



# **Toggling between Lockdowns: Canadian Responses for Continuity of Learning in the 2020-21 School Year**

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A special report of the Canadian eLearning Network

Joelle Nagle

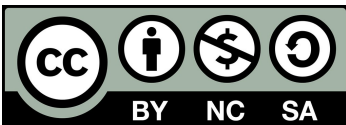
Michael K. Barbour

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## Previous Reports in this Series

### *Understanding Pandemic Pedagogy: Differences Between Emergency Remote, Remote, & Online Teaching* (Barbour et al., 2020a)

While this report was published out of sequence, it was designed to be the first contribution in this series. In the spring of 2020, the term ‘emergency remote teaching’ began to emerge to describe what was occurring in education at all levels, despite the more commonly used term ‘online learning’ dominating media descriptions of the instruction offered to students forced to remain at home. This report argues the importance of avoiding equating emergency remote teaching with online learning. It is clear from most schools and teacher’s experience with emergency remote teaching that much more planning and deliberate attention be provided to teacher preparation, infrastructure, education policy, and resources to be able to maintain quality instructional continuity during a crisis. This report offers recommendations for how schools can be better prepared for future crises that incorporate both home-based and school-based learning opportunities mediated through online learning environments.

### *Documenting Triage: Detailing the Response of Provinces & Territories to Emergency Remote Teaching* (Nagle et al., 2020a)

In August 2020, CANeLearn released a report describing how each jurisdiction managed their emergency remote teaching during Spring 2020. In the 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.

### *A Fall Like No Other: Between Basics & Preparing for an Extended Transition During Turmoil* (Nagle et al., 2020b)

In November 2020, CANeLearn released a report describing what was announced and provided for by provincial and territorial Ministries of Education during Fall 2020. While a national view was considered, approaches varied among each jurisdiction 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, others did not. Some jurisdictions announced specific plans for remote learning, others 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.

### *Stories from the Field: Voices of K-12 Stakeholders During Pandemic* (Barbour & Labonte, 2020)

In December 2020, CANeLearn released a report providing the stories of students, parents, school leaders, and educators. These voices provided a narrative of what actually transpired in homes, schools, communities, and districts. Students were concerned with the lack of social interaction; their parents with their physical, emotional, wellbeing and mental health. Teachers, district and school leaders, even trustees, found the changing dynamic of the education landscape overwhelming. The report offered glimpses of success in the development of new programs and expansion of others. The stories of teachers reflected a focus on physical, social, and emotional wellbeing first, curriculum second.

## Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I write a foreword for this incredibly relevant and timely report chronicling the state of face-to-face, hybrid, and remote teaching across Canada during the 2020-21 school year. As we move into what seems likely to be a third year of schooling disrupted by the continued COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that we learn from our experiences over the past year in order to better prepare ourselves for what lies ahead.

While previous reports in this series documented the cross-Canada responses to the initial few months of emergency remote teaching as well as the state of K-12 education in the Fall of 2020, this new report offers us an overall picture of our first full year of pandemic schooling. And while we might hope for a return to normalcy in the upcoming school year, the fact remains that we are staring down the barrel of a year that promises to be very similar to last, so the best thing we can do is learn from our successes and failures of the past 12 months.

As teachers across the country return to their classrooms to prepare for the arrival of students in a few short days, those in positions of power should be studying reports such as this one to glean insight into what we might do to ensure that remote learning, if and when it comes, is a successful and well-planned endeavour. For instance, and perhaps most unsurprisingly, the data in the pages that follow confirms that districts with robust pre-existing e-learning programs and solid Ministerial support fared best over the past year, while those without existing systems in place struggled. If we are lucky, Ministries of Education across the country will take this evidence as a catalyst for the rapid funding, development, and shoring up of permanent (rather than emergency) provincial and territorial e-learning programs in order to avoid being caught unprepared, again, for a mid-year shift in learning modalities. Forewarned is forearmed, as the old saying goes.

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## Executive Summary

Sponsored by the Canadian eLearning Network (CANeLearn), a leading voice in Canada for learner success in K-12 online and blended learning, this is the fifth report in a series, noted previously, that 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 website<sup>1</sup> was created to host this report series along with an archive of online workshop presentations based on each report.

This fifth report provides a summary of the publicly announced accommodations that were made to ensure continued pandemic schooling during the Spring of 2021. In some instances, along with the school opening plans that were in place for Fall 2020, some jurisdictions had remote learning plans in place for the complete 2020-21 school year. In other instances, school districts and boards were left to determine individual remote learning plans with or without use of provincially or territorially provided resources. Given the lessons that could, or should, have been learned during the rapid transition to emergency remote teaching in Spring 2020, the reality was that some jurisdictions did not put in place the necessary planning or preparation to allow for uninterrupted continuation of learning.

As the Fall 2021 approaches, despite a full year coping with pandemic school closures, most jurisdictions announcements have once again focused on a 'safe' return to school buildings. As in the past year, there continues to be more demand for remote learning options from some parents. However, unlike in the past year, it is hoped that the majority of students age 12 and older are likely to be vaccinated – along with their teachers. Yet the COVID-19 Delta variant continues to surge worldwide, affecting both the vaccinated and unvaccinated population but at different levels of severity. However, the potential for COVID-19 outbreaks in the unvaccinated population in schools and communities looms.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 distance, online, and blended learning” (para. 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 past two school years have challenged schools to provide students with learning options outside of the scope, and in numbers far beyond, traditional distance, online, and blended learning offerings.

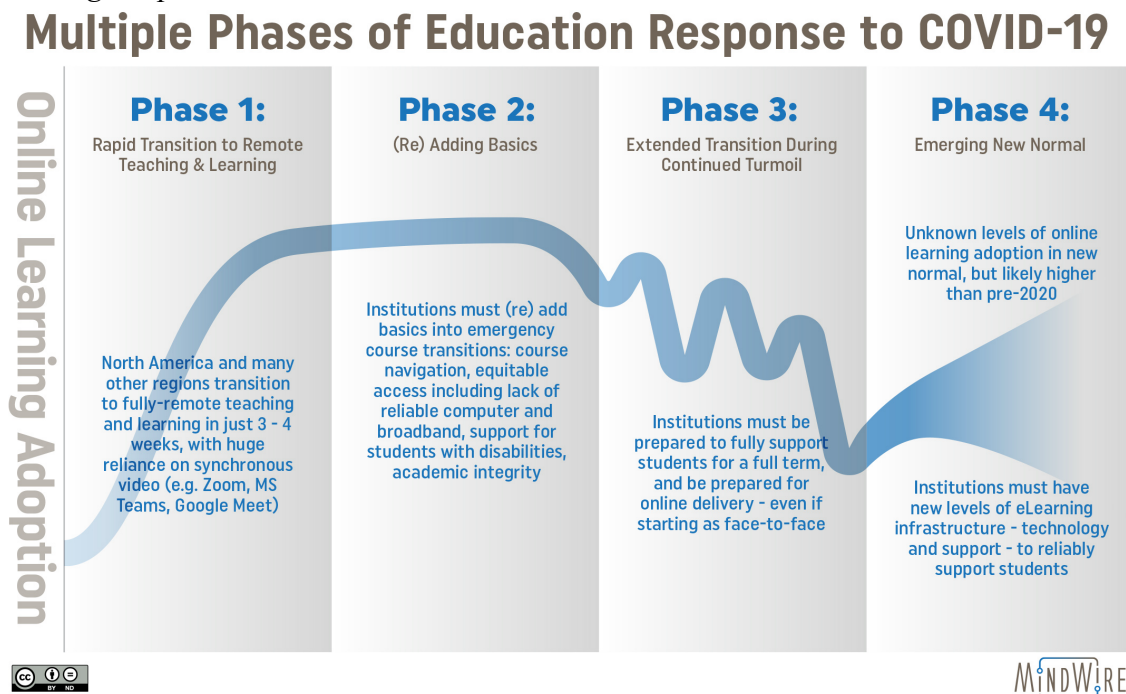
In the Spring of 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the term ‘emergency remote teaching’ emerged to describe what was occurring in education at all levels as schools shuttered their doors to in-person learning. Hodges et al. (2020) described emergency remote teaching as:

a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated. The primary objective in these circumstances is 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. (para. 13)

This was contrasted with online learning, which was based on purposeful instructional planning, using a systematic model of administrative procedures and course development. Online learning also requires the careful consideration of various pedagogical strategies and determination of which are best suited to the specific affordances and challenges of local delivery mediums as well as the purposeful selection of tools based on the strengths and limitations of each one. Finally, careful planning for online learning also requires that teachers be appropriately trained to use the tools available and apply them effectively to facilitate student learning.

Essentially, as Nagle et al. (2020a) reported, emergency remote teaching flourished during the Spring of 2020 when jurisdictions all across Canada scrambled to provide online tools, online course content and devices to all teachers to provide some modicum of continuity of learning for students when schools suddenly closed in March. This is the first of four phases of educator’s response to the pandemic as described by Barbour et al. (2020a) – a rapid transition to remote teaching and learning (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Four phases of educational response to COVID-19 in terms of remote and online learning adoption.*



**Phase 1: Rapid Transition to Remote Teaching and Learning.** Schools making an all hands on deck movement to remote delivery, often relying on synchronous video, with massive changes in just four weeks. Educators do whatever they can to have some educational presence for all classes online.

**Phase 2: (Re) Adding Basics.** Schools must (re)add basics into emergency course transitions: course navigation, equitable access addressing lack of reliable computer and broadband, support for students with disabilities, academic integrity. Schools must start to more fully address the question of quality of emergency online delivery of courses, as well as true contingency planning.

**Phase 3: Extended Transition During Continued Turmoil.** Schools must be prepared to support students for a full school year, and be prepared for online delivery – even if starting as face-to-face. During this phase, districts put plans in place to determine the mode of instruction based on the current realities of the pandemic. These plans should include adequate professional learning for teachers to ensure they have the skills and pedagogical knowledge to be able to implement the different instructional plans effectively.

**Phase 4: Emerging New Normal.** This phase will have unknown levels of online learning adoption, but it is likely that it will be higher than pre-COVID-19 days. Schools must have new levels of online learning infrastructure to reliably support students. Additionally, as teachers and students become more comfortable with learning using these tools, the chance that they will continue to use them post-pandemic increases significantly.



Following the Spring 2020'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 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.

Emergency remote teaching, what occurred during the Spring of 2020, was Phase 1 and – in some schools or with some individual teachers – this continued into Phase 2 where enhancements to remote teaching were made to improve the quality of the learning experiences offered. During the summer of 2020 little public consideration was given to planning for a return to 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 as well as the organization of students into cohort groups and timetables for their classes and courses.

The 2020-21 school year began with most schools in Canada open with classroom-based learning (Nagle et al, 2020b). Saskatchewan and British Columbia delayed school openings by two to five days and Ontario planned different start dates for in-class learning and remote learning, which was delayed by one week. While a national view was considered in summarizing what occurred, approaches 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, others did not. Some jurisdictions announced specific plans for remote learning, others relied on existing online learning programs for students who remained at home. Essentially, the school year could be described as a mix of Phase 1 and Phase 2, with few jurisdictions announcing or publishing specific plans for professional development or training for teachers new to remote learning.

This fifth report provides a summary of the publicly announced accommodations that were made to ensure continued pandemic schooling during the 2020-21 school year. In some instances, along with the school opening plans that were in place for Fall 2020, some jurisdictions had remote learning plans in place for the complete 2020-21 school year – including a description of the conditions under which schools would transition to remote learning. In other instances, school districts and boards were left to determine individual remote learning plans that may or may not have made use of provincially-provided or territorially-provided resources. Given the lessons that could, or should, have been learned during the rapid transition to emergency remote teaching in Spring 2020, the reality was that some jurisdictions did not put in place the necessary planning or preparation to allow the 2020-21 school year to proceed in the expected 'toggle term'<sup>2</sup> fashion – as envisioned by Phase 3 of the educational response to COVID-19.

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<sup>2</sup> "Toggle term" was a phrase coined by Alexander (2020) to describe the shift of instructional delivery model "between states of lockdown and openness, depending on their sense of epidemiological data and practical feasibility" (para. 32).

## Methodology

Data were collected by consulting various existing collections of data related to the response from various provinces and territories (e.g., Bogart [2020], Borden Ladner Gervais' [2020] *Canada-wide summary of COVID-19 education updates*, the People for Education's [2020-2021] *Tracking Canada's education systems' response to COVID-19*, etc.). These collections collated data for each jurisdiction as they released their educational guidelines from the beginning of the pandemic and throughout the 2020-21 school year. 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 throughout the 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 in-person and remote education during the 2020-21 school year, 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.

Finally, general internet searches – particularly of Canadian news organizations and media outlets – were regularly conducted. The authors also made use of the existing networks that had been developed by CANeLearn, as well as the longstanding *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* research project (Barbour et al., 2020b; Barbour et al., 2020c).

## How to Read this Report

This report is designed to chronicle the nature of face-to-face, hybrid, and remote teaching in each jurisdiction throughout the 2020-21 school year. Each jurisdictional profile attempts to report what was found with respect to:

- existing e-learning resources present in the jurisdiction prior to the 2020-21 school year (based on the data from the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 e-Learning in Canada* report);
- the specific disruptions that occurred during the 2020-21 school year and the nature of those disruptions;
- the specific learning model that was utilized during the identified disruptions; and
- a description of the types of support provided to hybrid and remote learning.

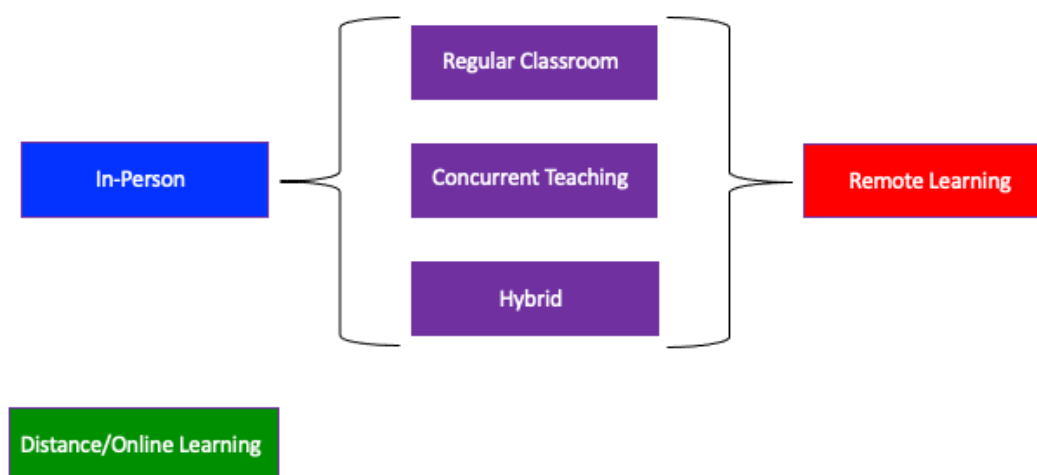
It is important to remember that at the time each of these jurisdictions were determining and/or adjusting their plans for K-12 education, it was against the backdrop of the status of the

pandemic in their individual province or territory. Health Canada (2020-21) began presenting the number of active COVID-19 cases in graphical format on their website in late July 2020. Table A-1, as well as Figures A-1 through A-10, in Appendix A indicate the number of active cases in each jurisdiction across Canada on the first day of school in September and January, as well as the first day of the month for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year for each province and territory. This data is not presented to parse trends with regard to infection rates throughout the school year, or to suggest specific differences between the provinces and territories. However, as the active case rate would have been an important factor influencing each jurisdictions' plans and actions, it is important that the reader have ready access to this data.

## National Overview

There were five dominant models through which K-12 education was provided during the 2020-21 school year.

Figure 2. *Various learning models available during the 2020-21 school year*



At the beginning of the year, many jurisdictions provided parents/guardians the option to enroll their students in school-based, in-person learning, or a distance, online learning, model. These two learning models were consistent with any other school year. **In-person learning** is the traditional model of K-12 schooling, where students are enrolled in a brick-and-mortar school and engage in their learning with teachers located at their school in a typical classroom setting. It is the kind of learning that many readers of this report will have experienced throughout their own K-12 education. In some cases, up to 6% of these students might take one or more courses at a distance because they were unable to access the course in their brick-and-mortar school for a variety of reasons (Barbour et al., 2020b; Barbour et al., 2020c). Even while engaged in these individual online courses, this small number of students were still physically located in their

brick-and-mortar school – often under the direct supervision of a teacher or paraprofessional in an online learning or computer lab, the learning resource centre or library, or even the back of a classroom. This form of supplemental distance learning, for a very small population of students, has been available in most jurisdictions since the late 1990s or early 2000s.

While full-time **distance/online learning** has been available to K-12 students in most jurisdictions for some time, traditionally these students represent less than 1% of the students enrolled in the K-12 system. However, during the 2020-21 school year, many jurisdictions gave parents/guardians the option to enroll their students in these full-time distance, online learning opportunities (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Jurisdictions where parents/guardians had the opportunity to enroll in full-time distance learning*

Jurisdiction	Ability to enrol in full-time distance learning
British Columbia	Full-time distance/online learning an option
Alberta	Full-time distance/online learning an option
Saskatchewan	Full-time distance/online learning an option
Manitoba	Full-time distance/online learning an option for any student sick with COVID-19 or secondary students
Ontario	Full-time distance/online learning an option
Quebec	Full-time distance/online learning not an option
New Brunswick	Full-time distance/online learning an option
Nova Scotia	Not specified
Prince Edward Island	Full-time distance/online learning not an option
Newfoundland & Labrador	Full-time distance/online learning an option for students home due to COVID-19
Yukon	Full-time distance/online learning not an option
Northwest Territories	Full-time distance/online learning not an option
Nunavut	Full-time distance/online learning not an option

For a variety of reasons (e.g., presence of immune-compromised family members in the household, general public health concerns about the community or region, concerns about the disruption from sudden school lock-downs and/or the back and forth between in-person and remote learning, etc.), parents/guardians decided to enroll their children in a model of learning where the student did not attend a brick-and-mortar school at all, but rather completed all of their learning at a distance online. In most cases, these online learning opportunities were provided by existing distance and online learning providers – some of whom had a history of providing supplemental and full-time learning opportunities for over two decades. However, there were also instances where school boards and districts established their own distance education programs over the summer of 2020 – sometimes in partnership with an existing K-12 distance, online learning program and sometimes on their own.

Depending on the jurisdiction, there were also some learning models that combined aspects of the different mediums to accommodate various public health measures (e.g., mask wearing, physical and social distancing, restricted class size, etc.). The measures related to physical distancing and restricted class size forced some schools to adopt a learning model where students

were only in the physical classroom a certain portion of time. One such model is a **hybrid learning model**, which has one group of students learning in-person in their classroom and another group of students learning at home through distance, online learning (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Typical schedule for a hybrid learning model*

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Learning Group A <b>In-Person</b>	Learning Group A <b>In-Person</b>	<b>Flex Learning Day</b> for all students	Learning Group A <b>Distance Learning</b>	Learning Group A <b>Distance Learning</b>
Learning Group B <b>Distance Learning</b>	Learning Group B <b>Distance Learning</b>		Learning Group B <b>In-Person</b>	Learning Group B <b>In-Person</b>

In this hybrid learning example, students in Group A would be in-person on Monday and Tuesday, then in a distance/online learning model on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Students in Group B would be in a distance/online learning model in-person on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, then in-person on Thursday and Friday. Another common model would be alternating days (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Another typical schedule for a hybrid learning model*

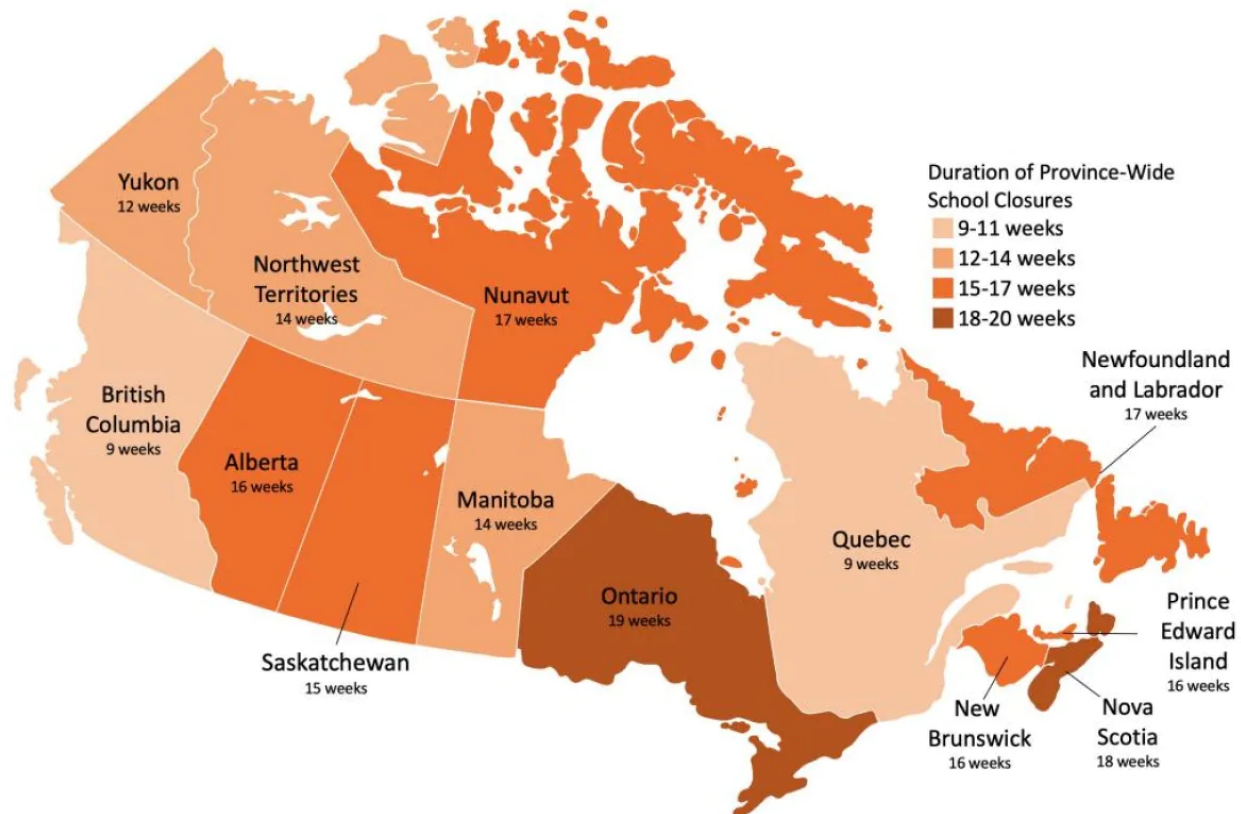
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Group A	In-person	Distance	In-person	Distance	In-person
	Group B	Distance	In-person	Distance	In-person	Distance
Week 2	Group A	Distance	In-person	Distance	In-person	Distance
	Group B	In-person	Distance	In-person	Distance	In-person

This second hybrid learning model had one group of students in the classroom each day with the other group at a distance. Over the course of a two week period each group of students would have five in-person days and five distance/online learning days.

The type of distance/online learning that was provided varied. In some instances, schools provided distance/online students with asynchronous course content created by their own teachers, provided free of charge from different online learning providers, and/or leased from a online content vendor. However, a more common hybrid model was the **concurrent teaching** learning model (also called co-seating or co-locating). In this model the classroom-based teacher taught some students who were in-person with the teacher in the physical classroom (i.e., colloquially referred to as ‘roomies’). At the same time, the teacher’s instruction was being streamed live through a video conferencing software such as *Zoom* or *Google Meet* or *Microsoft Teams* with other students logged in at home (i.e., colloquially referred to as ‘zoomies’). Essentially, concurrent teaching was an individual teacher providing instruction in-person to roomies, broadcast online to zoomies at home (Molnar et al., 2021).

Regardless if students were attending school in-person, through a hybrid schedule, or in a concurrent model, the local epidemiology of the virus caused schools in many jurisdictions to close all of their classroom-based instruction and revert to a **remote learning** model. Following the end of the 2020-21 school year, CBC News (2021a) published a map to indicate the number of weeks schools were closed provincewide/territory-wide for each jurisdiction.

Figure 3. *Time lost to provincewide school closures for each province or territory across Canada for the 2020-21 school year*



It should be noted that many schools were also closed at the local community, district, and/or regional level, as such the amount of time that students were forced into a remote learning context was likely longer for most K-12 students across Canada.

In fact, this was a trend in the overall data collection. One of the consistent findings as each jurisdiction was examined was a lack of specificity in terms explicit guidance and/or direct mandates at the provincial or territorial level, which allowed individual school boards or districts to make decisions and take action at the local or regional level. For example, on Thursday, May 27, 2021 it was publicly announced that there had been two potential COVID-19 exposures in a local grocery store in Stephenville, Newfoundland and Labrador on the previous day (CBC News, 2021b). Later that day the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) closed Stephenville Elementary School and Stephenville Middle School for Friday, May 28, 2021. On Sunday, May 30, 2021 it was announced that there was a new cluster of COVID-19 cases, and the region was placed into Alert Level 4 (i.e., the province's second highest restriction level). However, the NLESD only closed Stephenville Primary School for Monday, May 31, 2021 (Saltwire News, 2021). All other schools in the region were open – including Stephenville Elementary School and Stephenville Middle School – and Stephenville Primary School was open again by Tuesday, June 1, 2021. In this instances, the days lost at these schools would not be included in the 17 weeks listed in Figure 12 for Newfoundland and Labrador. While this is one

example, there are literally hundreds of these local and regional examples that occurred across the country when schools were forced to close and resort to remote learning.

While not a trend in the data or the data collection, it is important to note that the CANeLearn reports focused on Spring 2020 and the Fall 2020 re-opening – as well as this report – were all designed to simply document public actions and pronouncements of various jurisdictions. These previous reports, and even the new jurisdictional profiles that follow, have not engaged in an assessment of the educational response various governments have made during the pandemic. For example, research out of the United States has also found that most teachers reported to not being adequately trained to design, deliver, and support learning remotely (Diliberti & Kaufman, 2020). Despite the fact there was little or no delay in the re-opening of schools for the 2020-21 school year, initial research from both the United States and Europe indicated that reopening schools increased the rate of community spread of COVID-19 (Casini & Roccett, 2021; Courtemanche, 2021; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2020). This type of discussion and research on the spread of the disease in schools has not been included in the CANeLearn reports.

However, this deeper analysis of the health impacts can lead to recommendations that help to guide policy and improve safety in schools, which subsequently impact how learning opportunities are provided. For example, both Ismail et al. (2021) and Larosa et al. (2020) stressed the importance of quick testing, isolation, and other preventative interventions to better control clusters that developed in school age children. This advice was consistent with more broadly focused research conducted by Kočańczyk and Lipniacki (2021), who examined 25 highly developed countries – as well as 10 individual US states – and found that jurisdictions that enacted quick, stringent, and sustained restrictions had lower case counts and death rates than jurisdictions that were slower to bring in restrictions or brought in looser restrictions. Additionally, Kočańczyk and Lipniacki also reported that those jurisdictions who enacted quick, stringent, and sustained measures had fewer restricted days overall, at least compared to those jurisdictions that were slow to act or brought in half measures.

From a schooling standpoint, restrictions often resulted in some form of hybrid learning or remote learning. As the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2021) stated, based on data collected March 2020 and February 2021:

Last year, 1.5 billion students in 188 countries were locked out of their schools. Some of them were able to find their way around closed school doors, through alternative learning opportunities, well supported by their parents and teachers. However, many remained shut out when their school shut down, particularly those from the most marginalised groups, who did not have access to digital learning resources or lacked the support or motivation to learn on their own. The learning losses that follow from school closures could throw long shadows over the economic well-being of individuals and nations. (p. 3)

While Canada was one of the approximately three dozen countries featured in the report, there has not been systematic research on the impact of the pandemic on K-12 schooling. For example, the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) at the University of Saskatchewan surveyed 1002 Canadians in March 2021. These researchers found that while 63% of

respondents indicated that online education delivery was a positive long-term change from the pandemic, 54% also felt that changes from COVID-19 would have a negative impact on children's education (CHASR, 2021). Beyond this kind of perception data, much of the literature has focused on a perceived fear of *potential* impacts the pandemic *might* have on K-12 schooling (e.g., Moore et al., 2021).

As the summer 2021 begins to wane, after a full year coping with pandemic school closures, most jurisdictions announcements have once again focused on a 'safe' return to school buildings. Plans continue to be for a return to the 'new normal' with the opening of schools being the lynchpin to re-establishing both social and economic balance. Like in the past year, there continued to be more demand for remote learning options from some parents. Unlike in the past year, it is likely the majority of students age 12 and older will be vaccinated – along with their teachers. While a year later, at the start of the 2021-22 school year some schools are likely entering Phase 3 (particularly those with younger students, where the start could be in-person learning). However, the potential for COVID-19 outbreaks in the unvaccinated population in schools and communities looms. In the United States, where many schools open in August, already schools are closing as outbreaks of the Delta variant of COVID-19 erupt (Goldberg et al., 2021; Knutson, 2021; Zalazni, 2021). Although it is also important to point out that many US states have enacted laws or executive actions that prevent requiring masks and/or ban the use of remote learning (Blad, 2021; Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2021). While not handicapped by these same kinds of mandates, there is still real potential for school boards and districts across Canada to follow the same pattern as their American counterparts in terms of disease transmission within the school setting.


Given these realities, it is important to once again underscore that this line of inquiry from CANeLearn has not been designed to make assessments about the effectiveness of emergency response or the possible impacts of that response. However, it is also important that readers use the descriptive data provided by this line of inquiry over all five reports to make determinations about the appropriateness of the planning, preparations, and actions of each of these Canadian jurisdictions.



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



## Newfoundland and Labrador

	<i>2019-20 Figures</i>
	Population: 522,994
	Number of K-12 Schools: 260
	Number of K-12 Students: 63,722
	Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1
	Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning: 1,092

### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), a division of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and funded directly the Ministry of Education, was the sole provider of K-12 distance education in the province. The CDLI had created asynchronous content for 45 courses (mostly at the high school level) and allowed any provincial educator (i.e., including classroom teachers) to register in their learning management system and use the CDLI's asynchronous course materials with their students.

### Return to Remote Learning

On February 18, 2021 provincial schools returned to emergency remote learning due to an increased spike in COVID-19 cases, including a new variant of the virus (CBC News, 2021c). Schools throughout the spring closed on a per-region basis – such as St. John's returning to remote learning mid-March (CBC News, 2021d).


### Learning Model

In mid-April most high schools in at-risk regions across Newfoundland and Labrador worked from a blended learning model, switching days of in-class learning between cohorts (CBC News, 2021e). Having to again switch to remote learning in February 2021, there was a 'lag' in acquiring enough digital devices for students across Newfoundland and Labrador (CBC News, 2021c). Under Scenario 3 where students are learning remotely, the ministry mandated a minimum three-hour day for kindergarten to grade three, 90-minutes per day for grades four to six, and full-day remote learning for grades seven to 12 (VOCM, 2021).

### Remote Learning Supports

*Google Classroom* was used as a province-wide learning management system for remote learning (CBC News, 2021f). All assessments continued with a full implementation of curriculum; but provincial standardized tests continued for the 2020-21 school year. Students with exceptionalities may be allowed to continue in-school learning based on supports from their specific school (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2020).

## Nova Scotia

	<i>2019-20 Figures</i>
	Population: 971,395
	Number of K-12 Schools: 371
	Number of K-12 Students: 123,239
	Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2
	Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~106,627

### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were two distance education programs in the province. The Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) provided online courses for the seven English-speaking regional centres and the *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial* for the French. The correspondence studies program provided print-based courses (i.e., transition to an online delivery format is ongoing) for adult students, home-schooled students, and students living outside of Nova Scotia. Beginning in 2015, the *Nova Scotia Action Plan for Education* made additional commitments to the growth of online and blended learning by providing classroom students and teachers with access to NSVS courses and online learning opportunities for middle school students to prepare them for online courses in high school.

### Return to Remote Learning

Nova Scotia schools were closed, province-wide on April 28, 2021 and due to rising COVID-19 cases across the province and on May 19<sup>th</sup> the decision was made to remain online for the rest of the school year (Cooke, 2021a). However, a decision to return to in-school learning took place for some areas as early as June 3 (Cooke, 2021b).


### Learning Model

Under Scenario 3 (i.e., fully remote learning) there was a blend of asynchronous and synchronous learning (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021a). All students were expected to participate fully in remote learning. Pre-primary students were sent play-based learning materials (e.g., journal, pencils, crayons, glue, scissors, etc.) and booklets on play-based learning for parents. In primary to grade three, students were required to engage in one hour of synchronous learning per day, with two hours of asynchronous work. In grades four to six, there was one and a half hours (either individually or with a group) of synchronous work with up to three hours asynchronous. In grades seven to nine, there was two hours of synchronous work with four hours asynchronous. For grades 10-12, there was up to 50% of their school day as synchronous. At all grades, additional synchronous time could be required for students needing additional support. All assessments and reporting continued as per a regular school year.

## **Remote Learning Supports**

Teachers had access to an eLearning site developed by the Nova Scotia Government. Here teachers could gain access to supports related to developing synchronous and asynchronous ‘learning experiences.’ Students who needed assistive technology were provided devices by the government. Any other student that needed technology were provided devices with a priority given to marginalized and racialized communities (e.g., African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaw students). Regional centers for education were responsible to ensure had the support to “effectively use technology and platforms required to access and support learning and well-being” (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021b, p. 21). For students without internet access were offered other options such as the delivery of USB with learning materials (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021c).

## Prince Edward Island

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 159,249 Number of K-12 Schools: 63 Number of K-12 Students: 20,131</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 133</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were no K-12 distance education programs in Prince Edward Island and there were no intentional blended learning (i.e., specific projects or initiatives) occurring in public schools. Through an inter-provincial agreement students in Prince Edward Island were funded to take online courses from the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

### Return to Remote Learning

Throughout the 2020-21 school year some schools closed based on case numbers (Snan, 2021). Early May 2021 there was a province-wide lockdown with schools closed (CBC News, 2021g). However a week later, in-school learning returned May 9, 2021.


### Learning Model

Students who could not attend in-school learning due to illness or self-isolation were expected to complete online and offline work prepared by their teacher. As such, if a class or school needed to self-isolate or close, the teacher was expected to continue learning remotely. Expectations for synchronous and asynchronous learning included: kindergarten had 60-80 minutes daily covering “all learning topics,” with each subject given 15-20 minutes each. In grades one to six, two and half hours per day, in grades seven to 12, the classes during the school day remained the same as during a regular school day.

### Remote Learning Supports

The province adopted *Google Classroom* and *Google Sites* as its provincial learning management system. If students without access to technology went remotely, devices were delivered to students in need. Assessment and reporting continued as per a regular school year, and provincial assessments were cancelled for the 2020-21 school year.

## New Brunswick

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 781,024 Number of K-12 Schools: 307 Number of K-12 Students: 98,906</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 2 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~12,000</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development managed two distance learning programs that serviced secondary students in New Brunswick in either of the province's two official languages. There were approximately 55 courses in the Anglophone program and 28 in the Francophone program. The content for all of the distance learning courses was available to all teachers in the province to use as online courses in a more blended learning model under the direction of their local school's classroom teachers.

### Return to Remote Learning

Schools shifted to remote learning based on areas of risk within specific communities and regions listed as 'Red Zones' (Government of New Brunswick, 2021). On April 11, 2021 regions in Edmundston went into lockdown where schools continued remotely (New Brunswick Education and Early Childhood Development, 2021a).

### Learning Model


Under orange and yellow zones students at-risk were the only ones who shifted to fully remote learning populations only (Government of New Brunswick, 2021). During a red zone alert, high school students moved to a blended learning model (New Brunswick Education and Early Childhood Development, 2021b). Absences throughout the K-12 system were high during red zone alerts, as remote learning was no longer mandated under this level of alert (Moore, 2021). Depending on community risk, students in grades nine to 12 engaged in blended learning model. Students who were at-risk medically or due to self-isolation were also required to 'learn at a distance.' Teachers were responsible for continued child learning if they needed to remain at home (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2020). Teachers were asked to maintain a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning to minimize screen time.

### Remote Learning Supports

Students were responsible for their own devices. If in need, families could apply to the 'Laptop Assistance Program' to obtain any needed devices for their child's learning. Those families

eligible for this subsidy had to earn less than \$85,000/year, with a maximum amount given for one device per child depending on income range.

## Quebec

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 8,572,054 Number of K-12 Schools: 3,102 Number of K-12 Students: 1,003,322</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 5+ Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~55,000+</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The largest distance education program was provided by the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (SOFAD), comprised of correspondence distance learning materials which primarily serve adult learners. School boards could use the French learning materials in their own district-based programs. The Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN) provided a variety of distance learning opportunities, as well as services and resources (e.g., tutoring, tailored pedagogical content, training, community learning centres' support, curated resources, and enrichment activities), to all nine English-speaking school boards in the province.

### Return to Emergency Remote Learning

All provincial schools closed Dec. 17, 2020 and resumed 'virtual teaching' (Ross, 2020). Regular classes resumed after the winter holiday for elementary students, but secondary students continued virtual learning for one more week and opened on Jan. 11, 2021. The province did not issue a province-wide shutdown of schools, instead it was a region by region basis. For example, by mid-February, due to variants of COVID-19, schools in the Montreal area closed (Guibilaro, 2021), and by the end of March Quebec City and surrounding areas returned to lockdown and remote learning (Olson, 2021).

### Learning Model

As of the beginning of January 2021 all students are required to return to in-school learning, with secondary students returning January 11 (Laframboise, 2021). Only children who were at-risk medically were allowed to continue with full-time distance education. The only alternative for parents who wished their children not attend in-school learning is to remove them from their school and homeschool (Spector, 2021).

Requirements for distance learning included a minimum number of hours for educational services: for preschool 11.5 hours per week of teaching or learning and preparation activities and two hours of independent work; grades one and two 10.5 hours of teaching, three hours of independent work with two hours of teacher availability to respond to students' needs; grades three and four 10 hours per week with five hours of independent work and two hours per day of teacher availability; grades five to six 13 hours per week with seven and half hours of

independent work and two hours of teacher availability; and secondary students 15 hours per week of teaching with seven and a half of independent work and five hours per week of teacher availability (Quebec Ministry of Education, 2021).


### **Remote Learning Supports**

Telus partnered with the Ministry of Education to offer access to up to 15,000 data plans for students starting to return to school as a strategy to minimize the digital divide (Telus, 2021). Until the partnership with Telus, parents were responsible for the cost of connectivity. Students in areas with limited access to the internet were allowed to be in-school with supervision and safety protocols in place. Boards were also required to offer LTE devices to students to access the internet (Quebec Ministry of Education, 2021).

Each school prepared emergency protocols that included educational services during distance learning and managed it 'locally.' As such the temporary loaning of devices was also relegated to individual school boards. The ministry offered funding for school boards, which included a 'reserve supply' of over 200 000 tablets laptops for students that do not have digital devices. School boards were to also offer assistance to parents/caregivers to use the technology.



## Ontario

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 14,723,497 Number of K-12 Schools: 4844 Number of K-12 Students: 2,056,055</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Programs: ~81 Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Students: ~850,000</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Ontario Ministry of Education provided school boards with access to a learning management system and other tools and asynchronous course content for 122 English-language and 109 French-language courses for the delivery of e-learning. All educators in the 60 English-speaking and 12 French-speaking public school boards could use the Ministry-tools and materials in conjunction with their own course materials. As well, there were as many as eight different private or independent K-12 distance or online learning programs that students could attend.

### Return to Emergency Remote Learning

Due to rising COVID-19 cases emergency remote learning began province-wide on January 4, 2021 due to a provincial lockdown. Various regions across Ontario reopened a different times based on COVID-19 cases: elementary school students in most regions returned to in-class learning on February 1, 2021 with mandatory masks for all students in grades one to three, who had previously been exempt. By February 8, 2021 most southwestern Ontario students returned to in-school learning, with secondary students returning February 22 (Thompson, 2021). Due to rising numbers again, Premier Doug Ford postponed the March Break for all public schools until the week of April 12, 2021 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021a). However, all provincial schools returned to remote learning April 19 and schools remained closed for the remainder of the school year.

### Learning Model

Ontario school boards allowed parents to change their child's learning model by the middle of Fall 2020. This resulted in thousands of students moving online from in-person learning, with teachers being hired into remote learning positions, as the 'virtual schools' were created to accommodate fully-remote learners. This change in learning model was extended again for January 2021 due to COVID-19 cases (Simpson, 2020). However, the Ministry mandated that all school boards offer 'virtual learning' to students for the 2021-22 school year (Wilson, 2021).

Attendance requirements were the same as required pre-COVID-19. The Ministry of Education mandated specific synchronous learning requirements, per grade, during remote learning. With a continuation of the full 300 minutes of learning per day, students in kindergarten had 180 minutes of synchronous learning per day; students in grades one to 12 had 225 minutes per day;

grades nine to 12 would have had at least 60 minutes of their 75 minute courses synchronous (Pringle, 2021). Secondary students worked in a cohort, hybrid learning model where they alternated days remotely and in-school. While remote, students were still required to be online for their class, as another cohort attended in-school. Students with significant learning needs attended in-person school for supports, even while schools were closed.


Assessment and reporting continued as per-usual. Provincial standardized tests for grades three and six were cancelled. While the secondary literacy was to proceed as usual with a new pilot test created, many school boards opted out citing pandemic logistics for social distancing and stress on students (Rushowy, 2021).

### **Remote Learning Supports**

As required by the Ministry of Education, each public school board continued to provide digital devices and internet connectivity to students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021b). Other resources (e.g., learning packages) could be distributed to students who still could not gain access to either digital devices or the internet. The Ministry also mandated boards to offer a standardized suite of synchronous learning platforms.

As of late October 2020, several districts were still in need of digital devices, such as laptops and tablets (Samba, 2020). For example, a spokesperson for the Toronto District School Board, which had 2,000 students waiting for devices stated that this deficit was a national issue that “reflect larger backlogs amid surging demands for Chromebooks and iPads across the country” (para. 2). At the end of October, approximately 60,000 devices had been lent out to students across the Toronto District School Board alone.

## Manitoba

	<p><i>2019-20 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 Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: ~38 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~13,749</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

Each school division in the province participated in one or more of the distance education program options. The Independent Study Option (ISO) (i.e., print) offered 55 courses in English and 13 in French for grades nine to 12 students. The Teacher Mediated Option (TMO) (i.e., instructional television), managed by rural school divisions through the TMO Consortium in partnership with Manitoba Education and Training, offered fewer courses but included direct teacher involvement and support to the student. Finally, there was also a Web-Based Course (WBC) Option, which allowed all Manitoba teachers are able to use the WBC learning management system and its grade nine to 12 courses for free with both distance or classroom-based students.

### Return to Emergency Remote Learning

Across the province, students in grades seven to 12 were required to return to remote learning for two weeks after the winter break starting January 4, 2021; this option remained optional for students in kindergarten to grade six (Bergen, 2020). The province did not issue a province-wide shutdown of schools, instead it was a region by region basis. For example, in the capital of Regina, on March 24, 2021 secondary students returned to in-class learning and elementary students returned March 29. However, by the middle of May students in Winnipeg, Brandon and surrounding areas also returned to remote learning for the remainder of the school year (Manitoba Education, 2021).

### Learning Model

The remote learning model for kindergarten to grade eight continued to be offered for those parents who wanted their child to remain at home for the 2020-2021 school year. The province of Manitoba has mandated that this decision, to be made by January 30, 2021, is final for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year (Macintosh, 2021). Manitoba Education announced in June that while some schools were closed, teachers could arrange to meet with small groups of five or six students at the school to engage in supports, assessments, and transition planning (Manitoba Education, 2021).


Depending on the level of risk due to COVID-19, there were three stages offered: level one in-school, level two a blended model, and level three fully remote. Blended learning included

having students in kindergarten to grade eight with special needs prioritized for in-school learning and secondary students working remotely with access to the school for special programming and assessment. Fully remote students were still expected to engage in full participation during the day with regular assessments (Manitoba Education, 2020). Students in grades one to four within the remote learning model were expected to engage in five to six hours of synchronous learning per week with two and a half hours of asynchronous work each week. Students in grades five to eight were expected to engage in seven to eight hours of synchronous learning per week with three hours of asynchronous work per day. A further requirement was for teachers to meet individually with their students (i.e., primary to middle school grades) for at least 20 minutes per week. Kindergarten students continued with play-based learning and weekly check-ins with their teacher (Macintosh, 2021).

### **Remote Learning Supports**

Each school division and individual schools were responsible for students having access to digital devices (Manitoba Education, 2020).

## Saskatchewan

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,181,987 Number of K-12 Schools: 780 Number of K-12 Students: 186,036</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 16 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 12,456</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

In Saskatchewan school divisions were responsible to ensure distance and online learning opportunities with local support. School divisions were also required to ensure that distance learners had success rates that were equivalent to students in traditional classroom environments. There were 16 provincial online programs in 13 school divisions, one independent school, and one First Nation educational authority recognized as K-12 online schools.

### Return to Remote Learning

On November 12, 2020, Regina high schools moved to alternative days of learning to reduce their capacity by 50% (Eneas, 2021). By mid-November several of Regina and Saskatoon high schools went partially online and in-person (CBC News, 2020), and by mid-December all public schools in Regina closed until January 11, 2021 (Frew, 2020). With the return to in-person learning, schools closed on a by-need basis. By March 2021, the province closed all public schools (Farthing, 2021; Hill, 2021).


### Learning Model

In early November large Saskatoon and Regina high schools began a blended model of learning (CBC News, 2021h). When students returned to remote learning, no specific guidelines were found regarding synchronous and asynchronous learning.

### Remote Learning Supports

No remote learning supports offered by the Ministry of Education could be found.

## Alberta

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 4,421,876 Number of K-12 Schools: 2,503 Number of K-12 Students: 741,802</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 34 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 82,857</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

Alberta Education listed 34 different distance and/or online learning programs as a part of their website directory. However, the provincial distance education program (i.e., the Alberta Distance Learning Centre) ceased operations following the 2020-21 school year, with the responsibility for distance learning reverting to individual school division programs. The provincial consortium of the five French school divisions continued to support the provincial *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* program.

### Return to Emergency Remote Learning

The province moved from in-person learning to remote learning for junior and high schools (i.e., grades 7-12) as of November 30, 2020 due to rising COVID-19 cases. All schools remained closed for the beginning of 2021 and returned to in-school learning on January 11, 2021 (Keller, 2020). While junior and senior high students in Calgary returned to remote learning on April 21, 2021 (Ferguson, 2021), all schools returned to remote learning May 3. In-school learning resumed on May 25, 2021 except for one region (i.e., Wood Buffalo), which opened May 31 (Ramsay, 2021). Schools and/or specific classes required to quarantine for two weeks continued learning remotely (Alberta Education, 2021).

### Learning Model


Parents had the option to keep their students in remote learning for the 2020-21 school year. Some district schools used a blended model of learning with cohorting for in-school students. In a remote learning model a minimum number of hours per day online was required and specific curricular subjects were the foci. For example, students in kindergarten were online five hours per week with a curricular focus on language and math with some instruction focused on mental health; grades one to three had an average of 10 hours per week and focused on language and math, with an additional two hours to include health and fine arts; grades four to six had 12.5 hours per week focusing on language and math with an additional two hours of health and fine arts; grades seven to nine averaged 15 hours per week with an additional two hours for their elective courses. Main course offerings included math, language, social studies, science, and mental health; grades 10-12 were required to have three hours per course per week of work. Students were expected to attend most of these hours synchronously (Rocky View Schools, 2021).

## **Remote Learning Supports**

As of November 30, 2020 the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District stated they had collectively loaned out almost 5,000 digital devices, such as Chromebooks and laptops, to low-income students as grades seven to 12 students made the transition to remote learning (Ferguson, 2020). Yet, for both boards, many students had to rely on paper homework packets because of a lack of access to digital technologies or internet. While many students were still in need of devices or internet, some schools provided in-school visits for a limited number of students to use the library facilities.

Platforms used for remote learning included *Google Meet* and *Zoom*. Assessment, evaluation, and reporting continued as usual, but the provincial achievement tests were optional for school authorities.

## British Columbia

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 5,100,000 Number of K-12 Schools: 1,569 Number of K-12 Students: 548,702</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 69 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~59,000</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were 53 district-level public distributed, or online, learning schools and 16 independent school programs. Additionally, Open School BC provided provincial content and online hosting services for public school districts lacking the capacity or desire to manage their own program. Many schools took advantage of membership in the Western Canadian Learning Network (WCLN), a consortium of public school districts providing online courses, digital resources, and technologies that support their use for public schools in British Columbia (as well as schools and districts in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Yukon).

### Return to Remote Learning

All schools across the province remained open during the 2020-2021 school year despite increased COVID-19 numbers and variant concerns. Should a specific school have high case numbers, a voluntary ‘functional closure’ of the school or specific cohorts was put in place; students would then return to remote learning.

### Choice in Learning Model

There remained remote learning options for students across the province. For example, the Vancouver School Board extended the option for remote learning (i.e., Learn from Home Transition Option) until the end of the 2020-21 school year. Under this option, students still held their place at their respective schools. While there were approximately 6,000 students in remote learning under this option in September 2020, there were 2,600 students who continued with this mode of learning till the end of the school year (Britten, 2021). BC implemented a distributed learning model for students who continued remote learning. Elementary students who continued with remote learning were still required to take a full course load at one school, whereas secondary students were able to take courses from different schools (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021a).

Students continued with cohorts or ‘learning groups’ in-school, with 20-30 students in each group (Government of British Columbia, 2021). A learning group also referred to multiple classes coming together for a specific activity (e.g., physical education and music). For secondary students, a learning group might be comprised of students with the same courses together throughout the year. The maximum number of students per group was 60 in elementary




and 120 for secondary. Full curriculum expectations, assessments and reporting were in place during this school year.

### **Remote Learning Supports**

The provincial government allocated \$8.2 million to specifically support Indigenous learners to address learning loss, mental health, and technology for remote learning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021b). Students with significant learning needs continued with the same supports in-school as prior to COVID-19.

## Yukon

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 35,874 Number of K-12 Schools: 33 Number of K-12 Students: 5,456</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Programs: 2 Number of Formal K-12 Distance Education Students: 654</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

Aurora Virtual School was the only English-language online school in the territory and it offered 51 online courses. The only French-language online program was École Nomade. The territory was also able to access programming from four distance learning schools in British Columbia, as well as the *Centre francophone d'éducation à distance* (CFED) in Alberta.

### Return to Remote Learning

The province had school closures that differed between larger cities and rural areas throughout the 2020-21 school year.


### Learning Model

The province used a low (i.e., fully in-school) to high (i.e., fully remote) scale of what schools would look like. In-between fully in-school and fully remote a flexible learning model was put in place. When moving from low to high, initially only essential groups (i.e., students with diverse needs) would attend in-school full-time, while the rest of the students would engage in a part-time rotating schedule with blended learning. Moving toward the high-end of the scale (i.e., before fully remote) only students with significant needs, such as students with disabilities and diverse learning needs as well as students needing support, were attend in-school full-time (Yukon Ministry of Education, 2021a), while most of students were remote learning.

Each school across the Yukon developed their own operational school plan specific for their school environment (People for Education, 2020-2021). Blended learning requirements included full days of learning for grades kindergarten to nine and half-day instruction for grades 10-12, with the rest of the day open for teacher support and student independent work. Digital tools were used at varying degrees dependent on grade level to support instruction and learning.

Parents were asked to contact their individual schools if they were in need of digital devices. Digital platforms used included *Moodle*, *Microsoft 365* with *Teams* and *One Note*, *Google Classroom*, and *FreshGrade* (Yukon Ministry of Education, 2021b).

## Northwest Territories

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 44,826 Number of K-12 Schools: 49 Number of K-12 Students: 8,700</p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 1 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 131</p>
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### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

The Northern Distance Learning program (NDL) provided a synchronous distance learning program through videoconferencing, which included access to online asynchronous course material. Additionally, grades 9-12 students could be enrolled in distance learning courses offered through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre.

### Return to Remote Learning

The provincial capital of Yellowknife closed schools and returned to emergency remote learning on May 3, 2021 and was lifted May 17 (Mosher, 2021).

### Learning Model

Both in-school, blended, and remote learning (i.e., for students needing to self-isolate) were options for the 2020-2021 school year. During blended learning, students attend in-school in the morning and then remotely in the afternoon to complete school work online or with paper learning packages. Working on the land was also an option during remote learning. Specifically by grade when COVID-19 risk was low, K-6 would attend in-school with no physical distance when in their class 'bubble.' For grades seven to 12 in-person or blended learning when needed (Government of Northwest Territories, 2021). Assessments and reporting continued as usual regardless of learning model.

### Remote Learning Supports

All learning protocols, regardless of learning model, continued as normal. Students who needed assistive technologies had access to these supports regardless of learning model. Assessment supports continued per the *Continuity of Learning: Assessments and Supports for Distance Education* published in May 2020.

## Nunavut



### *2019-20 Figures*

Population: 35,944

Number of K-12 Schools: 44

Number of K-12 Students: 10,107

Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 0

Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: 19

### **Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year**

The Department of Education allowed various educational bodies to offer distance learning, including the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. The development of a Ministerial Directive regarding access to and delivery of distance education has been underway since 2012.

### **Return to Remote Learning**

On November 18th, 2020, Nunavut went into a two-week provincial lockdown. After schools in Iqaluit closed again in mid-March 2021 as a preventative measure to combat COVID, the government closed all schools across the province on March 17 for a three-week period (Murray & McKay, 2021). Throughout the winter and spring, different areas across Nunavut (other than territorial lockdowns) moved to different stages of reopening depending on COVID cases and preventative measures. By June 2021, Nunavut moved some areas (such as Iqaluit), into stage three of reopening.


### **Learning Model**

Stage one is a complete reopening of in-class learning for K-12. Under stage two, all elementary students attend, five days a week. A blended learning model is in place for middle and high-school students with staggered schedules to maximize physical distancing that includes only 40-60% of students in-school at one time. Under stage three of reopening, a blended learning model is in place with only 60% of elementary students in grades 1-6 attending in-class learning for three days per week, while only 40% of middle and high schools students attending two days per week in-class. Stage four is a complete move to remote learning during a partial shutdown or province-wide lockdown (Nunavut Department of Education, 2021a).

### **Remote Learning Supports**

Remote learning supports during blended and fully remote learning included: learning packages, 'supplemental learning tools' (not specified), 'enhanced land-based' learning, and daily check-ins with teachers and students (Nunavut Department of Education, 2021b). Information regarding instruction and assessment includes a focus on identifying and addressing 'learning loss' (not defined), and resources for mental health.

## Federal

	<p><i>2019-20 Figures</i></p> <p>Population: 1,008,955<sup>1</sup> Number of K-12 Schools: 495<sup>2</sup> Number of K-12 Students: ~109,400<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Programs: 5 Number of Formal K-12 E-Learning Students: ~2,200</p>
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<sup>1</sup> 2016 Census data

<sup>2</sup> refers to those reporting a 2019-20 nominal roll directly to ISC

<sup>3</sup> 2016-17 data

### Existing E-Learning Resources Prior to 2020-21 School Year

There were at least four K-12 distance/online learning programs First Nations programs operating during the 2019-20 school year: two in Ontario, one in Manitoba, and one in Alberta. Each of these programs operated on a regional or provincial basis, with each serving multiple First Nations communities. Most of the distance learning offerings from these programs were focused on secondary or high school level courses.

### Remote Learning During the 2020-21 School Year

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. As such, unlike with provincial and territorial jurisdictions where specific planning and actions can be described, tracking the response of First Nations schools would require data from more than 630 First Nation communities representing more than 50 Nations (Government of Canada, 2021).

### Federal Public Health Guidance Related to Schools

Federal guidance for K-12 schools 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” (para. 2). Through this *risk-based* approach to school operation, 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 (e.g., class size) and outside the school (e.g., 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). (para. 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). (para. 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, paras. 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 (paras. 71-74).

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## Appendix A

Table A-1. *Active COVID-19 cases by jurisdiction*

Jurisdiction	08 Sep	01 Oct	01 Nov	01 Dec	04 Jan	01 Feb	01 Mar	01 Apr	01 May	01 Jun
BC	1400	1290	3189	9663	8026	5610	4790	7685	8951	2871
AB	1692	1596	6278	16628	13839	7387	4674	8653	22504	6771
SK	58	144	798	3819	3027	2369	1551	1949	2452	1272
MB	393	621	3255	9066	4423	3466	1171	1176	2466	4330
ON	1502	4945	7946	14484	24732	19017	10570	20875	37393	11689
QC	1944	6227	9221	12264	23266	13564	7587	9038	9579	3609
NB	2	6	35	116	56	274	37	142	142	143
NS	3	2	13	142	27	10	35	24	713	369
PE	9	2	0	4	6	5	18	13	12	4
NL	2	3	3	33	13	16	240	8	37	94
YT	0	0	5	17	5	0	0	2	0	0
NT	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	6	0
NV	-	-	-	93	0	27	8	0	73	9

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



Figure A-1. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (08 September 2020)

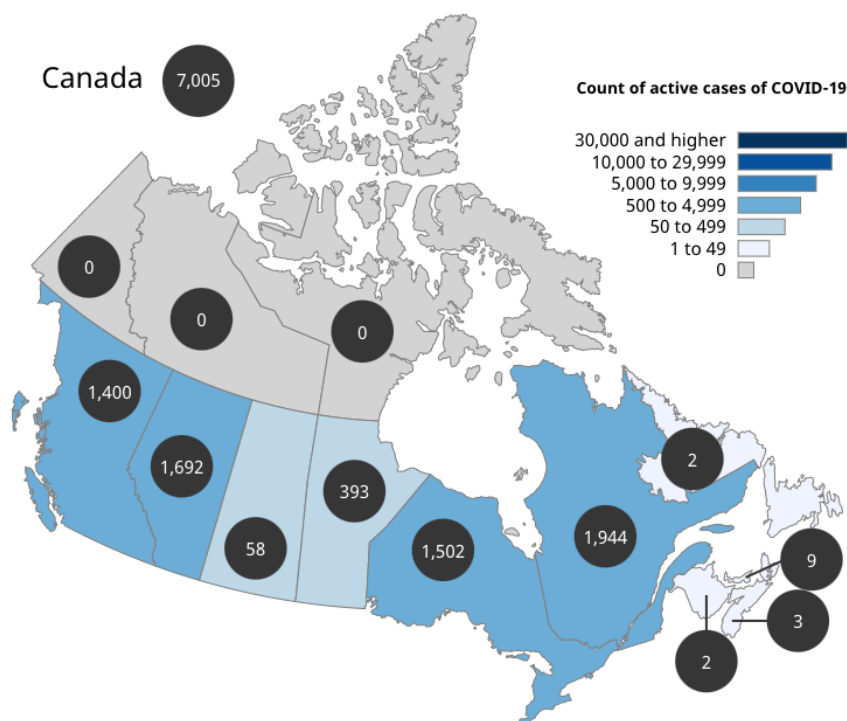


Figure A-2. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 October 2020)

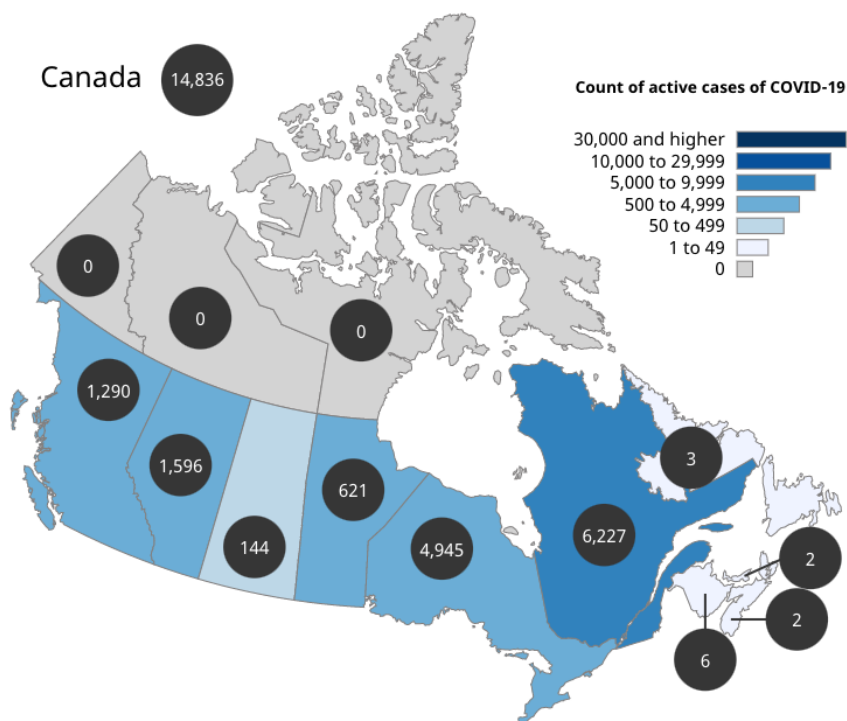


Figure A-3. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 November 2020)

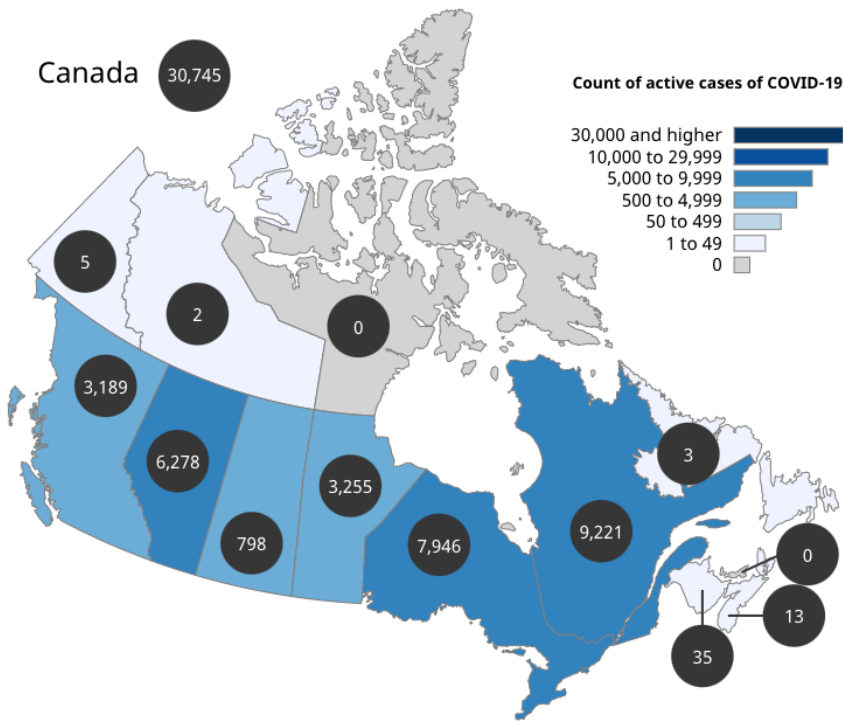


Figure A-4. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 December 2020)

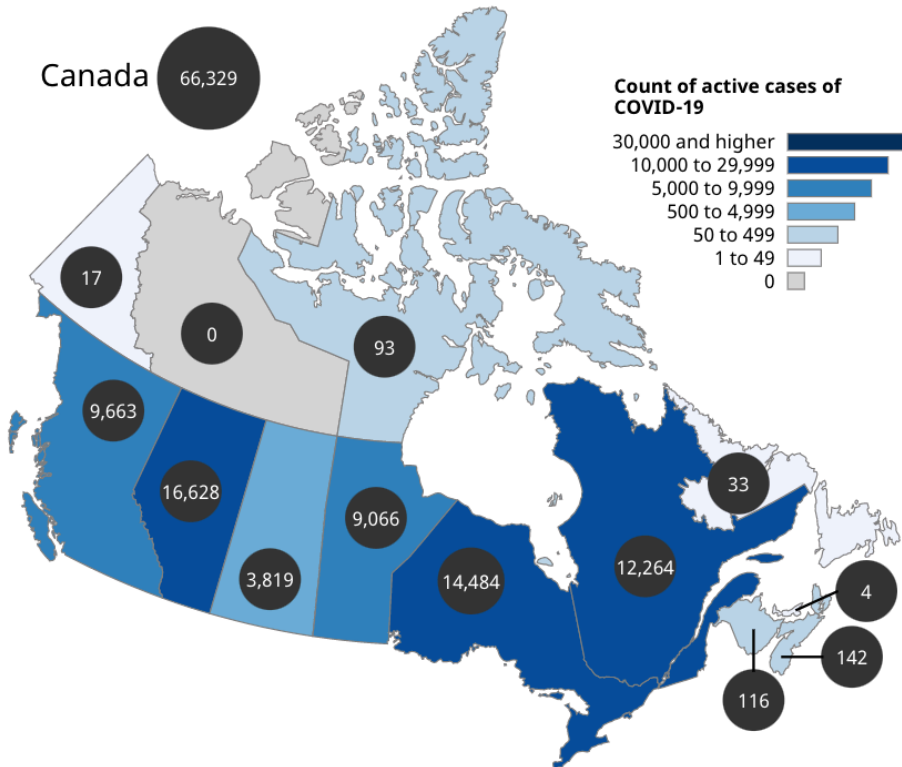


Figure A-5. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (04 January 2021)

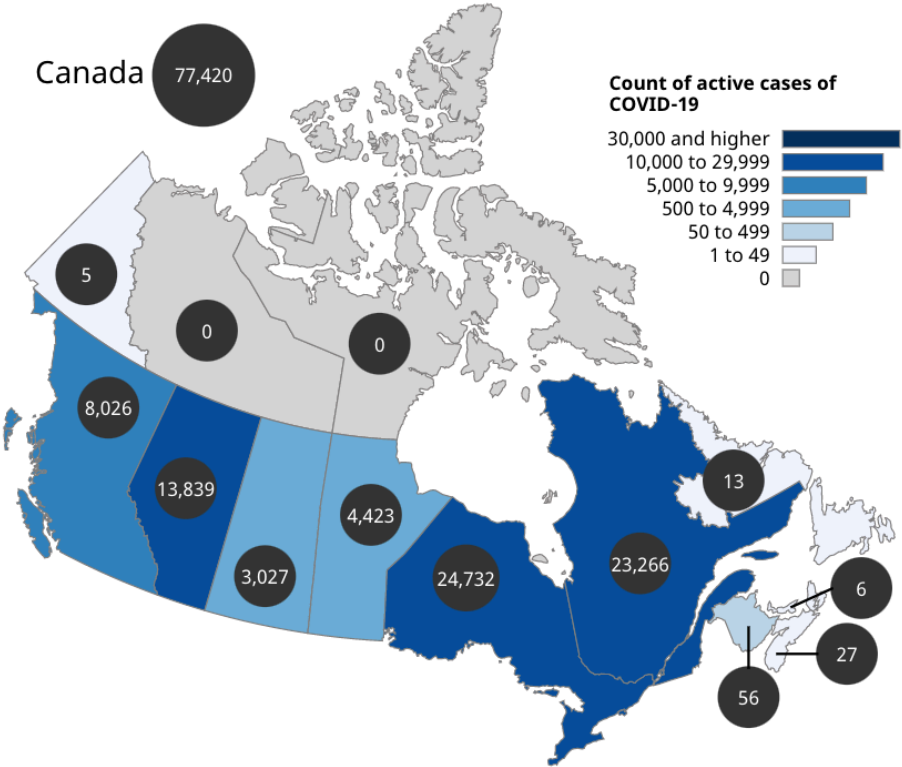


Figure A-6. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 February 2021)

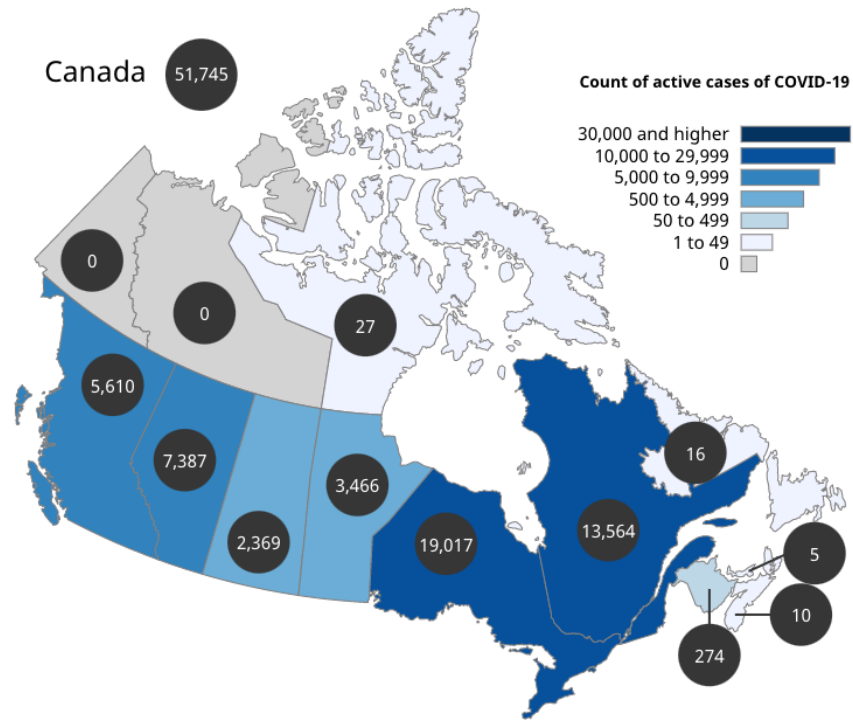


Figure A-7. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 March 2021)

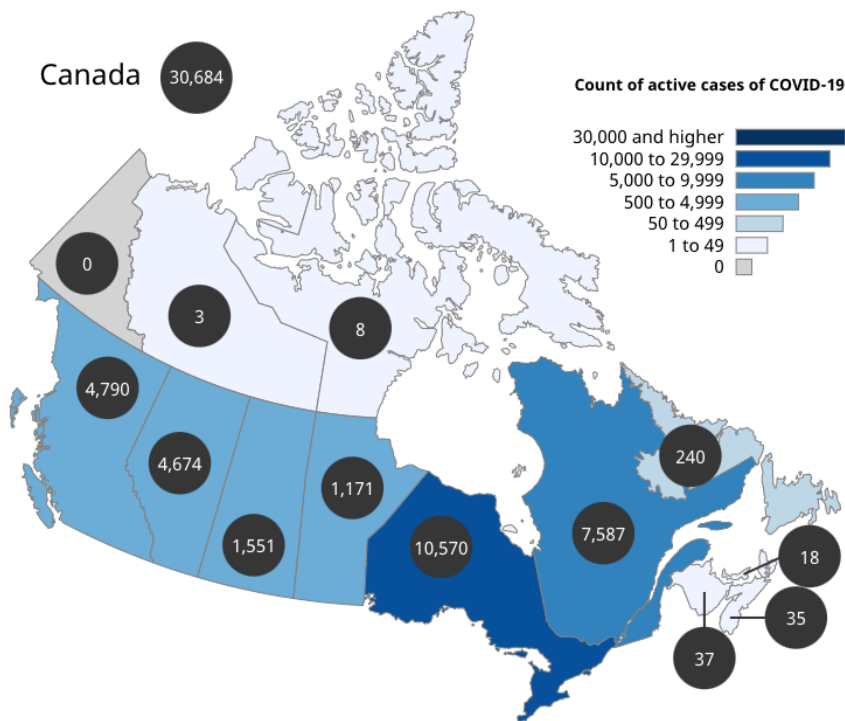


Figure A-8. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 April 2021)

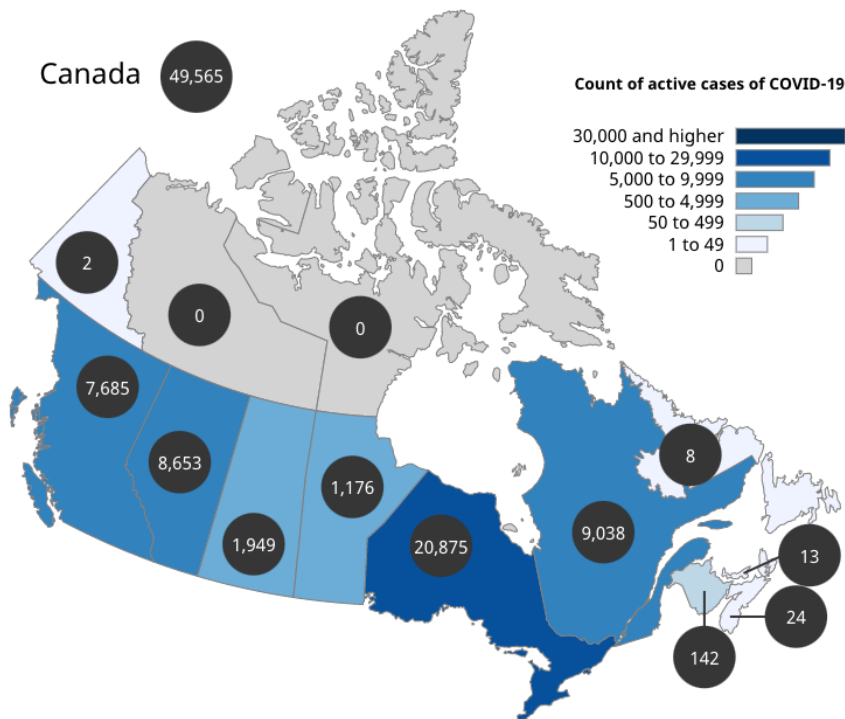


Figure A-9. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 May 2021)

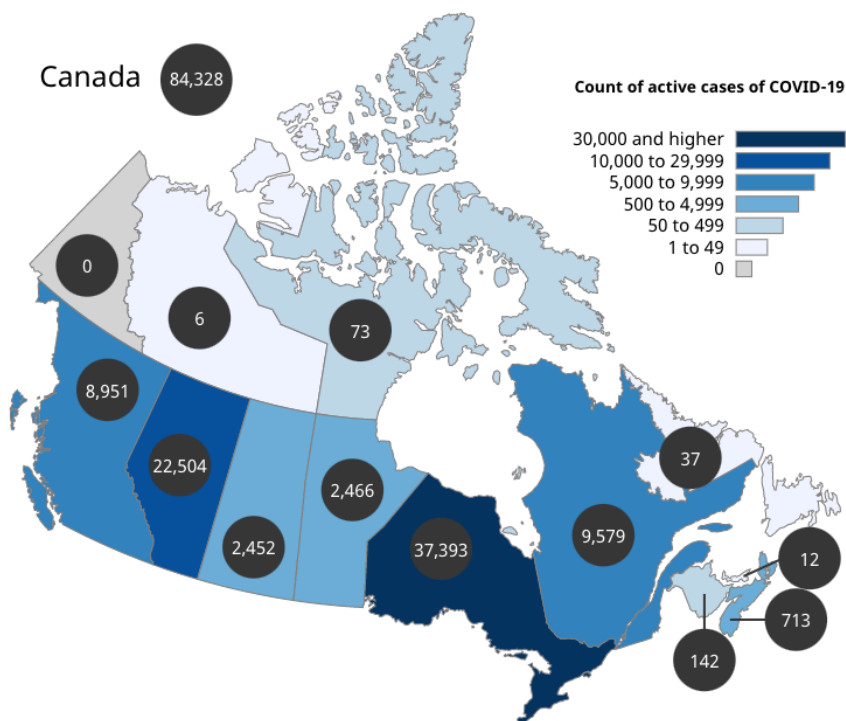
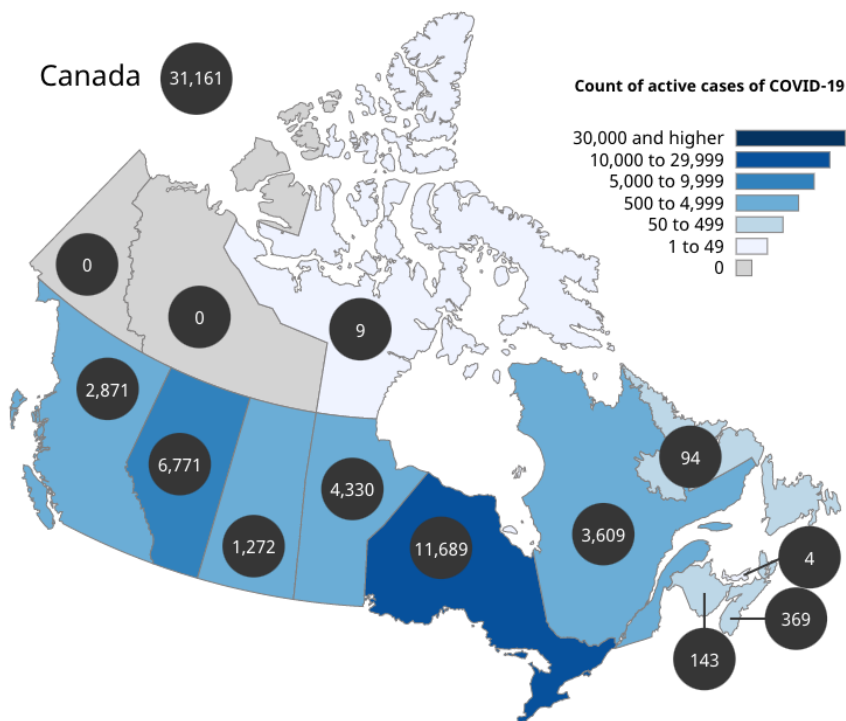


Figure A-10. Active COVID-19 cases across Canada (01 June 2021)







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