents. Add your name to these demands [here](#).

I also join my colleagues NDP Early Learning and Child Care critic Doly Begum and Education critic Marit Stiles in urging Ford to [reverse course on his pursuit](#)



## Child care centers are struggling to open

On Monday I hosted a Child Care Roundtable and learned about the huge challenges parents and child care centers are facing right now.

While Premier Ford insists more than 90% of child care centres are operating, we heard from experts that in fact only 37% of child care centres are open and most are operating at a limited capacity.

Staff have been working around the clock to ensure safe child care without support from the government. Child care centres are struggling to make ends meet, and need to be properly consulted by the government before decisions are made, provided clear guidelines, and increase base funding immediately.

On Tuesday [I gave this letter to Minister Lecce](#) asking him to do everything he can to ensure child care centers can safely reopen.

Parents and educators, want to take a turn sharing your thoughts with Minister Lecce? You can do so by signing my online campaign [here](#) to demand safe, affordable and high-quality child care for all.

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## Bill 184 passed, what's next for tenants?

I want to thank the **over 1000 people** who joined my online campaign [here](#) to help us put



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read more information about the bill [and what it means here](#).

While the bill has now become law, many folks across this city have shown their deep commitment to standing up for tenant rights. Now we need to work together to protect tenants from being forced out of their homes, especially those at risk of eviction as early as August 1. That means extending the eviction moratorium and making sure tenants are aware of how the changes impact them. If you are facing an eviction please contact us at 416 535 7206 or [jbell-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jbell-co@ndp.on.ca).

## New information on long-term care outbreaks and understaffing

A new study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal finds that [for-profit long-term care homes in Ontario experienced significantly worse outbreaks of COVID-19, and more related deaths](#), than non-profit or municipally run homes. For months, I have joined my colleagues in pushing for an independent, find-and-fix long-term care judicial inquiry that includes [scrutiny of the role of profits in long-term care](#)

I also echo NDP Long-term Care critic Teresa Armstrong's [demand that Ford act immediately to address the ongoing staff shortages in long-term care](#). An Ontario Health Coalition survey shows 95 percent of long-term care staff say seniors' basic needs continue to go unmet due to staffing shortages. This staff shortage would be terrible at any time, but is an incredibly dangerous abandonment of seniors right now, especially as we prepare for a possible second wave of COVID-19.

## Ontario: it's time to fund transit

Transit agencies across Ontario have been cutting service and laying off workers because they have lost up to 100 percent of their fare revenue since March. Ontario's largest transit agency, the TTC, is projecting a \$700-million budget shortfall by the end of 2020.

This week, the federal government announced it will chip in up to \$1.8 billion for public transit, but will only match dollar-for-dollar what provinces put in.

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province must do its fair share. We cannot afford to leave any federal money on the table.

[Join me](#) in demanding that the Ford government fully match the federal government's commitment to fund transit operations. This funding is the only way to ensure transit systems can recover from the pandemic without mass layoffs and painful service cuts.

Raise your voice here: <https://www.jessicabellmpp.ca/fundtransit>

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## Restriction of travel across Canada-US border continues

MP Chrystia Freeland confirmed last week that Canada and the United States have agreed to extend the temporary restriction of all non-essential travel across the Canada-US border by one month, [until August 21](#).

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



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