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## Wednesday, December 23 Update

Dear Neighbour,

With the approval of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, the mass inoculation of Canadians has begun, [starting with](#) healthcare workers, First Nations, and residents and staff in long term care settings. We can give ourselves permission to imagine a future with no pandemic.

We've got many hard months to get through until then. Our healthcare system is very strained. Health care workers are physically and emotionally exhausted. Some hospitals are delaying surgeries again. ICU beds are reaching capacity. To slow the spread and keep our healthcare system available for all of us, we must follow all the public health rules.

I support the Ford government's decision to tighten restrictions. The government should have moved earlier and more aggressively to reduce transmission, as the [health community](#) demanded. The government must also take strong measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 in workplace settings by requiring workplaces to report outbreaks and guaranteeing paid sick days so sick people can afford to stay home.

Not all of us made it through 2020. I pay my respects to the many neighbours and constituents who have been sickened and died from COVID-19. From beloved professor Leo Panitch to Chinese advocate Foon Hay Lum, it has been a devastating year for way too many of us. My thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones at this time.

I wish you a safe and not-too-stressful holiday break. I and our team will be back to organize with you to build back better, kinder, and greener in 2021.

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ours,  
*Jessica Bell*

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

**My newsletter for this week includes:**

- [Holiday office hours](#)
- [Public health update and lockdown guidance](#)
- [Child care centres in need of urgent support](#)
- [I support Keep Transit Moving's call for increased federal funding](#)
- [Service for loved ones lost to COVID-19](#)
- [Toronto Public Health holiday guide](#)



## Holiday Office hours

My community office will be closed beginning tomorrow, December 24th until Monday, January 4th. When we reopen, we will continue to follow the direction of public health and serve you safely via phone, email, zoom, and in the legislature. If you are in need of assistance, please contact us at JBell-CO@ndp.on.ca or 416-535-7206.

## Public health update and lockdown guidance

This week, Premier Doug Ford announced a significant extension and deepening of lockdown measures across the province. As COVID-19 cases continue to rise, additional restrictions will be put into place to reinforce that Ontarians should stay at home as much as possible to minimize transmission.

**Toronto continues to be in the Province's Grey – Lockdown category.** The [Provincewide Shutdown](#) will go into effect Saturday, December 26, 2020, at 12:01 a.m and includes greater restrictions on shopping, keeping schools closed to physical attendance until at least January 11th and more. [The full provincial press release with all the conditions and rules is here.](#)

In Toronto, hospitalizations rose 40.9 per cent, resulting in delays for surgeries and other procedures. Positivity rates also remain well above the 2.5 per cent high-alert threshold, at 5.8 per cent in Toronto. This is concerning and it is essential we follow public health guidelines and stay home to reduce transmission and prevent overwhelming our healthcare sector. For more information on the latest COVID-19 projections, [click here](#).

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## Official Opposition • L'opposition officielle

Ontario NDP Caucus • Groupe parlementaire du NPD de l'Ontario

Stephen Lecce  
Ministry of Education  
5th Floor 438 University Ave  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Friday, December 18 2020

RE: As tougher restrictions loom, child care centres need answers, direct help

Dear Honourable Stephen Lecce,

We are writing to you today in support of the Toronto Community for Better Child Care's (TCBCC) attached letter requesting clear communication from the Minister of Education on potential school closures as well as increased financial resources to support the child care sector through this difficult time.

As you are aware, schools received notice from the Ministry of Education informing them to prepare students and teachers for a potential transition to remote learning following the winter break. Despite sharing learning spaces and a community with schools, child care centres have received no communication on this urgent matter.

Similar failures to consult with the child care sector were brought to our attention during the spring, when last-minute decisions to reopen child care centres left operators scrambling to meet unrealistic reopening timelines, as well as significant financial and operational strain. As a result, more than 130 child care centres have permanently closed. While it remains unclear how child care centres will be impacted by mandated school closures, child care operators are left scrambling once again. Should the Ministry of Education fail to adequately support the child care sector, we risk permanently losing even more.

Without affordable child care options, many working parents, particularly women, will be unable to return work. As we continue to battle COVID-19, it is critical the Ford government support safe and affordable child care to ensure a fully equitable recovery.

That's why we are calling on you to:

- Create a plan to maintain access to child care by boosting capacity safely.
- Provide immediate base funding to stabilize the child care sector to prevent fee increases, layoffs, and closures.
- Listen to the asks of child care advocates, RECEs, childcare sector parents, and child care operators in future COVID-19 response decisions.
- Invest in improving the safety and quality care in our child care centres.

It is our hope this letter serves to help your ministry better prepare and support child care centres during this difficult time. Following receipt of this letter, we are eager to schedule a meeting to discuss these concerns in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Jessica Bell, MPP University—Rosedale

Doly Begum, MPP Scarborough Southwest

### Ontario NDP Caucus Services

Main Legislative Building, Room N200 • Queen's Park • Toronto, ON M7A 1A8 • [ondpcaucus.com](http://ondpcaucus.com)

## Child care centres are in need of urgent support

This week, I joined advocates from the [Toronto Community for Better Child Care](#) in their calls for the Ford government to properly consult with the child care community and provide direct financial support so they can survive the second wave.

Last Friday, I wrote a [letter to Minister Stephen Lecce](#) after hearing reports from the child care sector that centres were left out of communications from the Ministry of Education to principals on potential school closures, despite sharing learning spaces and communities with their schools. This left child care operators scrambling.

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from the province, operators like [Amy O'Neil at Treetop Children's Centre](#), fear the loss of revenue prompted by school shutdowns could force more to close.

To share your concerns I urge you to write to Minister Lecce (stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org) and CC my office (JBell-CO@ndp.on.ca).

[Click here](#) for more information on child care and school closures.

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## I support Keep Transit Moving's call for increased federal funding

This week, I wrote a letter to my colleague MP Chrystia Freeland in support of Keep Transit Moving's pre-budget submission to the federal government calling for steady and increased funding for public transit.

University-Rosedale is home to many transit riders and acts as a major artery for frontline workers who depend on public transit to travel to and from work at major hospitals, long-term care centres and more. It is essential we keep transit moving in University-Rosedale so frontline workers who depend on public transit can get where they need to go safely and reliably.

As we recover from COVID-19 and work towards achieving our climate commitments, increased investments in transit infrastructure are essential. Municipalities across Canada have ambitious plans for rapid transit, accessibility upgrades, and fleet expansion that, if funded, would stimulate the economy, increase transit ridership, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide good jobs. To get there, we need to make substantial investments in public transit.

[Keep Transit Moving](#) is a coalition that brings together dozens of riders' associations, unions and environmental groups from across the country. Founded in the spring of 2020, the coalition seeks to win affordable and efficient public transit for all Canadians.

See my letter to MP Freeland [here](#).

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## Special Service for Loved Ones Lost to COVID-19

Join Trinity-St. Paul's United Church and Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts for a special online Christmas eve service, dedicated to celebrating the lives of those loved and lost to COVID-19.

You can email the name of someone you would like to be remembered to: [pgade@trinitystpauls.ca](mailto:pgade@trinitystpauls.ca)

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## Toronto Public Health holiday guide

This year, we need to celebrate the holidays differently to keep our family, friends, neighbours and community safe from COVID-19. It's important to remember that people are contagious before they show symptoms, and so we need to continue keeping our distance from each other as much as we can.

We can show kindness to others by limiting contact with people we don't live with and staying home as much as possible. There are many ways for us to safely show our holiday spirit and make this season memorable.

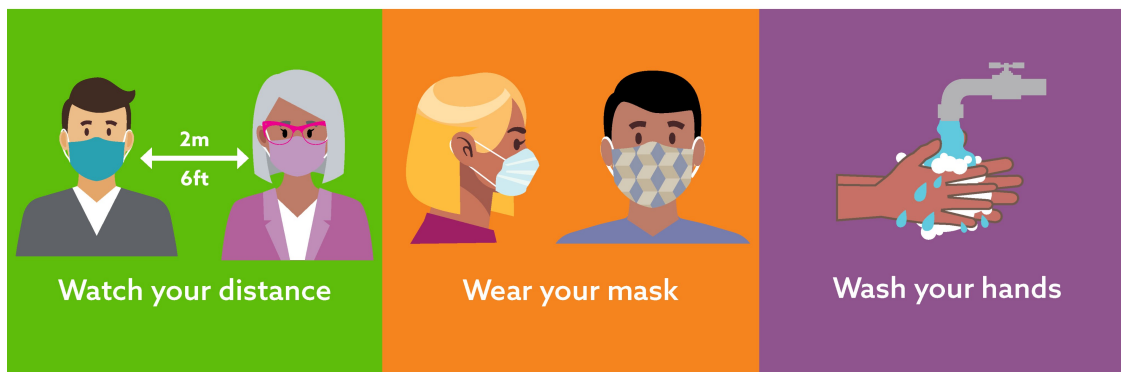
Follow these public health measures to reduce COVID-19 spread:

- Get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, and self-isolate. Testing does not replace the need to follow public health measures, including limiting visits with others. Learn more about [who should get tested](#).
- Don't gather with people you don't live with. Right now, in-person gathering and close contact is best only with people you live with every day.
- Don't host or attend in-person gatherings in your home, at a friend's, or at workplaces.
- If you live alone, consider having close contact with one other household.
- Continue working remotely, if you can.
- Limit essential trips and support local stores by shopping online or for curbside pickup.
- Keep a distance of 6 feet/2 metres from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask indoors, and outdoors when you can't keep your distance.
- Continue to connect virtually with others for support.
- Check in with vulnerable family members, friends, and neighbours, virtually or by phone.

Many of us are good at keeping our distance from strangers, but it's really easy to let family and friends get closer than 6 feet/2 metres. Because people are contagious before they show symptoms, keeping our distance is the most important step to protect ourselves and everyone else.

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We all have a role to play to reduce COVID-19 spread & keep our city safer:



TORONTO.CA/COVID19

 **Toronto** Public Health

## Now is the time to follow public health guidelines

As COVID-19 cases climb in Ontario, please consider these reminders from Toronto Public Health to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed:

- Limit non-essential trips out of your home and follow [travel advice](#)
- Keep [two metres \(six feet\) distance](#) from others
- [Wear a mask or face covering](#) in indoor public spaces and when you can't keep physical distance
- Clean your hands often. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based (70-90 per cent) hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home if you are feeling unwell

Download the [COVID Alert app](#) so you can be notified directly if you have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19. I have downloaded the app and I encourage you to do the same.

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**Protect your  
community.  
Download the  
COVID Alert app.**

Health  
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Canada

**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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