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Thursday August 20 Update

Dear Neighbour,

The number one issue I am hearing from residents is the need to safely reopen schools.

Safely reopening schools to full-time learning is essential to our kids learning, our mental health, and the economic survival of families who simply cannot make ends meet unless their children are in school.

The Ontario government's plan, however, is too little, too risky, too cheap and too late for school to be as safe as it needs to be.

It's critical we take action now. I encourage you to join our ["Get Active for a Safe September" Townhall on September 3rd](#), and share the blog post I wrote outlining [Four Ways To Advocate for Safe Schools in September](#) with your school community.

Yours,

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

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

My newsletter for this week includes:

- [Four Ways To Advocate For Safe Schools in September and sign-up for my "Get Active for a Safe September" Townhall on September 3rd](#)
- [Premier Ford demands municipalities look into replacing bus service with privatized cars in order to receive transit funding](#)

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- [COVID19 should move Ontario to improve migrant farmworkers rights](#)
- [Masjid Toronto Mosque has been the target of six hate crimes in the last three months](#)
- [Funding for nonprofits to recover from COVID19 is now available](#)
- [The Polish Combatants' Association Branch 20 \(206 Beverley Street\), is looking for your support](#)



Four Ways to Advocate for a Safe September

Since school closed in March, our family has been struggling with the impossible job of juggling full-time work and full-time parenting our two school-aged children. I, along with the parents of Ontario's two million school-age children, have been waiting for the Ontario government to release its back-to-school plan, but its release - just weeks before school is scheduled to begin and without any serious consultation with the community - brought feelings of relief, anxiety, hopelessness, and rage.

What exactly is in-store for our kids come September is still being feverishly worked out by public health units, schools and the government, but the gist at the time of writing is this:

- high school students will go back to in-school learning at least 50% of the time in cohorts of 15, with on-line learning for the remainder of the time
- elementary students are back full-time with full class sizes
- a lack of government funding means only some of the safety measures [Sick Kids Hospital](#) experts and [Toronto Public Health](#) are recommending

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health nurses, but there is not enough funding for improved ventilation in schools, a maximum of 15 kids a class, access to working washrooms and sinks, and safe bussing.

Safely reopening schools to full-time learning is essential to our kids learning, our mental health, and the economic survival of families who simply cannot survive unless their children are in school, but the Ontario government's plan is too little, too risky, too cheap and too late for school to be as safe as it needs to be.

If we stick together we can make the Ford government provide the necessary funding and direction to ensure our kids can access affordable high quality and safe public education and childcare during the pandemic and beyond, as well as provide additional support to Black, Indigenous and racialized students and families who are experiencing the worst impacts from COVID-19, and ensure parents receive paid leave and protection from being fired if they must stay at home.

Teachers, parents and students forced this government to back down on school budget cuts, massive class size increases and the threat of privatized online learning last year. We can do it again. Here's four useful ways to take action now.

[Join our "Get Active for a Safe September" Townhall](#)

- Thursday September 3, 6pm - 7:30pm
- Get the latest information on the back to school plan
- Learn what educators and parents are doing to advocate for safe schools
- Discuss with parents and educators in the #UniRose community about what we can do together to advocate for positive change

This will be a participatory meeting with breakouts. RSVP on my website:

www.jessicabellmpp.ca/registersafeseptember

Send a personal message to Premier Ford

You can send a message to the Ontario government via jessicabellmpp.ca/safeschools. I encourage you to share your story and your activism on social media because powerful stories of personal experience help isolated parents see they are not alone and that action is possible and necessary.

Join your school parent council

Now is the time to work with your parent council, principal and teachers to take useful political action as a school community, from safely organizing and attending rallies to having your school community write a sign-on letter to the Ontario government. Friendships and working relationships with your school community are the ingredients to social change and the antidote to the Conservative government's divisive plan.

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There are many groups worthy of your support and involvement, including [Parents of Black Children](#), the [Ontario Parents Action Network](#), and [Fix Our Schools](#).

There's four million parents, two million students, and 160,000 teachers in Ontario. There are just 72 Conservative MPPs. When we work together we will win real and permanent change for our kids, for our public schools and child care system, and for our province's safe future. **Let's get to it.**

Premier Ford demands municipalities look into replacing bus service with privatized cars in order to receive transit funding

Thanks to your advocacy, the Federal and Provincial governments agreed to provide up to \$2 billion in funding to transit agencies across Ontario to stem the revenue they lost due to the drop in ridership and fare revenue during the pandemic.

Just yesterday, however, the [Star](#) revealed the Ford government wrote a secret letter to the City of Toronto saying part of the funding was contingent on the City agreeing to look into replacing quieter bus routes with privatized car service, move forward with fare integration, and consider giving the province greater governance power over the TTC.

Municipalities that have experimented with replacing public buses with privatized cars in the past have seen services cut, fares go up, congestion increase and ridership decline. A far better way to bolster ridership on quiet routes is to lower fares, increase service and invest in dedicated bus lanes to speed up travel time.

Transit agencies need dedicated, long-term funding from the province, not a Premier that bullies them into accepting his agenda to privatize routes at the expense of municipalities and riders.

You can read more about my concerns with the Ontario Government's decision to tie strings to the second phase of critical COVID19 funding to transit agencies [here](#).

I encourage you to contact the the Minister of Transportation Caroline Mulroney (caroline.mulroneyco@pc.ola.org) and call on her to provide permanent funding for public transit during COVID19 and beyond, and cancel their plan to have the TTC look into replacing bus routes with privatized car services. Please CC me at JBell-CO@ndp.on.ca!

address deadly Anti-Black racism in policing

A new report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) found that Black people in Toronto are more likely to be arrested, charged, shot and killed by Toronto police.

This report from the OHRC reiterates what the Black community, justice advocates, and dozens of other reports, investigations, commissions, task forces and consultations have been saying for decades. It is clear to everyone who is paying attention that anti-Black racism in policing is corrosive and deadly.

Premier Ford has refused to accept the facts and address anti-Black racism in Ontario. A few weeks ago he questioned the existence of systemic racism. His government's COVID-19 pandemic response continues to utterly fail Black, Indigenous and racialized people in Ontario, who are all significantly more likely to be infected with the coronavirus. And he infamously slashed funding for anti-racism initiatives to just \$1,000 across the entire province.

[Add your name to call on Premier Ford to commit to fighting anti-Black racism.](#)

COVID-19 should move Ontario to improve migrant farm workers rights

Premier Ford says he's helping out migrant workers and limiting the spread of COVID-19 through the farming community in Ontario. He's not.

For far too long, too little has been done despite numerous reports of abuses and inhuman treatment of migrant workers including inadequate and overcrowded accommodations.

In Canada, three workers have died from COVID19 and 1300 have been sickened. The problem is greatest in Windsor-Essex, where the majority of cases are being found in farm workers.

Last week I spoke with Syed Hussan, Executive Director at [Migrant Workers Alliance for Change](#) to find out more about this important issue. Listen to my interview with Syed Hussan [here](#) and learn about what is really happening with migrant farmworkers during COVID-19, and what you can do to help out.

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Masjid Toronto Mosque has been the target of six hate crimes in the last three months

Everyone deserves to feel safe to attend their places of worship and practice their faith. It is deeply concerning to hear about the racist graffiti and damage inflicted on Masjid Toronto's locations, and the frightening rate with which these incidents have occurred.

These attacks are meant to intimidate the Muslim community and are absolutely unacceptable. We must stand together with the Muslim community and fight Islamophobia in all its forms.

[Read my full statement in solidarity with Masjid Toronto here.](#)

Funding for nonprofits to recover from COVID-19 is now available

The Ontario government has redirected some previously announced funding at the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) into a new \$83 million fund to [provide one-time grants to help eligible non-profit organizations](#), including food banks, child and youth programs and Royal Canadian Legion branches, recover from COVID-19.

This funding is not near enough given the incredible pressures facing non-profits at this time, but if your organization can benefit, see the information below:

Request amount: From \$5,000 to \$150,000

Grant Term: Up to 1 year

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The Polish Combatants' Association Branch 20 (206 Beverley Street), is looking for your support

To help recover lost income due to COVID-19 shutdowns, the Polish Combatants Association has taken on a new initiative creating easy-to-prepare pierogi kits, packed full of your favourite toppings and step-by-step instructions.

Orders can be placed through the [Google form](#) and are then fulfilled by a group of dedicated volunteers. All funds raised will benefit maintaining the building.

Learn more by visiting their [Facebook page](#) or [Instagram](#).

Thanks for showing your support!

Note that this email and all previous COVID-19 updates are available at: 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



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