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Wednesday July 30 Update

Dear neighbour,

Many of you have been anxiously waiting for the Ontario government to release its back to school plan. As a parent of two school age children I have also been anxiously waiting for this announcement. Well, today is the day.

My newsletter for this week includes:

- [Ontario releases its COVID-19 back to school plan](#)
- [Ontario releases its child care plan for September](#)
- [Funding for transit, municipalities is coming, but when and how much?](#)
- [Stage 3 for Toronto is coming, but bars and restaurants remain a concern](#)
- [Visitation rights to long term care homes remain an issue](#)
- [Ford permits 18-hour a day construction, causing distress](#)

Please reach out to my office if you have concerns, ideas, or suggestions. I will continue to do my best to work with you to fight for a better city, better schools, a science-based response to COVID-19, and a just economic recovery.

Yours,

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

Ontario releases its COVID-19 back to school plan

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- Highschool students will go back to in-school learning at least 50% of the time, with on-line learning for the remainder of the time
- Highschool students will be in cohorts of 15
- Elementary students are back full time with full class sizes
- Gov't is providing \$16,000 more per school total to implement the COVID-19 plan
- Cloth masks required for students from grade 4 to 12
- Optional masks for younger students
- Teachers and students will be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Parents can decide if they want to send their child to school
- Gov't is hiring 500 nurses to work in schools

In short, Ford's plan increases risk to save money. [You can read our full response here.](#)

I have been advocating for the Ontario government to do proper consultation with school boards, parents and educators and develop a fully funded science-based safe [back to school plan](#) for Ontario. I will continue to do so.

A safe plan includes capping class sizes to ensure physical distancing, hiring new teachers and educators, finding more space, and implementing effective safety guidelines. Our goal is to build a safe high-quality public school system for all our kids.

It's not too late to improve this back to school plan. Please post your feedback on the government's back to school plan on my [facebook page](#), on twitter at [@JessicaBellTO](#) #SafeSeptember, or via email at jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca. Contact Minister Lecce directly at stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org.

Ontario releases its child care plan for September

Today, the Ontario government [announced that child care centres](#) are permitted to open up to full capacity starting September 1.

Amy O'Neil, board chair of the Toronto Coalition for Better Childcare, said the Ontario government did not consult with the childcare community before making this decision, nor are they providing any additional funding yet for child care centres to provide PPE or implement health and safety guidelines, such as hiring additional staff to screen children and escort them to and from their rooms. Amy is calling the plan "irresponsible".

After hearing from [child care operators in a recent roundtable](#), we are calling for

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so they can operate safely, and help parents with sick leave and job protections so they cannot be fired if they have to take a leave of absence to care for children.

Our economic recovery must address the unfair consequences of COVID-19 on women, racialized people, and lower income people. It is not fair to tell people to go back to work yet fail to provide them with a safe and affordable learning environment for their children.

Please post your feedback on the government's back to school childcare plan on my facebook page, on twitter at [@JessicaBellTO](#) #SafeSeptember, or via email at jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca. You can also send Minister Lecce [a message](#) via my website.

Funding for transit, municipalities is coming, but when and how much?

After months of pressure from so many of us, Ontario municipalities will share up to [\\$4 billion](#) from the \$19-billion fund the federal government and provinces pledged last week to help municipalities, which are short millions due to the pandemic.

We're waiting for the Ontario government to reveal how much the city of Toronto and the TTC will receive and when. In the meantime, [we are advocating for municipalities](#) to receive permanent ongoing support from the province to improve city services, including childcare, public health, ambulance services, and the TTC.

Toronto is entering Stage 3, but bars and restaurants remain a concern

The Ontario government announced this week that the City of Toronto and Peel Region will move into [Stage 3](#) on Friday. Windsor-Essex County Health Unit region will remain in Stage 2.

Nearly all businesses and public spaces can gradually reopen as regions enter Stage 3, with public health and workplace safety restrictions in place. Indoor and outdoor gathering limits will be increased to as many as 50 people indoors and as many as 100 people outdoors. Physical distancing remains a requirement for all people of Ontario that are not from the same household or social circle, and masks indoors are required. [Here's more information about](#)

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Mayor John Tory and the [Ontario Medical Association](#) are warning that opening bars indoors could be a risky move, as there have been reports of a surge of cases among younger people in various parts of Canada when they open.

I share these concerns. We have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to get our case count down; we don't want to waste all that we have achieved by opening up too hastily. Let's not jeopardize it.

Visitation rights to long term care homes remain an issue

NDP MPP for Windsor West, Lisa Gretzky, [tabled a motion](#) in the Legislature last week urging the Ford government to implement a COVID-19 Essential Caregiver Strategy, which, if passed, would give residents in long-term care, groups homes and all congregate care settings the right to fully access their essential caregivers and support persons while giving congregate settings the resources they need to safely implement access. I fully support Lisa's motion.

Our office is working with many residents who are unable to visit loved ones in long term care homes, even though they serve as an essential caregiver, providing daily love, advocacy, and support. We have also been in contact with many long term care homes who are reluctant to ease visitation rights for fear of the spread of COVID-19, and who are asking the Ontario government to provide clear consistent and safe visitation guidelines and help to implement them.

Rob Pierce is a resident in our riding who is dealing with this issue right now. His father, Ed Pierce, has been confined to Briton House for over 100 days. Ed has lost over 20 pounds and his mental health has declined. Rob wants to visit his dad and provide support, but he is not allowed. That's why MPP Gretzky's motion needs to become law.

Please contact our office at jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca if you are also grappling with visitation rights issues and need assistance.

Ford permits 18-hour a day construction, causing distress

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noise. Here's why. Premier Ford overrode the City of Toronto's noise rules, and is permitting non-essential construction noise between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. seven days per week until October 7th, 2021. The city's rules limit noise to Monday to Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 7 p.m with no construction noise on Sundays and statutory holidays.

I, along with my colleagues, [sent a public letter](#) to Premier Ford telling him to give residents some peace and quiet and respect the City of Toronto's noise rules. My colleague MPP Chris Glover has set up a [petition](#) to make it easier for you to tell the government to respect the City of Toronto's noise rules. I encourage you to sign.

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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