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Wednesday April 22 COVID-19 Update

Dear neighbour,

Happy Earth Day. As we begin to plan how to reopen the economy, I will be fighting for real government investment in a [Green New Deal plan](#) and no bailouts to big oil. We must use this crisis to transition to a green and fair economy. We can do it. We must do it.

This week, the Premier reported that [community spread of the disease has peaked](#) and we are much closer to the best case scenario than Ontario had expected. Staying at home and keeping our distance from each other has literally saved thousands of lives. It has not been easy and it won't be easy going forward but it has made a huge difference.

That said, we have huge problems we must still address. Ontario lags behind other provinces in testing, health care workers are contracting COVID-19 at high rates, and COVID-19 is spreading fast through long-term care homes, nursing homes, supportive living homes, and shelters with devastating impact. I've talked to many agencies in my riding, from those that house people with disabilities to welcome centres for refugees, and all of them say they do not have the staff or personal protective equipment they need to stop the spread. This is utterly unacceptable. We must do everything we can to keep people safe and recover. That is what we must fight for.

Yours,

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

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

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This newsletter includes:

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Jessica Bell, MPP University-Rosedale
invites you to attend

Two Online Townhalls



MONDAY April 27

COVID-19 Townhall

with infectious disease specialist Dr. Matthew Muller



TUESDAY April 28

Tenants Townhall

with housing lawyer Melissa Jean-Baptiste Vajda

Join in from 6:00-6:45 PM on both nights to hear from MPP Bell and public health and housing experts and have your questions answered.



facebook.com/UniRoseJessicaBell



jessicabellmpp.ca/OnlineTownhalls

**Join our online townhalls this
coming Monday and Tuesday**

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physician and the Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at St. Michael's Hospital. He also chairs the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee on Infection Prevention and Control.

On Tuesday April 28 I will be hosting a [Tenants Town Hall](#) featuring community lawyer Melissa Jean-Baptiste Vajda. Melissa Jean-Baptiste Vajda is a social justice lawyer working at Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Clinic, with a focus on landlord and tenant law and worker's rights.

During both townhalls I will speak briefly alongside my guests as well as answer your questions. **Please email your questions to me at jbelleco@ndp.on.ca by Friday afternoon.** Some questions will also be taken live during the townhalls, time permitting.

To participate in our townhalls, [like and follow my page on Facebook](#), and [visit it](#) at 6:00pm on Monday and Tuesday to join in live. Please also [RSVP here](#).

You can find more information on the townhalls and each of our guests [here](#).

Please help me spread the word. I want to make sure as many people as possible have access to reliable information and a chance to have their questions answered by experts during this difficult time.

New Canada Emergency Student Benefit

Today, the Federal Government announced a new benefit aimed at students. The Canada Emergency Student Benefit will pay \$1,250 a month and up to \$1,750 for those with dependants or those with disabilities. The benefit is to be paid between May and August and will apply to those going to school and recent graduates. More details to be announced in the coming days. You can see more information about the announcement [here](#).

Ontario taking CERB money from people on social assistance is wrong

assistance, the [Ontario Government](#) has decided to go ahead and do exactly that. Minister Todd Smith has confirmed that for any \$1 a household receives from the federal CERB benefit, the Ford Government will take away either 50-cents or \$1 from the household, if someone in that household is receiving social assistance benefits.

The Government should not be taking money away from the province's most vulnerable people. Recently over 130 community groups [wrote an open letter](#) to Minister Smith, including my colleague MPP Lisa Gretsky, urging him to ensure low-income Ontarians don't fall through the cracks.

The Government should take over vulnerable LTC homes

According to the data released Monday, at least 367 of the 591 COVID-19 deaths in Ontario have been in long-term care. That's 62 per cent. That number doesn't include group homes, like Participation House in Markham, retirement homes or other types of assisted and congregate living.

The spread of COVID-19 across the long-term care home and group home settings has been made worse by years of underfunding, neglect, a lack of regulation and inspection, and horrible understaffing. MPP Doly Begum raised all these issues in [her opinion piece](#) in the Toronto Sun last week.

We are calling on the Government to:

- Step in to take over direct management of long-term care facilities where residents aren't protected enough
- Immediately restrict all workers in congregate care settings to one facility only, including temp agency workers
- Regularly and systematically test all residents and staff in congregate care facilities, in addition to testing people who are showing symptoms or have had contact with an infected person
- Provide and mandate full personal protective equipment (PPE), using the precautionary principle, for all workers in congregate care settings — not

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home facility staff to at least \$22 an hour, and launch and aggressive recruitment and retention strategy

- Provide hotel or other single accommodations for workers who live with vulnerable people or other essential workers so they can isolate in between shifts.

You can read more on my advocacy this week in support of long-term care residents and their families [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

We need race-based data collection now

Many people have described COVID-19 as a great equalizer; in reality, it is a great magnifier. We are witnessing it magnify our inequality in real time. Before the pandemic, Black, Indigenous, and racialized Ontarians already faced systemic barriers to our health care system. Now, with the spread of COVID-19, these health inequities are leading to even more dire health outcomes. Having race-based data collection is critical to addressing these inequities and to provide helpful information that can inform social policy and better deal with future outbreaks.

On Monday, the Premier said, “I don’t believe in collecting race-based data”, even though his own Chief Medical Officer of Health has recommended its collection and the Toronto Central LHIN has been collecting this data for a decade. Collecting this data is vital for understanding COVID-19 and protecting Black, Indigenous, and racialized people. The more we can understand the ways in which COVID-19 has affected our communities the better equipped we will be to deal with further outbreaks using strategies that are equitable for everyone.

NDP Anti-Racism critic and Black Caucus Chair Laura Mae Lindo has provided Premier Ford with a much-needed fact check. You can see more information about it [here](#).

New fund for community organizations

Trudeau announced [a new fund to distribute \\$350 million for community organizations](#) servicing Canadians during the pandemic.

The Federal wage subsidy program opens April 27

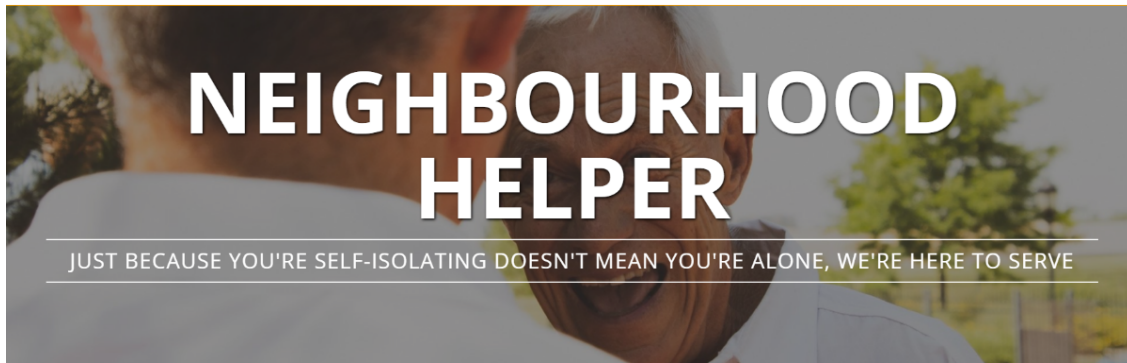
Applications for the [Federal Wage Subsidy](#) will be open on April 27. Companies can use the [new CRA calculator](#) to see what they qualify for.

Ontario COVID-19 Mental Health Network

The [Ontario COVID-19 Mental Health Network](#) is a newly-formed network of licensed therapists who provide pro-bono, one-to-one tele-therapy for healthcare workers – including doctors, nurses and personal support workers (PSWs) – who have been impacted by COVID-19 in their workplace. They have over 900 volunteer licensed therapists. So far, they have provided tele-therapy for over 600 healthcare workers.

Today's COVID kindness feature

Today I'm thrilled to highlight the work of [Neighborhood Helper](#). Through this project, Ahmadi Muslim youth are offering their services to help individuals who need assistance with picking up groceries, filling prescriptions, and providing overall moral support. They have been enormously helpful to many people in University-Rosedale who have been unable to leave their homes.

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Have ideas for acts of [#COVIDkindness](#) I should feature? Let me know!
I am also sharing these regularly on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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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