



Dear Friend,

As we head into the weekend, I wanted to provide you with an update on the following issues as they relate to our response to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic:

- Job protections and Queen's Park update
- Moratorium on evictions
- New rules for expired ID and OHIP coverage
- Social distancing

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

Job Protection for Workers and Queen's Park Update

Yesterday, the Ontario Legislature sat briefly to pass two bills. The first is a change to the Employment Standards Act, in order to ensure **workers have the right to take sick leave without risking their jobs**. This means the following workers cannot be fired or let go for taking sick leave:

- People who are in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19
- People who are at home caring for someone in their family sick with COVID-19
- Parents and caregivers who cannot work due to school/childcare closures
- People who can't return to work due to recommendations from public health or travel advisories

regulated industries (airports, banking). The Ford government also yesterday reversed its own policy that would have required employees to provide doctor's notes for sick leave. These notes are no longer required.

I believe that all workers are entitled to job security and sick leave. The Ontario NDP voted in favour of the bills, in order to pass them in one day. But they fall well short of what is needed. The NDP has been pushing for leave from work to be paid, not unpaid, along with other measures. So far the government refused to accept the NDP's suggestions or amendments to this legislation — but we won't give up on getting people the help they need.

Another bill was passed yesterday that allows city councils to count council members who join meetings electronically for quorum. Given the need to socially isolate this is a really important change to ensure that city councils won't be blocked from meeting.

Also, all public hearings on all bills before the legislature were suspended, so that we can have proper hearings at a later date.

Moratorium on Evictions

Earlier this week, the [Solicitor General of Ontario announced a moratorium on any new eviction orders](#) until further notice, and agreed to postpone enforcement of any scheduled eviction orders.

I strongly support the move to stop evictions orders, but am deeply troubled by the news that some landlords are still issuing eviction notices to tenants. Along with the Ontario NDP, I want to see a bill tabled that would guarantee that no one can be evicted for any reason during the pandemic, and that no one can be punished in any way for missing a rent payment, such as being charged interest or late payment penalties.

I know that many renters are struggling right now. If you are worried about paying your rent for April, please contact my office to discuss your options. I will continue to advocate on the larger issue of how to ensure that this government helps renters.

New Rules for Expired ID and OHIP Coverage

Yesterday, the Ontario Government announced an extension for anyone with an expired/expiring health card, driver's license, or license plates, in order to reduce in-person visits to Service Ontario. This [means you can continue to use a recently expired ID, until further notice](#).

Today, the Government also announced that [they are waiving the previously announced 3-month waiting period for OHIP coverage for Ontarians](#) who have been out of the country for more than 6 months. In addition, the Government has confirmed that they will cover the cost of any COVID-19 services and

Social Distancing and Building Community

In recent days, we have heard from our public health experts that **social distancing is absolutely necessary to combat this pandemic**. My office has also heard that some constituents are confused about what social distancing means.

According to the City of Toronto's Public Health team, where possible, **people are encouraged to do the following, even if they are not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms and have not returned from recent travel:**

1. Work from home
2. Avoid long-term care homes, retirement homes and other care settings
3. Try to run errands and take transit at non-peak times, if possible
4. Keep a distance of 2 metres from others in public places

Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. de Villa, has also been clear that **part of social distancing means not meeting friends for coffee, going over to neighbour's houses for dinner, or scheduling playdates for children at this time**. [You can read more of her comments here](#).

While this advice may be limiting, it's essential that we follow the recommendations of our public health experts at this time. **It also doesn't mean that we can't continue to build community**. I encourage you to set up a Facebook page for your block or neighborhood, if one does not already exist. This is a great way to communicate with your neighbours and help out those in your area who may need assistance at this time.

My team is also putting together a list of local supports, including food banks, seniors' programs, and other services that are continuing to operate in some capacity at this time. If you are part of such an organization, please let us know.

We're all in this together.

Sincerely,



Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

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