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## Tuesday April 14 COVID-19 Update

Dear friend,

As many of us are anxiously living in private and staying at home, others are stepping up into overtime to tackle the health crisis and keep us safe. From our farmers to our nurses to our delivery drivers to our supermarket staff, we see you and appreciate you all.

As we move deeper into the pandemic, it is also becoming clear that if we want to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and pull through as a province, we must help our most vulnerable, including our seniors.

Stay safe. We're in this together,

*Jessica Bell*

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

### This newsletter includes:

- [More Information on the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program](#)
- [Government orders childcare centres to stop charging fees](#)
- [Long-term care homes need support](#)
- [Seniors need more help](#)
- [Electricity disconnections are now banned](#)
- [Changes to construction and workplace safety](#)
- [Virtual wills are now permitted](#)
- [New short term rental restrictions](#)

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## More Information on the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program

The federal government has released a [new backgrounder](#) with additional details on the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program. The program will provide a 75-per-cent wage subsidy to eligible employers for up to 12 weeks, retroactive to March 15, 2020. Eligible employers will be able to apply through the Canada Revenue Agency's My Business Account portal as well as a web-based application. More details about the application process will be made available shortly.

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## Government orders childcare centres to stop charging fees

On April 10, the Ontario government is [temporarily preventing child care centres](#) from collecting payments from parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also ensuring that their child care spaces are protected. Child care centres, with the exception of those accommodating health care and other frontline workers, were ordered closed to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The [Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare \(OCBCC\)](#) says this move will help parents now, but they are asking how childcare centres will continue to pay childcare workers and cover ongoing bills, such as rent and utilities. They fear some centres will permanently close. The OCBCC is calling for emergency funding for childcare centres. [Take action](#) here.

- 👉 Aggressively recruit staff
- 👉 Schedule more staff on every shift
- 👉 Increase salaries to \$22/hr minimum
- 👉 Assign each worker to one facility only
- 👉 Standardize visitor policies
- 👉 Mandate that staff wear personal protective equipment—including gloves and a mask—with every patient or client
- 👉 Create a caregiver fund to support families caring for a loved one at home



## Long-term care homes need support

As of April 12, there have been over 86 outbreaks in long-term care homes in Ontario. My outreach to the many wonderful long-term care homes and retirement homes in the riding reveal workers and staff are doing their absolute best to keep residents safe, however, there are shortages of staff and personal protective equipment, as well as confirmed COVID-19 cases. This is a terrible situation that needs an immediate response.

On April 9, the Ontario Government [released new guidelines](#) for long-term care homes, including active screening of all residents, new admissions, and staff, and a new process for caregivers who want to have their loved one return home. The Federal Government also released [interim guidelines](#) for long-term care homes during the pandemic. Our office, as well as [The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly](#), can help you understand the new rules. You can also read the Ontario Health Coalition's response to the new [guidelines here](#), as well as ways you can advocate.

We are calling for the Ontario Government to:

- Aggressively recruit staff and schedule more staff on every shift
- Increase salaries to \$22 an hour or more
- Standardize visitor policies
- Assign each worker to one facility only
- Mandate, (and provide, staff with personal protective equipment with every patient or client
- Create a caregiver fund for families supporting a loved one at home.

Our office has had many calls from seniors, many of whom are feeling unsafe and who are financially vulnerable. One issue of note is that pharmacies have stopped providing medication in three month packs to manage supply and now only dispense one month at a time. This results in a 300% increase in annual costs for medication for many low income people, particularly seniors.

That is why we are advocating for the Ontario Government to do the following to help seniors now:

- Suspend medication dispensing fees and co-pays for Ontarians 65 and older
- Ban fee hikes or new fees in long-term care, retirement homes and other settings supporting senior care
- Crack down on scams looking to defraud seniors
- Provide \$5 million in matching funding to support screening, testing and resources for all senior care settings
- Provide \$20 million to community organizations addressing senior isolation
- Develop a clear province-wide plan for family visitation at long-term care homes, retirement homes and hospitals that includes best practices in preventing COVID-19 transmission

If you are a senior or a caregiver for a senior you can [sign our petition](#) in support of this plan, let us know what you think of our plan, or call us for help.

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## Electricity disconnections are now banned

Effective immediately, the OEB is extending the current ban on electricity disconnections for non-payment for all residential customers to July 31, 2020. Low-volume, small business customers will now also be protected by the ban. In addition, the OEB is calling on distributors to be more flexible on arrears payment arrangements. Please visit <http://www.oeb.ca/industry> for more information.

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# workplace safety

## Impacts of construction on residents

I am continuing to hear from many constituents about the harmful impacts of ongoing construction in the building where they live during this period of quarantine. Unfortunately, the [updated essential businesses list from last week](#) still allows for a majority of ongoing construction in Toronto to continue.

I will continue to advocate for all construction that is not truly essential to be stopped and to support residents in University-Rosedale who are being negatively impacted by construction in their homes during this crisis. Don't hesitate to reach out to me for support.

## Extended hours for essential projects and enforcement of workplace safety

The Government is extending construction hours for essential construction projects related to COVID-19, including the construction of hospitals and COVID-19 assessment centres. The Government also plans to add more employment standards officers, issue health and safety guidance, and double the capacity of Ontario's Health and Safety Call Centre to ensure essential workplaces are complying with physical distancing protocols, such as on construction sites and grocery stores.

This is a step in the right direction. I have heard many concerning reports from workers who don't feel safe at work and shoppers who don't feel safe visiting workplaces.

**If you are a worker and want to report your workplace** for neglecting to respect physical distancing rules, you can seek enforcement by filing a complaint with the ministry's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008

**To know your rights as a worker**, read the [Ontario Government's guide to refusing work](#) as well as the [Workers Health and Safety Centre's](#) guide for workers during COVID-19. The Workers' Action Centre is hosting free online

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531-0778.

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## Virtual wills are now permitted

Ontario has passed an emergency order to allow virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney during the pandemic. More information [available here](#).

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## New short term rental restrictions

The Ontario government has [banned short term rentals](#), including AirBNB, except for those who are in need of housing during the emergency period, such as frontline workers and those who are self-isolating. Hotels and motels are allowed to remain open and face no restrictions.

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## Ways to give and get help

For those who want to help or are seeking help, you are welcome to call our office at 416 535 7206 or email us at [jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca)

**Here is a list of community resources available for you to use:**

- My office compiled [resources on how to give and receive help during this crisis](#), including information on:
  - Mutual aid groups and networks (neighbourhood pods, community networks, city-wide programs)
  - Specialized supports from nonprofits and social services
  - Emergency Community Support Funds
  - Crisis support
  - Volunteer opportunities
- Councillor Mike Layton's [community guide](#) for University Rosedale / Ward 11, which includes resources on how to access emergency food, emergency funds, mental health supports, and more.





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## Today's #COVIDkindness feature

I want to recognize the amazing artists at the heart of our communities who are helping to keep us connected, inspired, thoughtful, entertained and sane during this difficult time. Whether musicians, filmmakers, writers, or visual artists — I see and appreciate you and will fight to ensure you receive the support you need right now.

Thank you to Lynne Dalgeish for this beautiful mural near Dupont and Spadina (and to Zoë for taking and sharing this photo with me).

Have ideas for acts of [#COVIDkindness](#) I should feature? Let me know!

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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 [jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca)



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