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## Thursday, April 1 Update

Dear Neighbour,

It's been a really tough week. My local school, Clinton, has closed down due to rising COVID-19 cases. Clinton is one of many schools that are experiencing high COVID-19 cases, and so I know I'm not the only one going through a stressful time. We are truly in this together.

In response to the drastically rising COVID-19 numbers, the Ontario government made some moves to tighten restrictions this afternoon, and we outline the new measures below.

Frankly, these measures are too little, too late. They fall short of what public health experts are calling for, and are setting us up for even tougher lockdowns to come. We need to listen to the public health experts and act decisively now.

Stay safe,

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

Jessica Bell (MPP for University-Rosedale)

My newsletter for this week includes:

### Queen's Park

- [Province-wide 'emergency brake' begins Saturday](#)
- [Upcoming live Q&A town hall: What does Ford's budget and latest announcements mean for education and our kids?](#)
- [My new bill would reduce microplastics in Ontario waters](#)
- [Seniors should not have to worry about unfair evictions](#)

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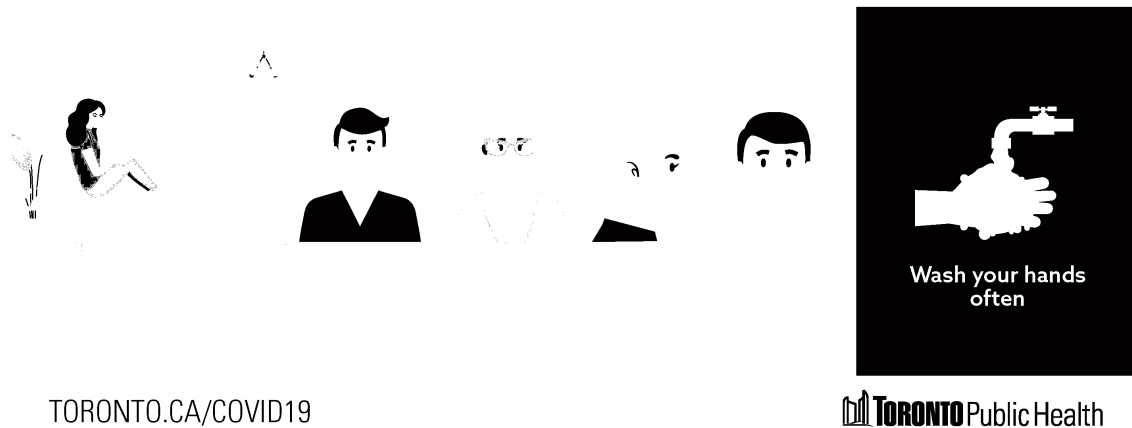
- [Conservatives say no to raising PSW wages](#)
- [Ford government refuses to fund homelessness and housing crisis strategy](#)
- [NDP MPPs urge the Ford government to act on child care](#)
- [Share your opinion on Ford's Budget before April 7](#)

## Community

- [Vaccines now available for age 60 and up, Astra Zeneca for age 55 and up](#)
- [Deadline extended for Small Business Support Grant](#)
- [St. Stephens' Overdose Prevention Site needs our help](#)
- [Victim services and support available through MADD](#)

## 4 STEPS FOR SELF-PROTECTION

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



## Province-wide 'emergency brake' begins Saturday

The Ford government is officially beginning a pandemic emergency break this weekend in response to a concerning uptick in variants of concern, record-high ICU admission numbers, and the urging of health experts who are warning Ontario's COVID-19 situation is now out of control.

Beginning this Saturday, April 3, at 12:01 a.m., all 34 Ontario public health regions will move into shutdown mode for a period of four weeks.

Restrictions will include:

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except for gatherings with members of the same household, or gatherings of members of one household and one other person who lives alone.

- Limits on in-person shopping: a 50 percent capacity limit for supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers' markets, other stores that primarily sell food and pharmacies; and a 25 percent limit for all other retailers including big box stores.
- No personal care services.
- No indoor and outdoor dining. Take-out, delivery, and drive-thru options are allowed.
- Prohibiting the use of facilities for indoor or outdoor sports and recreational fitness, with very limited exceptions.
- The closure of day camps.
- Limiting capacity at weddings, funerals, and religious services to 15 percent occupancy per room indoors, and to the number of people who can maintain two metres of physical distance outdoors. This does not include social gatherings associated with these services such as receptions, which are not permitted indoors and are limited to five people outdoors.

Please visit [Toronto Public Health](#) for more details.

## Upcoming live Q&A town hall: What does Ford's budget and latest announcements mean for education and our kids?

In the face of current funding failing to meet the needs of students and teachers, Ontario's 2021 budget confirms Doug Ford's government is cutting \$1.6 billion from education. In addition to this massive cut, there will be no replenishment of school board reserves, which were exhausted last year, nor a commitment to extend COVID-19 funding for smaller class sizes and hiring more staff. There is also news the Ford government is looking to make full-time synchronous learning permanent.

On **Monday, April 12 from 6-7 pm** please join NDP education critic Marit Stiles and myself to get the latest news, give feedback and have your questions answered.

The event will take place on **Facebook Live**. Submit questions in advance by emailing [jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca).

MPP University-Rosedale



Today, I announced a bill to reduce the release of microplastic pollution into our Great Lakes and waterways

## My new bill would reduce microplastics in Ontario waters

Microplastics in the Great Lakes are an increasing concern for the health of our waters, the creatures that live there, and the 14.5 million Ontarians who rely on them for their drinking water.

The most common type of microplastic, microfibers, shed from our clothes into washing machines, which release, per load, anywhere from hundreds to hundreds of thousands of microfibers into our waterways. As plastics bioaccumulate in fish, the effects are passed up the food chain to larger fish, birds, and mammals.

To help stop microplastics from leaching into our ecosystems, I announced I will be introducing a bill with my colleague, NDP MPP Ian Arthur, requiring manufacturers to equip washing machines with a microfilter, which studies show, reduce 87% of microfibers from ending up in washing machine wastewater.

This innovative technology was developed by [researchers right here](#) at the University of Toronto in our riding and was piloted by the good people of Parry Sound. Lisa Erdle, from the University of Toronto, and David Sweetman from Georgian Bay Forever, joined us at our press conference.

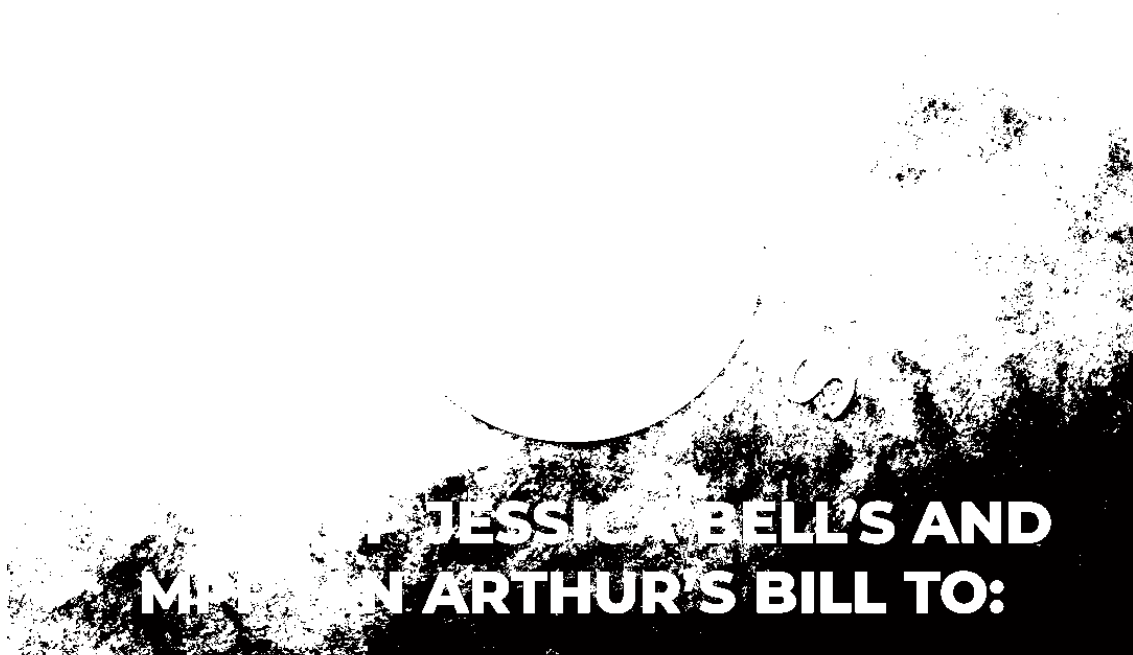
We can and must address microplastic pollution now. For our plant, for ourselves, and for future generations to come.

[Click here to help stop microplastics from entering our waterways.](#)

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## Seniors should not have to worry about unfair evictions

In 2019, over 100 seniors were evicted from Davenport Senior Living at Yonge and Bloor. The work we did with these residents showed us that laws protecting seniors in retirement homes need to be strengthened.

Seniors deserve the same rights as any other tenant and should be entitled to compensation if they are evicted. They should also be protected from economic eviction caused by unfair price gouging, which happens when retirement homes dramatically increase the cost of providing basic services like meals well above the actual cost of providing them.

That's why I am introducing my new bill Protecting Seniors in Retirement Homes, which aims to make changes to the Residential Tenancies Act to provide more rent control protections for residents in care homes, restrict retirement home providers from imposing unlimited fee hikes for services on vulnerable seniors, and give senior residents three months' rent compensation if they are evicted.

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[Click here to add your name in support.](#)

Please contact our office at [jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca](mailto:jbelle-co@ndp.on.ca) if you are interested in doing outreach and working with us to get this bill passed.



## **Ford passes bill making it easier to ignore public's concerns before bulldozing**

This week, the Ford government got closer to passing [Bill 245](#), which makes major changes to land-use planning. Bill 245 creates a new mega tribunal called the Ontario Lands Tribunal (OLT) which will adjudicate disputes on a broad swath of matters related to land use planning, from heritage designations to compensation for expropriations to new municipal zoning laws. Bill 245 also strips the right to appeal OLT decisions and denies residents the right to testify on development projects that affect their neighbourhoods. The infamous Local Planning Appeals Tribunal is not subsumed under the OLT.

The main goal of this bill is to quickly approve big developments by undermining due process and giving municipalities and residents less say over land-use decisions.

Earlier this month, I introduced amendments to Bill 245 that would have required OLT adjudicators to have expertise on the hearing they are overseeing, kept the right to appeal a decision, and allowed third parties the right to speak at a hearing. The Ford government voted all of these amendments down.

Read the full press release [here](#).

## Conservatives say no to raising PSW wages

Working conditions in long-term care homes are gruelling, and Personal Support Workers (PSWs) are often forced to work multiple jobs in understaffed homes, impacting their ability to provide critical care. PSWs put their hearts and souls into caring for our loved ones, and they deserve a decent wage for the hard work they do. That's why the Ontario NDP introduced the bill, Support Workers Pay Act this week, which if passed, would have permanently raised the PSW wage floor, and required they be paid for their travel between work sites.

In a heartless move, the Ford government voted our bill down, continuing Ontario's legacy of undervaluing PSWs and the work they do. Working conditions are care conditions and PSWs and the families they take care of deserve so much better than this.

## Ford government refuses to fund homelessness and housing crisis strategy

In a report earlier this month, Ontario's Financial Accountability Office estimated that over 16,000 Ontarians experience homelessness on any given night. This is a tragedy and we need to do more to ensure everyone has access to safe and secure housing.

Housing experts and advocates say with the right investments and initiatives, Ontario could end chronic homelessness in Toronto in just three years. To help us get there, this week, the Ontario NDP introduced a motion asking the Ford government to establish and fund a homelessness and housing crisis strategy. Our motion included calls for acquiring emergency shelter space, permanent supportive housing, and building at least 69,000 affordable housing units, and at least 30,000 supportive housing units.

Again, heartlessly, the Ford government voted our motion down, making it clear once again they don't see ending the homelessness crisis and affordable housing shortage as their responsibility or priority.



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March 31, 2021

Hon. Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
99 Wellesley St. W.  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1S3

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy  
Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board  
First Building South, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
7 Queen's Park Cres.  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1Y7

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 438 University Ave.  
Toronto, ON  
M5A 2A5

Dear Premier Ford and Ministers Bethlenfalvy and Lecce,

We are writing to raise our serious concerns regarding the increasingly untenable child care situation in Ontario and specifically in our city of Toronto, and to request that you provide immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector and lower fees for parents.

A recent report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) demonstrates that Ontario's child care providers are in financial crisis. The pandemic has caused many parents to pull their children from child care, resulting in a dramatic drop in enrolment across the country. According to the CCPA's report, the largest drops in enrolment occurred in cities where fees are highest, and Toronto has the most expensive child care in Canada. In Toronto, 22,000 fewer children were enrolled in child care in the fall of 2020 compared to before the pandemic, representing a 45% decline from 2019. The loss of this revenue has left child care providers struggling to retain staff, pay their rent, and keep the lights on. Many child care centres have been forced to close their doors permanently, and hundreds more will suffer the same fate without immediate support.

Toronto also continues to have the highest child care fees in Canada. Median infant fees in Toronto are almost \$1,900 per month, median toddler fees are almost \$1,600, and the median fees for preschool-age children are \$1,250 per month.

These fees are simply unaffordable for families in our ridings. We have received hundreds of emails from parents, particularly from women, asking for immediate action to address this so that they can get back to work.

The 2021 Budget provided a crucial opportunity to address our province's child care crisis, but your government failed to act. Given the precarious state of Ontario's child care sector and the crucial role affordable child care must play in our economic recovery, you cannot continue to ignore this problem.

We stand alongside parents, child care workers, and advocates in our call for you to step in now to provide immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector and ensure that all families have access to affordable child care.

We look forward to your prompt response and your commitment to address this issue.

Sincerely,



MPP Blarita Karpiche  
Critic for Early Learning and Childcare



MPP Jill Andrew  
Toronto - St. Paul's



MPP Rima Berns-McGowan  
Beaches - East York



MPP Marit Stiles  
Davenport



MPP Peter Tabuns  
Toronto-Danforth



MPP Doly Begum  
Scarborough Southwest



MPP Chris Glover  
Spadina - Fort York



MPP Sure Morrison  
Toronto Centre



MPP Jessica Bell  
University-Rosedale



MPP Faisal Hassan  
York South - Weston



MPP Tom Rakocvic  
Humber River - Black Creek

CC: MPP Catherine Fife, Finance and Treasury Board Critic

Ontario NDP Caucus Services

Main Legislative Building, Room N420 • Queen's Park • Toronto, ON M7A 1A8 • [ondpcaucus.com](mailto:ondpcaucus.com)

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## NDP MPPs urge Ford government to act on child care

Ontario's child care sector was struggling due to government underfunding before COVID-19, and a [report](#) from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) confirms the dire financial straits centres are facing, with drops in enrolment of up to two-thirds in the first wave alone. The report's clear takeaway is Ontario's child care sector (which has the highest fees in Canada) is at risk of collapse.

The 2021 Budget provided a crucial opportunity to address our province's child care crisis, but the Ford government failed to act. Given the precarious state of Ontario's child care sector and the crucial role affordable child care must play in our economic recovery, we cannot continue to ignore this problem.

The Ontario NDP stands alongside parents, child care workers, and advocates in calling on the Ford government to step in now to provide immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector and ensure all families have access to affordable child care.

If you are a childcare operator who is struggling to make it through this time, please reach out to us so we can work with you to raise the issue of affordable childcare.

## Share your opinion on Ford's Budget before April 7

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than \$4.8 billion in cuts. For a more detailed sector by sector take on what this Budget means for Ontarians and us, please [check out last week's newsletter here](#).

The Budget Bill ([Bill 269](#)) has already passed the second reading and is now in committee. You can sign up to speak or submit written submissions about the Budget (It's Bill 269) by following this link. The deadline to apply to speak is Wednesday, April 7, and the deadline to submit a written submission is Tuesday, April 13. Here's where you [can sign up](#).

## Vaccines now available for age 60 and up, Astra Zeneca for age 55 and up

Today it was announced that 350 more pharmacies will be added to the list of those administering the Astra-Zeneca vaccine and that it will now be offered to those 55 years of age and up. **Beginning tomorrow (Friday) at 8 am, Torontonians age 60 and over (born in 1961 or earlier) can start booking vaccination appointments at the City-run immunization clinics. There are appointments available throughout the long weekend.**

## How can I book my vaccine appointment?

There are 4 ways to book an appointment:

### 1. Ontario's Online and Telephone Booking System

You can book your appointment through the province's online portal at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/>

You can also call the **Province's Vaccine Booking Help Line** at **1-833-943-3900 (TTY 1-866-797-0007)**. This line is available 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, 7 days a week.

People who still have a red and white health card, or who require assistance with booking, can call the **Provincial Vaccine Information Line** at **1-888-999-6488**.

### 2. Hospitals (via pre-registration)

Eligible individuals:

- **As of April 2, 2021:** Adults **60 and older** (if an individual is turning 60 or older in 2021)
- Health care workers in Highest Priority and Very High Priority risk groups
- Indigenous Adults (16 years of age or older)
- Adults receiving chronic home care

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**[www.vaccineto.ca](http://www.vaccineto.ca)** or calling the call centre at **1-888-385-1910**

### **3. Select Pharmacies (AstraZeneca Vaccine for people 55 and older)**

**As of April 3, 2021**, individuals **55 and older** (if 55 or older as of the day of vaccination or, if will be 55 or older in 2021) can register to receive the AstraZeneca vaccination at one of the selected pharmacies by visiting:

**<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations>**

In order to book, you must have a valid Ontario OHIP card, or other form of valid government-issued identification.

### **4. City-run Mass Immunization Clinics**

**As of April 2, 2021**, adults **60 and older** (if an individual is turning 60 or older in 2021), can also book COVID-19 vaccination appointments online at a City of Toronto operated clinic via the Ontario Online Portal at:

**<https://covid19.ontariohealth.ca/>**

## **Deadline extended for Small Business Support Grant**

The Ford government announced today that applications for the Ontario Small Business Support Grant have been extended for one week through April 7. All eligible businesses are encouraged to apply.

[Learn more about provincial small business supports here.](#)



Since the Ontario Small Business Support Grant (OSBG) was launched, our office has heard from a number of business owners who have struggled to access this grant. We want to hear what has and what has not been working, and your thoughts on how to improve the process before the second round of funding is released.

To participate, please fill out this form.

To request an "I Shop Local Sign" like the one pictured above, please [click here](#).



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP

**Overdose  
Prevention Site**

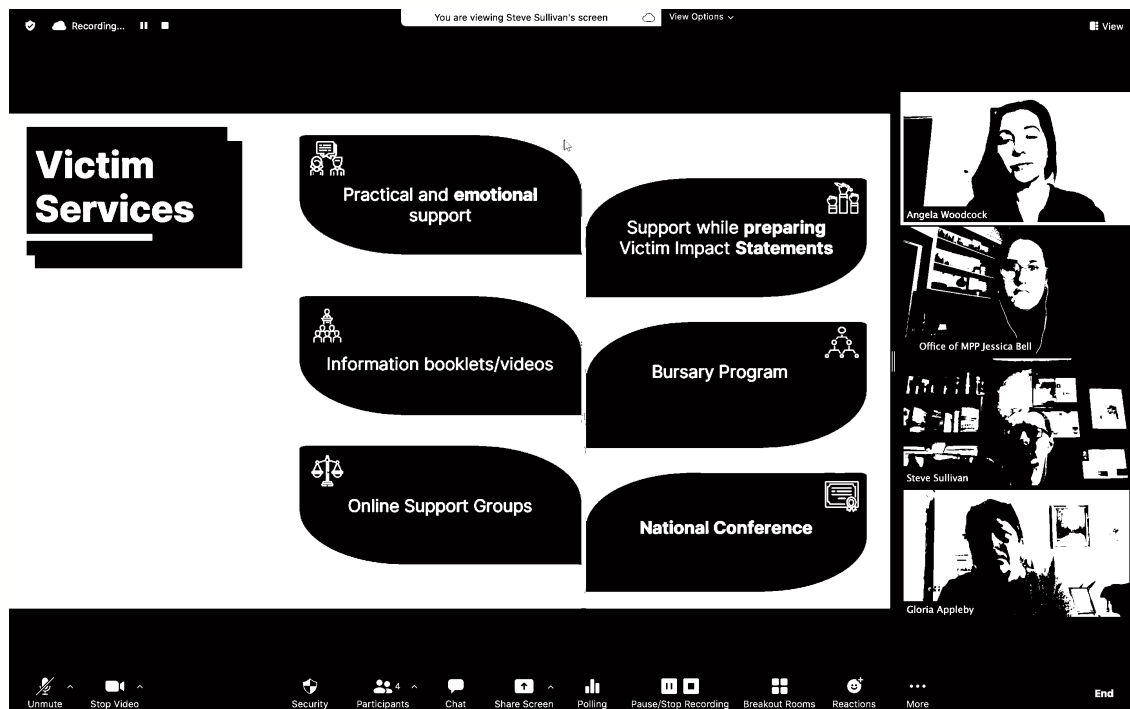
## St. Stephens' Overdose Prevention Site needs our help

In 2018, [St. Stephen's Community House \(SSCH\)](#) opened an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) in response to the dramatic and alarming increase of overdose deaths related to injection drug use.

community members who need support.

SSCH's OPS service has saved countless lives and brought hundreds of people at risk into their supportive environment where people can access food, friendship, primary healthcare, housing help, employment supports, mental health counselling and support groups. With COVID-19, the need for the OPS has never been greater.

If you are able, [please consider donating here](#).



## Victim services and support available through MADD

In our advocacy work, our office frequently works with families who have lost a loved one in a road crash. Today, our team met with [Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#) (MADD) to learn more about their work, how we can become better advocates for safe driving and safe streets, and how to support victims and their families.

In the aftermath of a crash, victims and survivors have many questions and often do not know where to turn. MADD Canada's most important priority is helping those who have lost a loved one or suffered an injury as a result of impaired driving. If you or someone you know is a victim/survivor of impaired driving, [MADD Canada](#) is here to help.

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Learn more about my private member's bill [Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act](#) and the [Vision Zero Strategy Act](#).

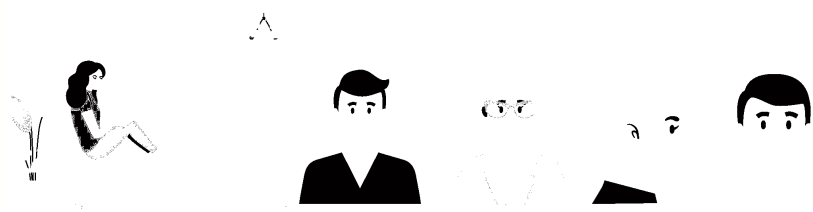
## ... And to all those celebrating safely at home or online

Wishing you and yours a happy and safe spring season.



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



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  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

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



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