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## Friday June 12 COVID-19 Update

Dear neighbour,

It's been a big week. After months of advocacy, the Ontario Government agreed to put a moratorium on commercial evictions, and we stood up against the anti-renter Bill 184 at Queen's Park. At committee hearings, I listened to many concerned residents who live near the proposed Ontario Line speak in opposition to Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act. On Tuesday, the Ontario Government announced the re-opening of daycare. You can [watch my interview](#) with the director of Treetop Children's Centre, Amy O'Neil, for the child care community's take on what this means for centres, parents and children in the coming weeks.

Feliz Dia de Portugal! On Wednesday, the Portuguese community celebrated Portugal Day. I join the Portuguese community here in Ontario and around the world in celebrating its history, art, culture, and contributions to all aspects of life in Ontario.

Finally, I want to congratulate this year's graduates, from middle school through post-secondary! I know many young people won't be able to walk across the stage this year, but your graduation remains special and memorable nonetheless. Best of luck in the next phase of your lives! We're all counting on you to change what's normal.

Yours,

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

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

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- [Child care centres can open today, but will they?](#)
- [The province's plan for Stage Two of reopening](#)
- [New rules for social gatherings and places of worship](#)
- [Visiting access to senior homes will change on June 18](#)
- [Federal government changes international travel rules](#)
- [Recognizing Indigenous History Month](#)
- [A big win for commercial tenants](#)
- [No one should be evicted because of a pandemic](#)
- [Ontario will appeal 'extreme intoxication' defense](#)
- [New safety guidelines released for public transit](#)
- [Plan for post-secondary education to resume in-person](#)
- [Ontario lifting 30-day supply limit on prescriptions](#)
- [Summer day camps allowed to open](#)
- [Provincial parks opening up gradually](#)
- [Expanded patio and outdoor dining coming soon](#)
- [New City of Toronto COVID-19 Resource Map](#)
- [Today's COVID kindness feature](#)

## Child care centres can open today, but will they?

The Ontario Government announced that licensed child care centres across the province are allowed to reopen as early as today, Friday June 12th. New [guidelines for child care centres](#) have been released, including procedures for daily entrance screening, cleaning, preparing a COVID-19 response plan, and reducing the staff-to-child ratio. If you choose not to return your child to daycare right now, the province has implemented measures to ensure that your spot can't be offered to someone else.

The rules for reopening are modeled off lessons learned from the Emergency Child Care Centres open throughout the pandemic. These facilities were three times more expensive to operate and I've been hearing from many child care providers that without additional funding, they may have to hike fees or shut down.

Many parents will find it difficult or impossible to return to work without affordable child care. The burden of these costs cannot fall on child care centres or the families that rely on them. The provincial government must step in to make sure child care is accessible and affordable.

Last night, Thursday June 11, I spoke with Amy O'Neil, director of Treetop

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reopen (the formal interview begins at minute 1:30 of the video).

If you are a parent worried about sending your kids to child care or are a child care operator who has concerns about reopening, I want to hear from you to make sure your needs inform our province's actions. Please send an email to Premier Ford at [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca) and cc me at [jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca) so I can follow-up.



## The province's plan for Stage Two of reopening

This week we learned [the details of the province's plans](#) for Stage Two of reopening. While many municipalities are moving to phase two, Toronto will remain in Stage One. At the beginning of each week, the government will provide an update on the ongoing assessment of all regions in Stage One to decide whether they are ready to move into Stage Two.

We believe Stage Two must come with paid sick days and more contact tracing. We cannot let the second stage of reopening create a second wave of this pandemic. Workers all over the province go to work when they feel unwell because they cannot afford to lose a day's pay. Without paid sick days, [Stage Two could fail](#) and Ontario could see a significant rise in COVID-19 cases.

We also need greater transparency on the important decisions the Ontario Government is making that impact our health. Premier Ford is refusing to

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the government on safety guidelines for re-opening. We have a right to know.

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## New rules for social gatherings and places of worship

As of today, the [province has increased the limit on social gatherings from five to 10 people across the province](#), regardless of whether a region has moved to Stage Two. Note that in all social gatherings you must still practice physical distancing and keep at least two metres away from those outside of your direct household.

Additionally, all places of worship in Ontario will be permitted to open as of today with attendance limited to no more than 30% of the building capacity to ensure physical distancing and the safety of worshippers. Here are specific [health and safety guidelines for places of worship](#).

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## Visiting access to senior homes will change on June 18

Yesterday, the Ontario Government announced [the gradual resumption of visits to long-term care homes, retirement homes, and other residential care settings](#). Family and friends will be allowed access to these settings beginning June 18, 2020. Long-term care homes will allow outdoor visits of one person per resident each week at a minimum. Retirement homes will resume indoor and outdoor visits in designated areas or resident suites when physical distancing can be maintained. Other residential care settings will be able to allow outdoor visits of two people at time. Physical distancing will be required for all visits.

While I support these changes to allow family visits, [they must come with increased staff, more PPE, sanitation supplies, and a guarantee from Ford](#) that rigorous, frequent and in-person inspections will take place for all congregate care and long-term care homes.

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# international travel rules

As of this week, Canada's ban on non-essential international travel [makes an exception for Canadians who wish to reunite with immediate family members](#) who are non-Canadian citizens and separated by the Canada-U.S. border. — anyone coming into Canada under this exemption will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days.



## Recognizing Indigenous History Month

I want to recognize Indigenous History Month by not only celebrating the incredible urban Indigenous community in University-Rosedale, but by demanding action to end anti-Indigenous racism and violence. It is time for Ontario to [commit to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) and to enact the [calls to action](#) from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, released last year. We must support the Indigenous community in this riding and across this city and back their important demands, including equitable access to housing and health care.



I have been calling on the provincial government to act to save our local businesses before it's too late. **After months of refusing to do so, this week, the Premier finally backtracked and announced that he will bring forward [legislation to temporarily ban commercial evictions](#).** The proposed changes to the Commercial Tenancies Act would, if passed, temporarily halt evictions of businesses that are eligible for federal/provincial rent assistance. It would also reverse evictions that occurred on or after June 3, 2020.

**This is a big win for all of us who have been fighting hard to save local businesses.** But unless there is real rent relief, I'm concerned it's just kicking the can down the road. Too many businesses in our community have [already been lost](#). And, the eviction moratorium may also be too restrictive to work for many of them, since it only protects businesses that have lost 70% of their income.

For those businesses falling between the cracks of supports that are available, **I want to highlight some new programs set up to assist you.**

**Yesterday the provincial government [launched the Digital Main Street platform](#).** It includes three new programs to support businesses' digital transformation. In addition, the Recovery Activation Program, operated through the Toronto Region Board of Trade, will help businesses grow and digitize their operations.

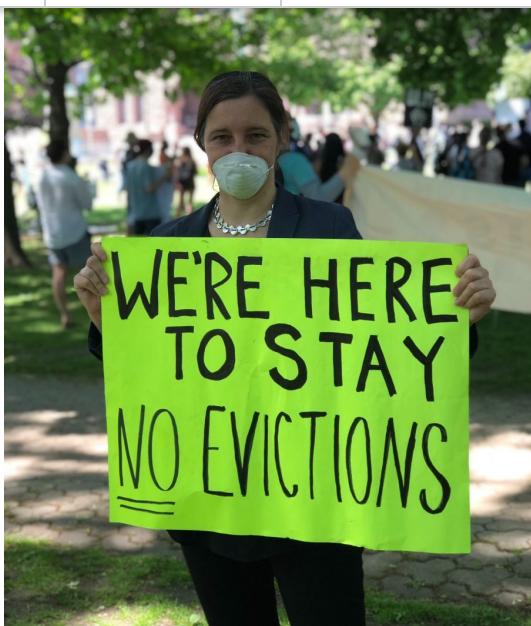
**FedDev Ontario's [Regional Relief Fund](#)** is specifically geared for businesses that can't receive other support. The [Application Guide is here](#) as well as a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page. You can reach FedDev Ontario by phone at 1-866-593-5505.

**The new Business Resilience Service hotline** is also available for the next two weeks. This free hotline provides small business owners, including those who run charities and nonprofits, with customized financial advice. You can reach them by phone at 1-866-989-1080, 7 days a week.

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## No one should be evicted because of a pandemic

On Tuesday I was proud to join the hundreds who rallied at Queen's

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speeches and chants, and very impressed by the safety precautions - everyone wore masks and stayed two meters apart. Check out [more photos here](#) and a [30 second video I recorded at the rally](#).

I will keep fighting to ensure that no one is evicted because of this pandemic. As part of that commitment, I will keep pushing back on the Ontario Government's Bill 184. [Join me in acting now to stop this bill here](#).

## Ontario will appeal 'extreme intoxication' defense

Thank you to everyone who reached out to me with their concerns about the 'extreme intoxication' defense used in a recent Ontario Court of Appeal decision. I share your concerns regarding the barriers survivors of sexual violence face when seeking justice. Our justice system does not provide adequate protection for survivors of sexual violence and intoxicated violence, which disproportionately impacts women and girls and those who are the most marginalized, including racialized and Indigenous women, as well as those living with disabilities.

Anything that makes it even more difficult for survivors of sexual assault and violent crimes to get justice is a painful step backwards. For that reason I was glad to learn that [the Attorney General of Ontario has sought leave to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court of Canada](#). At the same time, I recognize that criminal law can only go so far and I will continue advocating for a survivor-centered approach to ensuring justice and accountability through novel policy initiatives.

## public transit

The Ontario government released [safety guidance for public transit agencies](#) as the province reopens and more people return to work. The [guidance document](#) provides transit agencies with best practices to help stop the spread of COVID-19, such as maintaining physical distance, and recommending that passengers wear face coverings or non-medical masks when taking transit.

While these guidelines are important, to truly ensure that transit is safe for all riders service levels must allow for physical distancing. I will keep pushing the Ford Government to provide emergency funding to make this possible.

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## Plan for post-secondary education to resume in-person

While many post-secondary students across the province were able to finish their studies online, it was simply not possible for others. Students in fields like nursing, engineering, and personal support work have practical elements to their programs and were unable to finish as a result. On Wednesday, the [government announced](#) a program for these students, allowing post-secondary institutions to offer 4-8 week courses that will facilitate the completion of academic programs. Specific details will be available from individual institutions. In September, all students will have the opportunity to attend post-secondary education through virtual learning, in-class instruction, or hybrid formats.

I join my colleague Chris Glover, Colleges and Universities critic, in highlighting [the important needs of post-secondary students that remain unaddressed](#). Students and institutions that have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic need financial support, and the province has so far refused to help. Students still need this government to exempt the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit from OSAP calculations, otherwise students will receive less OSAP funding for their Fall term. In other words, the province is using the federal student benefit to reduce their own responsibility to provide student assistance while Ontario students were already struggling because of the Ford Government's \$700 million cut to OSAP. This is unacceptable.

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## on prescriptions

The Ontario Government is [lifting the recommended 30-day supply limit](#) for dispensing Ontario Drug Benefit program medications. Effective June 15, 2020, program recipients can return to filling up to a 100-day supply at a time from their pharmacy or dispensing physician, when appropriate.

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## Summer day camps allowed to open

Summer day camps will be allowed to open this summer. [Sector-specific guidelines](#) have been issued and distributed to local public health units. At this time, overnight camps will not be permitted to operate this summer.

The City of Toronto will begin to [offer summer camps across the city starting on July 13](#) as part of its CampTO initiative.

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## Provincial parks opening up gradually

As part of the Ontario Government's Stage Two reopening plan, [more facilities and services will be available at provincial parks in certain regions](#) beginning today. Over the next several weeks, Ontario Parks will open beaches, campgrounds, and provide more washrooms and drinking water, along with roofed accommodations, park store and rental operations, visitor centres, and sports fields.

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## Expanded patio and outdoor dining coming soon

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establishments are permitted to fully reopen for business. The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) will not require licensees to apply or pay a fee for these temporary extensions, but licensed establishments must ensure they have municipal approval and meet all other applicable requirements.

The City of Toronto announced last week that it is also working on [a plan to provide more outdoor dining areas](#) to help restaurants and bars create physical distancing for patrons on patios during the summer months.

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## New City of Toronto COVID-19 Resource Map

The City of Toronto has created a useful [COVID-19 Essential Service Mapping Tool](#). This tool has up-to-date service listings across Toronto, including COVID testing centres, food banks, meal delivery programs, community health services and more. Additional layers and details are being updated daily by 211 Toronto.

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## Today's COVID kindness feature

Today I want to spotlight an initiative by the Toronto Online Art Fair to support both local artists and frontline workers. They are collaborating with 300+ artists through their Gifts of Heart program. Donations will go directly to artists who will in turn provide gift certificates to frontline workers to redeem for art during TOAF (July 2–12, 2020). For details and to nominate a frontline worker, go to: <https://torontooutdoor.art/donate/gifts-of-heart>

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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)

