



NATIONAL

# COVID-19 IN CANADA

– CANADIANS HELPING CANADIANS THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME



Canada confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on January 25. Within a month, there were 14 cases, all in Ontario or B.C. Then cases started popping up in Quebec.

## THE VIRUS MOVES IN

Now, we are wrestling with over 16,000 cases. More than 320 Canadians have died. The virus has inched into every province and territory except Nunavut.

Life has quickly changed. Hospitals began treating an **influx** of cases and scrambled to prepare for more. Meanwhile, Canada has been struggling to control the spread of the new **coronavirus**. By March 23, every province and territory had declared a state of emergency.

## SHUT IT DOWN

Almost overnight, sporting events were cancelled. So were

concerts and plays. Libraries, gyms, and movie theatres were shuttered. Public transportation was cut back. Schools and workplaces were closed and people were asked to stay home. Why? To reduce person-to-person spread of COVID-19.

Now, Canadian cities look like ghost towns. Streets are deserted. Shopping centres, restaurants, and parking lots are empty.

## COME HOME

Borders have closed in many countries, including Canada. Just four Canadian airports now accept international flights. That's to allow for more efficient health screening of returning Canadians.

On March 16, the prime minister urged Canadians to come home while they could. Many followed his advice and booked flights. Others were stranded abroad or

on cruise ships. The government worked hard to **repatriate** them. It arranged special flights and covered the costs. Returnees had to self-quarantine for 14 days or face jail time or fines.

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

## STAY HOME!

Prime Minister Trudeau has been giving daily updates on the pandemic. He is begging us to stay home. He is urging us to practice **social distancing** when we have to go out, and to self-isolate if exposed to the virus.

On March 22, he specifically thanked kids for their sacrifices in the battle to slow the spread of COVID-19.

"All of a sudden... you can't go on play dates or have sleepovers. Your playgrounds and schools have closed. March Break was

## DEFINITIONS

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

**INFLUX:** a large number of people coming to a place

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

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



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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 he had harsh words for those not social distancing.

"We've all seen pictures of people who think they're **invincible**," he said. "Well, you're not. Go home. And stay home."

## TEAM CANADA

During March, the federal government introduced plans to help families, workers, and businesses during the shutdown. Opposition parties were onside. With everyone working together, new laws passed quickly.

"I'm glad we can be here together, not always agreeing, but agreeing on one thing – putting the needs of our fellow Canadians first and foremost," Conservative House leader Candice Bergen noted.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh added, "[Canadians] want politicians, they want leaders to work together. They want to see **collaboration**. There's a common threat and it's scary."

## STRONGER TOGETHER

Since the outbreak in Canada began, the federal government and premiers have also been

working as a team. The premiers have agreed to pool lifesaving resources to ensure provinces with outbreaks have what they need. That means personal protective equipment (PPE) and **ventilators** will be sent where they are in short supply.

Meanwhile, companies are retooling to produce more ventilators, test kits, and protective equipment. They are making masks, visors, gloves, and hand sanitizers. Universities are making **respirators** and face shields using 3D printers. Everyone is chipping in.

Canada's support for China earlier this year is also paying **dividends**. In February, the outbreak in China was at its peak. So Canada shipped more than 16 tonnes of PPEs. On March 29, the Chinese Embassy informed Canada that China would repay the kindness. It is 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? Canada's Chief Public Health Officer is Dr. Theresa Tam. At the end of March, she said that it was still too early to tell.

However, on March 29, Quebec Premier François Legault reported that the number of cases in his province seemed to be stabilizing. B.C.'s provincial health officer thinks social distancing is starting to work in her province as well.

Travel and social distancing restrictions were introduced in B.C. on March 12. At the time, the daily increase in new cases was 24 percent. By March 27, it was just 12 percent. Still, she says that the rate of infection could rise again if people don't stay home.

## WHEN WILL THIS END?

Even if they do, scientists say the virus could re-emerge and we could face two or three waves over the next two years.

That uncertainty isn't easy.

"But... social distancing doesn't mean we have to stop talking to each other," says Mr. Trudeau. "Pick up the phone. Write an email. FaceTime. The strength of our country is our capacity to... care for each other, especially in times of need.

"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

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

**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 confirmed in Canada?

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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 three measures Canadian authorities have implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19.

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5. What are travellers required to do after they arrive back in Canada from a foreign country?

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

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8. How have many businesses contributed to the fight against the pandemic?

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