



A Fall Like No Other: Between Basics and Preparing for an Extended Transition During Turmoil

November 2020

A special report of the Canadian eLearning Network

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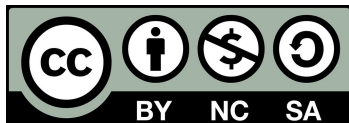
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Foreword

This report is essential reading for all Canadian government agencies concerned with K-12 education, and especially for school boards. Teachers will also be interested to see how other jurisdictions were similar to or different from their own in their response to COVID-19 in the Fall of the 2020-21 school year.

What is striking is what was NOT done as well as what was. The upsurge in cases in the Fall of 2020 obviously took most jurisdictions by surprise. They were not expecting a return to emergency remote learning, but, in many cases, this is what has happened. However, as a result, schools, parents and teachers have had to pivot once again.

There are obviously important lessons resulting from this report about ensuring our schools systems are more resilient and flexible. This report suggests that despite all the efforts of politicians, administrators and teachers over the summer, much still needs to be done to strengthen the design and delivery of online learning in an emergency. This report provides an essential foundation for such rethinking of our systems.

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Executive Summary

This report is second of three reports designed to chronicle how each province and territory in Canada managed their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this second report, as with the first report *Documenting Triage: Detailing the Response of Provinces and Territories to Emergency Remote Teaching* report (Nagle, Barbour, & LaBonte, 2020) that described how each jurisdiction managed their emergency remote teaching during Spring 2020, is to report on what occurred, not to assess its quality. This report is designed to delineate what actions each jurisdiction took: the tools, content, and devices provided, curated, and/or created; and, the nature of instruction that occurred. The third report will provide vignettes authored by education stakeholders sharing their stories about what actually transpired in their school and community.

Sponsored by the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn), a leading voice in Canada for learner success in K-12 online and blended learning, this report highlights the announcements, supports, and policy changes each Canadian jurisdiction made to continue to promote learning throughout the pandemic. Information was gathered for each province and territory through government websites, educational organizations, and current news releases. This information highlighted each jurisdiction's strategies to provide supports, resources, and technologies appropriate for the continuation of teaching and learning. A website¹ was created to host this report series along with an archive of online workshop presentations based on each report.

This second report provides a description of what was announced and provided for by provincial and territorial Ministries of Education during the Fall 2020. While a national view is considered, the approach taken varied among each of the provinces and territories. Some jurisdictions required students to wear masks in school buildings, others did not. Many jurisdictions required masks to be worn when physical distancing was not possible. Some jurisdictions announced specific plans for remote learning, others relied on existing online learning programs for students who remained at home. Few jurisdictions announced or published specific plans for professional development or training for teachers new to remote learning. Most schools opened as planned with physical distancing measures, restricted movement, and encouraged outdoor activity when possible. Remote learning choices were offered, but there were issues of managing choices as parents chose to shift from remote to online or the reverse after the school year started. Teachers had to be shifted from teaching in the classroom to teaching remotely or in a hybrid format as student groupings and classroom attendance shifted during the opening months.

For the most part, the supports and resources provided by each of the jurisdictions continued as in the Spring, including access to mail delivery of educational learning packages, radio and television broadcasting, centralized learning management systems, and access to a variety of digital tools. Some provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia provided technology to students. All jurisdictions – except for Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick – provided resources that did not require internet access. Further, some jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut continued to make specific considerations for Indigenous students.

¹ The website is available at <https://sites.google.com/view/canelearn-ert/>

Introduction

The Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn) (2020) was founded “with a vision to be the leading voice in Canada for learner success in K-12 online and blended learning” (¶ 1). One of the ways CANeLearn has traditionally achieved this vision has been their longstanding partnership with the annual report produced by the *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* research team, which continues to “examine the nature of the governance and level of activity of K-12 distance, online and blended education in each province and territory, as well as for First Nations, Metis and Inuit” (Barbour & LaBonte, 2015, p. 2). However, the 2020 calendar year continues to challenge schools to provide students with learning options outside of the scope and in numbers far beyond traditional distance, online, and blended learning offerings.

During the Spring 2020 the term ‘emergency remote teaching’ emerged to describe what was occurring in education at all levels. Hodges et al. (2020) described emergency remote teaching as an attempt not “to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis” (¶ 13). In August 2020, CANeLearn released the *Documenting Triage: Detailing the Response of Provinces and Territories to Emergency Remote Teaching* report (Nagle, Barbour, & LaBonte, 2020), which described how each jurisdiction managed their emergency remote teaching during Spring 2020. In that report each jurisdictional profile began with a brief summary of the online tools and online course content that were available based on existing e-learning activity, followed by a specific focus on the jurisdiction’s emergency remote teaching plan. This focus included when schools were closed and reopened (for those that did); what actions were taken; the tools, content, and devices provided, curated, and/or created; and the nature of instruction that occurred.

This second report provides a description of what was announced and provided for by provincial and territorial Ministries of Education during Fall 2020. While a national view is considered, the approach taken varied among each of the provinces and territories in light of trends with the spread of the virus (often regionally within a particular jurisdiction). Some jurisdictions required students to wear masks in school buildings, other jurisdictions did not. Some jurisdictions announced specific plans for remote learning, other jurisdictions relied on existing online learning programs for students who remained at home. Finally, few jurisdictions announced or published specific plans for professional development or training for teachers new to remote learning.

Methodology

Data were collected by consulting various existing collections of data related to the response from various provinces and territories (e.g., the People for Education’s *Tracking Canada's education systems' response to COVID-19*², Bogart [2020], Borden Ladner Gervais’ *Canada-wide summary of COVID-19 education updates*³, etc.). These collections collated data for each jurisdiction as they released their educational guidelines due to the re-opening of schools during

² Available at <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/tracking-canadas-education-systems-response-to-covid-19/>

³ Available at <https://www.blg.com/en/insights/2020/04/canada-wide-summary-of-covid-19-education-updates>

COVID-19. The data found in these collections included, but was not limited to: start dates, learning models (i.e., face-to-face, online, or hybrid/blended), health and safety guidelines, the wearing of masks, signage and adaptations of the physical school environment, bubbles/cohorts, and learning group sizes. These collections were updated during the Fall of the new 2020-21 school year, and offered the basis for following jurisdictional updates as they became available.

Additional data were gleaned from each jurisdiction's Ministry of Education website. Through these Ministry websites, data extracted outlined information about health and safety measures, learning models proposed, bubbles/cohorts and adaptations to the physical learning environment. For specific dates and other information related to education during the Fall re-opening of schools, as well as any additional missing information, a general internet search was conducted of news releases from major news sources for each jurisdiction who were also tracking educational initiatives for COVID-19 for the re-opening of schools. Many of these news sources corroborated the above mentioned collections and also offered quotes from Ministers regarding information that may not have been readily available through their Ministry's websites.

How to Read this Report

This report is designed to chronicle how each jurisdiction managed their return to school in the Fall 2020 and planned for face-to-face, hybrid, and remote teaching. Each jurisdictional profile is divided into a section for elementary schools and a section for secondary schools (assuming there was a difference in the plans). If there was no difference in the planning for elementary and secondary schools, the profile is presented in a single section. Each profile attempts to report what was found with respect to:

- structural operations (e.g., in person, remote, or hybrid) and what that delivery model entails (e.g., busing, class size, masks, cohorts/bubbles, student movement, schedules, modalities, etc.)
- the nature of tools, content, and devices provided, curated, and/or created; and
- the nature of instruction (i.e., attendance requirements, teacher expectations, grading, etc.).

It is important to remember that at the time each of these jurisdictions were determining their plans, it was against the backdrop of the status of the virus in their individual province or territory. Health Canada (2020) began presenting the number of active COVID-19 cases in graphical format on their website in late July. Figures 1 through 4 on the following pages indicate the number of active cases across Canada throughout the period that many provinces and territories were planning their start to the school semester in the Fall.⁴

⁴ See Appendix A for a table and figures that indicate the **total** number of cases by jurisdiction throughout the period this planning occurred

Figure 1.
Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (31 July 2020)

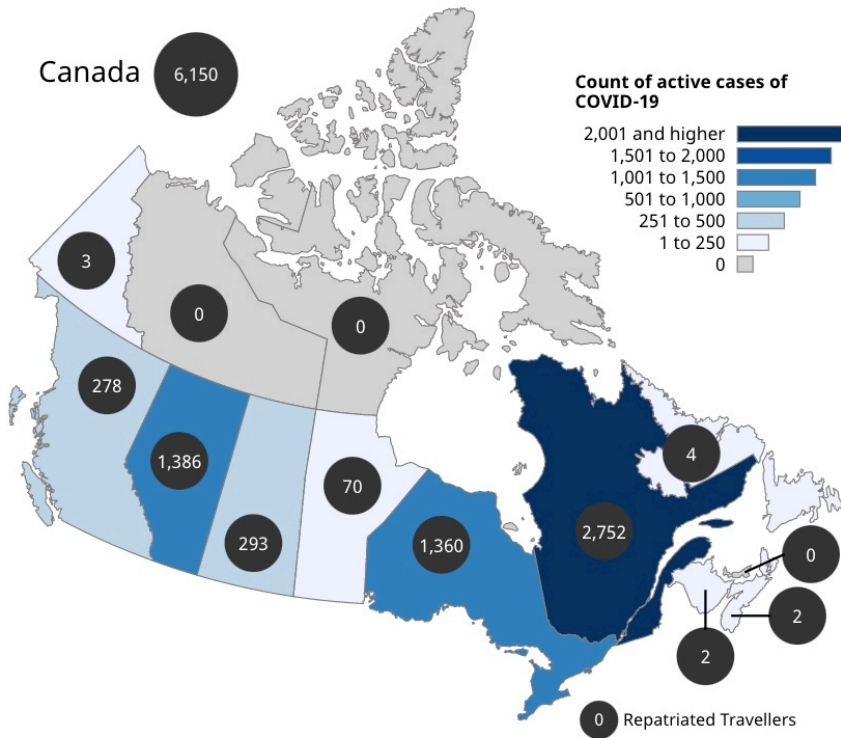


Figure 2.
Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (15 August 2020)

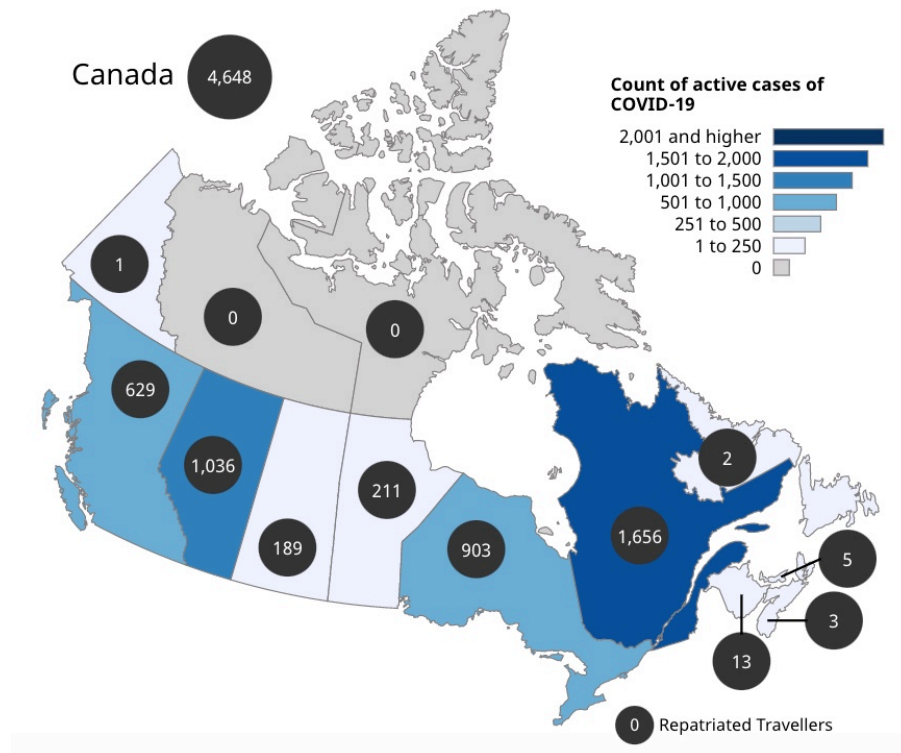


Figure 3.
Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 September 2020)

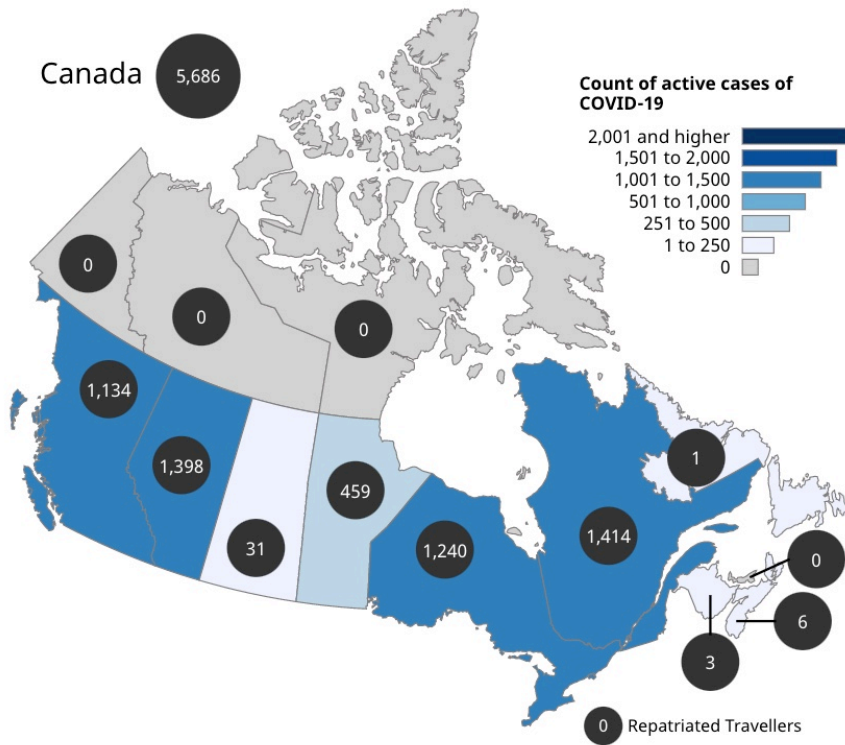
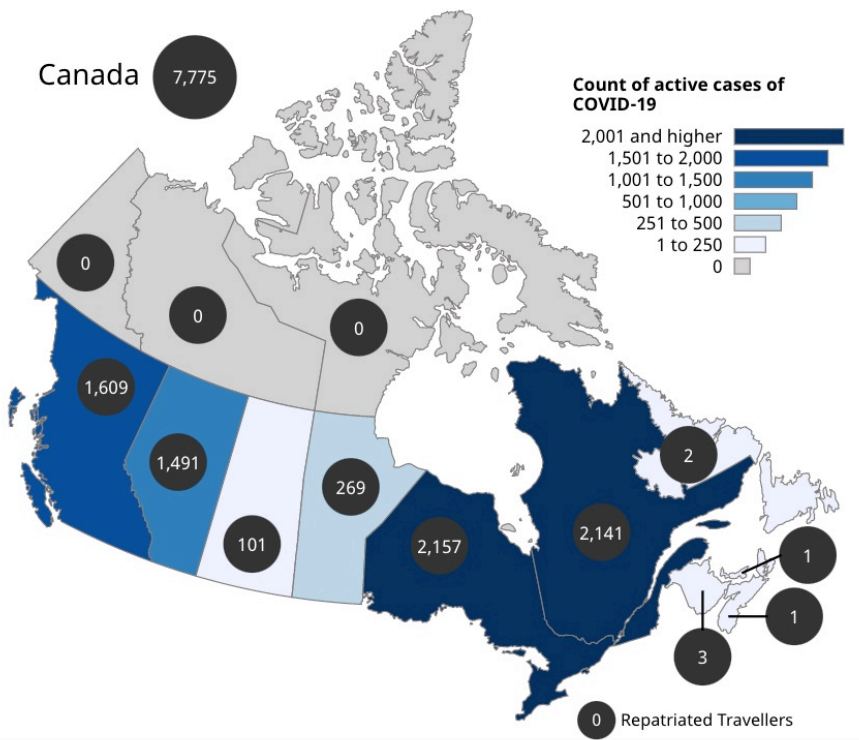


Figure 4.
Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (15 September 2020)



This data is not presented to parse trends with regard to infection rates over the late summer and early Fall, or to suggest specific differences between the provinces and territories. However, as the active case rate would have been an important factor influencing different jurisdictions' plans, it is important that the reader have access to this data.

To begin our examination of the Fall 2020 school opening plans in each province and/or territory, it is first useful to consider a national overview of what occurred prior to the presentation of each of the jurisdictional profiles.

National Overview

Following the Spring's sudden closure of the physical school buildings, and the shift to emergency remote teaching, provincial and territorial Ministries of Education had a respite as the regular Summer school break came into effect. The spread of COVID-19 had 'flattened' or begun diminishing in most provinces and territories, and Ministry plans shifted to focusing on a 'safe' return to school buildings. While the continuing pandemic and requirement for physical distancing put restrictions on how the return to school would occur, the predominant theme and planning for most provincial and territorial government leaders was focused on the 'safe' reopening of schools. Little public consideration was given to planning for remote learning in many of the provinces and territories. Most announced efforts and planning were focused on designing school building entries, student flow through buildings, cleaning protocols for all surfaces, setting requirements for student social distancing and rules regarding the wearing of masks while in school buildings, as well as the organization of students into cohort groups and timetables for their classes and courses. The focus was simply on a return to school buildings while meeting federal and provincial/territorial health regulations – a return to a 'new normal' with the opening of schools being the lynchpin to reestablishing both social and economic balance. Table 1 provides a summary of the start dates for school in provinces and territories.

Table 1
Fall 2020 Start Plans by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Delayed start
British Columbia	Two day delay
Alberta	No delay
Saskatchewan	One week delay with a staggered start by last name
Manitoba	No delay
Ontario	Two weeks or longer delay for remote and one week delay for in-class with a staggered start by grade level for in-class
Quebec	No delay
New Brunswick	No delay
Nova Scotia	No delay
Prince Edward Island	No delay
Newfoundland & Labrador	No delay
Yukon	No delay
Northwest Territories	No delay
Nunavut	No delay

Only Saskatchewan and British Columbia delayed planned school opening dates by two to five days. Ontario was the only jurisdiction that planned a differentiated start date based on the modality of instruction and, in fact, the delay for those beginning the school year in Ontario in a remote context was twice as long or more than compared to students who began their school year in the classroom (i.e., who also had a planned delay of one week).

It is important to note that, at first, planning for a return to remote learning was either marginally discussed or not in the forefront of publicly announced planning for many jurisdictions. While, as noted in Table 2, distance learning was considered as an option, little significant planning, resourcing, and most importantly teacher training was announced for any increase in remote learning beyond what had been in place either before the pandemic or offered during the Spring of the pandemic period.

Table 2
Fall 2020 Learning Options by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Learning Options
British Columbia	Fully in-class learning with distance learning an option
Alberta	Fully in-class with distance learning an option
Saskatchewan	Fully in-class; remote learning with <i>Google Classroom</i> (LMS) for elementary and asynchronous and synchronous (150 min/day); blended learning using Blackboard with the Online Learning Center and asynchronous and synchronous learning
Manitoba	Fully in-class; blended options for any student sick with COVID-19 or secondary students
Ontario	Fully in-class for grades K-8; remote for grades K-12 with either offline packages or online synchronous and asynchronous learning for 5 hours per day); blended for grades 9-12 with asynchronous and synchronous learning; blended learning can be a quadmester
Quebec	Fully in-class for elementary; fully in-class or blended for secondary
New Brunswick	Fully in-class; remote paper-based for grades K-2; remote paper-based with some online technology for grades 3-5; technology-based asynchronous and synchronous for grades 6-8; blended with asynchronous and synchronous for grades 9-12
Nova Scotia	Not specified
Prince Edward Island	Fully in-class
Newfoundland & Labrador	Fully in-class instruction; remote learning for students home due to COVID-19
Yukon	Fully in-class for grades K-9; Fully in-class in rural areas for grades 10-12; Whitehorse area offers a blended asynchronous and synchronous approach
Northwest Territories	Fully in-class for K-9; grades 10-12 can choose fully in-class or blended
Nunavut	Fully in-class

Nunavut and Prince Edward Island, and for the most part Manitoba and Quebec, announced all students would be largely fully in classrooms with limited exceptions. Several provinces set minimum requirements for remote learning (e.g., Saskatchewan called for 150 min/day for synchronous and asynchronous learning while Ontario required five hours per day of learning). Other provinces – like Nova Scotia – did not specify different requirements, relying on already published standards or requirements. Of particular note in Table 2 was that the provision of correspondence opportunities were also announced as options in some jurisdictions. In short, the focus was on the classroom with previous existing distance options offered for some students unable to return to the classroom. While some training was provided for teachers transitioning to include online learning as options for instruction, most time was devoted to ensuring learning could occur within school buildings amidst the addition of health and safety protocols.

Several health measures were taken by school authorities across the country to provide a safe environment and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within school buildings including the wearing of masks when physical distancing could not be maintained, creating smaller cohorts or ‘bubble’ groupings of students, reduction of class sizes, and limiting the movement of students within the school building. Table 3 provides a summary of classroom measures by jurisdiction.

Table 3
In Class Measures by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Masks	Cohorts	Class Size
British Columbia	Not mandatory	Classroom learning groups of 20-30; learning groups of no more than 60 students	Not specified
Alberta	Only when physical distancing is not possible	Not specified	20 student cap in Kindergarten
Saskatchewan	Not mandatory	Classroom cohorts	Not specified
Manitoba	Only for grades 4-12	Classroom cohorts with a maximum of 75 for larger activities for K-12	Not specified
Ontario	Only for grades 4-12	Classroom cohorts to support physical distancing	Secondary class sizes of 15
Quebec	Grades 5-8 but masks do not need to be worn in the classroom; Grades 9-12	Bubbles of up to six students with no physical distancing within cohort; Grades 10-11 can choose their own bubble	Not specified
New Brunswick	Grades 6-8 for outside; Not required in classrooms;	Cohorts or bubbles with no physical distancing in bubbles	15 students in K-2; 22 students in 3-5; no cap in grades 6-12
Nova Scotia	Only for grades 4-12	Classroom cohorts to support physical distancing	Not specified

Prince Edward Island	Only for grades 7-12	Classroom cohorts or small groups to support physical distancing	Not specified
Newfoundland & Labrador	Not mandatory in classrooms; only mandatory where physical distancing is not possible	Classroom cohorts to support physical distancing	Not specified
Yukon	Not mandatory	Not specified	Not specified
Northwest Territories	Not mandatory in classrooms; mandatory for spaces where physical distancing is not possible	Learning bubbles for grades K-6 with no physical distancing; grades 7-12 physical distancing only	
Nunavut	Not mandatory	Regular classes with some physical distancing	Regular class sizes

While it is difficult to draw comparisons between the provinces and territories on the announced measures, which were likely influenced by the spread of the virus in each jurisdiction at the time, some similarities and differences can be identified. Some jurisdictions announced the wearing of masks was not mandatory, others added the exception that masks were mandatory only if physical distancing could not be maintained. This basically meant that students were not required or asked to wear masks in the classroom during interaction with their cohort or ‘bubble’ group, but were either encouraged or required to wear a mask outside of the classroom. Other jurisdictions specified mask requirements for specific grade levels. Physical distancing, as well, varied depending on age, grade level, and school building. The variations in the rules and requirements caused concern amongst parents resulting in some choosing to keep their children home.

Finally, Table 4 provides the provision of remote learning resources and technologies that was specifically identified in some jurisdiction.

Table 4
Remote Learning Resources

Jurisdiction	Technology
British Columbia	Not specified
Alberta	Not specified
Saskatchewan	<i>Online Learning Center</i> to offer courses to support remote learning; technology distributed in-class to limit sharing
Manitoba	Devices distributed if needed by the Ministry
Ontario	Individual Boards can provide technology to students in need; supervised study hall option available to remote students who need access to the internet; online courses available for remote students
Quebec	For remote education educational videos offered through French-language television
New Brunswick	Technology provided for blended or distance learning in K-8;


	bring your own device for grades 9-12
Nova Scotia	Not specified
Prince Edward Island	Not specified
Newfoundland & Labrador	Chromebooks for junior high and high school students; iPads, laptops, Chromebooks, tablets to students in need; priority technology to grade 12 students; MiFi (broadband devices) distributed to students in need
Yukon	Not specified
Northwest Territories	Not specified
Nunavut	Not specified

As mentioned earlier, the provision of remote learning resources and technologies was not prominent in announcements and published planning. Some provinces did announce specific supports that had been in place prior (e.g., Ontario’s online courses of study and provision of technology for students in need or New Brunswick’s bring your own device [BYOD] program), while others announced specific initiatives to support remote learning (e.g., Quebec’s education videos via French-language television or Newfoundland & Labrador’s Chromebooks and MiFi option).



The following pages provide more detailed profiles for each of the 10 provinces, three territories, and those schools falling under the federal jurisdiction.

Newfoundland Labrador

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 526,977 Number of K-12 Schools: 260 Number of K-12 Students: 64,336</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 1 Number of K-12 Distance Learning: 1,140</p>
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School Re-opening Plans for Both Elementary and Secondary

There were no delays to the start of the 2020-21 school year. Classes opened under near-normal conditions with in-class instruction for grades K-12. The inclusion of added health measures included cohort groupings, physical distancing (i.e., two meters), though recognizing the limitations of physical distancing in classrooms, signage to control the flow of student traffic, and limited student movement. Subject-specific teachers transitioned between classrooms, while students remained in one room. Masks were not mandatory in classrooms, but mandatory where physical distancing was not possible.

An added curricular focus was placed on mental health and wellness. With virtual learning as an option for students who remained at home due to COVID-19, the Newfoundland and Labrador Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development (2020a) announced funding for *Technology to Support Digital Learning*. This initiative aimed to provide equipment loans to students in need, such as Chromebooks and iPads to all students with special priority provided to grade 12 students without a device. To provide equity for students with limited access to the internet, *MiFi* devices (i.e., a brand name for portable broadband) were to be distributed.

Assessment practices included considerations for student time out of class during the pandemic and for teachers to be cognizant of “flexibility and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding” (p. 37). All public examinations were cancelled, however, provincial exams for grades 3, 6, and 9 were to be administered.

Nova Scotia


	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 966,858 Number of K-12 Schools: 371 Number of K-12 Students: 120,604</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 2,381</p>
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School Re-opening Plans for Both Elementary and Secondary

There were no delays to the start of the Fall 2020-21 school year. Schools started with a full reopening with the inclusion of added health measures, which included cohort groupings, physical distancing, and outdoor classes used as much as possible, a reconfiguration of classroom space, and signage to regulate student movement. No large school gatherings (i.e., assemblies and cafeterias) were permitted. Masks were mandatory for grades 4-12.

The curriculum focus for the 2020-21 school year was rooted in inclusive educational practices as outlined in Nova Scotia's *Inclusive Education Policy* (Nova Scotia, 2020). The focus included "supporting students who are historically marginalized and racialized (i.e., African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw students) as well as LGBTQ2S++ and students with disabilities" (p. 2). A further curricular focus included trauma-informed and culturally-responsive pedagogies. Diagnostic assessments were planned for the start of the year to gauge student learning and to assist teachers to better understand the learning needs of their students. All provincial assessments were cancelled.

Prince Edward Island


	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 145,211 Number of K-12 Schools: 63 Number of K-12 Students: 20,131</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 0 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~100</p>
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School Re-opening Plans for Both Elementary and Secondary

There were no delays to the start of the Fall 2020-21 school year. With a full re-opening, health measures were added, such as cohorts or small groups with number limits and physical distancing, staggered entry and exits, signage to direct the flow of student traffic, and elementary students eating their lunch in their classrooms, while secondary students staggered their lunch breaks. Masks were mandatory for grades 7-12 and voluntary for grades K-6.

The curriculum was revised to address learning gaps and outcomes that could not be addressed in the Spring while schools were closed (Prince Edward Island Education and Lifelong Learning, 2020). Learning assessments were planned to continue as usual, and a prioritization of missed outcomes for language arts and math would be a focus (Fraser, 2020).

New Brunswick

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 755,464 Number of K-12 Schools: 307 Number of K-12 Students: 98,906</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 2 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~3,270</p>
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School Re-opening Plan for Elementary

New Brunswick elementary schools created cohort groupings or ‘bubbles’ for their students. In grades K-2 class sizes were a maximum of 15 students, in grades 3-5 a maximum of 22 students, and in grades 6-8 there were regular class sizes. All student movement throughout schools adhered to physical distancing. However, no physical distancing was required within a bubble, and each bubble was required to physically distance two meters from the other. Masks were recommended, but not required in the classroom, though grades K-5 were encouraged to wear them, and grades 6-8 were only required to wear masks outside of class (People for Education, 2020).

For students continuing with remote learning, technology was to be provided for students in grades K-8. The resources for remote learning included: paper-based for grades K-2 with daily teacher check-ins, paper-based with some added technology and “routine teacher engagement” (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2020a, p. 16) online for grades 3-5, and technology-based, asynchronous with regular synchronous teaching in grades 6-8. Considerations for student learning in the Fall were to focus on multiple opportunities for success, feedback, and regular and diverse assessments.


School Re-opening Plan for Secondary

Due to the lack of appropriate physical distancing, secondary students engaged in a blended learning model with alternating schedules (i.e., smaller schools able to physical distance) could continue with in-class learning full-time. However, class sizes were to remain the same for in-class learning and masks were not required in the classroom, but mandatory in out-of-class, common areas. Physical distancing between students was one meter within a classroom and two meters outside of the classroom. Staggered breaks between classes was included to maintain physical distancing, as well as the addition of markings to direct the flow of traffic within common areas.

The blended model of learning announced by the Ministry relied on project-based and experiential learning opportunities. Remote learning was also an option. Students were

responsible for bringing their own devices with, “enhanced IT support under the *Bring Your Own Device Initiative*” (p. 15). A laptop subsidy program was created for students who needed devices, and the community was asked to offer learning spaces for students to access the internet if needed. The platforms used for blended and/or remote learning were: *Microsoft Teams*, *D2L’s Brightspace*, with free access to *Microsoft 365*. Regular school attendance was required. Teaching and learning, which was technology-based, had regular asynchronous and synchronous opportunities. Considerations for student learning in the fall focused on multiple opportunities for success, feedback, and regular and diverse assessments.

Quebec

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 8,263,600 Number of K-12 Schools: 3,102 Number of K-12 Students: 1,003,322</p> <p>Number of Distance Learning Programs: 5+ Number of Distance Learning Students: ~40,000+</p>
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School Re-opening Plan for Elementary

There were no delays to the start of the 2020-21 school year. With all students attending in-class learning, enhanced health measures included: ‘bubble’ groups (i.e., cohorts) of up to six students with no physical distancing, yet a one meter distance from other bubble groups was to be maintained. Students remained in the same classroom, while teachers moved for subject-specific teaching. Masks were mandatory for grades 5-8 but not required to be worn in the classroom. Masks were only required in areas where students were not able to physically distance. Curriculum included an added focus on assisting students in their learning to identify gaps throughout the Spring.

School Re-opening Plan for Secondary

Secondary students in grades 10-11 could “chose to either form their own bubble and attend school full-time or use an alternating schedule” (Bogart, 2020, ¶ 35). Masks were mandatory for grades 9-12. Support tools for distance education, for students who chose the option, included *Savoir Média*, a French-language television network, which offered 192 educational videos on *Matières à emporter* (Québec Ministry of Education, 2020). Curriculum added a focus on assisting students in their learning to identify gaps throughout the Spring.

Ontario

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 13,537,994 Number of K-12 Schools: 4850 Number of K-12 Students: 2,020,245</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Education Programs: ~81 Number of K-12 Distance Education Students: ~89,000</p>
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School Re-opening Plan

The Ontario Ministry of Education allowed Boards of Education to stagger start dates for their school openings depending on the needs of each individual community. Most boards chose to delay the start of in-class learning by one week for K-12 with staggered start dates by grade level. Remote learning was delayed by two weeks. After the school year began, some boards allowed parents the option of changing their child’s learning model (e.g., from online learning to face-to-face or the reverse).

School Re-opening Plan for Elementary

Elementary students had the option to attend class full-time or continue with remote learning. Blended learning was available for students who were not able to attend in-school due to COVID-19. Enhanced health measures were put in place, which included classroom cohorts (but no added limits on overall class size), physical distancing, signage to control student movement, and the staggering of lunches, recesses, entry and exits, and bell times. Masks were mandatory for grades 4-8 in classrooms and where physical distancing was not possible. Students did not have to wear a mask at recess within their classroom cohort.

Curriculum was delivered as usual with a focus on assessing students’ gaps in learning as a result of the Spring closure of schools. Curriculum expectations for students not in-school were based on the overall expectations for each grade and subject. If students chose to continue with remote learning, two options were available: either through asynchronous and synchronous learning or with prepared packages as determined by each school board. For students online, a daily schedule was to be provided based on a five-hour instructional day (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020). Should there be limited access to internet, the Ministry suggested boards open school spaces to accommodate students on a “supervised study hall basis” (§ 123). Provincial assessments for grades 3 and 6 were cancelled for the 2020-21 school year.


School Re-opening Plan for Secondary

Enhanced health measures for secondary schools consisted of cohort grouping, with class sizes limited to 15 students that could be up to two classes, physical distancing, signage to control student movement, and no large assemblies (e.g., closed cafeterias). Masks were mandatory in class and where physical distancing was not possible.

A blended learning model was introduced where students alternated days for in-class and online learning. Boards were able to adopt a quadmester model if it met the needs of their community, which required that course curriculum be condensed to a quarter of the semester. On at-home learning days, independent work was assigned with the opportunity to participate in synchronous learning with their teacher. Digital tools for online learning included: D2L's *Brightspace* or other board-approved learning management systems. The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test for grade 10 students was rescheduled to be administered in the Spring of 2021.

For students who wished to continue with a fully independent remote learning model, online courses were available through the *TVO Independent Learning Center (ILC)*, as well as 140 courses available in both French and English. With this option, school boards were, "required to approve student enrollment...and must pay \$250 per credit to TVO" (§ 115).

Manitoba

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,369,000 Number of K-12 Schools: 810 Number of K-12 Students: 208,796</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: ~38 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~11,875</p>
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School Re-opening Plan for Elementary

Manitoba's schools set up cohorts for their students in their classes with a maximum 75 students for recess and other activities (People for Education, 2020). Cohorts were to be distinct from other groups with physical distancing (i.e., two meters) measures in place to have no comingling, including entry and exits, staggered lunches, and recess (Manitoba Education, 2020). Masks were to be worn by students from grades 4 to 12 where physical distancing could not be achieved.


Full attendance in-school was required for elementary students, and a blended learning model, with both synchronous and asynchronous activities, was available for K-8 students if they were sick or contracted COVID-19. All student assessments continued, however the provincial assessments for grades 3 and 4, and grades 7 and 8, were suspended. A curricular focus was placed on the return to in-class learning and to identify learning gaps due to the spring closure of schools. While school divisions and teachers were tasked with ensuring students have the technology, connectivity, and materials/resources they need for learning, Manitoba Education continued to support the availability of devices for students and alternative options where internet access was limited.

School Re-opening Plan for Secondary

Cohort grouping for secondary students as a class were implemented with a cap at 75 students maximum for other activities, with physical distancing (i.e., two meters) between groups, staggering lunch and breaks, entry and exits. Learning from home could be an option where physical distancing was not a challenge and schools could engage in a blended model of learning, both synchronous and asynchronous.

Full attendance was required for the in-school or blended learning model. Grade 12 provincial assessments continued for the 2020-21 school year. School divisions and teachers were responsible for identifying student needs regarding technology, and Manitoba Education supported the availability of devices as well as access to alternative options for students with limited access to the internet.

Saskatchewan

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,169,131 Number of K-12 Schools: 767 Number of K-12 Students: 184,004</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 14 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: 8,378</p>
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School Re-opening Plan

Saskatchewan schools had a one week delayed start to the 2020-21 school year and staggered student start days based on last names.

School Re-opening Plan for Elementary

Enhanced health measures were put in place for the Fall start, which included: classroom cohorts, physical distancing, and staggered start, end, and break times where possible, dedicated entries and exits with signage to control student movement, outdoor activities whenever possible, no sharing of materials, spaced out desks, and alternatives to large assemblies, such as virtual gatherings. Technology was deployed to limit sharing (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2020a). Masks were not mandatory, but recommended in grades 4-8, particularly where physical distancing was not possible.

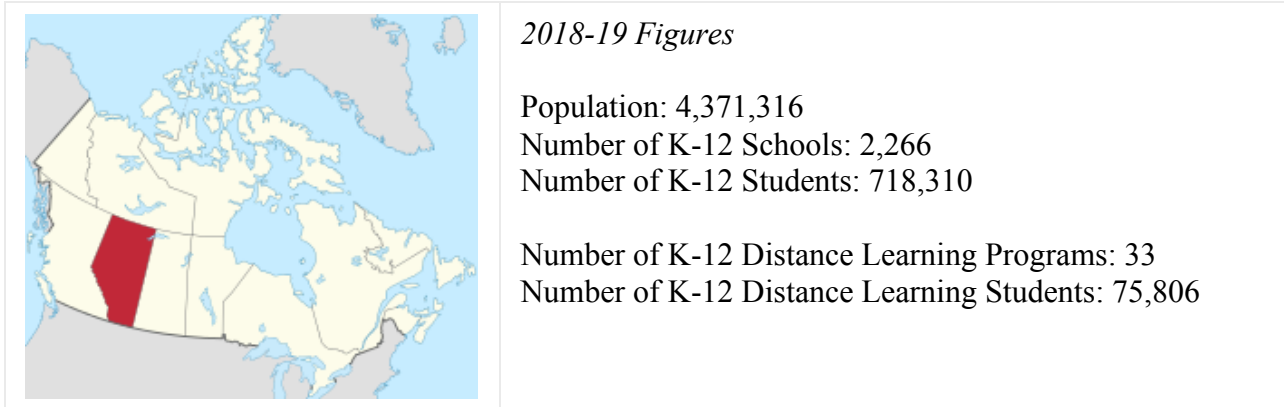
For students working under a remote learning model, the *Online Learning Center* offered curriculum for both English and French Immersion for grades K-8. *Google Classroom* was used as their learning management system (LMS), and online learning consisted of both asynchronous and synchronous (i.e., approximately 150 min/day) activities. Assessment and reporting was to continue as usual.

School Re-opening Plan for Secondary

School divisions throughout Saskatchewan were responsible for determining how to move cohorts within their school communities to achieve physical distancing requirements. A modified timetable was developed to allow for two cohorts per day. Masks were not mandatory for grades 9-12, and school divisions could decide if they required their schools to have masks or not.

For students working under a remote learning model, the *Online Learning Center* was available for their use, including use of *Blackboard* as their LMS. Online learning consisted of both asynchronous and synchronous activities.


Alberta



School Re-opening Plans for Both Elementary and Secondary

There were no delays to the start of the Fall 2020-21 school year. Alberta returned to school under scenario one, which included full in-class learning with near-normal operations within the school for grades K-12. The inclusion of added health measures, cohorts, and physical distancing (i.e., two meters where possible) were added. Staggered lunches and breaks were also included to assist with physical distancing. Masks were mandatory for grades 4-12 where physical distancing was not possible, but masks were not mandatory while children were sitting at their desks or where physical distancing was possible (Alberta Ministry of Education, 2020). Class sizes were not limited (Bogart, 2020), with the exception of a 20-student cap in Kindergarten. Distance learning was an option for students.

British Columbia


	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 5,020,302 Number of K-12 Schools: 1933 Number of K-12 Students: 633,805</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 74 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~65,000</p>
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School Re-opening Plan for Elementary and Secondary

British Columbia delayed the start of the school year by two days to assess their provincial situation due to COVID-19 (Bailey, 2020). British Columbia schools opened with full in-class learning for grades K-12. Added health measures included: physical distancing, staggering breaks and transition times, and signage to direct the flow of student traffic. Elementary cohorts were between 20 and 30 students and *learning groups* were capped at 60 students, which limited the number of students who could interact. Secondary school learning groups were capped at 120 students. Masks were not mandatory.

Curriculum included an added focus on mental health and well-being for grades K-12. Any alternative methods of teaching and learning other than in-class was determined by each Board of Education. If students chose to continue with remote learning, they could choose online or distributed learning options, however, students in grades 8-12 could choose from “different distributed learning schools at one time” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020a, ¶ 58), while grades K-7 were required to choose one distributed learning school only. All assessments were to be administered.

Yukon

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,874 Number of K-12 Schools: 33 Number of K-12 Students: 5,456</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Education Programs: 2 Number of K-12 Distance Education Students: 170</p>
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School Re-opening Plan for Elementary

Elementary schools re-opened as usual for grades K-8. Enhanced health measures were in place, such as physical distancing, which could include smaller classes and groups. Masks were recommended for ages 10 and older, but not mandatory (Yukon Ministry of Education, 2020a).

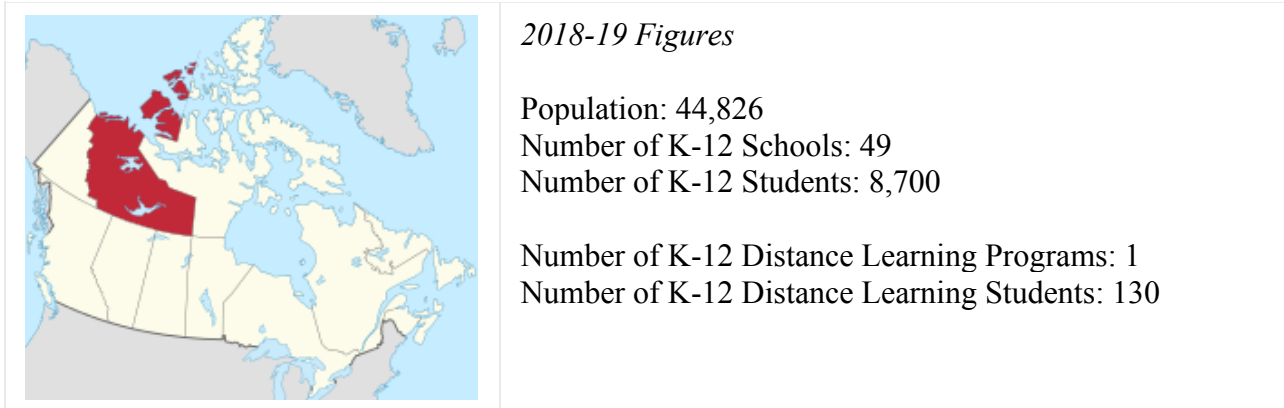
Grades K-3 continued with in-class instruction, grades 4-8 continued with an added focus on digital technologies and tools used with the teacher to focus on problem-based learning. Digital tools that could be utilized were: *Moodle*, *Microsoft 365* with *Teams*, *Google Classroom*, and *FreshGrade*. A focus on literacy and numeracy as part of the core competencies continued, as well as a *learning recovery* model prioritizing formative and benchmarking assessments for both language arts and math.

School Re-opening Plan for Secondary

Students in grade 9 continued with a fully in-class model of learning. Grades 10-12 in Whitehorse used a blended learning model where students were half in-class and half online five days per week (i.e., those in rural areas could attend fully in-class each day).

The curriculum focus encouraged student collaboration through *Microsoft Teams*, and continued to integrate the *Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being*, and *experiential learning* (Yukon Education, 2020b).

Northwest Territories




School Re-opening Plans for Both Elementary and Secondary

There was no delay to the start of the 2020-21 school year. Increased health measures for in-school learning included regular classes with learning ‘bubbles’ for grades K-6 with no physical distancing within the bubble. Physical distancing for grades 7-9 included one meter between students and two meters between students and teachers and staff. Grades 10-12 required two meters for physical distancing, controlled entries and exits for student traffic flow, staggered lunches and recess, spacing of desks and furniture, no large assemblies or gatherings, and outdoor activities as much as possible. Masks were not mandatory for in-class and masks were used when physical distancing could not be achieved.

The curriculum was to be delivered as usual, and the *Dene Kede, Inuuqatigiit and Our Languages* curricula continued to be taught regardless of learning model. Grades 10-12 could choose to be full-time in-class or continue with a blended learning model. Depending on the school size, learning shifts were a possibility, where secondary students attended in the morning or afternoons on alternating days. The Government of Northwest Territories (2020a) acknowledged that there would be flexible learning to, “access education in a variety of ways, either at home, at school or on the land, while ensuring equity and inclusion” (p. 5). All assessments were to be conducted as they were pre-COVID-19.


Nunavut

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,944 Number of K-12 Schools: 44 Number of K-12 Students: 10,107</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 0 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~70</p>
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School Re-opening Plans for Both Elementary and Secondary

As there were no cases of COVID-19 in the territory of Nunavut, schools fully re-opened as usual for grades K-12. However, added health measures were put in place, which included: enhanced cleaning, physical distancing, and limited group activities (e.g., assemblies and lunches in common areas). Masks were not required. Full curriculum was to be delivered, and regular attendance was required (Nunavut Department of Education, 2020).

Federal

	<p><i>2018-19 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,400,685 Number of K-12 Schools: 489* Number of K-12 Students: ~107,000*</p> <p>Number of K-12 Distance Learning Programs: 5 Number of K-12 Distance Learning Students: ~2,000</p>
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* refers to those reporting a nominal role directly to Indigenous Services Canada

School Re-opening Plan

First Nations schools do not fall under provincial jurisdiction. While many schools may have followed the mandates and guidelines in the respective provinces in which the school is located, Indigenous Services Canada supported First Nations Control of First Nations Education and, as such, the First Nation communities made their own choices regarding their protocols and delivery methods.

Federal guidance for K-12 school re-opening was based on the most current scientific information as outlined in *Community-based Measures to Mitigate the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Canada* (Government of Canada, 2020a). The guidelines outlined by the Canadian government sought to, “take into consideration the diverse needs of population groups based on vulnerability, ethnicity/culture, disability, developmental status, and other socioeconomic and demographic factors” (¶ 2). Through this *risk-based* approach to school re-opening, the following factors were outlined for risk-assessment of schools:

- risk of transmission, such as prolonged interaction between students and teachers, close interactions within activities inside (class size) and outside the school (physical activity); prolonged contact with surfaces (e.g., desks) or shared items;
- risk of more severe diseases or outcomes, based on their age or other medical condition; and
- ability to reduce risk by consistently applying mitigation measures (e.g., physical distancing, hand washing, masks). (¶ 5)

Further guidelines to *mitigate* the risk included:

- not allowing students or staff to enter the school if they have symptoms or high exposure within the last 14 days;
- promote and facilitate personal preventative practices;
- promote physical distancing as much as possible;
- create physical barriers between students and teachers/educational staff;
- increase ventilation;
- reduce risk to high-touch surfaces (e.g., desks, shared materials);

- reduce risk for vulnerable populations (e.g., older adults, those with chronic health conditions); and
- modify practices to reduce how long people are in contact with each other and how many people come into contact with each other (e.g., cohorts/bubbles). (¶ 12)

The Federal Government also outlined considerations for reducing risk through the use of cafeterias and libraries, as well as specific school activities such as music and physical education. The use of masks for risk reduction was encouraged, specifically for children over ten years of age and particularly where physical distancing could not be achieved. Extra considerations for students with disabilities included continued access to supports and services with extra accommodations made where necessary. Attention to the “psychosocial needs of children/youth, staff and volunteers” were also detailed to include managing stress and anxiety to mitigating bullying surrounding COVID-19 cases (Government of Canada, 2020b, ¶ 62-70). Supports were also outlined for Indigenous communities who are “remote” or “isolated” specifically regarding health measures for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to mitigate risk (¶ 71-74).

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Appendix A

Table 5
Total COVID-19 cases by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	15 June	15 July	15 August	15 September
British Columbia	2745	3149	4358	7376
Alberta	7453	8994	12053	15957
Saskatchewan	683	881	1566	1741
Manitoba	304	330	663	1466
Ontario	32370	37052	40565	45068
Quebec	54054	56859	61084	65554
New Brunswick	160	168	184	194
Nova Scotia	1061	1067	1074	1086
Prince Edward Island	27	36	41	57
Newfoundland & Labrador	261	262	268	271
Yukon	11	11	15	15
Northwest Territories	5	5	5	5
Nunavut	0	0	0	0

Data downloaded from <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html>

Figure 5.
 Total COVID-19 cases across Canada (15 June 2020)

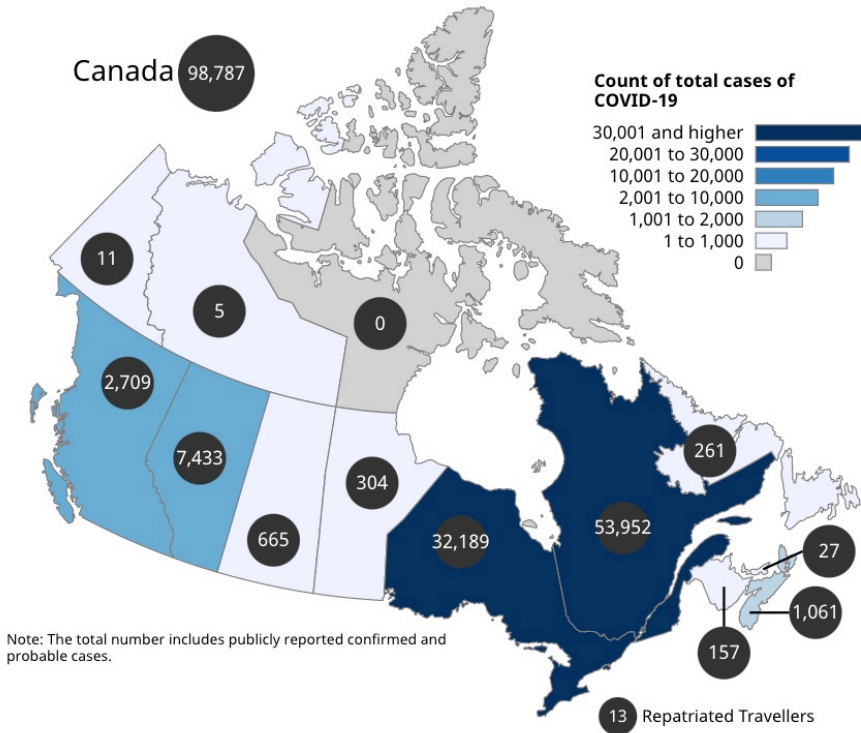


Figure 6.
 Total COVID-19 cases across Canada (15 July 2020)

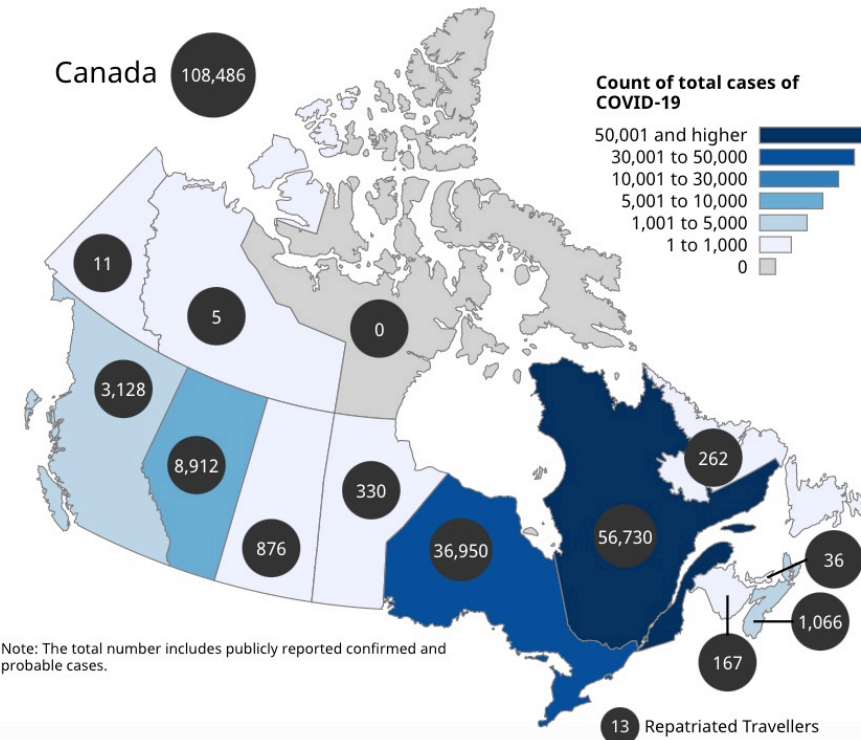


Figure 7.
 Total COVID-19 cases across Canada (15 August 2020)

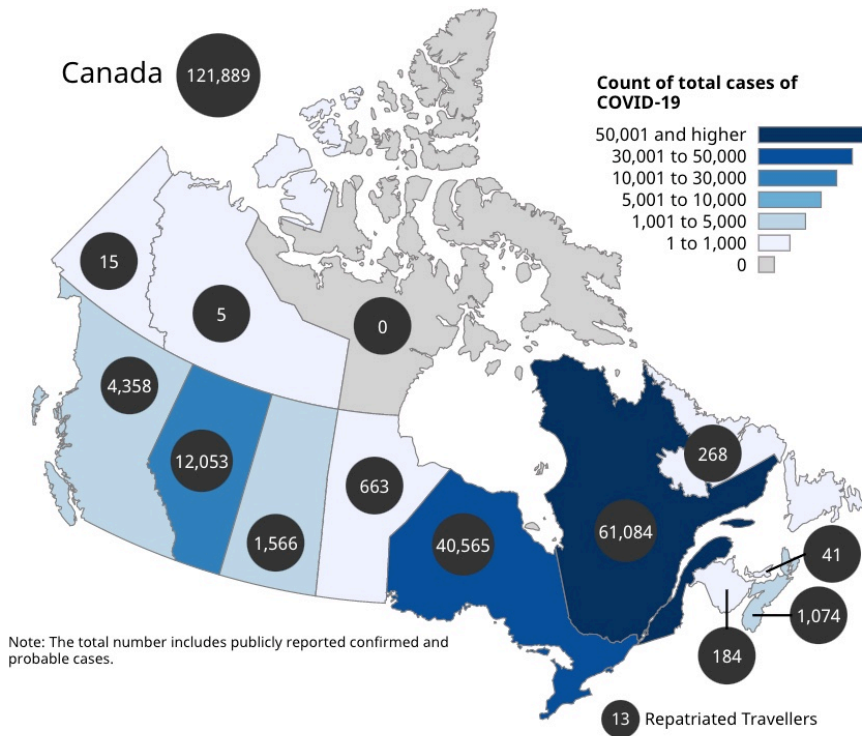
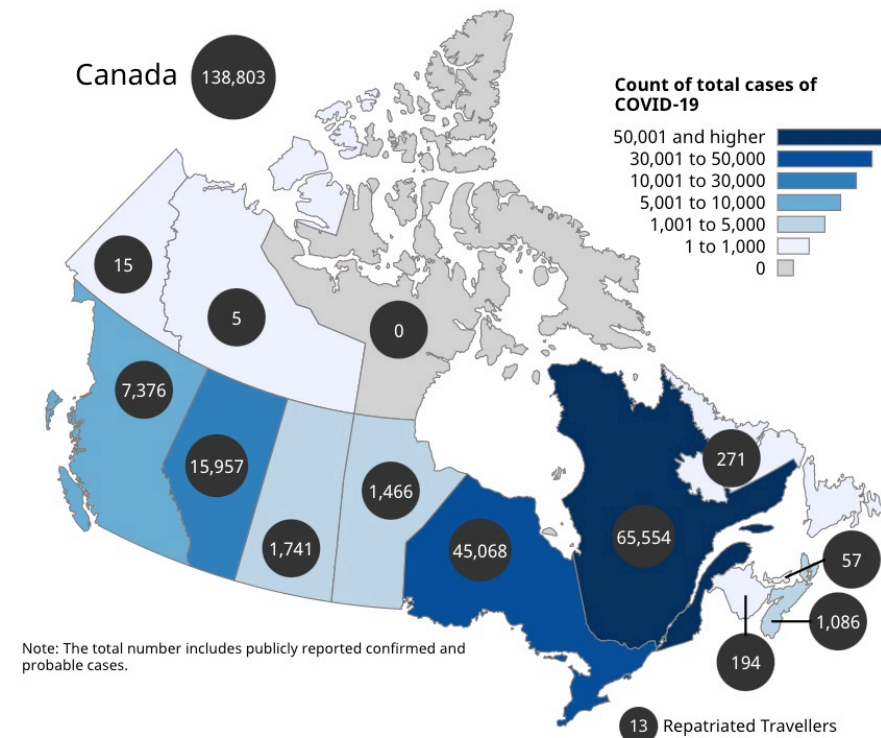


Figure 8.
 Total COVID-19 cases across Canada (15 September 2020)





Canadian eLearning Network – <https://canelearn.net>