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Monday, February 8 Update

Dear Friend,

It is heartening to see cases of COVID-19 continue to decrease. I know the stay-at-home order has been very hard for many of us. It's been a sacrifice.

Today, Doug Ford announced Toronto will continue to be under [a stay-at-home order until February 22](#). He also announced the Declaration of Emergency will be lifted and we will begin to transition back to our colour-coded system through a regional approach. [The full details are here](#).

I am concerned the Ford government is opening the economy too fast, setting the stage for another round of illness, preventable death, overwhelmed hospitals and lockdowns. It is vital we make decisions based on what's best for public health.

When we reopen, we must reopen with safety first and foremost in mind. The government must make schools safer, reduce class sizes, increase mass testing, increase funding for public health, publicize workplace outbreaks, enforce workplace safety rules, and bring in paid sick days. Our bill to require paid sick days will be voted on February 16, the first day we return to the legislature. Please send a [message](#) to Premier Ford calling for paid sick days today.

Yours,

Jessica Bell

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

My newsletter for this week includes:

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I am excited to begin my role as critic for housing, tenant rights, and urban planning

As MPP's head back to the legislature, I have taken on the new role of critic for housing, tenant rights and urban planning. Everyone deserves a stable, safe, and comfortable place to call home.

Housing and housing affordability are major challenges in University-Rosedale. We need practical solutions that will keep people housed long-term like rent control and [renoviction protections](#). It is also critical we make the housing market more affordable so people can buy their first home. For more information on the Ontario NDP's Homes You Can Afford platform, [follow this link](#).

Thank you to everyone who has worked with me on transit issues. I will continue to champion fast and affordable transit for all and will be working closely with our new transit critic, [NDP MPP Tom Rakocovic](#).

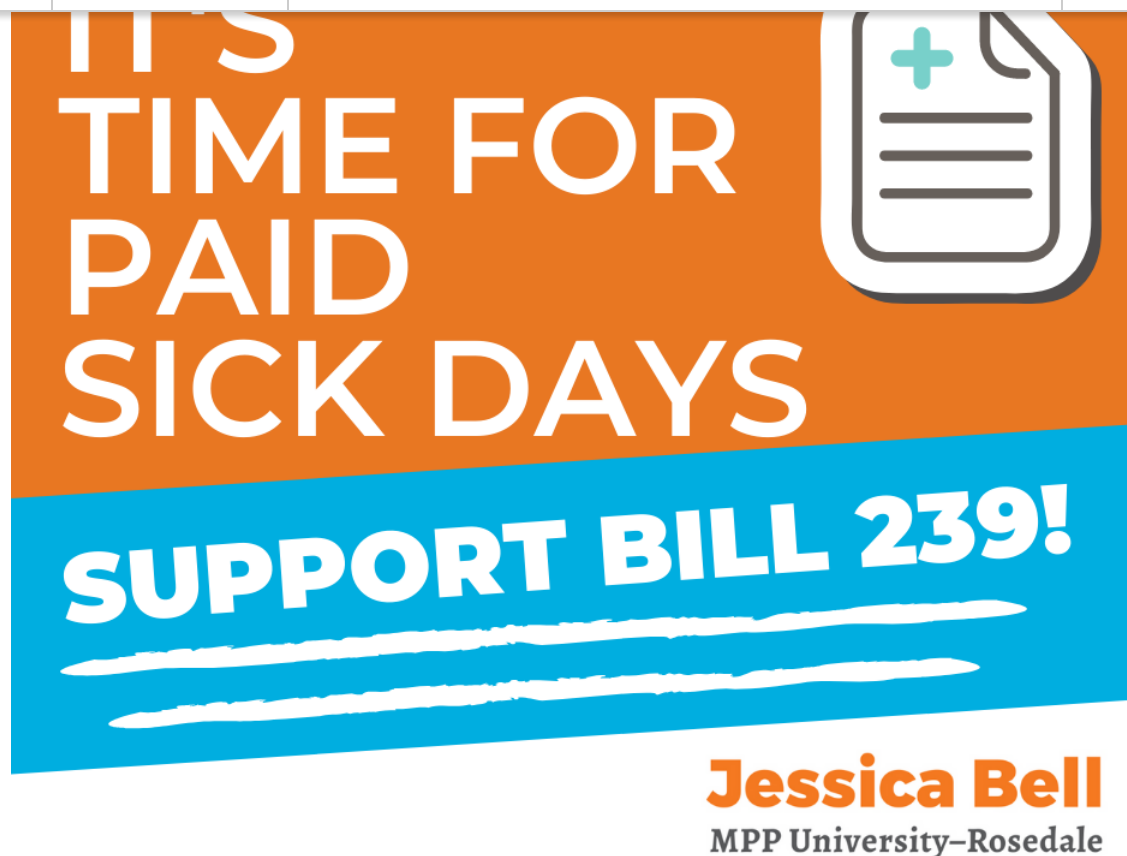


Vaccine Q&A with Dr. Matthew Muller

My office has been asked many questions about the vaccine. Residents want to know when they can expect to get vaccinated. They also have questions and concerns about the vaccination rollout so far. To help answer some of your most pressing questions, I sat down with Dr. Matthew Muller, infectious diseases physician and the Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control at St. Michael's Hospital to get his expert advice. I encourage you to [watch the full interview here](#).

I stand with the Ontario NDP in pushing for a rapid, transparent, and equitable vaccine plan. My office is committed to providing you with the most up-to-date information on the rollout. If you have questions about the interview or any other questions about the vaccine and the vaccine rollout we weren't able to address, please contact my office at jbell-co@ndp.on.ca.

For more information on Ontario's phased rollout approach, including timing and which phase you can expect to be vaccinated, [click here](#).



Call for paid sick days continues to grow

[Public health officials](#), frontline health care workers, [mayors from across the province](#), small business owners, and many workers all agree – paid sick days will help stop the spread of COVID-19. Workers need to be able to stay home as soon as they feel symptoms or may have been exposed without the fear of losing income.

In December, the Ontario NDP tabled Bill 239, the [Stay Home If You Are Sick Act](#), which lays out exactly how we can ensure anyone who has fallen ill can stay home without the fear of lost wages. Now we need to get it passed when the legislature returns on February 16. For more information on how to get involved, [click here](#).

I want to thank everyone who has helped spread the word on paid sick days so far. During our day of action on February 4, we were able to get hundreds more to join in the demand for paid sick days. I also want to thank Deena Ladd, the Executive Director of Workers' Action Centre, for [speaking with me about paid sick leave](#) and why it's so important.

Worried about your workplace safety and want advice? Call the Workers Action Centre hotline (416) 531-0778 or visit their [website](#).

Jessica Bell
MPP University-Rosedale

In-person learning resumes February 16

All [schools in Toronto will be permitted to open on February 16](#), just after Family Day.

I know this news will bring a mix of reactions here in University-Rosedale. Many will be relieved after many difficult weeks of remote learning and the challenges and stress it brings. Others are feeling worried about how safe it will be and are wondering if this decision comes too soon. I feel so many conflicting emotions. It feels like a betrayal to have the government force us to make such difficult personal choices.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce hasn't explained how the government made its decisions about reopening schools, and he didn't announce the kind of safety measures parents, staff, experts, and the NDP have all been calling for, especially with more contagious variants now spreading in our communities.

We all want to see children back in school full time, but we need to do more than just open them - we need to make them safer.

For schools to be safe we need smaller class sizes, a comprehensive in-school testing program with clear targets and funding, improved ventilation, and paid sick and family-care days so that all parents can afford to keep potentially-sick little ones at home.

Ford's autism program fails to support kids

widespread public outrage. After tremendous pressure, the Ford government backpedaled on its planned cuts, but failed to fully restore funding.

On Tuesday, the Ford government finally [released the new funding model](#) for the OAP. After waiting two years for program details, families and advocates were devastated to learn funding for autism treatment will be capped based on age, rather than need. Additionally, during the first roll out, only 600 out of 42,000 kids who need autism support services will be allowed into the program, and many families will see cuts to the amount of therapy their children will get.

Early and consistent support is critical for children with autism and now parents are worried the new funding model will exclude their kids from critical therapies. Families don't need more delays and inadequate funding; they need this government to step-up and support the children they promised to help.

Airbnb rules must be properly enforced

As part of a broader effort to regulate short-term rentals across the city, [Toronto is now requiring anyone renting out their home for 28 days or less](#) to register with the city. Short-term rentals are now only allowed in your primary residence.

Despite new restrictions in place since late December, of Toronto's 18,553 Airbnb listings, [less than 3,000 have registered](#).

Ensuring Airbnb operators are following the rules will take proper resources and enforcement. Ottawa, a city with only 3,000 listings has nine municipal staff working to ensure regulations are followed and listings are properly licensed. Toronto's short-term rental program has been allotted only five by-law enforcement officers, a supervisor, and four compliance staff.

Taking steps to regulate short-term rentals like Airbnb is a critical step in tackling Toronto's housing affordability crisis because it will return units to the long-term rental market and prevent new investment properties from being turned into illegal short-term rentals.

If you are looking to initiate a complaint against an illegal Airbnb listing, please contact 311. Our office is also able to assist.

Drivers who kill, injure face little consequence

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vulnerable road user deaths are at an all-time high and it is past time the government took action.

In 2017, the Liberal government amended the Highway Traffic Act to charge careless drivers with significant penalties, including a license suspension of up to five years, as much as two years in jail, and a fine of as much as \$50,000.

[But new statistics released last week say this law isn't working.](#)

Statistics provided by the Ministry of the Attorney General show many people convicted under the offense don't receive anything approaching the stiffest penalties it allows. And more than half the drivers who face the charge aren't convicted.

In 2018, I introduced Bill 62, [the Protecting Vulnerable Roads Users Act](#), which would automatically require any driver who injures or kills a cyclist or pedestrian and is convicted of a non-criminal HTA offense to have their license suspended until they take a driving re-education course and perform community service related to road safety. If we're going to make Ontario roads safe, we must stop the systemic pattern of smaller fines being handed out to dangerous and destructive drivers.

[Add your name in support of Bill 62 here.](#)

Construction noise continues to strain residents

In April, the Ford government used an emergency order to suspend noise bylaws and prevent the City of Toronto from limiting non-essential construction noise between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., daily. The regulations are currently in effect until October.

With people spending more time at home because of the winter lockdown, residents have been dealing with constant construction noise morning and night — some are experiencing sleeplessness, interruptions to work, and mental health stress.

That's why I introduced a motion to restore municipal construction bylaws and bring some relief from the near-constant construction noise. It has now been several months since this motion was introduced, and residents have continued to contact our office about noise impacting their sleep, mental health, and workday.

We need to keep the pressure up. To support my motion, [add your name here.](#)

Local communities should have a say in how their neighbourhoods are built.



Temporary injunction halts demolition of the Foundry

For over a year, the [International Resource Centre for Performing Artists](#) (IRCPA), Corktown Residents and Business Association (CRBA) and Toronto City Council have been working together to regenerate the site into a thriving cultural community centre. In October, the Ford government issued a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) for the Foundry site, overruling the ongoing local planning and consultation.

Last month, a provincially-mandated demolition crew began tearing down the buildings without releasing a specific plan for the site and without consulting or warning city officials and community members.

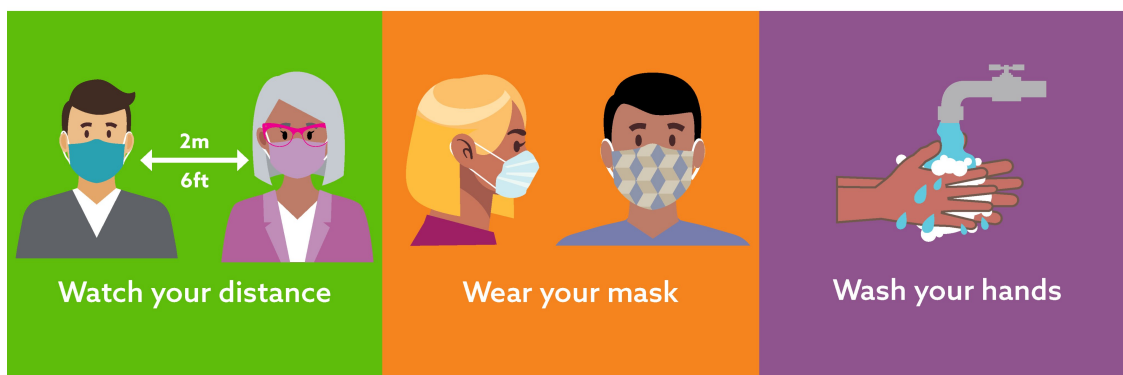
After public backlash, an [Ontario judge temporarily stopped the province](#) from demolishing the buildings. The judge found the province was in contravention of the Heritage Act, and breach of Ontario's obligations to the City of Toronto, resulting in an injunction.

members.

Winning this injunction is the first step in a much longer fight. Now it's time for Doug Ford to rescind his MZO and commit to proper consultation with the community and city officials. Local consultations are vital to proper municipal planning and residents deserve a say in what happens in their community.

3 STEPS FOR SELF-PROTECTION

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



[TORONTO.CA/COVID19](https://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.

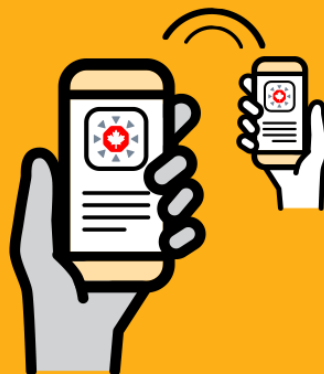
The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed:

- 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

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downloaded the app and I encourage you to do the same.

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



Canada

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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