

# COVID SIGNPOST 200 DAYS



## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE **The Prairies**



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## INTRODUCTION

The **COVID Signpost 200** report presents a high level picture of how COVID is changing life in Canada's cities as of September 27, 2020, the 200-day mark. It draws on public health and survey data, research and thought-leader insights, building on the findings of **Signpost 100** released in June 2020.

This **Regional Perspective** is one of seven that dives deeper into how the trends and changes revealed in **Signpost 200** are playing out in different parts of the country, and what it means as we look ahead in a time of uncertainty and anxiety, but also of collective purpose in urban Canada.

### THE PRAIRIES

**6.7%**  
OF CANADA'S  
POPULATION

**2.3%**  
OF CANADA'S  
COVID CASES

## COVID DASHBOARD

Table 1: COVID Cases & Deaths, Region and Largest Cities<sup>1</sup>

	Cases	Cases Per 100,000	Deaths	Deaths Per 100,000	Avg. Daily Cases, 1st 100 Days	Avg. Daily Cases, 2nd 100 Days
Canada	146,663	<b>390.2</b>	9,234	<b>24.6</b>	1,002	464
Prairies	3,456	<b>135.9</b>	42	<b>1.7</b>	10	24
Winnipeg	708	<b>100.4</b>	5	<b>0.7</b>	2	4
Saskatoon	258	<b>104.8</b>	1	<b>0.6</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Case and death data is based on locally reported public health and municipal reports, as of September 23, 2020. In cases where city cases and death counts are reported at a larger geography, the city's share has been calculated according to the city's share of the overall population of the larger unit.

## A SELECTION OF KEY SIGNS

Table 2: Indicators of COVID Impacts<sup>2</sup>

	All expressed as %	Canada	Prairies	Winnipeg	Saskatoon
How We Live	Household member has experienced COVID symptoms	11	11	10	9
	COVID has had a “major impact” on the household	22	20	21	18
	Rent / mortgage payments have been impacted	18	17	17	17
How We Move	Decline in transit ridership from pre-COVID	-62	-	-49	-76
	Transit users that would shift to cars if service is reduced/unavailable*	42	37	16	73
	People “strictly practicing” social distancing	38	29	34	33
How We Work	Unemployment rates (August)	10.9	-	10.4	10.8
	People reporting having experienced the loss of a job	17	16	17	18
	People reporting an impact on their personal earnings	23	23	23	23
How We Care	Households reporting a high impact on access to healthcare*	30	33	38	32
	“Very concerned” with children going back to school*	26	24	22	24
	Households reporting high mental health impacts	38	38	39	41
How We Manage	COVID has caused household financial hardship	25	22	21	32
	A positive outlook on Canada’s economic recovery	24	23	29	24
	Local/municipal government performing well in protecting against health risks	60	12	59	61

<sup>2</sup> Sources: Advanis survey of 90,000 Canadians during the COVID pandemic (with those marked with an asterisk reflecting survey data from June 2020); Statistics Canada data; and, TransitApp. City unemployment rates are for StatsCan CMA, with figures from the August Labour Force Survey (released September 4).

## A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE, AT 200 DAYS

By **Michael Redhead Champagne**, CUI Regional Lead for the Prairies

Here we are, 200 days later. How does it feel in Winnipeg?

### Restarting Too Soon

I remember at *Signpost 100* I wanted to be quiet and simply observe the good things that were happening in our city and province, as we were able to weather that first 100 days with relatively few COVID cases. By late August, however, almost directly in step with our province's "Restart Manitoba" campaign, the number of COVID cases in Winnipeg and other Manitoba municipalities began to increase. The imagery of the line graph of [#RESTARTMB](#) – intended to represent the rise in economic conditions for the province – has better reflected the rise in positive COVID infections in Manitoba, which continue now into day 200. Since then, the campaign has shifted to a mostly public health education campaign, which is a welcome direction.

Is this our first wave, or is this our second wave? Either way, the messaging from public health officials has been consistent on wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing wherever possible, and being extra clean and extra careful.

### Safety and the Police

Over the last 100 days, a movement towards police accountability and abolishment in Winnipeg has been gaining momentum. After three Indigenous people were killed by Winnipeg Police in April, thousands demonstrated against police brutality. In June, community groups emerged again in response to police violence in the United States. The passionate demands of these groups included removing police from schools, amplifying Black and Indigenous perspectives, more meaningful community consultations and robust conversations about funding alternatives to police. In response to this movement, Winnipeg City Council considered a motion to equip police officers with body cameras, though it failed to pass.

If we are serious about safety in this city as the pandemic rages on, we will ensure that there is significant citizen and Indigenous oversight in police interactions, and we will get real about preventing the circumstances that lead people to crime. We must

ask ourselves, what is the best way to improve safety in our community? And, what role should police play in this?

### **Back to School and Mental Health**

This time of year is often difficult for parents, for families and, especially, for young people. Now going back to school, everything is drastically different than ever before, from the look and feel of the classroom, to the ways students must behave and interact. It is resulting in mental health challenges for young people, their parents, their teachers and their broader communities. Kids Help Phone has recorded a rise of over 60 per cent in calls to their phone line since the pandemic began, and an over 90 per cent increase in text messages of distress. Many parents have not had adequate communication or received enough instruction on the newly developed hybrid or at home education activities for their children.

It is important then for us to ask in our cities: how are these kids going to have access to the socialization they need for their healthy development and their wellness? What are we doing to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people and families? How are we using the infrastructure, both physical and human, to address the wellness of our residents?

### **Silver Linings and Awesomeness**

In spite of all the difficulties of this pandemic 200 days in, there are many good things that we can take a look at and think about. From the perspective of cultural infrastructure, public health, education, transportation and active living, and grassroots community organizing, Winnipeg today is in a much stronger position to address our municipal challenges thanks to the difficulties of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Bright Spots**

- The Circle of Life Thunderbird House, a spiritual hub for urban First Nations people, [received needed infrastructure upgrades](#) to meet the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority standards in order to transform it into a walk-in COVID testing site geared to serving a downtown population, including those who experience homelessness or live in shelters
- Several Winnipeg Business Improvement Zones have worked together to reinforce the open streets and active transportation, creating the [Central Winnipeg Bike Loop](#)



as a 10 km bike-friendly path that connects central neighbourhoods.

- [SpotLight: Anishiative](#) in the St John's neighbourhood is a grassroots initiative, led by young urban Indigenous Winnipeggers has emerged that picks up litter multiple times a week. These young people have a focus on leadership development and are also feeding our relatives on the street and providing safe (socially distanced) companionship. The example they have set on how to take care of our most vulnerable, including our planet, not just during a pandemic but always.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Michael Redhead Champagne**, born and raised in Winnipeg's North End, is an award-winning community organizer, public speaker, and a proud member of Shamattawa First Nation.



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