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COVID-19 Report

Atlantic Canada

5:30 PM, March 25, 2020

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CONFIRMED CASES

Newfoundland: 32 presumptive, 35 confirmed
New Brunswick: 0 presumptive, 26 confirmed
Nova Scotia: 0 presumptive, 68 confirmed
Prince Edward Island: 0 presumptive, 3 confirmed

These statistics are based on information as of 5:00 PM AST, March 25. For more information on official confirmed cases of COVID-19, please see the [federal Public Health page](#).

GOVERNMENT UPDATES

FEDERAL: Prime Minister Trudeau began his Wednesday address by acknowledging the concerns that millions of Canadians have as their financial situation has been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. More than one million Canadians applied for Employment Insurance, or some sort of financial support, in the past week. During the early hours of Wednesday morning, the House of Commons passed emergency legislation that provides financial aid to those impacted by the COVID-19 fallout. The government has adapted the legislation, replacing the two previously announced benefit streams with one funding mechanism that provides \$2,000 a month for those who have had their income impacted by COVID-19. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is planning to provide financial assistance for those in need in the next 10 days. Trudeau reiterated that internal departments have shifted personnel to accommodate the massive influx of calls, requests, and applications seeking answers and support in light of the COVID-19 response. This reorganization includes the temporary allocation of up to 13,000 staff to help process these requests. Trudeau once again highlighted the collaborative efforts between the federal government and manufacturers, science researchers, and airline industries to help neutralize the impact of COVID-19.

Trudeau indicated that measures to support journalists will be enacted, and thanked the media for their continued work. Once again, Trudeau pointed toward the importance and effectiveness of social distancing. He acknowledged this is a unique challenge as it eliminates the options of many common stress alleviators but urged the public to take advantage of available resources to deal with any mental health issues they may be experiencing.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: Dr. Janice Fitzgerald announced 32 new presumptive cases in the province, bringing the total number of cases to 67. There are now cases in all four health regions. All are still self-monitoring at home. Contact tracing is underway. Of the 61 cases in the Eastern Health region, 44 are associated with a gathering at Call’s Funeral Home in St. John’s. Anyone who has been to this establishment must self-isolate and self-monitor for 14 days. 1,336 people have been tested to date.

NEW BRUNSWICK: Testing has identified eight new cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in New Brunswick to 26. Dr. Jennifer Russell, Chief Medical Officer of Health, reassured New Brunswickers that testing is adequate, efficient, and increasing to meet the ever-changing shape of the current pandemic. The province has conducted over 1,700 tests to date. Beginning today, restrictions will be implemented for all travellers arriving in New Brunswick from outside the province. Interprovincial travellers, like international travellers, will need to self-isolate for 14 days. All unnecessary travel into New Brunswick is prohibited, with some exemptions, and officers are authorized to turn away visitors when they attempt to enter. The provincial government has partnered with the Canadian Red Cross to support New Brunswickers affected by the requirement to self-isolate. This service is available to all residents and visitors.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: Prince Edward Island’s COVID-19 case total remains at three confirmed cases of COVID-19. There are self-isolation enforcement officers on the island that are following up with those in self-isolation to ensure they are staying on their property. The provincial parks have delayed this year’s reservation launch until May 5—people are allowed to be in provincial parks but must practice social distancing while on trails and beaches. However, playgrounds at provincial parks will be closed until further notice. The P.E.I. government has announced a partnership with Sobeys to provide \$100 gift cards for Islanders who have been laid off and are waiting for employment insurance. Islanders can use the gift cards at Sobeys, Lawtons Drugs, Foodland, and participating Co-ops. The province has confirmed an order of 12 ventilators arriving “late spring” from a vendor and 15 ventilators coming as part of a federal bulk order.

NOVA SCOTIA: Nova Scotia has 17 new cases, bringing the total to 68. All are travel related or connected to earlier cases, including groups or families who had travelled outside of Canada. No community spread to date. Two individuals have fully recovered; one case is in the hospital. Dr. Robert Strang emphasized that Nova Scotia is further behind in the development of the virus, but ahead in protective measures, urging the public to continue practicing social distancing. Testing is mainly still focused on travel-related cases, but some testing is being done on contacts of travellers. The province is also testing hospital patients who present with flu-like symptoms (no positive tests have been found in this population). Government is working with internal and external partners to determine the need for protective medical equipment and ventilators, all of which is being fed into the bulk national order. The province is also utilizing its leftover H1N1 stockpile, as well as coordinating with businesses and private sector entities who have extra equipment. The province is working with municipal and community leaders to develop a relief package to support their operations with the loss of property tax revenues.

SOCIAL MEDIA SNAPSHOT

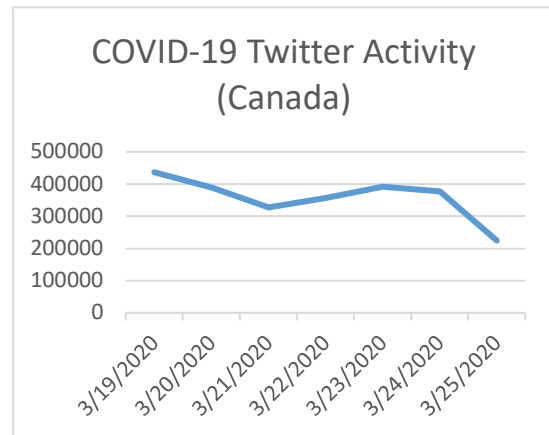
Wednesday saw another dip in social media activity, as the downward volume trend has continued into the middle of the week. Contributing factors for lower social activity likely include the lack of significant developments or announcements coming from elected officials in comparison to the routine jolting impacts of state of emergencies, and the general public settling into social distancing practices.

Nationally, there was an active conversation thread detailing the struggle in the House of Commons to pass the emergency financial aid legislation on Tuesday evening. The legislation was eventually passed in the wee hours of Wednesday morning, but criticism of how the government was perceived to have politicized a pandemic by attempting to pass legislation that had seemingly unnecessary spending powers sparked a social debate.

The primary concerns of the general public continue to be related to health, wellness, and the confirmed case totals across the country. Key narratives include:

- Health and wellness practices
- Updates on case statistics
- The importance of social distancing
- Personal experiences of the pandemic
- Essential workers during the pandemic and the sacrifices being made
- Division by socio-economic status during the pandemic
- Political implications and division

In Atlantic Canada, the focus has been on rising case numbers in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Social distancing measures, and the pressures to adhere to these requirements, have increased lately, and social conversation has reflected the necessity to take these steps to protect the most vulnerable members of the population.



TRADITIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

ATLANTIC CANADA

- [SMU researchers to study COVID-19's impact on Canadian workplaces](#) 25/03-2020 (The Chronicle Herald)
- [New Brunswick premier says province can handle flooding during COVID-19 crisis](#) 25/03-2020 (HalifaxToday.ca)
- [Newfoundland woman arrested for refusing to self-isolate after talking to police](#) 25/03-2020 (HalifaxToday.ca)
- [Passengers, drivers face risk in crowded Halifax Transit buses, union says](#) 25/03-2020 (The Chronicle Herald)
- [EHS tells volunteer first responders not to attend medical calls amid COVID concerns](#) 25/03-2020 (The Chronicle Herald)
- [Life with Mental Health and Addictions Issues Under COVID-19 Regulations Challenging: CMHA](#) 25/03-2020 (VOCM)
- ["Urgent Plea" Issued by Internal Medicine Specialists in St. John's](#) 25/03-2020 (VOCM)
- [Streets of Charlottetown mostly empty as many businesses close amid coronavirus pandemic](#) 25/03-2020 (The Guardian)
- [Residential tenants, landlords face dilemma as rent comes due on April 1](#) 25/03-2020 (HalifaxToday.ca)
- [Patients bumped by COVID face anxiety, as health system searches for alternatives](#) 25/03-2020 (HalifaxToday.ca)

ACROSS CANADA

- [House of Commons passes emergency COVID-19 aid legislation](#) 25/03-2020 (The Chronicle Herald)
- [Testing backlog linked to shortage of essential chemicals](#) 25/03-2020 (Global News)
- [Pandemic-related supports coming for media and journalism, Trudeau says](#) 25/03-2020 (HalifaxToday.ca)
- [Scientists urge Canada's COVID-19 testing be ramped up to 'war-time mode'](#) 25/03-2020 (Health – CBC News)
- [Air Canada starts cargo-only flights for sensitive shipments, medical supplies](#) 25/03-2020 (Global News)
- [Bauer switches from protecting NHL players to shielding medical workers](#) 25/03-2020 (Sports – CBC)
- [Leon's Furniture to lay off nearly 50% of workforce](#) 25/03-2020 (Global News)
- [Trudeau says EI system will be 'scaled up' to meet new demand by April 6](#) 25/03-2020 (Global News)
- [UN launches global appeal for \\$2 billion in aid to fight COVID-19](#) 25/03-2020 (Global News)

WHAT WE'RE READING

- [The Covid-19 risks for different age groups, explained](#) (Vox News)
- [Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count](#) (New York Times)
- [Quarantine Act](#) (Government of Canada)
- [Doctors warn about trying malaria treatment for COVID-19](#) (CBC – The National)

WHAT WE'RE SAYING

- Social media activity is declining in volume this week—possibly a residual effect of the general public starting to settle into the new reality of social distancing. With that said, cases in Atlantic Canada, and across the country, are on the rise. This could end up resulting in additional government powers being enacted, including at the federal level. This would take the provincially-enforced State of Emergency measures even further and has many unknowns.
- Financial aid is coming, and the government is listening to public concerns. This resulted in the previously announced two financial support streams being consolidated into one “catch-all” mechanism that provides support for Canadians who have had their income impacted by COVID-19. This represents unique circumstances where significant legislative measures are being drafted, introduced, and amended based on feedback yielded from the court of public opinion, and passed to royal assent, all within a week.
- The debate between what constitutes an essential business over one that is non-essential is unclear and divided by jurisdiction. The fallout of this ad-hoc process could result in serious confusion if the federal emergency measures are put in place. Beyond the on-the-fly legal definition of what defines an essential private business, the precedence being set by governments could have significant future implications during state of emergencies, or give leverage to those businesses who are having their true value revealed during the COVID-19 response.
- The sociological and local economic impacts are on the horizon, and organizations will be thrust into a position where they'll need to adjust the nuances and support systems they have provided to impacted stakeholders.