

COVID SIGNPOST 200 DAYS



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE **The Territories**



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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 TERRITORIES

0.3%
OF CANADA'S
POPULATION

0.01%
OF CANADA'S
COVID CASES

COVID DASHBOARD

Table 1: COVID Cases & Deaths, Region and Largest Cities¹

	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	390.2	9,234	24.6	1,002	464
Territories	20	16.7	0	0	0.2	0.04
Whitehorse	11	43.9	0	N/A	0.08	0.03
Yellowknife	4	20.4	0	N/A	0.04	0

¹ 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 not reported at a city level, the city's share has been approximated according to the city's share of the overall population of the larger unit.

A SELECTION OF KEY SIGNS

Table 2: Indicators of COVID Impacts²

	All expressed as %	Canada	Territories	Whitehorse	Yellowknife
How We Live	Household member has experienced COVID symptoms	11	5	4	4
	COVID has had a “major impact” on the household	22	17	14	23
	Rent / mortgage payments have been impacted	18	18	14	23
How We Move	Decline in transit ridership from pre-COVID	-62	-	-	-
	Transit users that would shift to cars if service is reduced/unavailable*	42	41	34	21
	People “strictly practicing” social distancing	38	28	27	55
How We Work	Unemployment rates (August)	10.9	-	-	-
	People reporting having experienced the loss of a job	17	15	14	18
	People reporting an impact on their personal earnings	23	19	23	21
How We Care	Households reporting a high impact on access to healthcare*	30	24	33	16
	“Very concerned” with children going back to school*	26	14	7	17
	Households reporting high mental health impacts	38	37	32	38
How We Manage	COVID has caused household financial hardship	25	21	26	21
	A positive outlook on Canada’s economic recovery	24	28	24	39
	Local/municipal government performing well in protecting against health risks	60	14	69	77

² 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 **Jay Massie**, by special invitation of the Canadian Urban Institute

The welcoming, neighbourly ‘small-town’ feel is a hallmark of life in Canada’s northern communities — so the shift towards closed borders, restricted travel between communities and limits on visitors has been an abrupt change.

The territories have fared relatively well during the COVID pandemic, with few cases overall and no deaths reported to date. However, this hasn’t meant that COVID has not impacted the lives of people living the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Shortly after COVID was declared a global pandemic in March 2020, shutdowns began across all three territories. Travel between communities was restricted, posing a particular challenge for remote communities who rely on amenities and access to goods in the larger cities. The federal government announced the closure of the American-Canadian border, although the continued presence of Alaska vehicles in the Yukon sparked “plate hate” among locals. New government check points along the border have since been established.

Working from home was particular challenge in places with poor internet access. Northwestel temporarily waived internet overage charges, through a successful emergency application to the Communications and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon — although many areas continue to have low connectivity. ‘Working from home depots’ were established in some communities to allow physically distanced workspaces for those without internet access or needed technology at home.

Travel and tourism is a major industry in Canada’s territories, particularly during the summer months which are normally peak season. The usual array of adventure

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seekers in caravans and motorhomes has almost entirely evaporated, and both domestic and International flights have been temporary discontinued. The cancellation of a weekly direct flight from Germany to Whitehorse has major implications for local businesses and the hospitality sector which rely on revenues from international travellers. Regional flights within the territories, including connecting communities without road access continue, but with distancing provisions in place on board. Only recently has travel begun to open up, including travel now allowed between the Yukon and British Columbia.

Access to healthcare was already a challenge before COVID, and the pandemic added additional strain. Hospitals introduced safety precautions including visitor restrictions and entry screening check points, and had to procure health and safety equipment for staff. Additional respiratory centres were set up in some communities to provide additional capacity if needed.

Although the COVID case counts in the territories remains low, the impacts have been high. Access to basic amenities — food, health care services, the internet — was already a challenge for many, and COVID has intensified the problem. For us it's not about 'recovery'; it's about a longstanding need to provide people with access to the goods and services they need, to enjoy the welcoming and neighbourly lifestyle that is distinctive of Canada's northern communities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jay Massie is the Director of Indigenous Relations at Canadian Utilities Ltd, with more than three decades of experience in public utilities. Jay is a multi-generational Yukoner and Ta'an Kwach'an Council citizen, and a proud dad.



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