



Dear friend,

There's been lots of news over the weekend and a number of announcements today, so I wanted to provide you with a quick update.

Ontario has made improvements to the **COVID-19 online self-assessment tool**, which is now interactive. [You can access the tool here.](#)

In addition, the Premier commented today that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **it is unlikely that schools will reopen on April 6, and that parents should prepare for a longer break.**

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)

## Province Orders All Non-Essential Workplaces to Close

Today, the Ontario Government announced that as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all non-essential workplaces and businesses must close by Tuesday, March 24th, at 11:59 pm. This mandatory order will be in place for 14 days, with the possibility of future extension. [A full list of businesses that are permitted to stay open is available here.](#)

As of Wednesday, a 1-800 number and website will be launched for public inquiries. [More information is available here.](#)

The Government also announced that all Drive Test Centres will be closed; but people will not lose their current driver's licenses as a result of the closure.

While I know that this order will create difficulties for many, I fully support the directive to close non-essential businesses and workplaces. These are the kind of bold actions we need right now to limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep

## City of Toronto Declares State of Emergency

Under the suggestion of Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Mayor Tory has declared a state of emergency in Toronto. This action makes it possible for the Mayor to act quickly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, without requiring the full approval of the City Council. One power that Tory now has is that he is able to enforce the mandatory 2-metre distance between individuals who are out in public or in parks.

Mayor Tory, Premier Ford and Prime Minister Trudeau have all expressed concern that not enough people are taking social distancing seriously. Right now, we all need to do a part to combat this pandemic. That's especially true for travelers who are returning from March Break vacations, who must self-isolate in their homes for a period of 14 days. In addition, **Toronto's Medical Officer of Health has been clear that even small social gatherings, like playdates or meeting a friend for coffee, are strongly discouraged right now.**

## Child Care for Essential Workers

The Ontario Government has announced that certain child care centers will be allowed to operate in order to serve healthcare and other frontline workers at this time. Nurses, paramedics, doctors, firefighters, police, and correctional officers will have access to child care centres that are safe and accessible.

Once the centres open, a list of locations will be available at:

[ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus)

The City of Toronto has also announced that it will be opening free, licensed child care centres for essential City staff. [More information is available here.](#)

## Ontario NDP Calls on Government to Provide Income Support

This morning, Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath called on the Ontario Government to make sure that help for families and individuals impacted by COVID-19 is included in the province's financial statement on Wednesday. **We are asking the Ontario Government to issue a direct payment of \$2,000 before April 1st to each household experiencing lost income or unemployment as a result of the pandemic.**

The direct payments, called the Ontario Emergency Income proposal, would bridge the weeks-long wait for federal support payments, and would help top-up the Employment Insurance and Emergency Care Benefit payments, which alone only replace about 55 percent of a person's income.

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well as a \$1 billion increase in funding for hospitals. [You can read the full details of our proposal here.](#)

Take care of yourself and others, and remember: we're all in this together.

Sincerely,

*Jessica Bell*

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)



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