



# NATIONAL COVID-19 IN CANADA

– CANADIANS HELPING CANADIANS THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME



The first Canadian case of COVID-19 was confirmed January 25. Like most early cases, it was carried into the country by a traveller returning from China. Within a month, the number of cases rose to 14, shared between Ontario and B.C. Then cases started popping up in Quebec.

## THE VIRUS MOVES IN

Two months after the first case emerged, the country is wrestling with over 16,000 cases. More than 320 Canadians have died. The virus has inched into every province and territory except Nunavut.

Life quickly changed as the cases mounted. Hospitals began treating an influx of sick patients and scrambling to prepare for many more. Cities and provinces struggled to control the spread of the new **coronavirus**. By March 23, every province and territory had declared a state of emergency.

## SHUT IT DOWN

Today, Canada is a very different place than it was at the start of 2020. Almost overnight, sporting events large and small were cancelled. So were performances and concerts. Libraries, recreation centres, and

movie theatres closed their doors. Public transportation was reduced. Schools and workplaces were ordered to close and people were asked to stay home. Why? To reduce person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Now, Canadian cities look like ghost towns. Streets and sidewalks that usually bustle with traffic are deserted. Shopping centres, restaurants, and parking lots are empty.

## COME HOME

As borders closed in many countries, including Canada, airlines began operating fewer flights. Canada announced just four airports would continue to accept incoming international flights to allow for more efficient health screening of Canadians returning home. The prime minister urged Canadians to return to Canada while they still could.

“If you’re abroad, it’s time for you to come home,” he stated on March 16.

Many followed the prime minister’s advice and booked flights. Others were stranded in foreign countries or on cruise ships. The government worked hard to **repatriate** them, arranging

special flights and covering their costs. Meanwhile, returning travellers were told they had to self-quarantine for 14 days. Those who did not could face jail time or fines.

The Canada-U.S. border was also closed to all non-essential travel.

## STAY HOME!

In his daily updates on the pandemic, Prime Minister Trudeau begged Canadians to stay home as much as possible, to practice **social distancing** when they had to go out, and to self-isolate if exposed to someone who might have the virus. On March 22, he specifically thanked Canadian kids for the sacrifices they’re making in the battle to slow the spread of COVID-19.

“All of a sudden you’ve heard you can’t go on play dates or have sleepovers. Your playgrounds and schools have closed and your March Break was certainly different than what you’d hoped for. And you’re having to wash your hands – a lot... So, a special thanks to all you kids.”

But the prime minister had harsh words for people who weren’t taking social distancing seriously.

## DEFINITIONS

**REPATRIATE:** to bring back into the country

**CORONAVIRUS:** a family of viruses that can infect animals and humans, and that causes the common cold and COVID-19

**SOCIAL DISTANCING:** keeping a distance of two metres from others and avoiding large groups to prevent the spread of disease



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“We’ve all seen the pictures online of people who seem to think they’re **invincible**,” he said. “Well, you’re not. Go home. And stay home.”

## TEAM CANADA

During March, the federal government introduced various measures and programs to help Canadian families, workers, and businesses stay afloat during the shutdown. The opposition parties gave their support, and legislation was quickly passed. Everyone was working together.

“If I could take off my **partisan** hat for just a moment,” Conservative House leader Candice Bergen noted. “I think we all recognize what a difficult time this is, obviously, for the country, for the world, and for the Canadian government, of any political stripe, this is a very heavy load to bear.

“And I’m glad that we can be here together, not always agreeing, but agreeing on one thing, and that is that we are putting the needs of our fellow Canadians first and foremost.”

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said he thinks “that people want people to work together.”

“They want politicians, they want leaders to work together. They want to see **collaboration**. There’s a common threat and it’s scary,” Mr. Singh said.

## STRONGER TOGETHER

Since the outbreak in Canada began, the federal government and the premiers have also been working as a team. At a video conference to discuss the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and **ventilators**, the premiers agreed to pool lifesaving

resources to ensure provinces with outbreaks had what they needed.

At the same time, companies have retooled their factories to produce more ventilators, test kits, and protective equipment such as masks, visors, gloves, and hand sanitizers. Universities are making **respirators** and face shields using 3D printers. Everyone is chipping in to help.

Canada’s support for China earlier this year is also paying **dividends** now. In February, when the outbreak in China was at its peak, Canada shipped over 16 tonnes of personal protective equipment. On March 29, the Chinese Embassy informed Canada that China would repay the kindness by sending 30,000 medical masks along with gowns, gloves, and goggles to protect our healthcare teams.

## A GLIMMER OF HOPE

How long will the crisis last? At the end of March, Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, said that it was still too early to tell. But on March 29, Quebec Premier François Legault said the number of cases in his province “seems to be stabilizing.”

B.C.’s provincial health officer thinks social distancing is starting to work in her province as well. When travel and social distancing restrictions were introduced on March 12, the daily increase in new cases was 24 percent. As of March 27, it was just 12 percent.

“I’m trying not to over-call it, but I do believe we’ve seen a flattening, a falling-off of that curve,” says Dr. Bonnie Henry.

However, she cautions that the rate of infection could accelerate again if people don’t continue to stay home.

## WHEN WILL THINGS GET BACK TO NORMAL?

“Every day someone asks me how long these restrictions will be in place,” says Mr. Trudeau. “The truth is, we don’t know yet.”

Schools and businesses could reopen by June. But scientists believe the virus could re-emerge once it’s **suppressed**. We could face two or three waves over the next two years.

The prime minister acknowledges that the uncertainty isn’t easy.

“This is an adjustment for all of us. But I want to remind all Canadians that social distancing doesn’t mean we have to stop talking to each other. Pick up the phone. Write an email. FaceTime. The strength of our country is our capacity to come together and care for each other, especially in times of need.

“So, call your friends. Check in with your family. Think of your community. Buy only what you need at the store. But if you’re heading out to grab groceries, ask your neighbour if you can get them anything. And if you know someone who is working on the front lines, send them a thank you. See how they’re holding up.

“Because that is what Canadians do in difficult times. We pull together and we look after each other. ★

## DEFINITIONS

**COLLABORATION:** the act of working together with others

**DIVIDEND:** a bonus; something extra

**INVINCIBLE:** too strong to be defeated

**PARTISAN:** adhering to a particular political party

**RESPIRATOR:** a protective mask with a filter

**SUPPRESS:** to keep under control; keep in check

**VENTILATOR:** a machine that pushes air in and out of someone’s lungs when they cannot breathe on their own



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**ON THE LINES**

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. When was the first COVID-19 case reported in Canada? Where did this person come from?

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2. How many cases of COVID-19 have been reported since then?

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3. Explain what **social distancing** means.

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4. List at least four measures that Canadian authorities have implemented to hinder the spread of COVID-19.

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5. Describe the recent changes at Canada's airports. How many airports are now allowing international arrivals?

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6. What are travellers required to do after they arrive from a foreign country?

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7. What has the federal government done to help workers and businesses who are experiencing reduced incomes as a result of the pandemic?

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8. Describe how Ottawa is working with the provinces to slow the spread of COVID-19.

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9. How have many businesses and universities contributed to the fight against the pandemic?

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