

Public Policy Responses to the Pandemic, and  
Building Back Better





Cover illustration for the book titled “Public Policy Responses to the Pandemic, and Building Back Better.” Illustration includes a woman wearing a white mask and white hazardous materials suit with COVID particles surrounding her



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# Government of Ontario funding declaration

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*Image-Government of Ontario logo and banner*



# Introduction

What are the health, economic, and social policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic?

How did these choices arise?

What comes next?

COVID-19 has sparked rapid policy responses to gaps in our social, economic and political foundations. The learnings from this crisis, and the solutions to help Canada rebuild, need to be captured as it plays out in real time.

**Public Policy Responses to the Pandemic, and Building Back Better** is an interdisciplinary virtual learning experience about the Canadian policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the debate around whether, and how, to “build back better” – to use the occasion of the pandemic to bring in other fundamental policy reforms.

You will learn the economic and social impacts of, and responses to, COVID-19 in Ontario and across Canada – as well as the ideas, tools, and skills available for each of us to shape the recovery.

Together we will explore a variety of topics:

- how long-term and temporary income support programs provided assistance for basic living expenses and helped prepare individuals for finding work;
- what gaps and perspectives are missing in the health and healthcare system to help us understand the transmission and spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and SARS;
- what we need to do to help people inform themselves and not be misled; and
- whether Canada should, or even can, radically rethink some of its policies coming out of the pandemic.



# I. PANDEMIC CONTROL BASICS



*Illustration of video game controller being used to shoot COVID-19 viruses*



# Learning Objectives

## Welcome & Introduction: What Are We Doing Together?

- Define key pandemic terms: pandemic, flattening the curve, herd immunity, and complementary frameworks
- Understand the use of traditional data collection tools and scenario modelling when identifying early signs of emerging threats like pandemics
- Recognize the socio-economic impact and relationship between public policy, public administration/governance, and politics

This module will help learners explore policy study characteristics that impact the public during crises like pandemics. By the end, learners will demonstrate an understanding of different policy goals that contribute to ending COVID-19.

# Instructor's Course Introduction



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# 1a. "What are policy professionals saying we must do first?"

## What are policy professionals saying we must do first?

First Policy Response, MARCH 24, 2020 | IN [ECONOMIC POLICY](#) |  
BY [MATTHEW MENDELSON](#), [SEAN MULLIN](#) AND [KARIM BARDEESY](#)

As the exponential growth in the number of Covid-19 cases starts to sink in, the exponential growth in the economic calamity is also becoming apparent. It is unprecedented in our lifetime. The potential destruction of individuals' economic lives, security and well-being is staggering. As governments try to deal with the health emergency, they are also dealing with an economic shock unlike any they have ever felt.

## Unlike any other economic downturn

The number of Canadians who applied for Employment Insurance was almost 930,000 last week, compared to 27,000 for the same week last year. And as staggering as those numbers are, they dramatically understate unemployment because over  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Canadians who were employed two weeks ago are contract workers or the self-employed. They aren't represented in those numbers.

Millions of Canadians have less than a month of savings — and it is likely that hundreds of thousands of Canadians will not be able to pay their rent next month.

## Thinking differently, quickly

Policies are being proposed that would have been inconceivable a month ago.

The most compelling policy ideas will be those that bridge us through the pandemic and stabilize the economic lives of Canadians immediately — to the greatest extent possible and with all the tools at our disposal. These have to be the immediate policy goals.

Medium-term and longer term economic stabilization and renewal efforts will come later. But the current crisis is serving to highlight the systemic vulnerabilities that have been highlighted for years. The sense of vulnerability that many of us are feeling today are experienced by gig workers and the self-employed every day due to policies that have not kept pace with the evolving labour market.

If you are still talking about “stimulus,” please stop. It isn’t the right framework and it misunderstands the problems we are facing. This type of crisis requires a new [playbook](#).

A consensus is emerging that measures have to be large and fast and that we must find the quickest way of getting cash or relief (e.g. debt repayment pause, moratorium on evictions, etc.) into the hands of people who are at immediate risk of losing businesses or lodging, and into the hands of those who have suddenly lost their income.

There is also a consensus that we can afford a large effort. Even a \$100 Billion — or 5 per cent of our national GDP — would take only about \$1 Billion to service. The risk of doing too little and turning the immediate economic crisis into a longer term economic one is far larger than the risk of doing too much.

## Delivering benefits — you can't just flick a switch

The options governments can realistically deploy are also constrained by the systems that currently exist. Our Employment Insurance system covers only a fraction of workers, requires those workers to make proactive applications, and is already overloaded by demand. The Canada Child Benefit goes out to Canadian parents based on their income last year. We have no national data set that includes every Canadian.

Many good ideas will bump up against the reality of our current delivery mechanisms and data. Delivering something tomorrow, through government, that addresses 70% of a given problem will be more effective than rolling out something next month that deals with all of it. That's especially true if not-for-profits can get their own funding to help fill the gaps for those populations they touch, where governments can't.

We know that some of the programs are being rolled out slower than is ideal; we also know that everyone working on these things in Canada is working around the clock to roll them out as quickly as humanly possible.

The quickest instruments are the bluntest. Using the Canada Child Benefit and the GST rebate remain simple and useful vehicles to get money to people quickly, but many people who receive these benefits are facing catastrophic losses in income, while others are facing no loss in income at all. As tools get deployed, we will have to be really clear about which problems are being addressed and which people need different programs.

As governments experiment with many new approaches at once, some won't work. Some money will leak away. Some people — even now — will find ways to run a scam. But waiting for perfect is not an option. And things are moving so quickly that ideas that get rolled out tomorrow may already be too little to address the issues that emerge next week. There will need to be differentiated responses for some sectors. Although small businesses in the tourism sector

or the cultural sector face some of the same challenges as nail salons and pubs, there will be issues unique to each sector. We know Ministers and their departments are working now to craft responses to help.

Some groups are not receiving attention yet. In an online video meeting yesterday, Deena Ladd of the Workers' Action Centre and Garima Talwar Kapoor of Maytree pointed to the many populations and groups — from migrant farmworkers to social assistance recipients — whose situations have yet to be addressed by the announcements to date.

## The federal package

Federal, provincial, municipal and Indigenous governments are rolling out new initiatives every day. To understand what is going on, a good place to start is always the official source, and we encourage Canadians to check out the official documents being rolled out by their governments on a daily basis.

The federal effort, first announced on March 18, outlined initiatives to help stabilize the incomes of individuals and businesses. (see [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#)). The expansion of existing programs to the self-employed and those not covered by EI is particularly important. The extension of existing programs, like job sharing arrangements through EI, should have a material impact on the ability of businesses to retain some workers. And measures like eliminating the one week waiting period for EI will allow people to access cash immediately.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is reacting in real time. Initiatives to make sure people don't lose their homes — and parallel provincial efforts to ensure renters don't lose theirs — will be particularly important. Stabilizing the housing situation for renters and owners is crucial to building an economic bridge through Covid-19. If people can't pay their rent or mortgage and

lose their home because of Covid-19, that would be a catastrophic policy failure with long-ranging consequences, some of which we saw in the United States when so many Americans lost their homes following the financial crisis of 2008.

Two new experiments are worth applauding. The Emergency Support benefit will provide up to \$5-billion in support to workers who are not eligible for EI. A new 10% wage subsidy for businesses is an unprecedented new broad-based support. Both will likely need to be bigger, and implemented with great speed. (more on that below)

## Policy community responses

Luckily, the Canadian public policy community is diverse and creative. In this first post, we will highlight some of the best work that has been done (Apologies if we missed you! Get in touch by [e-mail](#) or [Twitter](#)!), with a particular focus on those ideas designed to stabilize the economic lives of Canadians, businesses and not-for-profits and bridge them through the next few months.

## Sending cash and relief fast

[Jennifer Robson](#) is trying to help Canadians make sense of the benefits and has [prepared this Google doc](#), for example, on the benefits that working age adults can receive.

[Tammy Schirle](#) has lots of useful policy analysis and important tips for Canadians — like making sure the CRA has your accurate address and banking information to ensure you get the benefits you need.

[Kevin Milligan](#) has been doing a great job analyzing these proposals in real time on Twitter, [outlining their rationale](#), and

addressing plausible criticisms. His perspective is that the government was right to lean towards the use of existing mechanisms, even when they are imperfect, which he outlines in [this CD Howe Institute memo](#). There is concern that some of the initiatives will take too long to roll out – but realistically, there is no conceivable way that the government through the Canada Revenue Agency could roll out a program like emergency income support any faster than is being proposed.

[Sean Mullin](#) and [Karim Bardeesy](#), in [their Toronto Star op-ed of last week](#), make a call for a three-part framework to guide thinking on economic policy – first, send money to stabilize the situation; then, traditional stimulus; finally, work to adapt to a new economy that can thrive

[Ken Boessenkool proposed an immediate Crisis Basic Income in Maclean's](#) to deal with the biggest economic challenge we face: the sudden loss of working income. As a way to stabilize incomes quickly, an immediate cash benefit could be very effective. It would not be as expensive as the immediate price tag, because some of these funds could be taxed back or clawed back through the tax system, if an individual's income stabilized.

[Jim Stanford does his quick analysis at Progressive Economics](#) on the initial federal efforts. Stanford argues it is crucial that the federal government make stronger commitments that people and businesses will not be left destitute – and that this needed to be backed by strong actions. It goes without saying that this must be a policy goal and Jim states it forcefully, arguing that we need a moratorium on bankruptcies, foreclosures and evictions.

A group of policy leaders, organized by the [Atkinson Foundation](#), [put forward their recommendations](#) with a focus on income support, rent support and help for the community sector.

And the [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives highlighted the desperate challenges that many renters](#) are facing.

## Business, not-for-profits, and other public

## services

There is rightly lots of interest in increasing the wage subsidy to employers beyond the 10% offered by the government so far, consistent with what other countries have offered. Many are concerned that there is not enough yet to stabilize small and medium sized businesses.

[David Samuel](#) and [William Robson](#) argue in [The Globe and Mail](#) that subsidies to help businesses pay their workers need to be larger

In [Policy Options](#), Erin Millar, [Teara Fraser](#), and [Suzanne Siemens](#) outline the challenges they are facing and document how easier access to more debt and small wage subsidies are not going to be sufficient to bridge businesses through the next several months.

[Jon Shell](#) [pleads to not forget the kinds of small and medium-sized retail businesses](#) that populate our streets and welcome customers face-to-face. He proposes specific measures to save business owners and their families from financial ruin. They are all intended to reduce and postpone expenses, including suspending commercial rent payments up to \$10,000, suspending water and electricity bills, delaying collection of property taxes or remitting of sales taxes, and getting credit companies to delay payments and waive interest on corporate cards up to \$25,000.

The implications for the charitable sector and not-for-profit organizations have not attracted as much attention, but the implications for thousands of community organizations that rely on donations are every bit as dire as the implications on small businesses that rely on foot traffic. These organizations provide vital services to Canadians and touch almost every aspect of life in our communities.

[Rahul Chandran](#) [makes a simple plea in Maclean's](#) that every foundation with an endowment double the value of every current grant to a non-profit, and do so without any restrictions. Immediately. He points out that foundations know and support

these organizations – and that they now need more money to support the people they serve

[Brian Dijkema](#) and [Sean Speer](#) [argue in this CARDUS report](#) that the federal government should match charitable contributions on a one-to-one basis. We would add that many of the income support policy proposals currently being considered to help SMEs are equally applicable to not-for-profits.

One policy area that risks neglect as policymakers attend to the health and economic aspects of COVID-19 is public education. [Sam Andrey](#) (also Director of Policy and Research at the Ryerson Leadership Lab) has some [actionable prescriptions in The Toronto Star](#) on how to re-direct resources, and attend to students and families on the wrong side of the digital divide.

## High-level thinking

We'll conclude our round-up with some higher-level arguments around what a proper response to COVID-19 looks like, for governments and institutions.

In The Globe and Mail, [Michael Sabia](#) has [strong guidance](#) for governments to be creative, and start thinking about the future economy now.

[Andrew Potter](#) has [launched a newsletter](#) that attempts to summarize evolving “policies for a pandemic.”

[Karim Bardeesy](#) calls on leaders to make sacrifices, retool their institutions, and help their people to be their best selves on the [Ryerson Leadership Lab](#) website and in [Corporate Knights / Future of Good](#).



## Hearing from the community

We hope to source many more contributions from the policy community, and link to existing work, through this PolicyResponse.ca project. Get in touch by [e-mail at policyresponse@ryerson.ca](mailto:policyresponse@ryerson.ca) or reach out to us on [Twitter at @PolicyResponse](#). [You can also subscribe to our mailing list.](#)

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**Keywords:** [BUSINESS SUPPORT](#), [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Mendelsohn, M., Bardeesy, K., & Mullin, S. (2020). [What are policy professionals saying we must do first?](#) First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Mendelsohn, Bardeesy, and Mullin's article "What are policy professionals saying we must do first?":**



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Background image-The word “tax” on a dictionary page

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# 1b. "Campaign catch-up: Focus on vaccine passports"

## Campaign catch-up: Focus on vaccine passports

First Policy Response, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 | IN [IMPLEMENTATION](#)  
+ [GOVERNANCE](#) | BY [STEPHANIE MACLELLAN](#)

*Each week leading up to the federal election on Sept. 20, First Policy Response will highlight news and debates about recovery-related policy issues that surface on the campaign trail. We'll recap the policy proposals put forward by the main national parties and hear from researchers and practitioners about what it will take for those ideas to work on the ground.*

## One big issue: Proof of vaccination

### The background

COVID-19 vaccination has been deployed repeatedly as a wedge issue during the election campaign. Protesters railing against vaccination have disrupted campaign events for Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, and more recently raised public ire by staging noisy and disruptive demonstrations outside of hospitals across the country. Trudeau has tried to link these protesters to his Conservative rival, Erin O'Toole, who is not requiring his candidates

to get vaccinated. However, there appears to be more overlap with Maxime Bernier's People's Party of Canada — several protesters at Liberal campaign stops were spotted in PPC gear, the president of a local PPC riding association was [charged with throwing gravel](#) at Trudeau, and Bernier has [violated public health orders](#) around quarantines and opposed vaccination and mask-wearing as violations of Canadians' freedoms. (The Constitution does allow governments to [limit basic freedoms](#) if they can show a restriction is reasonable and necessary.)

Immunization records are actually a provincial responsibility. Indeed, since this summer, several provinces — including Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario — have announced plans for their own proof-of-vaccination regimes for non-essential spaces such as shops, gyms and restaurants. However, the federal government can require vaccination for people working in areas where it has jurisdiction, such as the federal civil service, on domestic flights and trains, or at international borders. It can also offer support to lower levels of government to implement their vaccination programs.

According to [Government of Canada data](#), more than 73 per cent of the population, and 84 per cent of people older than 12, have received at least one vaccine dose as of Sept. 4. Nearly 68 per cent, or 77 per cent of those over 12, are fully vaccinated.

## Where the parties stand

**Liberal Party:** The Liberals would implement a national vaccine passport, and require federal civil servants and passengers on domestic transportation to be vaccinated. They would also provide \$1 billion to provinces and territories to help them roll out a proof of vaccination system for non-essential spaces, and bring in legislation to shield businesses and organizations that require proof of vaccination from legal challenge.

**Conservative Party:** O'Toole has consistently said he would not make vaccination mandatory, and that the party would not require vaccination for federal civil servants, travellers or people entering the country, instead relying on rapid testing. However, he has set a goal of fully vaccinating 90 per cent of eligible Canadians, through paid time off for employees, providing transportation to vaccine clinics, a national marketing campaign and targeted information to address vaccine hesitancy among groups with a history of being disenfranchised by the health system. The platform promises to support the provinces with logistical resources to deliver vaccines and booster shots, and to make rapid tests more widely available.

**NDP:** The party would roll out a national vaccine passport, with \$1 billion to increase vaccination rates, and support provinces and territories to “create targeted, inclusive programs that will remove the remaining barriers and help those who are still unvaccinated get their shots.”

**Green Party:** There is no specific reference to vaccine mandates in the party platform, but Leader Annamie Paul has [questioned](#) how proposed mandatory vaccination plans would accommodate people with “legitimate reasons” for not getting vaccinated, such as “whether those be medical conditions, religious or cultural convictions, or that live in rural communities with limited access to either vaccination clinics or information that addresses their concerns.”

## The reaction

The case for vaccine passports is obvious: After 18 months of repeated lockdowns and restrictions, everyone is anxious to get back to their normal routines, but the Delta variant is driving a fourth wave that is delaying a full reopening. Delta spreads much more easily than previous strains of COVID-19, but vaccinated

people are far less likely to contract the virus or become seriously ill from it. The vast majority of Canadian residents who are vaccinated are understandably eager for something to be done to stop the remaining 30 per cent of the population from continuing to spread the virus.

But there are still concerns about how such a program would be implemented. For starters, we've seen over and over that the pandemic [affects marginalized groups](#) — such as racialized, low-income and immigrant communities — worse than it does others, and we've learned how well-intentioned policies can actually serve to reinforce inequity. Observers fear the same thing could happen with vaccine passports. According to **Dr. Danyaal Raza**, a physician and health advocate with **Unity Health Toronto**:

“Communities already excluded from many public and private spaces, like undocumented migrants who fear deportation and communities that often lack formal ID such as those who are houseless, are at risk of being further marginalized. Vaccine passports are critical and must be rolled out with targeted supports including community outreach funding, a secure paper passport option and ongoing vaccination support.”

**Seher Shafiq** of **North York Community House**, who is also an FPR editor, offers a similar observation when it comes to immigrant and refugee communities:

“Some populations can have a mistrust in government for a variety of reasons — particularly immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers who come from authoritarian or unstable regimes. In the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector, we often see clients hesitant to share personal information with government authorities because of a lack of trust due to experiences with governments in their home countries. I hope that the vaccine passport rollout takes an equitable approach and finds a way to address these barriers. This

could include educational campaigns in different languages to assure people that the personal information they submit is safe, secure, and will not be misused.”

Others such as **Nour Abdelaal** of the **Ryerson Leadership Lab's Cybersecure Policy Exchange** point out that with most passports expected to be primarily digital in format, those who [lack digital devices or expertise](#) are at risk of exclusion:

“We know that more Indigenous peoples, older adults, low-income individuals and people with disabilities do not have a home internet connection or smartphone — tools that are needed to access digital proofs of vaccination and register for protection statuses efficiently online. Targeted outreach, training and technical support for those facing greater digital challenges should be prioritized to protect vulnerable populations, who actually face greater risks of contracting COVID-19.”

**Bianca Wylie** and **Sean McDonald** of **Digital Public** warn that by focusing too much on digital solutions to public health problems, policy-makers run the risk of overlooking the bigger picture:

“Governments that implement vaccine passports should be equally committed to the wide range of public health interventions we need, including free N-95 masks for all, easy access to testing, ventilating public spaces and access to justice mechanisms for digital rights issues. But they're not. Whether it's the breakthrough of Delta, the lack of vaccine access for children, or the reality that there will always be immunocompromised people that are ineligible, we need to invest in broad measures that create dignified access to vital services.”

Meanwhile, **Yuan Stevens** of the **Cybersecure Policy Exchange** adds that there are also security risks inherent in any digital identification system that could put users' privacy at risk:



“As regions and countries roll out vaccine passports, it’s crucial to prioritize the security of these tools. Hire a team tasked with assessing and mitigating security threats. Provide robust disclosure pipelines — and legal protection — for external people who disclose security flaws.”

In addition to the risks a vaccine passport system may pose to the general public, there are also concerns about how it would affect the people tasked with enforcing it — in particular, small business owners who have already [struggled to stay afloat](#) during repeated lockdowns, and retail and service workers, many of whom are already working with low pay and limited benefits. Food journalist **Corey Mintz**, who has been reporting on the challenges facing the food service industry during the pandemic, told us:

“Many provincial governments left businesses to develop and enforce their own safety protocols. At this stage, businesses need a clear proof of vaccination system that works across provinces and takes legitimate medical exemptions into account, in order to implement policies intended to protect the safety of their employees and customers. And workers, if they haven’t gotten a vaccination yet, deserve paid time off to do so.”

**Karla Briones**, an Ottawa entrepreneur who works with immigrants launching their own businesses, wrote about her concerns in the [Ottawa Citizen](#):

“Policing this is exactly what I’m scared of. If we are getting spat on for reminding people to wear a flimsy mask, what reaction can we expect from those who don’t want to share their personal vaccination information? . . . What type of training and extra security is the government going to provide to business owners so that we don’t become the first line of casualties in such a divisive topic? So that we don’t get

sued or assaulted while we struggle to keep our businesses alive.”

She calls on the government to do more to include business owners in their decision-making processes.

## More from the campaign trail

### Long-term care

The Liberals said they would spend \$9 billion to help the long-term care sector that was ravaged by the first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. That would triple the amount promised in the April budget. The proposal would train 50,000 more workers and raise their wages to \$25/hour, and implement new national standards. Because long-term care is a provincial responsibility, the federal governments would have to reach agreements with the provinces to make the changes.

Like the Liberals, the NDP has pledged better pay and working conditions for long-term care workers and a set of national standards. The party also said it would end private, for-profit long-term care.

The Conservative platform earmarks \$3 billion for infrastructure funding for long-term care over the next three years. They also pledged to add more care workers, in part by accepting more immigrants working in long-term care or home care, but didn't specify a number. Rather than introducing national standards, the Conservatives would work with the province to develop best practices.

The Green Party also wants to eliminate for-profit long-term care and improve working conditions for care workers, as well as bringing long-term into the Canada Health Act and developing and

enforcing national standards. It would prioritize aging in place to allow more seniors to remain at home, by establishing a dedicated Seniors' Care Transfer to provide "transformative investment" to provinces and territories for improvements to home and community care.

**Dr. Samir Sinha**, director of health policy research at **Ryerson University's National Institute on Ageing**, said he was looking to see more details from the parties:

"While all major parties are proposing much-needed investments in long-term care, there continues to be a lack of clarity on critical logistics. How would federal parties work with provinces and territories to ensure meaningful reform occurs equitably in communities from coast to coast to coast? Across the political spectrum, we have also seen a disappointing lack of commitment to adequately resource homecare, which is an integral part of the larger solution to Canada's long-term care crisis."

**Dr. Shara Nauth**, chief geriatrics fellow at **Western University**, also cautioned that too much focus on long-term care facilities could stymie much-needed improvements to homecare:

"There's no doubt that increasing capital in long-term care is essential. The question is: will it be enough? Canadian older adults have made it clear that they need and want to age in place — and other countries have demonstrated that this is a more cost-effective solution. Similarly, it is excellent that [personal support worker] compensation is addressed — but if wages only increase in the LTC sector, the already drained homecare workforce will be decimated. Caring for older adults requires a comprehensive approach — we've been approaching this in silos for too long. We need a party that will create an integrated plan that stops focusing on long-term care beds and is willing instead to invest in care where Canadians need it most."

## Afghan refugee intake

Just as the election was called, the crisis in Afghanistan reached a tipping point, with the Taliban taking control of the government and thousands of desperate citizens trying to flee the country – including interpreters and other locals who had helped the Canadian military during its operations in the country, and whose lives were now in danger because of their involvement.

The governing Liberals initially said Canada would take in 20,000 Afghan refugees, but doubled that number to 40,000 during the campaign. Their platform also pledges to “expand the new immigration stream for human rights defenders and work with civil society groups to ensure safe passage and resettlement of people under threat, including from Afghanistan.” The Conservatives say they will take in at least 20,000 Afghans in addition to those who worked with Canadian forces, and work with allies to help Afghans trying to flee the country. The NDP and Green Party have both endorsed the demands of the [Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace](#), which include resettling at least 40,000 Afghans; identifying the Hazara ethnic group as a vulnerable group; eliminating barriers to applying for immigration; and increasing funding to resettlement agencies and Afghan-led organizations in Canada to support Afghan newcomers.

**Anna Triandafyllidou**, the **Canada Excellence Research Chair on Migration and Integration** at **Ryerson University**, said that Canada’s experience with Syrian refugee settlement has taught us that private sponsorship can be highly effective; “However, if the sponsorship arrangement breaks down, the refugees can find themselves in a difficult situation.” She adds:

“We have also learned that private sponsors need more training and support from government and immigration professionals in terms of how to prepare for their sponsorship, what to expect, and how to deal with crisis with their sponsored refugees or within the sponsorship

team. In addition, there has been some very interesting research pointing to the importance of matching refugees with sponsors at the same phase in their lives. For example, a young family with kids may understand their challenges better than a group of young, single professionals or students.”

Do you work on the front lines of policy issues – such as child care, long-term care, small business, mental health, poverty reduction, creative work, settlement services or anything else? We would love to hear from you. Send us your thoughts about how the campaign promises would affect you and the people you serve at [policyresponse@ryerson.ca](mailto:policyresponse@ryerson.ca).

[Stephanie MacLellan](#) is the managing editor of First Policy Response.

**Keywords:** [CHILDCARE](#), [ELECTION 2021](#), [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

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## Quiz

**Quiz on MacLellan’s article “Campaign catch-up: Focus on vaccine passports”:**



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**Please click on the photo below to learn more about N-95 masks and their Canadian connection:**



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“[Deep well Covid Mask](#)” by [Kenan Hoffpauir](#) is marked with [CC0 1.0](#)

# 1c. "Principles and policies for a national pandemic response"

## Principles and policies for a national pandemic response

First Policy Response, DECEMBER 11, 2020 | IN [ECONOMIC POLICY, IMPLEMENTATION + GOVERNANCE](#) | BY [KARIM BARDEESY](#)

What does success look like in our COVID-19 response? Nine months into the crisis, and the day after an important First Ministers' Meeting, we still don't have an answer from our political leaders.

It seems, though, that they are relying on the promise of a vaccine. It's a tempting answer that sidesteps the debate we're mired in, based on the false narrative that economic re-opening and slowing the pandemic are in opposition to each other. That's simply not so — they are the same objective, as the prime minister, to his credit, [finally said](#) two weeks ago.

To meet that objective, we need to crush the pandemic — getting the community transmission rate well below one new infection per case — with aggressive, co-ordinated and common measures across the country to dramatically limit transmission and scale up testing and tracing. We need a national plan that actually learns from and applies the lessons of the failures of the spring and the fall — that selective lockdowns do not work.

Instead, we're continuing to “manage” the pandemic with a series



of welcome, but discrete, policy and spending announcements, not related to a clear set of objectives, priorities or timelines. With exhortations — to families, businesses and other governments — to do things. All in the hopes that not only will the vaccine resolve the pandemic, but that its rollout will be quick, orderly and welcomed by everyone.

In recent days, we've seen a robust economic support package that will last well into 2021, the quick approval of one vaccine, the preparation of vaccine rollout plans, even the resumption of regular news conferences from the prime minister — all necessary pieces to fight the virus.

But on top of these discrete policy announcements, we need a real, cohesive plan: a comprehensive national plan, or a unified set of provincial/territorial/ municipal/Indigenous-led plans. Only such a plan can aggressively slow the spread of the virus. Developing this plan and getting support for it is a job for our political leadership, and a project of incomparable national urgency.

That could have been the subject of yesterday's First Ministers' Meeting. But instead, we had the usual bickering over jurisdiction and spending responsibilities, sometimes on issues that go well beyond pandemic response.

The federal government and the provinces may not be entirely on the same page, but neither of them is on the page of Canadians who are looking for a path between today's grim reality and widespread vaccinations. Neither is seized with what a comprehensive pandemic response needs to look like.

Yes, the federal government has used its borrowing power to provide the vast majority of income supports to individuals and organizations, occasionally butting up against some areas of provincial jurisdiction in the process. It is procuring vaccines centrally. It is setting international border policy. But is it organizing and driving a national response? Is it using the money to drive shared national goals around testing and tracing (at which we've now failed twice, spring and fall), around driving a shared

communications message (ditto), and around [equity for the most at-risk populations](#) (ditto)? No.

Provincial governments are spending that federal money (eight out of every 10 government dollars spent on the pandemic comes from Ottawa, as the federal government is fond of pointing out), adding their own spending, and generally attempting — with limited success — to stem outbreaks of the virus in workplaces, [schools](#) and [long-term care facilities](#). The protections are not widespread enough; they are not accompanied by rapid testing, tracing and re-tracing; they have generally not taken an equity lens; and they do not share messages and policy approaches across the country, apart from aggressive messaging around personal responsibility. And so provinces are failing to stem the tide.

In many ways, the country is working exactly as designed — a federal country, with highly devolved powers. Provinces have decided to devolve further, to allow variable and highly divisive regionally-focussed shutdowns — measures that did not stop virus spread this fall, and which reduced solidarity within provinces and at the national level. Citizens are not being protected; and what's worse, the message Canadians get from differential shutdowns is that some regions are more worthy than others.

The fall infection rate, the return of the virus (in particular, to long-term facilities) and the ongoing failure to dramatically scale and target testing-and-tracing infrastructure — these are all signs of a national tragedy. Signs that while the country is working as designed, it is not working as it should.

But we don't need to reimagine federalism. We just need our leaders to do their jobs.

And we need everyone pulling together on a national plan, wherever it originates from, because it will need to be built on clear, common, fundamental principles.

A national plan needs to articulate the things that are most important in our pandemic response. That involves a set of easily understood principles and objectives that are public, based on our national and community values, and can win public support. These,

in turn, will help explain many of the decisions and choices that are underpinned by those principles. Call those principles and objectives the rock on which the entire foundation of our approach rests.

## Principles for a national crisis response

I'll take a shot, and say those principles are something like the following:

**1. This is a national emergency that requires a national response, and the prime ministers, first ministers, mayors/ councils and Indigenous leaders are in charge**

This is a given, maybe, but do we have a national response?

Too often our political leaders point fingers at each other, or say simply that they are “following best advice” of public health leaders, without (a) giving a full public accounting of what that advice is; (b) acknowledging that public health leaders get their authority from political leadership; or (c) admitting that the biggest decisions — around funding, lockdowns, and allocation of resources towards the greatest needs — are political.

Perhaps more importantly, without this level of solidarity from political leaders, we just won't be able to do the politically difficult work of demanding similar levels of solidarity of our populations, and making life a bit harder for some who feel they deserve to have their economic livelihood entirely untouched.

**2. The most at-risk populations deserve the most attention**

This, too, ought to be obvious by now, but have we aggressively directed our resources this way? Do we have sufficient shutdowns of indoor public places to protect at-risk populations? Do we have paid sick leave policies guaranteed beyond the current (and time-limited) \$500 a week under the national Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit? Do we have enough supports for small businesses — not

typically defined as at-risk, but clearly under existential threat – so they know we are all in this together?

### **3. We need to solve for families, for the heart, and for a holiday**

Public policy is not good at emotion, though politicians are often good at emoting. Public policy solutions for families, for the heart, for a holiday would recognize the profound human need to connect safely. These policies would have us collectively plan and set goals for when we can gather indoors in smaller family units – with whatever inventive approaches that might require. These policies would create new holidays and intersperse them across 2021 by region. And they would bring all the resources available to help bring a sense of connection to the lonely, to allow people to grieve, and to start to bring justice for those who have lost loved ones.

**4. Otherwise, we need the maximally protective measures in place until the vaccine is here. All defaults, questions and exceptions to our policy positioning should receive a full airing and debate. But when in doubt, err on the side of maximally protective measures and the three principles above.**

This is the cold reality of pandemic response, at least as we know it now with high community transmission.

Based on these four principles, we need a set of public policy and funding approaches, guided by the latest evidence on pandemic spread and policy effectiveness, that (a) virtually eliminate community transmission and (b) can win public support. The plan must last not just a month, but get us through the next six months, all the way through to a period when the vaccine is being distributed in sufficient quantities across the country that community spread has abated.

# Policies for a national crisis response

Those policies could look something like the following:

## **1. Keep only the most important indoor work and living spaces open**

This means that public schools and childcare centres should be the last frontier for institutional closure; that we should target long-term care, and any other in-person caregiving settings, for the greatest security, connectivity and testing-and-tracing measures; and that we should, as a corollary, relax the policing on some contacts and lower-risk outdoor activities that we need to be well and happy.

## **2. Provide support and ensure fairness**

We have some, but not all, the policies in place to do this. To be consistent with our principles above, adequately supporting and resourcing schools, childcare and long-term care isn't enough. We need to resource the rest of the health-care system, including with new surges of human resources to make sure other lives aren't lost needlessly. And we need to ensure income and sectoral support for the people we are asking not to work — indeed, enough of those targeted and broad supports to reassure them that their sacrifice is manageable and time-limited. None of this works without sufficient paid sick-leave policies and benefits for those who must work.

## **3. Plan for the next set of problems and issues**

We need to debate and engage on a second, just as aggressive, set of plans. This next phase is the transition to the hoped-for return to normal when the vaccine starts to become widely available, but which will in turn require public health, public policy and political measures. Those measures could be just as controversial as the ones that have been required for the previous and current shutdowns. They'll involve choices around who gets the vaccine first, how to deal with misinformation about the vaccine, and how to rectify

the way in which we created — reluctantly, inadvertently or intentionally — winners and losers during the pandemic.

They'll involve considerations around vaccine certification and immunity passports. They'll involve continued testing and contact tracing, because we will continue to need it to re-open workplaces.

If we are solving for loss, for grief, for the need to restore connection, then we need to start planning now to rebuild devastated sectors, and rebuild human capital in all of those whose education was interrupted, or whose careers or connections to the workforce were knocked off track. And again, we will need to target supports to the neediest sectors and the people with the most to lose if they are not connected to economic opportunity.

#### **4. Demonstrate that we're all in this together**

The Atlantic provinces have already demonstrated, for a time, that they can do this, and they reaped the benefits. And it would be naïve to think that it was only the border closure or the [Atlantic Bubble](#) that protected them — their co-ordinated policies within the bubble also made a big difference.

Political leaders could go further though an intense, war-time level of co-operation. New Brunswick demonstrated this by bringing its opposition party leaders into the regular decision-making process with the premier. There was some outside rationale for this measure, as that government had a minority — but so does our current national government. While such attempts might fall short of a “government of national unity,” as we had during the First World War, there's a strong case for a level of engagement and co-operation, with daily briefings of opposition leaders and co-operation on the construction and roll-out of the plan. A further necessary measure would be similar measures in provincial capitals.

A supplement to this must be much more regular First Ministers' Meetings, on a public schedule, to check against progress, to update them on preparations for the work to come, and to check on the solidarity that is required; and regular meetings with municipal

leadership, municipal organizations, and Indigenous, First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments, again on a public schedule.

Some revenue-raising and power-dispersing measures may be necessary. These are, transparently, more important for public support for the full set of measures, not because they contribute in a significant way to the bottom line of the effort. These policies need to be implemented and communicated because shared sacrifice is part of the foundation for dealing with this in a co-ordinated way, and it's been the basis for success in responding to past national emergencies.

Shared sacrifice does not mean equal sacrifice. But many small businesses and frontline workers (in health care and retail, in particular) observe that sacrifice is not being shared, and are rightly questioning pandemic response measures at a result. All Canadians should be prepared to make sacrifices, and we should use public policy tools to help them get there.

## **We can do this**

We have resources to set a new course and do it quickly. Public support is ready to attach itself to the maximum set of confidence-producing measures, even if they produce some immediate additional hardships. Our ingenuity and the fundamental resilience of much of our infrastructure also present advantages. So, too, does our robust public square, in which people and institutions that have proven to be right have had a clear chance to make their case. Their solutions remain on the table. We've adopted some of them. It's not too late to pick them all up, stitch them together and hold to them for the medium-term.

Exponential increases of COVID-19 mean not only more cases, but an ever-faster increase in the rate of cases. Today's delay in bringing forward a national plan is more costly than yesterday's delay. And

every day of delay or half-measures decreases trust — trust which can plummet at rates almost as exponential as the virus's spread.

Is there too much to do right away? Yes, though we've known this for months. Politically naïve? Perhaps, but the pandemic has made the bounds of what is politically possible pretty elastic.

At the very least, as a start, we could start to muster national goodwill through plans that do the following, co-ordinated at the federal level or through other levels of government with the private sector, labour and community sectors:

1. Co-ordinated vaccine delivery and prioritization;
2. Co-ordinated rental market supports for residential and commercial tenants;
3. Co-ordinated financial system support to locked-down businesses;
4. Co-ordinated increase in testing and tracing at a common set of institutions across the country;
5. Co-ordinated messaging to get Canadians enjoying the winter outdoors, and the resources and supports they need to do so.

Let's start with these efforts, at least, in the next month. Let's recognize this for the crisis it is, which requires dramatic interventions that build national solidarity. And let's give our political leaders licence to lead, and not follow, in the months until the vaccine and all of the heroes involved in pandemic response have had the time to do their work.

[Karim Bardeesy](#) is Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Ryerson Leadership Lab and co-director of First Policy Response.

**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Bardeesy, K. (2020, December 11). [Principles and policies for a national pandemic response](#). First Policy Response.



## Quiz

### Quiz on Bardeesy's article "Principles and policies for a national pandemic response":



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**Please click on the photo below to learn more about the Atlantic Bubble:**



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# 1d. "How Canada can pursue an inclusive industrial policy"

## How Canada can pursue an inclusive industrial policy

First Policy Response, JANUARY 28, 2021 | IN [ECONOMIC POLICY](#) |  
BY [MATTHEW MENDELSON](#) AND [NOAH ZON](#)

For decades, we have been told that “governments can’t pick winners” and that industrial policy — characterized by high tariffs and grinning politicians delivering jumbo cheques to failing factories — is for chumps.

The caricature was a dishonest distraction from the fact that Canadian governments have been engaging in industrial policy the whole time. Although we didn’t like to talk about it, governments never stopped investing public dollars to shape markets and build sectors in explicit and implicit ways.

“There is now a surprising emerging consensus across the political spectrum in Canada on two ideas: governments need to engage in activist industrial policy; and economic growth on its own isn’t a sign of success if growth exacerbates inequalities, damages the environment, destroys communities and fails to create good middle-class jobs.

It is not a question then of whether Canada embraces industrial policy, but whether we do it well. With governments now making massive public investments in COVID economic recovery, it will be a generational failure if we neglect to account for what kind of growth we want to see and what kinds of communities we want to build.

Strong macroeconomic fundamentals are important. But these on

their own were never enough to create, scale and retain globally leading companies. The most dynamic economies in the world in Europe and Asia have been successful in part because of an active state and strategic and creative ways of supporting firms, sectors and regions.

Today, around the world, governments are investing more in their industrial policies, focusing on building competitive advantages in sectors like AI and energy transition. Here in Canada, the current federal government — even before the massive investments during the pandemic — had embraced an agenda focused on supporting key sectors and helping companies scale, attract talent and diversify their export markets.

But a modern industrial policy should not ignore other critical policy goals. It needs to be *inclusive* – supporting innovation and private-sector growth in a way that delivers widely shared economic, social and environmental value.

There is growing evidence that more inclusive growth isn't just more equitable — it's also *stronger growth*. Many of the most pathological qualities of our current economic crisis – inequality, precarity, carbon intensity and a lack of social protection for vulnerable workers – arise from our failure to understand that economic growth and inclusion are mutually reinforcing goals, not competing ones.

If our industrial policies help build great companies that contribute to growing inequality and wealth concentration, they will have failed.

A well-designed industrial policy overcomes collective action problems, addresses issues of scale and builds ecosystems in which positive spillovers and economic activity are more likely to occur. A well-designed *inclusive* industrial policy is a conscious effort to build that economic capacity in ways that generate broadly shared wealth for individuals and communities on a sustainable basis.

In a joint effort with the [Brookfield Institute and Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#) and the [Ryerson Leadership Lab](#), we recently released a [report](#) outlining how Canadian governments can build an

inclusive industrial policy that delivers more economic inclusion and community wealth, and helps Canada achieve its 2050 climate goals.

The report lays out a toolkit of tested inclusive industrial policy approaches that could be scaled or introduced here in Canada. Among the key levers that governments can use are a more strategic use of procurement and standard-setting; more democratic and inclusive access to capital; and government investment in Canadian firms, including taking equity. If these tools are used, Canada would be more likely to see economic growth and innovation, while at the same time making progress on goals like reconciliation, racial justice, gender equality, community-wealth and net zero emissions

Some will argue that Canada has enough trouble simply creating and retaining innovative, high-growth companies and we should focus on that first. It is not an unreasonable concern. But this generational economic crisis demands a generational economic response to the very real risks of inequality, social instability and the climate crisis. We can deliver growth and inclusion at the same time.

[Matthew Mendelsohn](#) is Visiting Professor at Ryerson University and a co-creator, with the Ryerson Leadership Lab and the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship, of First Policy Response.

[Noah Zon](#) is the co-founder of Springboard Policy, a public policy research and advisory firm based in Toronto. He has spent his career in public policy in the non-profit sector, think tanks and public service.

**Keywords:** [ECONOMICS](#), [FPR ORIGINAL](#), [INCLUSIVE POLICY MAKING](#), [INDUSTRIAL POLICY](#)

**Citation:** Mendelsohn, M., & Zon, N. (2021, January 28). [How Canada can pursue an inclusive industrial policy](#). First Policy Response.

## Quiz

### Quiz on Mendelsohn and Zon's article "How Canada can pursue an inclusive industrial policy":



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# 1e. "COVID 19 in Community: How are First Nations Responding?"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [COVID 19 in Community: How are First Nations Responding?](#)

*Yellowhead Institute*, POLICY BRIEF Issue 58 | April 7, 2020

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**Keywords:** COVID-19, First Nations Indigenous People

**Citation:** Yellowhead Institute (2020, April 7). [COVID 19 in Community: How are First Nations Responding?](#) Yellowhead Institute.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Yellowhead Institute's article "COVID 19 in Community: How are First Nations Responding?":**





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# 1f. "How 'colonialism by paper cuts' has undermined Indigenous pandemic leadership"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [How 'colonialism by paper cuts' has undermined Indigenous pandemic leadership](#)

*The Conversation.* June 22, 2021 12.40pm EDT, Jocelyn Stacey, Crystal Verhaeghe, and Emma Feltes

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### **Keywords:**

- [Indigenous](#)
- [Pandemic](#)
- [Colonialism](#)
- [Coronavirus](#)
- [british columbia](#)
- [First Nations](#)
- [Emergency response](#)
- [Colonization](#)

1f. "How 'colonialism by paper cuts' has undermined Indigenous

- [Federal funding](#)
- [Tsilhqot'in Nation](#)
- [COVID-19](#)

**Citation:** Stacey, J., Verhaeghe, C., & Feltes, E. (2021, June 22). [How 'colonialism by paper cuts' has undermined Indigenous pandemic leadership](#). *The Conversation*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Jocelyn Stacey, Crystal Verhaeghe, and Emma Feltes' article "How 'colonialism by paper cuts' has undermined Indigenous pandemic leadership":**



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1g. "Indigenous communities facing 'dual pandemic' due to the impact of COVID-19 on mental illness and addiction, report says"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

[Indigenous communities facing 'dual pandemic' due to the impact of COVID-19 on mental illness and addiction, report says.](#)

*The Globe and Mail*, March 25, 2021, Teresa Wright

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**Keywords:** Indigenous people, Indigenous communities, pandemic, COVID-19, *The Globe and Mail*

**Citation:** Wright, T. (2021, March 25). [Indigenous communities facing 'dual pandemic' due to the impact of COVID-19 on mental illness and addiction, report says.](#) *The Globe and Mail*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Teresa Wright's article "Indigenous communities facing 'dual pandemic' due to the impact of COVID-19 on mental illness and addiction, report says":**



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# Policy Brief Assessment

Based on the articles above from *First Policy Response*, please engage in the following assessments to test your learning.

## **Policy Brief:**

You are an Ontario government policy analyst. The province has had a relatively successful roll out of its [vaccine passport program](#). However, you have been alerted to COVID-19-related tensions within a small northern Ontario rural town.

A vocal minority of the town's residents have relatively low technology skills, doubt the usefulness of the passport, and have resisted downloading the vaccine app.

In contrast, most of the town's business people quietly support the passport with the hope that it will help them implement a standardized plan and protocol to safely re-opening allowing businesses to stay open. However, these business people also fear that being open about their support for the passport could alienate customers.

The Ontario government worries that another wave of the COVID-19 pandemic will hit northern Ontario. As a result, they fear that they may need to shut down the town entirely in the future to stem pandemic spread, including its businesses, due to this lack of widespread passport adoption.

Write a short policy brief (750 – 1,500 words in length) that focuses on how the Ontario government can promote and implement a vaccine passport in this town. Present the government with your top three recommendations to improve downloads and use of the vaccine passport app.



## 2. HEALTH



*Illustration of health care worker, wearing protective equipment, with COVID-19 particles floating around*



# Learning Objectives

## Identifying Gaps in Ontario's Healthcare System—Long Term Care, Racism, and Health Equity

- Describe the process of the COVID-19 vaccine administration
- Identify infection prevention and control measures that have been/could be used during the pandemic
- Outline the physical and psychological practices of healthcare workers
- Analyze the healthcare system roles and responsibilities when advancing public safety and health in collaboration with the federal, provincial, and municipal governments

This module will help learners understand how governments leverage policies to address gaps in the healthcare system. By the end, learners will be able to explain the key role that governments and healthcare professionals play in contributing to more equitable health outcomes.

## 2a. "For more equitable health outcomes, start with the health-research system"

### For more equitable health outcomes, start with the health-research system

First Policy Response, NOVEMBER 5, 2020 | IN [EQUITY + COVID-19](#) | BY [ZAHRA BHIMANI](#)

Over the course of the pandemic, we have seen deep inequalities rise to the surface. The acknowledgement of these disparities has led to the [push for race-based data collection](#) and other policy measures aimed at reducing inequality. [Sociodemographic data reveal](#) that racialized, marginalized and low-income communities have been most affected by COVID-19, and [Toronto Public Health](#) reports that non-white residents make up 52 per cent of the population but 82 per cent of COVID-19 cases in the city.

Now, amid the second wave, these inequalities continue to persist in the health system. This prompts the question: Are we doing all we can to learn how health outcomes can be improved for those most affected by this pandemic?

To date, more than [\\$275 million](#) has been invested to enhance Canada's capacity in research and development, as part of Canada's COVID-19 research response. Now more than ever, research is one of the most powerful tools we have for improving health outcomes. But before we can attain answers, we need to address institutional barriers within clinical research.

Canada's clinical research response to studying patients with COVID-19 and related treatments must be representative and inclusive of racially marginalized populations across Canada. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) [recently released a](#)

[statement](#) committed to fostering a more “equitable, diverse and inclusive research-funding system,” noting that its predominant focus to date has been on sex and gender diversity.

The homogeneity of clinical trial participants has long been recognized as both an [ethical and scientific issue](#); relying on data that may not be generalizable (but may be considered as such) is problematic. Taking action that will result in tangible change is important, and the time to act is now. The current pandemic offers an opportunity to address this problem by reducing disparities in health outcomes across the country, but that depends on organizations that fund Canadian health research adopting system-wide policy solutions:

## **Increase transparency of funding decisions by enabling public involvement**

First and foremost, the Canadian health research-funding system should consider enabling demographically representative public participation in its funding decisions. Public involvement is imperative to increase transparency and accountability in government decision-making. Just as recent demand for greater citizen engagement in matters that affect the health outcomes of Canadians has been met with [patient-oriented research strategies](#), a demographically representative sample of the Canadian public should become a mandated requirement when decisions that fund health research take place. Public representatives drawing from lived experience would be able to judge research proposals by the quality of their equity, diversity and inclusion strategies. In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, when critical policies were being made about patients (such as long-term care facilities and visitation rights), [patient and public voices were largely left out](#) of the decision-making. The second wave offers an opportunity to make policy decisions transparent and inclusive.

## Require equitable inclusion of racially marginalized populations in clinical research

While researchers may have the willingness to improve the diversity of clinical trials, they have to consider many important barriers, such as historical abuses. One particularly successful means for building trust, educating patients and raising awareness is through [community-based participatory research](#). Trial sponsors and research teams are forging new paths to diversity by obtaining the support of trusted community leaders. Given our history, building the trust of Indigenous and Black communities in Canada will be particularly critical, and our research-funding system should make this a requirement for all clinical researchers seeking funding.

## Address disparities in clinical trial access

All funded research should require that research sites have the resources and personnel to simplify research and translate consent documents to languages spoken by local populations. Though translation services are often available, their use is not mandated by our funding system, which limits trial participation from patients who speak little or no English or French. [Low income and education levels](#) are also barriers to increased participation in clinical research. Requiring research teams to include professionals trained and educated on the potential barriers that racially marginalized populations face, who share cultural and language similarities with patients and who use simplified language to explain their research, will help overcome the barriers to including low-income and racially marginalized populations in research. This solution would not only be a step closer toward inclusive science, but also toward health equity and consequently, improved health outcomes.

As we strive as a country to tackle the second wave of the



pandemic, and as CIHR develops a new strategic plan for 2021-25 Canada's health research-funding community must take a close look at current research practices that may be exacerbating inequalities in clinical research, and act swiftly to enact these recommendations.

[Zahra Bhimani](#) is a public health research professional based in Toronto.

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**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#), [HEALTH ECONOMICS](#)

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Bhimani's article "For more equitable health outcomes, start with the health-research system":**



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**Please click on the image below of the [Carver Museum at Tuskegee University](#), which was involved with the Tuskegee Experiment as well as its impact on research.**



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## 2b. "Underfunded long-term care system is still vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks"

### Underfunded long-term care system is still vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks

First Policy Response, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020 | IN [SUPPORT FOR THE MARGINALIZED](#) | BY [SAMIR SINHA](#)

*September marks six months since the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic of COVID-19. We're using this milestone to take stock of the policy response so far and consider next steps as Canada continues to move from reaction to rebuilding. As part of this, First Policy Response is speaking to several policy experts to gather their thoughts on the key policy developments of these past six months, and what they think our next priorities should be.*

*This interview with Dr. Samir Sinha, director of health policy research and co-chair of the [National Institute on Ageing](#) at Ryerson University, is part of a series of interview transcripts. You can read the full series [here](#). This transcript has been edited for clarity.*

**First Policy Response: As of May, the National Institute on Ageing was reporting that more than 80 per cent of COVID-19 deaths in Canada were in long-term care homes. Is that still accurate at this point?**

Dr. Samir Sinha: Yes. Towards the end of March, we launched what we call our [NIA Long-term Care COVID-19 Tracker](#). It's available online and we continue to update it to this day. By May, or at the height of the pandemic, if you will, we were even up as

high as 82, 83 per cent of Canadian deaths that occurred in long-term care settings. By the time the Canadian Institute for Health Information did an [analysis](#) towards the end of May looking at our data, they confirmed about 80 to 81 per cent. Right now that number is about 77 per cent of Canadian deaths that have occurred in long-term care homes. So the number is decreasing a little bit, but it's staying around the 80 per cent mark, and this reflects that more younger people are now becoming infected. And certainly younger populations, with the second ripple or second wave that's starting to develop across the country, we're starting to see more deaths occurring outside long-term care homes in the general population, as well.

But the bottom line is that Canada still holds this record of 77 per cent or close to 80 per cent of its deaths occurring in our long-term care homes. And that's about double what we're seeing on the international stage.

**FPR: Why do you think that is?**

I think there are two fundamental reasons why we've actually been seeing such a high proportion of our deaths occur in long-term care homes. The first part is good news: Canada did a really, really good job early on in the pandemic, as cases were starting to climb in Canada, to actually take some definitive public health measures to lock us all down, essentially, and limit our ability to travel and interact, and close our borders as well. And by doing that, we helped to significantly limit the rate of community spread that could potentially occur, that we had seen become real issues in places like the U.K., Spain, Italy, etc. And so, because we had fair warning compared to some European countries, for example, we were able to heed those warnings and close our borders, create our lockdown situation early, which helped to limit the amount of community spread and the number of cases and deaths. And overall we've seen only about 1 per cent of Canadians in total have actually been infected, probably, with COVID-19. The challenge is that, when it came to the way that we were preparing ourselves in our health-care system, a huge amount of focus was placed on our

hospitals at the expense of our long-term care and our retirement-home systems, which really in the end were not well equipped and well supported enough to deal with COVID-19. So even though COVID-19 was circulating in the communities, we weren't making sure that all of our long-term care homes were fully equipped with personal protective equipment. While we assumed that our staff in these homes knew how to follow IPAC [Infection Prevention and Control] procedures and use their PPE, this wasn't quite the case. And then we already had a system that was plagued with staffing shortages and issues. And as COVID got into homes and spread easily – because we weren't aware early on of the possibilities of asymptomatic spread and transmission – staff weren't equipped with enough PPE and we already had severe staffing shortages to begin with. As soon as COVID started taking effect in these homes, this just exacerbated all these problems even further, and especially in provinces like Ontario and Quebec, really set us off on a wrong foot overall.

**FPR: What does that tell us about the long-term care system in Canada?**

I think what it really exposed to us is that, when we think about how Canada did compared to the rest of the world, we could say, yes, some of our high case numbers or rates of deaths in these settings was partly related to the fact that we actually had done a reasonably good job of limiting the amount of general community spread. But you know, when you're double the international rate of deaths in long-term care homes, it also speaks to the fact that COVID-19 exposed how vulnerable our long-term care system was to begin with. So when you look at OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] countries, in general, which experienced half the rate of deaths in its care homes that we did, what we see is that we spend 30 per cent less on providing long-term care services in Canada compared to other OECD countries. We're already funding significantly less as a proportion of our GDP compared to other countries, only 1.3 per cent versus 1.7 per cent on average. So that's the first challenge.

And then, when you underfund an entire long-term care system, it means that we have staff who aren't paid as well as those who are generally working in our hospitals, for example. And we also have the challenge where more people tend to work part-time in these settings than, say, in other health-care settings, and as a result, to try and make a full-time salary, people are working multiple jobs in multiple settings. All of this means that if you have infection in one home, when staff are working between multiple homes, they could inadvertently become vectors to transmit this virus from one home to the other. So when you underfund the system, it affects the level at which we staff these homes.

It also affects the resources we actually provide these homes to provide the care that residents need. And it really just exposed the fact that we had these systemic vulnerabilities – that not only were we having challenges staffing and making sure that homes have the resources they did, but we also see this phenomenon in Canada, compared to many other countries, where in Ontario, for example, a large portion of the rooms happened to be two-, three- or four-bedded rooms, where in many other jurisdictions, they moved to an all-single-room format. The problem is, if you move to all single rooms, that's a much more expensive home to build than packing people two or three or four to a room. And so again, when you underfund the system, you're going to have poor-quality facilities and many older facilities that are vastly in need of redevelopment, but also a system that can't actually even attract the basic staff it needs to keep these homes properly staffed and supported, especially during a pandemic.

**FPR: Was it a surprise to you, how much higher the rate was in Canada compared to the rest of the world?**

It was. I mean, the data doesn't lie. And when you see that Canada has such a high rate of death in long-term care settings, especially when we had other countries that had significant community spread but their long-term care settings seem to fare better, we started realizing what other countries were doing and what we weren't doing, and it reinforced how our approaches were not well

balanced in Canada. For example, other countries, realizing that their long-term care homes or settings were highly vulnerable settings, were making sure that they actually increased the staffing in those settings. They were making sure that homes had adequate supplies of PPE. They were making sure that staff in those homes were having their skills augmented in terms of how to use PPE, and making sure that they were well versed in their infection prevention control efforts. And in some jurisdictions, they had developed early response teams, so that if a home did go on outbreak, it would actually have extra resources deployed almost immediately. Yet we didn't have a lot of those mechanisms in place or those considerations in place. I think so many people were concerned about our hospitals getting overwhelmed at the beginning; we were concerned about conserving PPE for these settings at the expense of our long-term care settings. So while we were masking all the staff in our hospital settings, we weren't doing that for staff in long-term care homes for even weeks after we started mandating this in our own hospitals. This really just showed that we almost created a bit of a double standard, and ironically, a double standard in environments that had the most to lose if COVID-19 got in.

“Fundamentally, as a society, we're ageist.”

**FPR: How do you think we ended up in this position where the long-term care homes were so much less prepared than hospitals?**

I think part of it was just the fact that what we were seeing around the world was that countries that were really struggling had hospitals that were utterly overwhelmed. And so I think a lot of people just naturally felt that if we shore up our hospitals, then the rest of the system will be OK. But what we weren't hearing about was the fact that in countries like Spain or Italy, people weren't even getting the opportunity to be sent to hospital for care from a long-



term care home. Because the hospitals were so overwhelmed, they kind of left long-term care homes on their own. And it's only after the fact that we found that thousands of additional people were dying in these settings, weren't even being tested and weren't even being given the chance of going to a hospital. And I think part of it is because fundamentally, as a society, we're ageist. And we're more focused on maybe protecting the shinier and more expensive parts of our health-care system that we can all relate to, versus the more underfunded and forgotten parts of our system that tend to a group of people towards the end of their lives, who no longer have as much relevance in our society as, say, children and adults in general. So when you think that these homes basically housed hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are in their last few years of their life, 70 per cent of whom have dementia, I think that sometimes the attitude is, "Well, if they get COVID and die, they were going to die in a few years anyways, so is this really a loss?" We see the utter hysteria right now happening at this time around schools reopening, and parents really worried about their children and protecting the children. If we imagine these homes being boarding schools, and all of these victims, the thousands of Canadians who have died in these homes, were actually young children, I wonder if we would have even more of a visceral response as Canadians, feeling that if these were young lives, that they would have mattered more, because they lost the lives that were completely ahead of them. But because these were older people towards the end of their lives, did their lives matter as much as others? And we saw these attitudes and these issues play out in places like Italy. When they ran out of ventilators, for example, they would just simply say, "If we have to choose between two people, we're going to choose a young person over an older person, because frankly, that older person has probably less of a chance of surviving on a ventilator and they have fewer years of life ahead of them." I think there were a lot of different issues that came into play. This was a less well-known part of our system. It's always been, traditionally, a less well-supported and funded part of our system, and I think that partly

reflects societal attitudes and views. And then when it came to an overall response, I think that many people were just feeling that if we just better support our hospitals and make sure that our efforts are focused on them, then the rest of the system will follow. But what we really saw is that by having poorly coordinated and under-supported responses early on for our long-term care homes, especially as COVID was spreading in communities in Ontario and Quebec, we saw what the consequences ended up being. And in provinces like B.C. that actually took much more definitive action early – perhaps because they were next to Washington state, which was seeing some of the first major outbreaks occurring in their nursing homes – I think B.C., frankly, gets top marks so far because they recognized quickly how vulnerable these homes were. I think they really focused on making sure that they were particularly well supported with the right policies, staffing solutions and PPE supplies. By doing those things early and definitively, our work has shown that only 12 per cent of B.C. homes ended up in outbreak. You compare that to the province next door of Alberta, where 24 per cent of its homes in a less populous province ended up in outbreak; then you go to Ontario, and you see 35 per cent of Ontario homes, 27 per cent of Quebec homes in outbreak. You see that B.C., as one of Canada's most populous provinces, by definitively taking earlier and more direct actions to support their long-term care homes, saw only 12 per cent of their homes ever end up in outbreak.

**FPR: What policy interventions so far do you think have been helpful?**

Universal masking, for example – making sure that all the staff in these care settings and all visitors to these settings are wearing masks. Especially when we realized that COVID-19 can have such a high rate of asymptomatic transmission and spread. By universally masking – what we're asking citizens to do in their everyday lives now, as well – we knew that putting that in place had a significant level of impact. But B.C. did this fairly early on. They did this towards the end of March, for example, where this still wasn't implemented in other provinces, like Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec, until well

into April. We also know that COVID-19 can be rather asymptomatic in its presentation and spread. Traditionally when there's an influenza outbreak, it's pretty easy to tell who has influenza and who doesn't, but with COVID-19, because a person could look perfectly well and actually have COVID-19, it became really important to start changing our approaches to testing and isolating residents. So, making sure that we don't simply just isolate and test people who look symptomatic, but we also think about people who possibly could have been positive contacts and making sure that we test and isolate them, as well. It was quickly adopting more advanced testing and isolation strategies that also recognized the rates of asymptomatic transmission. And then also making sure that we could actually support staff or enable staff to not have to work in multiple care settings, because when you have a lot of foot traffic occurring between different settings, we have a risk where these staff can inadvertently start transmitting this virus between homes. That was an early lesson learned in B.C., where the very first outbreak led to the second outbreak, when it was staff working between two homes who actually introduced it to a second home.

*"We're trying to be open and transparent about what the data actually shows to better inform better policy responses."*

**FPR: I am also struck by the fact that the NIA is collecting data on this. Does that identify a gap in the system, that nobody else has been doing this?**

Yeah. I think certainly at the start of the pandemic, did we think this was something that needed to be done? Absolutely. Did we think we needed to be the ones doing it? Certainly not. I think what we anticipated early on was that there would be some kind of national system to help, just as we would hear in the daily news brief – how many cases, how many deaths, etc. What we were seeing was

the most vulnerable part of the system wasn't really getting a lot of air time, other than hearing stories about significant outbreaks occurring in parts of Canada, but not necessarily seeing the data being reported. We would hear number of cases, deaths, how many people are hospitalized, how many people are using ICUs, but never how many homes are in outbreak across the country? How many residents have been infected? How many staff have been infected? How many residents and staff have died? And because we didn't see this being collected, first of all, at a national level – or at least being reported publicly at a national level – and then we were seeing provinces collect information in different ways and not collecting it in a systematic way that would allow us to compare and learn from different provincial experiences, we clearly saw a gap here that nobody else seemed to be filling. And that's why I think the NIA decided to step in and actually start collecting this information in a robust way that we could present in an open way back to the public, with a goal to fill in a clear data-collection gap that nobody else seemed to be focusing on in Canada at the time. And we certainly have seen over time that certain provinces have improved some of their reporting systems, but we've seen some provinces that have kind of backed away from being so public in the way they're reporting things and even becoming a bit more, I think, secretive in the data that they're even willing to share.

Quebec is one of those classic examples. I think, as things were getting really bad in Quebec, for example, there wasn't really clear, definitive information on what was actually happening in its long-term care homes. And then I think by April, the Quebec government started releasing a daily list showing what the size of the outbreaks were, which homes were in outbreak, etc. But then they abruptly stopped reporting that data on April 30. They said there was some kind of accounting or technical error that they would fix and start reposting that information back within a few days. But then it was literally about two weeks that, that information system was down. When it got re-posted, it was even, I would even argue, a little bit less transparent than it was before, and it made it really hard for

people to understand exactly what was happening. So even with our tracker data in Quebec, we know that we're probably under-reporting the total number of resident cases and staff cases and overall [cases]. And that's a concern because, again, without accurate data, we're making assumptions about what happened in Quebec that may actually be under-reporting the issue there, and maybe [affecting] how accurately we can interpret the Quebec situation in a way that can be helpful for other provinces and territories not wanting to make some of the same mistakes. We've had real problems trying to get clear, definitive answers towards our data in both Nova Scotia and Quebec, whereas other provinces like B.C. and Alberta have been incredibly transparent and supportive of our work and helping us to make sure that we have good quality, accurate data, because they appreciate that what we're trying to do is just be open and transparent about what the data actually shows to better inform better policy responses.

**FPR: At this stage, as we've kind of gone through the first six months of this, what kind of policy responses do you think are needed as we're going forward over the next few months?**

I think right now, the good news is that we have learned a lot during the first six months that helped us to understand why long-term care homes are particularly vulnerable and what potentially makes them particularly vulnerable. And I think through provinces that have been particularly hard hit, like Ontario and Quebec, they've started to appreciate the resources and mechanisms that they didn't have in place before. They now better understand what the virus is, how it operates, the things that we can do that can effectively prevent its introduction and spread, and again, mimicking some of the good policy decisions that B.C. made early on. I think now other jurisdictions are starting to increasingly emulate that. The key is that we haven't fundamentally changed any of the underlying staffing problems that we had prior to the pandemic, so there still remains significant issues that relate to the staffing of care homes and what we need to be doing that way. So I think we've come away with a lot of lessons learned, both

internationally and locally. And I think that will hopefully stand us in better stead. But it also reminds us how vigilant we need to be, not just saying, “Oh well, we appreciate that we needed to have adequate supplies of PPE.” We actually have to make sure that all of our staff are really well trained in infection prevention and control strategies, as well. So I think all of these sorts of things have been good lessons learned. The question is, only time will tell how well we’ve actually learned those lessons. For example, more recently, we’re seeing new outbreaks occur in places like B.C., in places like Manitoba and Alberta, as well. So we’re seeing new outbreaks that are actually developing. And in some of these cases, people are saying, “Well, when we look at it, we certainly were making sure staff are trained in PPE, we thought we were doing all the right things, but we also realized that we have to maintain a high level of vigilance.” And in places where we see right now that they still haven’t resolved their staffing issues overall, it’s going to make them particularly vulnerable yet again if there’s another outbreak in that setting. I think the other challenge has been, in homes that remain understaffed, they’re finding it increasingly difficult to try and do things like even permit homes to reopen to visitors. So for family caregivers and families and friends who want to visit their loved ones in care, a lot of people have just been shut out of these homes because the staffing situation of the home remained below the level where they can provide the basic care that they need to be providing, let alone actually provide additional staffing resources to facilitate families and friends wanting to come and visit their loved ones in care. So I don’t think we’ve resolved a lot of the core, underlying, fundamental issues that were the problems related to long-term care in the first place. I think we’re still just kind of grappling and thinking about what needs to be done. But I think what COVID-19 is done is exposed, certainly, a lot of the vulnerabilities within the system. I think it’s really shaken a lot of Canadians’ trust and confidence in the system, whether that be residents, whether that be family members and friends, whether that be members of the general public thinking about their own

future. I think a lot of individuals and a lot of staff who were working in the system have probably lost a lot of faith in it – lost faith in it to be able to protect the residents, but also protect the staff who work in these systems, as well. So there's going to need to be a lot more work done to further figure out what the future of long-term care needs to look like in Canada, and how do we actually advance that.

[Dr. Samir Sinha](#) is the director of health policy research and co-chair of the [National Institute on Ageing](#) at Ryerson University.

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**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Sinha, S. (2020). [Underfunded long-term care system is still vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Sinha's article "Underfunded long-term care system is still vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks":**



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**Please click below to learn more about ageism as well as how it connects to issues like healthcare.**





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## 2c. "Systemic racism is at the heart of economic inequality — and of how we get sick and die"

### Systemic racism is at the heart of economic inequality — and of how we get sick and die

First Policy Response, FEBRUARY 24, 2021 | IN [EQUITY + COVID-19](#) |  
BY [GRACE-EDWARD GALABUZI](#)

*Published as part of a collaboration between [TVO.org](#) and First Policy Response*

The early proclamations about COVID-19 suggested that the virus does not discriminate. There was a sense that everyone was equally susceptible to this once-in-generations pandemic. But these assertions were quickly invalidated by the names and faces of those who were contracting the virus and perishing from it.

Our pandemic response has shown clearly how race, class, and gender determine who is most likely to be in the line of fire: the Black, Brown, and Indigenous Canadians who keep working during the crisis while others shelter. They must work to live because they are precariously employed, as the standard employment relationship — with one permanent employer and stable, full-time hours — is gradually disintegrating as a labour-market norm. They earn [low wages](#) and have [little wealth](#) to fall back on.

COVID-19 has demonstrated starkly how social determinants of health include employment opportunities — the sectors of the

economy and forms of work that racialized, and often poor, people have access to. In contrast, white Canadians, who have more economic resources, are far more likely to be protected against these outcomes.

*The labour-market sorting by race, class and, gender that makes these disproportionate risks possible is the result of structural features of society that start in the school systems, operate into disparate opportunities in the labour market, and lead to uneven access to generational wealth and family income.*

While there is some debate over whether class or race is to blame, this is an artificial dichotomy. We have enough documented evidence to show that insecure work, low income, and poor health outcomes are inextricably linked to both race and class. Systemic racism lies at the heart not just of economic inequality in Canada but also of how we get sick and die.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen protection measures, particularly stay-at-home orders, exclude Canadians whose jobs were deemed to be an “essential service” — long-term-care workers, grocery store clerks, transit operators, and so on. These occupations carry a higher risk of infection by virtue of their ongoing proximity to others. Data collected so far has shown massive differences in COVID-19 infection rates between the working-class Black and Brown people who predominantly do these jobs in Canadian society and the white people who are more likely to be in office jobs that allow them to stay at home and shelter from risk without jeopardizing their incomes.

For example, racialized people — particularly Black and Filipino women — are more likely than those from other groups to be personal support workers, and there have been a significant number

of COVID-19 cases among personal support workers in long-term-care homes, according to [Statistics Canada](#) data. This makes them disproportionately vulnerable to infections, and possibly death, because of the power relationships in their work.

The labour-market sorting by race, class and, gender that makes these disproportionate risks possible is the result of structural features of society that start in the school systems, operate into disparate opportunities in the labour market, and lead to uneven access to generational wealth and family income. It also stems from a lack of adequate social policy, including unequal funding formulas that mean less government support for public education in some neighbourhoods; a lack of paid sick days; crowding on transit lines serving highly racialized and low-income neighbourhoods; a lack of investment in health resources in those neighbourhoods; and the persistence of racial discrimination in hiring processes that prevent Black and Brown people from obtaining high-wage, high-status jobs, even when they have the education and experience necessary.

A number of actions are advisable here: Action on strengthening equitable access to employment for Black, Indigenous, and racialized workers. Public policy to address precarious employment and the conditions of [working poverty](#) it generates. Employment-standards reforms, such as ensuring access to paid sick days for low-income earners. Anti-poverty measures, such as improved access to housing to decrease overcrowding among immigrant populations. And disaggregated data collection so we have a fuller picture of these impacts on particular communities.

There is a role for local public-health agencies to engage directly with communities so that they can generate recommendations relevant to each community's conditions. At the national level, the Public Health Agency of Canada should leverage its resources to declare racism a [social determinant of health](#) and work to confront it.

In total, we need a pan-Canadian strategy that includes the province and cities in implementing aggressive workplace and

health-sector reforms to address the impact of systemic racism on work and life.

[Grace-Edward Galabuzi](#) is an associate professor in the Politics and Public Administration Department at Ryerson University and a research associate at the Centre for Social Justice in Toronto.

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**Citation:** Galabuzi, G.-E. (2021, February 24). [Systemic racism is at the heart of economic inequality – and of how we get sick and die](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Galabuzi's article "Systemic racism is at the heart of economic inequality – and of how we get sick and die":**



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**Check the map below to see how COVID-19 has impacted various Canadian provinces between March 2020 and July 2020.**



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[“Canada-Map-With-Cities”](#) by [larrywkoester](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

The chart below compares data from the map above. It accentuates the major difference between certain Canadian provinces and Canada as a whole.



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For more information, please read: [COVID-19 mortality rates in Canada’s ethno-cultural neighbourhoods](#)

## 2d. "Ontario's health-care system must develop an anti-racist response to COVID-19"

### Ontario's health-care system must develop an anti-racist response to COVID-19

First Policy Response, FEBRUARY 22, 2021 | IN [EQUITY + COVID-19](#) | BY [AISHA LOFTERS](#)

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact, with more than 100 million cases and more than 2.4 million deaths worldwide. But despite what feels like the universal nature of the pandemic, not all of us have been affected equally.

After months of community advocacy, public-health officials, researchers, and policy-makers finally started to look at the impact of COVID-19 on racialized people. The results were striking, although sadly not surprising. In Toronto, by the end of December, it was reported that nearly [80 per cent](#) of people with COVID-19 were racialized. To put that in perspective, only 52 per cent of Toronto's population is racialized.

Racialized people in Ontario are at higher risk of COVID-19 because they are more likely to be "essential workers" who cannot work from home and less likely to be able to take paid sick leave, physically distance, or receive adequate protective equipment in the workplace. Our system's response to the pandemic has too often



ignored, trivialized, and been slow to protect these groups, leaving them at ever higher risk of infection.

We also have to ask about the why behind the why. Why are racialized people more likely to be in these [precarious working and living situations](#)? Because this is one of the many ways in which systemic, long-standing racism manifests. Racialized people are not genetically engineered to be precarious workers and did not end up on the lowest rungs of the social ladder by chance. Societal structures that play out in education, employment, housing, and other areas disproportionately push racialized people into these positions.

*Racialized people in Ontario are at higher risk of COVID-19 because they are more likely to be “essential workers” who cannot work from home and less likely to be able to take paid sick leave, physically distance, or receive adequate protective equipment in the workplace.*

So what can be done to address all this? In the short term, we need to take a hard look at the system response to the COVID-19 pandemic through an anti-racist and health-equity lens. An anti-racist system response requires specific policies and systems to explicitly protect and prioritize those who are marginalized and at higher risk of infection.

It will mean providing paid sick days for everyone and viewing affordable housing and food security as human rights. It will mean providing support to community organizations to lead COVID-19 testing and contact tracing. It will mean not blaming people's [genetics](#) or [culture](#) for disproportionate COVID-19 rates. It will mean infrastructure to provide wrap-around care and social-service supports for those who test positive.

And, crucially, it will mean developing a community-based and

community-led vaccine strategy that prioritizes those living and working in settings at higher risk of COVID-19. There are promising initiatives we can learn from. The Centre for Wise Practices in Indigenous Health, at Women's College Hospital, is working in partnership with multiple other Indigenous-focused community and health-care organizations on [Sharing Medicine](#), a project that will develop community-centred resources specifically tailored to Indigenous communities. Importantly, they are using a decolonial approach to understand and address vaccine concerns (and how they are related to [colonial histories](#)).

Examples such as this make it clear that taking a hard look at our current policies, systems, and plans from an anti-racist perspective cannot be done behind closed doors. Community leaders and advocates from racialized communities must be central voices in the response and be recognized as the experts that they are.

In the longer term, we need to take that anti-racist lens to all our social and public-health policies. Housing insecurity, food insecurity, job insecurity, precarious work, unsafe working conditions, and everyday racism will all still be with us after everyone has been vaccinated. The current pandemic is just one example of how these factors play out, but there are countless others.

We also need to increase representation of racialized people in positions of power and decision-making across all sectors. There has been focus on the over-representation of racialized people at the margins of our society in this pandemic, but the flipside of that is the under-representation at the centres of our society, including at the decision-making tables. A meaningful, sustainable increase in representation will require the involvement of all governmental sectors. How can we ensure that our racialized students are not streamlined away from career paths they'd be more than capable of pursuing? How can we ensure that racialized people have equal employment opportunities and receive equal pay?

The road that led us to where we are now is centuries long. We

cannot expect the solutions to be quick and easy. But we must choose — today — to take a different path.

[Aisha Lofters](#) is a family physician and researcher at Women's College Hospital and the University of Toronto. She is the chair in implementation science at the Peter Gilgan Centre for Women's Cancers in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society.

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**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL HEALTH](#), [RACE](#), [TVO](#)

**Citation:** Lofters, A. (2021, February 22). [Ontario's health-care system must develop an anti-racist response to COVID-19](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Lofters' article "Ontario's health-care system must develop an anti-racist response to COVID-19":**



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**Check the map below to see COVID-19's global impact.**



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# 2e. "Indigenous people in Toronto have much higher rates of COVID hospitalization than general population, new data shows"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

[Indigenous people in Toronto have much higher rates of COVID hospitalization than general population, new data shows](#)

Toronto Star, April 26, 2021, Brendan Kennedy

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, COVID-19, Health, Toronto Star

**Citation:** Kennedy, B. (2021, April 26). [Indigenous people in Toronto have much higher rates of COVID hospitalization than general population, new data shows](#). Toronto Star.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Kennedy's article "Indigenous people in Toronto have**

**much higher rates of COVID hospitalization than general population, new data shows”:**



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# 2f. "Vaccine Mistrust: A Legacy of Colonialism"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [Vaccine mistrust: A legacy of colonialism](#)

*Globe and Mail*, March 31, 2021, Margo Greenwood & Noni MacDonald

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, COVID-19, Health, Vaccination, Colonialism, *Globe and Mail*

**Citation:** Greenwood, M., & MacDonald, M. (2021, March 31). [Vaccine mistrust: A legacy of colonialism](#). *Globe and Mail*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Greenwood and MacDonald's article "Vaccine mistrust: A legacy of colonialism":**



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# 2g. "Medical experimentation and the roots of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous Peoples in Canada"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [Medical experimentation and the roots of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#)

*Canadian Medical Association Journal*, March 15, 2021, Ian Mosby & Jaris Swidrovich

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, COVID-19, Health, Vaccine hesitancy, Medical experimentation, Canadian Medical Association Journal

**Citation:** Mosby, I., & Swidrovich, J. (2021, March 15). [Medical experimentation and the roots of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#). *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 193(11), E381–E383.

## Quiz

### Quiz on Mosby and Swidrovich's article "Medical experimentation and the roots of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Indigenous Peoples in Canada":



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# Policy Brief Assessment

Based on the articles above from *First Policy Response*, please engage in the following assessments to test your learning.

**Policy Brief:**

It is 2022, and you are a policy analyst for the [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#) (LTC). The 43rd Ontario General Election has been held. Regardless of the outcome, a new Minister of Health is expected to be named. Over the course of the pandemic, protecting long-term care residents from outbreaks required improving infrastructure, proper staffing conditions, and a culture of quality reassurance.

Write a short policy brief (750 – 1,500 words in length) that focuses on improving Ontario's long-term care system during that year. Discuss what you believe are the top three issues that will face the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Based on these three issues, include your recommendations to communicate effective strategies for the incoming minister.





### 3. INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES



# Learning Objectives

## **Addressing Crises in Canadian Indigenous Communities:**

- Recognize governance issues related to health crises in Indigenous communities
- Discuss vaccination initiatives in Indigenous communities

This module will help learners understand how pandemics create unique challenges for Canada's Indigenous communities. By the end, learners will be able to apply this knowledge of Indigenous issues to improve health outcomes as well as develop more productive relations between different levels of government and Indigenous communities.

# 3a. "Indigenous communities need governance overhaul to address public health crises"

## Indigenous communities need governance overhaul to address public health crises

First Policy Response, SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 | IN [EQUITY + COVID-19](#) | BY [HAYDEN KING](#)

September marks six months since the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic of COVID-19. We're using this milestone to take stock of the policy response so far and consider next steps as Canada continues to move from reaction to rebuilding. As part of this, First Policy Response is speaking to several policy experts to gather their thoughts on the key policy developments of these past six months, and what they think our next priorities should be.

This interview with Hayden King, executive director of the [Yellowhead Institute](#) at Ryerson University, is the last in our series of interview transcripts. You can read the full series [here](#). This transcript has been edited for clarity.

**First Policy Response: What are some of the particular challenges facing Indigenous communities in Canada when it comes to COVID-19?**

Hayden King: At the outset of the shutdown and the pandemic, with the awareness that this was a public health emergency, I think that communities were initially very quick to respond. I think that

communities by and large had emergency response teams established, they had pandemic preparation and response plans. We saw, originally, daily and then weekly updates for band members on reserve, in communities. And then there were some more innovative solutions when we're talking about remote communities – and I think about my own community, which is an island community. Those communities ended up coming together and gathering the resources that they had to make sure that everybody had food security. Obviously there's this enormous challenge to deal with, but I think I would preface everything by saying how remarkable it was that a lot of communities ended up actually engaging and preparing and dealing with the pandemic. And I think to a really a large degree, that's why we saw very few cases in communities at the outset.

But as the pandemic went on, I think there were some governance challenges that really started to speak to more structural issues in Indigenous policy and law. I think one of those was around governance and elections. As it happens, many communities, particularly in Ontario, were about to go and vote for new [Indian Act chief and council elections](#). And so there was a lot of confusion initially. Communities were saying, “We can't have an election in the middle of the pandemic.” And then community people were saying, “Well, we want to hold you accountable. We want a new chief and council.” And the Department of [Indigenous Services] . . . ultimately was left with this question of what to do. And they really fumbled the response. Initially they said, “Go ahead and have your elections. Everything will be fine.” And obviously people were uncomfortable with that – this was the height of the pandemic. And then they said, “You can have a six-month delay to the election.” And there were all these questions about, “Well, what if a community already called the election? Are people able to go back to work after they they've declared nominations?” All these complications that are really specific to Indian Act governance started to emerge, and it really demonstrated, I think, how inflexible and rigid Indian Act governance is. The department of [Indigenous Services] didn't have any answers. Communities were scrambling to figure it out. At the

end of the day, the department positioned itself as the arbiter of when you can have an election, and when you can't have an election, and by what process you can have an election. And I think we're coming up on that six-month mark and there's still a lot of confusion around that.

So on the one hand you had communities that were really proactive and really responsive to the pandemic as a public health crisis, but then as a governance crisis, there was a lot of confusion, and the Indian Act became activated as this barrier to addressing governance in communities during the pandemic.

*"The community didn't have any mechanism to say,  
'Stay out, we're shutting down just like everywhere else.'*

Then a second area of governance challenges was around communities prohibiting visitors from entering. I'll focus on Ontario just because that has been my focus over the last few months. There are communities like Six Nations or Alderville that non-native people frequent for shopping purposes, I guess I'll say. And when the community said it was time to shut down, it was really difficult for non-native people to stop going to the reserve. They continued to go. And then on the other side of the country in coastal British Columbia, for instance, you had communities where yachtsmen and boaters, fishermen, wanted to come into coastal waters, visit the community. And again, you had this challenge where the community didn't have any mechanism to say, "Stay out, we're shutting down just like everywhere else. You need to respect that." And I think there was a little bit of debate in the beginning – how do we enforce this? But ultimately, communities like Six Nations put up concrete barriers at every road entering into their community.

Communities like mine, island communities, shut down the ferry to non-native people. So ultimately, communities again took things into their own hands, but there was this policy question around who

has the authority to shut down reserves? And by what mechanism do you do that in a public health crisis? And so those were, I think, the two big challenges that emerged.

And I suppose there are other things to discuss here, like around food security and having nurses available, and should there be an outbreak, having the resources to deal with it. There were some communities that were petitioning the federal government to erect medical tents in case there were outbreaks, and there was one community that asked if the [doctors from Cuba](#) could come into their community in the case of an outbreak; that was a request that was denied by Chrystia Freeland at the time. So, that's the third challenge that I would add to list of challenges at the outset.

I've sort of alluded to the fact that communities did find ways to address these issues on their own. And that's been effective for awhile, but now we have the situation where we had a lull over the summer and now cases are beginning to increase. So now we have a case in Bella Bella, we have a couple cases in Squamish territory, cases are on the rise in a number of other First Nation communities. And this is the fear. The fear is that once a virus did get into communities, we'd be in a lot of trouble. So I think the relaxation period over the summer has unfortunately led to an increase in cases.

One more challenge that has been ongoing throughout this entire pandemic is around data. We don't actually know how many cases are in communities because the Department of Indigenous Services, they release a daily list. Courtney Skye, a Yellowhead research fellow, did a [community-based research project](#) to figure out how many cases were actually in communities. And in some cases, province by province, it was three or four times the rate that the Department of Indigenous Services was reporting. It's difficult to actually know where the cases are, how many cases there are. And without that accurate information, it's really difficult to plan and prepare and respond to the pandemic.

There's one more challenge around privacy. This is related to data. [Ontario Regional Chief] RoseAnne Archibald of the Chiefs of

Ontario and Judith Sayers of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council have spoken a little bit, at least to Yellowhead, about how it's very difficult to get the provinces to disclose where the cases are so that those communities can prepare. Because the word is that there's cases in the neighbouring non-native community, but there's a lack of clarity on that for communities to actually address that.

**FPR: What about broadband access, as we've had a shift to remote school and work?**

That's sort of a perpetual problem. Internet connectivity in a lot of communities is very weak. And we're not just talking about Northern and remote communities, you know, we're not talking about the far north of Ontario or Iqaluit, which have poor internet at the best of days, but communities south of the 401 have limited stable internet connectivity. And this is a perpetual problem. I would like to see some proactive response right now, because the provincial government is speaking to rural counties – like the county that I'm in right now, Northumberland County – about how a solution to the pandemic for economic recovery is increasing access to the internet and the digital main street, etc., etc. And that's great. That's wonderful for people like me who live rurally and have bad internet, but that conversation isn't happening to the same degree for First Nation communities. Now is a perfect opportunity to increase broadband and internet infrastructure, but to date I haven't been I haven't heard about those discussions.

**FPR: I wanted to ask you about education as well, because that is another perpetual challenge. What is the situation with getting students back in school?**

As I sort of began at the outset of this conversation, communities, because of the previous legacies of infectious diseases, have been overly cautious with COVID-19. And so when the province of Ontario, for instance, decided, "OK, it's time for school to go back," there were a number of communities that decided that they were



not going to send their students back. Six Nations is a good example of a large community with multiple primary elementary schools that has decided to delay the reopening of schools. There's this jurisdictional wrestling match, basically, between the province, the federal government and First Nations each thinking it has the best interests of communities and students in mind, and each proposing generally divergent policy solutions for things like education. And I think we're seeing that to some degree right now.

In terms of additional support, that hasn't materialized at the provincial level. At the federal level, there have been ad hoc funding announcements – in some cases, quite large funding announcements. One big challenge with that is that there's not a lot of transparency over the rationale for the allocation of the funding, sustainability of the funding. It's sort of just like, "Here's some cash, we'll figure the rest out later." And in some ways it's sort of ironic, because First Nations have been saying, "That's great. We'll take it and do with it what we please." But in other ways, the disorganized nature of it, I think, creates a lot of uncertainty for communities. No doubt some are directing it to education, but speaking of data, there's just no clear indication of what communities are spending the resources on right now.

**FPR: Are there any other policy interventions that you've seen so far that have been more useful or less useful, from either level of government?**

There's been a disturbing trend – even as early as June, Alberta and Ontario were still green-lighting large-scale infrastructure projects and suspending environmental regulation of those projects. Both Alberta and Ontario basically said these projects must go ahead. And some of the first restrictions to ease were on resource extraction. So while they were allowed to proceed, and workers were able to go back to camps, the monitoring of their work was restricted in both provinces. And interestingly, we saw outbreaks in both provinces, as well as in Saskatchewan, in remote worker camps, which then spread to other communities. So there's this

sort of hypocrisy at play, that somehow it's safe for large numbers of people to gather in close spaces as long as it's for resource extraction, and yet it's unsafe for the environmental monitoring that would ordinarily accompany it and require just a handful of individuals, not congregating in large spaces, to carry out. I think that there's an agenda at work there that requires some more scrutiny.

And I think that intersects with Indigenous policy because we have these legal principles in Canada, like the [duty to consult](#), like [free, prior and informed consent](#) – which, while not recognized by the federal government or provinces, is attempted to be enforced by First Nation communities. So what happens to the duty to consult? What happens to consultation? What happens to consent during the pandemic when industrial or resource extraction is allowed to proceed with little to no regulation? I think that's been an under-the-radar development that is actually a big story of the pandemic that should probably be scrutinized.

*“The federal government has had six months to sort out public health on reserves and I'm not sure that's been done.”*

**FPR: As we're moving out of the initial phase of the pandemic and into the longer-term recovery, where do you think our priorities should be in developing policy to address these challenges?**

I think public health is the primary one. If this so-called second wave arrives – and it looks like it's on the horizon if Ontario and Quebec are any indication – the federal government has had six months to sort out public health on reserves, to figure out how to get the adequate health-care staff, capacity, services, supplies, resources to communities, and I'm not sure that's been done. And so more work on pandemic preparedness and figuring out the

relationship between Health Canada, the First Nations and the Department of Indigenous Services Canada is really where the priority should be. Because we know if the virus gets into communities, it will have devastating consequences.

**FPR: Before you go on, can you speak a little bit more about why that is?**

Well, the people that are most affected by this virus are generally people that live in overcrowded homes, lower-income folks, people with complicating health factors such as other chronic diseases – that's true generally across the board. If you look at the demographic analysis of where COVID is hitting people in Toronto, it's in [low-income, racialized communities](#). So for Indigenous people – who generally live in overcrowded homes, with higher rates of chronic and infectious diseases already, often in poverty – that is just a recipe for some serious harm from this virus and disease.

But then in addition to that, we know that First Nations, and Inuit in particular, are more susceptible to the harms of infectious disease. And we can look at H1N1, we can look at the Spanish flu – some communities lost a third or half of their population due to the Spanish flu.

And of course we can look at tuberculosis and many other examples throughout the 19th century.

And without adequate [medical] training, staff, medicine. . . . Many people have spoken about the lack of clean water. How do you wash your hands? Many people have spoken about the inability to physically distance. It's interesting because what some Dene communities did, families just went out on the land and were by themselves for four months on the land. And that's an effective strategy, but that requires resources, that requires snowmobiles, that requires gas, that requires ammunition, and sometimes those are in short supply as well.

**FPR: Was there anything else that you were going to say in terms of policy priorities?**

Yeah, I think public health is one. And then governance is another. It's really difficult to do this sort of large-scale, consultative work in the middle of a pandemic, but as I mentioned earlier, we have this governance crisis in communities where the Indian Act really showed how cumbersome it was, in terms of the inflexibility around elections. And so, whenever this pandemic ends, or even in the midst of it, I think that communities should really be working towards figuring out their governance structures, independent of the Department of Indigenous Services and Crown-Indigenous relations. And to some degree, that is going on, but in other cases, it's slow to start. And the federal government did attempt to push communities in this direction with the Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework, but that was bad legislation that [we at Yellowhead critiqued](#). So support or input from the federal government on a move away from Indian Act governance and towards something that's a little bit more expansive in terms of self-determination would be another priority.

*“Urban Indigenous people were really left out of any discussions on pandemic preparedness and response.”*

**FPR: So far we've talked about Indigenous communities. Are there additional or different challenges for Indigenous people living off-reserve?**

Over 50 per cent of Indigenous people live in cities, and when the federal government announced that there was going to be support for on-reserve folks, the urban Indigenous people were saying, “That’s great, but who’s here to represent us? Who’s here to speak on our behalf?” Because national Indigenous organizations do not do a very good job of that. They focus primarily on the on-reserve folks. And so those urban people were really left out of any discussions on pandemic preparedness and response. It took a lot

of lobbying from Friendship Centres and others to really try to convince the federal government to devote some resources to urban communities. . . . By and large, it's one of the most peripheral groups in the whole discussion around COVID-19 support.

**FPR: Same question – is there anything policy-wise that you would like to see done to address the needs of the urban Indigenous populations?**

You know, so much of this is structural. It's really difficult to say, "We just need a policy preparation plan for urban Indigenous people." Like when I'm talking about the governance issues on reserves, that's a structural thing that is going to require significant change in the relationship, and it's not something that can be done easily with a straightforward new direction and policy. It's the same with public health. These are broader discussions and I think if anything, the pandemic exposes the need for those conversations. And I think the same is true of urban issues, as well. Our urban Indigenous people are really left out of most of the conversations around Indigenous issues in Canada. For many years, there's been this Urban Aboriginal Strategy, where the Conservative government actually tried to say, "OK, the federal government will pitch in 33 per cent, the province will pitch in 33 per cent, and the municipality that you live in will pitch in 33 per cent, and if everyone agrees to the project or the proposal, then you can have your funding for your urban Indigenous project." It was a pretty sneaky way to avoid supporting urban Indigenous people because inevitably, one of those jurisdictions is going to bow out, and that means the entire project does not proceed. After the Conservatives left office, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy was tweaked a little bit, but there is really limited policy framework for addressing the needs of urban Indigenous people. . . .

It would be nice to be able to say there's one simple, easy solution to all the challenges. I think maybe the only area where I could say that is around the land question. If you recall, right before the pandemic there was this massive Land Back movement in Canada

that started with the Wet'suwet'en preventing the Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline going through a part of their territory. Then that was supported by Tyendinaga Mohawks who blockaded CN Rail lines and prevented GO trains and Via trains from passing. And that was a multi-week shutdown. I think that we were really on the cusp of this national conversation around things like free, prior and informed consent. And then, of course, the pandemic hit and that obviously sapped the energy of the movement and the attention of Canadians. But the really clear and simple demand that was made off and on throughout that movement – but really since 2007 and even before that – has been for this concept of free, prior and informed consent. So, for any project that's happening in a community's established or asserted treaty area or title lands, the province or the federal government has got to get the permission or the consent of the community before that development proceeds. That's simple, that's straightforward, there's a clear objective, there's a clear rationale. And that's one that I think could be a straightforward [policy] answer, and also remedy some of the challenges that I spoke about earlier about the suspension of environmental regulation in Alberta and Ontario.

**FPR: Is there anything you will be looking for in the throne speech?**

I think with the first Trudeau government, the majority, there was this clear focus on Indigenous issues and reconciliation and the nation-to-nation relationship, and how it was the “most important relationship.” During the last campaign, I think it was clear that the Liberals couldn't run on reconciliation – it didn't work out for them. And since then there's been this real lack of attention, like a glaring lack of attention to Indigenous issues. It's remarkable, [the difference between] the first government and the second government. So I think we'll really get confirmation with this throne speech on whether or not the “most important relationship” has been downgraded. We might hear a few references to reconciliation, but unless we're hearing things like, robust support in

transformation of public health on reserves, a real community-based alternative to the Indian Act to address the governance issues, concepts like free, prior and informed consent, which includes the recognition of treaty rights, all that sort of stuff, then I'm afraid that [the relationship] has been downgraded, if you will. And that will be concerning for the next few years.

[Hayden King](#) is the executive director of the [Yellowhead Institute](#) at Ryerson University.

**Keywords:** [COVID-19](#) [SIX](#) [MONTHS](#) [LATER](#), [FPR](#) [ORIGINAL](#), [INDIGENOUS](#)

**Citation:** King, H. (2020). [Indigenous communities need governance overhaul to address public health crises](#). *First Policy Response*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on King's article "Indigenous communities need governance overhaul to address public health crises":**



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**For more information on the Six Nations, please click on this photograph below.**





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[“Studio portrait of the surviving Six Nations warriors who fought with the British in the War of 1812 / Portrait en studio des survivants des Six-Nations qui ont combattu aux côtés des Britanniques pendant la guerre de 1812”](#) by [BiblioArchives / LibraryArchives](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

## 3b. "Vaccination rollout must engage with Indigenous communities"

### Vaccination rollout must engage with Indigenous communities

First Policy Response, JANUARY 21, 2021 | IN [SUPPORT FOR THE MARGINALIZED](#) | BY [ELISA LEVI](#)

While some Canadians are anxiously awaiting their chance to get vaccinated against COVID-19, others are expressing reluctance. There may be several reasons for this vaccine hesitancy — defined by the [World Health Organization](#) as purposefully delaying receiving available vaccines — but the issue is particularly complicated when it comes to Indigenous communities.

As public health authorities roll out vaccination programs regionally across Canada, it is important that Indigenous peoples are part of vaccination uptake. Their high degree of [socio-economic marginalization](#) results in disproportionate risk in public health emergencies, which may increase their vulnerability to COVID-19. Increased vaccination uptake will help individuals protect themselves, as well as build community immunity (also called “herd immunity.”)

But it is equally important that they are given all the information necessary to make an informed decision and that their concerns are respected. Some members of Indigenous communities have legitimate [concerns](#) around medical treatments, rooted in historical trauma. “We have to be honest about where the fear comes from,”

Grand Chief [Arlen Dumas](#) of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs told the CBC.

## Historical trauma and vaccine hesitancy

Indigenous people have good reason to distrust government. While younger generations may not have experienced the segregated “[Indian Hospitals](#)” that were established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have certainly heard about it and experienced the intergenerational trauma that comes along with it. These hospitals focused on tuberculosis treatment, including testing of tuberculosis vaccines in the 1940–50s, but advances in treating the disease were not extended to Indigenous patients, who instead languished in the hospitals. Furthermore, in the 1940s, government scientists performed [nutrition experiments](#) on Indigenous people without consent in some of these hospitals, as they did with children in residential schools.

If the vaccine is rolled out in a community without information that an individual understands, they may reject it, and this could trigger historical trauma based on previous experiences. Historical trauma, when triggered, can result in dissociation.

While there have been many improvements in the areas of ethical health research and culturally safe health care, historical trauma continues to present itself in health disparities. Colonization has left us with devastating inequities, including high rates of infectious disease and non-communicable disease such as diabetes, and a health-care system in which Indigenous people such as [Joyce Echaquan](#) fall victim to systemic racism. Shortly before her death this past September, Echaquan broadcast a video on Facebook Live showing her crying out for help in her hospital bed while two nurses at the Quebec hospital insulted her. Following this tragedy, the [Council of the Atikamekw Nation and the Council of the Atikamekw of Manawan](#) delivered to the federal and provincial governments

Joyce's Principle, which demands that all Indigenous people have an equal right to the highest standards of physical and mental health care, and that the government recognize Indigenous rights to autonomy and self-determination in matters of health and social services. The Quebec government [rejected](#) the proposal.

*It has been said that vaccines don't save lives: vaccinations do. But the right to health for all people, including autonomy in decision-making, must remain at the core of vaccination rollout, for this pandemic and beyond.*

## First-wave resilience, second-wave concerns

We knew that the consequences of colonization, including pre-existing health conditions, would put Indigenous people at a higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19. Therefore governments, including Indigenous communities, have been preparing for this pandemic since the [H1N1 flu outbreak](#) in 2009. Most communities had community emergency plans ready to implement.

Dr. Evan Adams, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Public Health for Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), [said](#) that in spite of the social determinants of health and underlying health issues that could put First Nations at a disadvantage, COVID-19 incidence and fatality rates there were one-quarter of the national rate in the first wave of the pandemic. He attributed this to cultural veneration of the [elderly](#) and the swift action of leadership to shut the borders of their communities to control movement, and therefore COVID-19 incidence.

But now the number of COVID-19 cases reported in First Nations communities across the country is [rising](#) at what an ISC public health official calls an “alarming” rate. ISC reported 5,571 active

cases in First Nations communities this week, the highest number so far. Case counts have been increasing by 1,753 to 2,046 a week so far this year, with Western Canada being [hardest hit](#). We are witnessing outbreaks now in what would be considered the “second wave” of the pandemic.

## An equity-based approach to immunization

[The National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI) is an external advisory body to the Public Health Agency of Canada that provides medical, scientific and public health advice on the use of vaccines. As it develops its recommendations on delivering the COVID-19 vaccine, one of the factors it must consider is [equity](#). Equity seeks to increase access to immunization services to reduce health inequities without further stigmatization or discrimination. As such, the key populations NACI identified for early vaccination include those whose living or working conditions put them at elevated risk of infection and where infection could have disproportionate consequences, including Indigenous communities.

Equity also means engaging systematically marginalized and racialized populations in immunization program planning. As [NACI recognizes](#), any immunization program should consider the needs of diverse population groups, based on health status, ethnicity and culture, ability and other socioeconomic and demographic factors that may place individuals in vulnerable circumstances.

An equitable approach should integrate the values and preferences of these populations in vaccine program planning, and build capacity to ensure convenient access to immunization services. As [Caroline Lidstone-Jones](#), chief executive officer of the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, told the *Toronto Star*, “If you engage with us effectively and appropriately, there are real ways that we can get better uptake and engagement of our population.”

There has been some progress here when it comes to Indigenous

communities. Federal and provincial bodies have committed to work together on vaccination efforts with Indigenous, First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities to ensure efforts reach the most vulnerable, including the most northern communities. In Ontario, Chiefs of Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald was appointed to the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force. In addition, a separate sub-table was created by Indigenous Affairs Ontario and the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, and other Indigenous organizations were invited to participate.

[Nishnawbe Aski Nation](#), which represents 49 First Nations in northern Ontario, has been working with the ORNGE air ambulance service and the provincial government to develop a plan for the distribution of vaccines to First Nations, including 31 remote First Nations in NAN. And the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council has united with Ontario's primary care organizations to help ensure Indigenous inclusion in the vaccination rollout, and to educate health system providers about Indigenous concerns like systemic racism.

One example of an Indigenous-led vaccination initiative was a community-focused rollout day in Toronto, led by [Anishnawbe Health Mobile Healing Unit](#) in partnership with Women's College Hospital. It resulted in approximately 74 per cent uptake of Indigenous seniors at a retirement residence. With a vaccine that is 95 per cent effective, it has been projected that [70 per cent uptake](#) is needed for community immunity.

It has been said that vaccines don't save lives: vaccinations do. But the right to health for all people, including autonomy in decision-making, must remain at the core of vaccination rollout, for this pandemic and beyond. Respectful communication that is transparent, empathetic and proactive about curiosity, risks and vaccine availability will contribute to building trust in the science.

In the months ahead, we will see the outcomes of a conscious effort to not repeat history by working with Indigenous leadership and Indigenous organizations in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination.

[Elisa Levi](#) is an MD Candidate at the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, member of Chippewas of Nawash, and Yellowhead Institute Research Fellow.

**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#), [INCLUSIVE POLICY MAKING](#), [INDIGENOUS](#)

**Citation:** Levi, E. (2021, January 21). [Vaccination rollout must engage with Indigenous communities](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Levi's article "Vaccination rollout must engage with Indigenous communities":**



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**Please click on the photograph below to learn more about the world's deadliest pandemic – The Spanish Flu:**





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[“Emergency hospital during influenza epidemic, Camp Funston, Kansas \(1918\). Original image from National Museum of Health and Medicine. Digitally enhanced by rawpixel.”](#) is marked with [CC0 1.0](#)

# 3c. "Who decides what's essential? The importance of Indigenous ceremony during COVID-19"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [Who decides what's essential? The importance of Indigenous ceremony during COVID-19](#)

*The Conversation*, October 24, 2021, Jodi John, Angela Mashford-Pringe, Heather Castleden, Janice Hill, Marc Calabretta, Mark Dockstator, & Wendy Phillips

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, Indigenous ally, Toolkit, Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network

**Citation:** John, J., Mashford-Pringe, A., Castleden, H., Hill, J., Calabretta, M., Dockstator, M., & Phillips, W. (2021, October 24). [Who decides what's essential? The importance of Indigenous ceremony during COVID-19](#). *The Conversation*.

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## Quiz

### Quiz on John et. al's article "Who decides what's essential? The importance of Indigenous ceremony during COVID-19":



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# 3d. "21 things you may not know about the Indian Act"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [21 things you may not know about the Indian Act](#)

CBC News, April 13, 2016, Bob Joseph

**Citation:** Joseph, B. (2016, April 13). [21 things you may not know about the Indian Act](#). CBC News.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Joseph's article "21 things you may not know about the Indian Act":**



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## 3e. "Residential Schools in Canada: Education Guide"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

### [Residential schools in Canada: Education guides](#)

*Historica Canada, Heritage Minutes, n.d.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, Residential schools, Health, Historica Canada, Heritage Minutes

**Citation:** Historica Canada, & Heritage Minutes (n.d.). [Residential schools in Canada: Education guides](#). *Historica Canada, Heritage Minutes*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Historica Canada and Heritage Minutes' guide "Residential schools in Canada: Education guides":**



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## 3f. "Indigenous Ally Toolkit"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

### Indigenous ally toolkit

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, Indigenous ally, Toolkit, Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network

**Citation:** Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network. (2019, April). [Indigenous ally toolkit](#). Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network's resource "Indigenous ally toolkit":**



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# 3g. Lesson Plan: Decolonizing Public Policy Development and Implementation (for Instructors)

<b>Module Length (classes):</b>	1
<b>Module Description:</b>	In completing this module, the learner will understand the value and reality of decolonial work in public policy and public administration. Through this module, they will study existing documents and learn historical legislation that has impacted Indigenous peoples in Canada. By the end, the learner is able to apply that knowledge in working with marginalized populations in a respectful and collaborative manner in the public policy development and implementation processes.
<b>Learner Preparation:</b>	Optional: It would be beneficial to watch the videos prior and then as a class to truly let the messages be absorbed and for students to be able to engage in dialogue after watching the videos.
<b>Module Length (hours):</b>	3 hours
<b>General Module Contents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colonization and decolonization</li> <li>• History of policies negatively impacting Indigenous peoples</li> <li>• Rights of Indigenous Peoples</li> <li>• Positionality</li> </ul>
<b>Learner Follow-Through:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-reading/watching</li> <li>2. Completion of activities in class</li> <li>3. Group discussion following class</li> <li>4. Assignment completion and submission if needed</li> </ol>

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**Learning Outcomes:**

- Understand positionality
- Engages in reflexive praxis
- Analyze the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities
- Analyze systemic racism in relation to Indigenous peoples
- Articulate decolonization theory and methods associated with this practice
- Identify and analyze significant public policies and the role that historical policies and legislation plays in impacting Indigenous peoples in Canada
- Explore the role that cultural practices play in supporting physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual wellness and well-being

Indigenous learning outcomes:

- Relate principles of Indigenous knowledge to career field
- Analyze the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities
- Explain the relationship between land and identity within Indigenous societies
- Compare Indigenous and Canadian perceptions of inclusion and diversity
- Analyze racism in relation to Indigenous peoples
- Generate strategies for reconciling Indigenous and Canadian relations
- Formulate approaches for engaging Indigenous community partners

[Negahneewin Council](#). (2011).

To discuss the use of the ILO at your institution or to learn more about them, please contact:

Dr. Lisa Schmidt,  
Program Development Manager  
Centre for Policy and Research in Indigenous Learning  
(807) 475-6465  
lschmidt@confederationcollege.ca

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<b>Key Questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is decolonization?</li> <li>2. What does taking a decolonizing approach to public policy development and implementation mean?</li> </ol>
<b>Illustrative Examples/ Cases</b>	INSERT FROM READINGS
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Flower power exercise</a>.</li> <li>• Write a personal philosophy statement on public policy development and implementation; consider how this statement changes or remains the same throughout the course</li> </ul>
<b>Learner Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">YouTube Video: Decolonization Is for Everyone   Nikki Sanchez   TEDxSFU</a></li> <li>• United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)</li> <li>• The Indian Act, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Indian Hospitals in Canada</li> <li>◦ Indian Day Schools</li> <li>◦ Indian Residential Schools</li> <li>◦ Elected Chief and Band Council System</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada; 94 calls to action</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: 2-3 readings per learning objective (other forms of media can be used to supplement) was requested; however, in accordance with an Indigenous education approach learning is accomplished through experiential learning, practicing humility, storywork, and interdependent thinking as well as reading</i></p>
<b>Evidence of Learning</b>	The learner utilizes a decolonizing approach in effort of true collaboration with Indigenous communities and other marginalized peoples

<b>Associated Assessment Method(s)</b>	<p>Storywork assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom dialogue / conversation</li> <li>• Listening to a guest speaker</li> </ul> <p>Practicing humility assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flower power exercise</li> <li>• Personal philosophy statement on policy development and implementation</li> </ul> <p>Experiential learning assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan for working with Indigenous communities; consider ethics, a trauma informed approach, what documents you can learn from to inform your approach, what principles you will draw on to guide your work, how collaboration is achieved</li> </ul> <p>Interdependent thinking</p> <p>Research essay on one component of the Indian Act and how it continues to negatively impact Indigenous peoples in health care. How is access to equitable health care become even more of a challenge during the pandemic?</p>
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**Original Source File for Lesson Plan:** [AEC-PrimerLessonPlan-1](#)

# Policy Brief Assessment

Based on the articles above from *First Policy Response*, please engage in the following assessments to test your learning.

**Policy Brief:**

You are a policy analyst for [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada](#). An Indigenous community in Southern Ontario has low vaccination uptake. The community's land has been plagued by boiled water advisories seemingly in perpetuity. From this, faith in all levels of government is low and the community's communications with officials often understandably turn bitter.

Write a short policy brief (750 – 1,500 words in length) that focuses on the relations between the government and Indigenous communities. It will be presented to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. Make three recommendations to improve Crown-Indigenous Relations that will eventually result in higher levels of vaccination uptake.



## 4. ECONOMY



*Illustration of three green Canadian flag with \$2,000 in the middle of the maple leaf*



# Learning Objectives

## Improving Economic Outcomes During the Pandemic and Beyond

- Understand the political procedures and implications when a government initiates a shutdown
- Explain the function of the economy and market allocation to understand indicators/measures of economic change, growth, and development
- Analyze the post-pandemic economic recovery plan with an emphasis on income support programs
- Assess the roles and norms of municipal, provincial, and federal institutions in shaping the workforce

This module will help learners understand the economic impacts of pandemics across multiple sectors of the economy. They will also examine different types of governmental economic responses like income support, training, development, and unemployment. By the end, learners will be able to apply this knowledge to foster more equitable post-pandemic economic outcomes.

## 4a. "Race-based COVID-19 data needs to lead to political action"

### Race-based COVID-19 data needs to lead to political action

First Policy Response, FEBRUARY 23, 2021 | IN [EQUITY + COVID-19](#) | BY [RINALDO WALCOTT](#)

Published as part of a collaboration between [TVO.org](#) and First Policy Response

COVID-19 has brought urgency to calls for disaggregated data collection in the Canadian public sphere, and particularly for race-based data collection. The demand for race-based data is premised on the idea that, once the data has been collected, it can inform policy decisions that will alleviate the suffering experienced by the racial groups most affected by the pandemic. The collection of race-based data in Canada and its most populous provinces has been a matter of [ongoing debate](#). The establishment argument has been that race-based data was neither required nor needed since everyone should be treated the same. Of course, the reverse is closer to the truth.

But there is a hard truth about data collection— and about race-based data collection in particular: there is a significant gap between the collection of data, the formulation of policy ideas and options, and the implementation of policies that might stem the negative impact of COVID-19.

Disaggregating data — breaking it down by demographics such

as race, age, gender, or location — allows us to tell a story of how a given phenomenon is unfolding and the different ways in which it affects different communities or populations. [The calls for race-based data](#) in Canada have come from a belief that telling the story of how race affects various phenomena will contribute to good policy-making.

So far, the data has been telling a dramatic story. In places where race-based data has been collected, it is clear that COVID-19 is ravaging Black, Indigenous, racialized, and poor communities at rates not commensurate with their proportion of the population. For example, in Toronto, Canada's most multicultural and multiracial city, [14 per cent](#) of COVID-19 cases are among Black people, who make up only 9 per cent of the population. Overall, people of colour make up 77 per cent of cases.

Even more difficult to contend with is the data showing that people working in what have been deemed essential services, many of them non-white, are more exposed to the coronavirus. And, further, the people they come into contact with — their family members, especially — have been exposed to the virus, too. We have begun to recognize that already marginalized, low-waged, essential workers in long-term-care homes, factories, delivery services, warehouses, supermarkets, and other highly racialized labour forces were [significantly exposed](#).

*Collecting race-based data is a policy decision, but it does not guarantee that good policy decisions will follow from the data that is collected.*

But even though the data has given us significant information about the populations most affected by the coronavirus, we still do not seem to have good policies meant to impede the impact of the virus on these populations. Rapid and mobile testing have been delayed in some low-income, highly racialized communities, but it

is far from systemic. In Ontario, paid sick days remain elusive even though we know that low-income wage earners could benefit from it in a pandemic. And when we learned from other places, such as [China](#) and Taiwan, that isolation centres would benefit those living in congregate settings or families living in cramped housing, cities like Toronto were slow to act. Toronto's first isolation centre was opened [six months into the pandemic](#).

Collecting race-based data is a policy decision, but it does not guarantee that good policy decisions will follow from the data that is collected. For example, Toronto mayor John Tory often repeats the phrase “evidence-based decision making,” yet the city has not taken the lead in pushing the Ontario government to implement paid sick days, which would make a significant difference to the non-white communities experiencing the brunt of the pandemic.

Collecting data does not mean change: it simply means information has been gathered, maybe collated, maybe even used to tell a story. COVID-19 has shown us that the evidence we gather through race-based data collection also has to meet those in authority who have the will and desire to use that data as the basis of decisions that change life for the better. We must be clear, then, that collecting data is not an end in itself: further work is needed to make something happen, and that work is political work.

[Rinaldo Walcott](#) is a professor in the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto and the author of *On Property* (Biblioasis, 2021).

**Keywords:** [DATA](#), [EQUITY](#), [FPR ORIGINAL](#), [RACE](#), [TVO](#)

**Citation:** Walcott, R. (2021, February 23). [Race-based COVID-19 data needs to lead to political action](#). *First Policy Response*.

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## Quiz

### Quiz on Walcott's article "Race-based COVID-19 data needs to lead to political action's article":



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# 4b. "Year-End Q&A: Ken Boessenkool on income support"

## Year-End Q&A: Ken Boessenkool on income support

First Policy Response, DECEMBER 22, 2020 | IN [ECONOMIC POLICY](#) | BY [KEN BOESSENKOOL](#) AND [ADMIN](#)

*With 2020 drawing to a close, we reached out to some of our first FPR contributors to ask them to look back on what they wrote in the early days of the pandemic and reflect on what's happened since then.*

Ken Boessenkool's [original piece about emergency income support](#) ran on April 5, 2020. You can see the rest of our Q&A series [here](#).

**Q: Why did you think federal income support was a policy priority at the beginning of the pandemic? Do you still feel that way? Why or why not?**

**A:** A huge number of Canadians were losing income at a rapid rate. It was clear that they would need rapid income support and that existing programs were unfit to deliver on the scale and breadth that would be required.

My view on that has not changed because the government did, if not precisely what I recommended, then certainly something consistent with it. They put in place an easily accessible program that replaced income across the wide swath of Canadians who lost income.

**Q: You called for a Crisis Basic Income of \$2,000 for all Canadians who filed an income tax form in 2019, to be clawed back on next year's tax form. What actually happened?**

**A:** The government did not do exactly what I recommended. But they came close. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was given on a “trust but verify” basis where “verify” meant that next year's tax form would be the opportunity to collect any overpayments.

The government actually managed to deliver a more targeted and application-based program much more quickly than I (and many others) thought possible. I believe I was the first to propose \$2,000 per month so I was pretty surprised when the CERB proposed precisely that amount.

**Q: What expectations about the pandemic did you have that contributed to your recommendations? Did they come to pass?**

**A:** There were worries about the administrative ability of the federal government to deliver a targeted program like CERB. That was one of the primary reasons why I proposed a universal benefit. In the earlier days of CERB, the repeated modifications to the program to address people that were missed, plus the much delayed and weaker rollout of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), suggested that concerns about administrative capacity and delays in delivering benefits may have been justified.

In the end, the CERB was an astounding success overall, and it turned out those worries were misplaced. But had the CERB rolled out as poorly as the CEWS program, we would all be wishing that the government delivered a universal Crisis Basic Income instead of trying to deliver an application-based and more targeted CERB.

All of that is another way to say that, at least when it comes to CERB, the government far exceeded my expectations. Which in this case is a very good thing.

**Q: If the policy approach you recommended was pursued, how**

**do you think it has worked out? If not, how do you think it would have compared to the approach that was eventually pursued?**

**A:** I think if the government would have rolled out a universal Crisis Basic Income in those early months and then used some time to get the other programs (CERB, CEWS and others) better designed and targeted, we would have potentially avoided some of the early pitfalls and redesigns of the CERB.

It would have been more expensive than what actually rolled out, and non-tax filers would still have needed an application portal to get the universal benefit, but it would have worked fine and perhaps made for a smoother rollout of the CEWS as well as a more targeted CERB.

I don't think that would have been better than the path chosen by the government, but it was a path with less risks and it certainly wouldn't have turned out worse.

**Q: What should policy-makers' priorities be in this space in the coming months?**

**A:** They need to do an orderly rollback of the CERB once we get past the second wave and start to get vaccines into a critical number of Canadians. Also, much care will be needed in collecting overpayments, and even potential fraud, from these quickly rolled-out and generous programs.

**Q: What policy position or assumption did you hold heading into 2020 that has been most challenged by the pandemic?**

**A:** That government cannot move big and quickly to deliver income support.

**Q: Finally, it's time to share a plug: What's a new information source, advocacy campaign or group, book, etc., that you discovered this year that you think more people in the policy community should know about?**

**A:** First Policy Response was an excellent source of information, as was the C.D. Howe Institute and Max Bell School of Public Policy.

But the best is just following all the authors on Twitter where much of this debate played out in real-time. Nearly everything that I (and many others) wrote for these outlets came from an exchange on Twitter. Twitter is a terrible platform, except when it isn't. And it wasn't if you were following the right people during the pandemic.

*[Ken Boessenkool](#) is the McConnell Professor of Practice at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University and Research Fellow at C.D. Howe Institute. [Website](#)*

**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#), [INDIVIDUAL INCOME SUPPORT](#), [YEAR END Q&A](#)

**Citation:** Boessenkool, K. (2020). [Year-end Q&A: Ken Boessenkool on income support](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

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## 4c. "Economic shutdown is leaving young women behind"

### Economic shutdown is leaving young women behind

First Policy Response, MAY 28, 2020 | IN [EQUITY + COVID-19](#) |  
BY [BAILEY GREENSPON](#)

On a recent Friday, Services Canada updated its Job Bank to include the organizations and businesses that had been approved to receive Canada Summer Jobs funding, including [G\(irls\)20](#). Last year, G(irls)20 received no more than 10 inquiries about a Canada Summer Jobs position. But this year, in response to our listing, we received 51 emails and two phone calls by the end of the day. A few days later the count was up to 200. Each CV we received shared the story of a young woman's ambitious plan to earn a competitive degree, balance service-industry work in the process, and compete to join a skilled workforce. If our inbox is any indication, there are clearly more young women out there looking for opportunities that are harder to come by.

When the COVID-19 economic shutdown began, commentators were quick to identify it as a "[she-cession](#)," bring attention to the disproportionate impact on [racialized and immigrant women](#), and centre advocacy on responsive measures such as [affordable and accessible child care](#). G(irls)20 joined this chorus and will continue to highlight these needs.

G(irls)20 works to advance young women in leadership. As advocates on behalf of young women, we wanted to understand how the youngest demographic of working women fared during the first

six weeks of Canada's economic shutdown. Economics data released since the crisis began point to an alarming and untold story of one invisible group of Canadians who have been disproportionately affected by the economic crisis: girls and young women.

### **An economic crisis for young women**

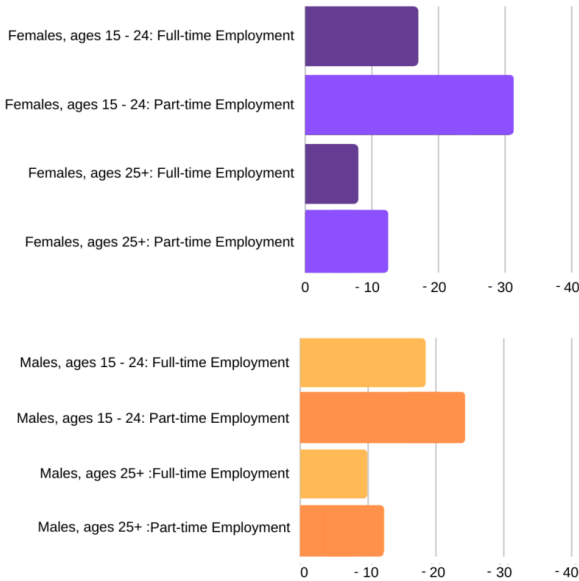
To better understand how young women (15-25) have fared compared to older women and men, we looked at the data shared in the latest [labour force numbers](#) from Statistics Canada.

Widespread and rapid layoffs and furloughs have had a disproportionate effect on youth. In April, there were 480,000 fewer employed youth (15-24, both sexes) than there were a month before. While young women and men lost full-time jobs at nearly the same rate, young women fared worse in the loss of part-time work: 31 per cent of the young women who had part-time jobs in March lost their jobs in April, compared with 24 per cent of males the same age.

Notably, young women and older women have not had the same experience during the first six weeks of this economic crisis. The share of women who lost their jobs was nearly three times higher among ages 15-24 than those 25 and older. These trends do not seem to be related to typical labour market changes between months.



Percent decline in employment by age and sex  
from March 2020 to April 2020



### How did this happen?

In 2019, a full 95 per cent of employed women aged 15-24 worked in the [“services-producing sector,”](#) and more than half worked in either retail or in accommodation and food services. These are the young women who are assembling our salad bowls, folding our rejected t-shirts in H&M, and serving up our cold pints. They are at the bars and malls, which for the most part continue to be shut down. Young women have been an invisible casualty of this crisis. They were the first to be sent home in March and, as some of the most public-facing workers in our economy, will likely to be the last to return to work.

Even worse, this data does not take into account the huge number of young people who had summer jobs lined up and have either lost hours or lost their job altogether. In a Statistics Canada crowdsourcing survey of more than 100,000 students between April 19 – May 1, 48 per cent of those who had a job lined up said they

had [lost their job or been temporarily laid off](#), and another 26 per cent said they were working reduced hours. While youth will immediately feel the loss of income, they might not immediately see what effect it has on their early careers, as they try to build valuable leadership skills that will set them up for future employment.

We already know that young women are not paid as much as young men. A Girl Guides of Canada study, [Girls on the Job: Realities in Canada](#), looked at the youngest demographic of summer workers (15-18) in the summer of 2018 and discovered a \$3/hour pay gap across gender. Deepening the existing gender pay gap, young women have now lost part-time work and part-time hours at a greater rate than young men, and the sectors in which they work will be the last to return to full employment. Without intervention, this trend could send Canada backwards on our push for gender equality in the economy.

As G(irls)20 works to gather more stories and data about young women's employment during this crisis, we can already identify three critical areas for intervention:

### **1. We must ensure education is not disrupted**

Since the 1990s, Canadian women have made impressive gains in education, leading males in graduation rates from post-secondary education, although [significant barriers persist](#) for Indigenous women and women living with disabilities. The gender pay gap has narrowed, if frustratingly slowly, from 38 per cent to 22 per cent in the past 40 years – though, again, racialized women continue to make only 84 cents on the dollar of non-racialized women. Young women are the critical ingredient to achieving gender equality in the workforce in our lifetimes. Investments in their ability to complete post-secondary education and compete for jobs in the future of work is critical to ensuring they aren't left behind, and that Canada does not backslide on the progress we've made.

How concerned should we be? In the same [Statistics Canada survey of students](#), 44 per cent were very or extremely concerned about their ability to keep up with their current expenses, nearly half (46 per cent) were concerned about their ability to pay next

term's tuition, and 43 per cent were concerned about paying for next term's accommodations. Many students may have no choice but to drop out of school. Unfortunately, gender and other intersectional data was not made available for this survey.

One way to ensure students – and young women in particular – do not lose ground on their education is by ensuring the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) and Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) are not wound down before the services-producing sector, and in particular retail and accommodations/food services, are running closer to their previous capacity. As emergency benefits are phased out or restricted to certain sectors, it is important that young women and the sectors in which they work receive support in line with their vulnerability and the hit they have taken.

Secondly, to ensure young women are able to return to school – whether or not their employment has resumed – we need re-investments in student grant programs. Increasing the availability of loans is not sufficient, as women are disproportionately burdened with both loans and the challenge of repaying them. Women accounted for 60 per cent of [Canada Student Loans](#) recipients, and 66 per cent of those in the Repayment Assistance Program for those earning \$25,000 or less after graduating. Investing in significant grants to students – and in particular, women – will help ensure young people do not fall further.

## **2. We need better data**

We cannot afford to paint young women with one brush. We already understand how intersecting identities have led to different outcomes in our stronger, pre-pandemic economy. To build an equitable gender future in Canada, we need the best data. While the federal government has created a [centre hosting statistics on gender, diversity and inclusion](#), it has yet to capture the full range intersections and margins of young women's lives.

Civil society organizations, through their monitoring, evaluation and research programs, are the best positioned to collect stories and data about how marginalized youth and women are

experiencing the economic shutdown. We need intersectional, disaggregated data that tell us about the experiences of LGBTQ and genderqueer womxn, Black, Indigenous and racialized young women and womxn, parental status and ability, and much more. We need to understand how, within cities, opportunities are distributed for youth. The international development sector has led the way for open-data partnerships, such as the [Global Partnership on Open Data for Development](#). We're calling for partnerships between civil society organizations and government to share data specific to how young women and genderqueer youth are experiencing this economic crisis, and to design recovery policies using the best information available.

### **3. We need young women at the table**

Finally, to ensure the recovery includes young women and genderqueer youth, their experiences must be represented at the table. As government and civil society groups strike advisory committees and working groups (such as the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee, Toronto's Recovery and Rebuild Strategy and others), it is vital that young women are included and able to advocate on behalf of those who have been shut out of the economy. G(irls)20's Girls on Boards program is one national program that equips young women to enter these spaces. Youth-serving organizations can play a valuable role in identifying advocates and equipping them to be effective advocates for young women's economic inclusion.

## **Conclusion**

The hundreds of young women who applied to G(irls)20, like others across the country, have the opportunity to be part of the generation of workers who will achieve gender equality with the end of a pay gap, access to equitable leadership positions, and be able to start a family while doing so. Supporting them through this crisis will go a long way toward helping them achieve these dreams and creating an equitable Canada.

Thank you to Arman Hamidian for research support and Jacob Greenspon for help analyzing the data.

[Bailey Greenspon](#) is the Acting Co-CEO at G(irls)20, a Canada-based, global organization advancing the full participation of young women leaders in decision-making spaces to change the status quo.

**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#), [GENDER + COVID-19](#)

**Citation:** Greenspon, B. (2020, May 28). [Economic shutdown is leaving young women behind](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

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# 4d. "Did this week's economic policy statements go far enough?"

## Did this week's economic policy statements go far enough?

First Policy Response, OCTOBER 30, 2020 | IN [ECONOMIC POLICY](#) | BY [KARIM BARDEESY](#) AND [MATTHEW MENDELSON](#)

The federal government issued three big updates this week about Canada's approaches to economic and public health policy for the COVID-19 recovery. On Wednesday, [Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland](#) delivered a virtual keynote speech to the Toronto Global Forum, and [Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem](#) unveiled the central bank's latest monetary policy report. Meanwhile, Chief Public Health Officer [Dr. Theresa Tam](#) delivered her annual report on the state of public health in Canada.

Policy watchers had been keeping a close eye on these developments to signal Canada's policy priorities for the recovery, but there were mixed reactions on whether they went far enough in setting an agenda — including among the FPR team. FPR directors Karim Bardeesy and Matthew Mendelsohn share two different takes.

### **Karim Bardeesy: Without clear priorities, there's no real plan**

There's something missing in this week's trio of reports and speeches from Chrystia Freeland and Tiff Macklem, the lead economic policy-makers in Canada, and Dr. Theresa Tam, the chief



public health officer. On their own, they are important pieces of work that sum up the current consensus in their areas, across many countries. But absent other political and policy leadership, they are not enough to guide future decision-making.

Freeland's speech laid out the arguments for income supports for people and businesses, increased investments in health care, and high deficit spending in a low-interest-rate environment. Macklem's report laid out the hows and whys of the Bank's long-term low-interest-rate peg and its bond-buying program. And Tam's report described the principles of the aggressive public health measures required to contain the virus, and described its disproportionate effects on different populations.

A good measure of policy-making is actually art, not science. That art comes from the confidence — economic or otherwise — that is generated by having a coherent mix of policies founded in evidence, and showing a longer-term commitment to them. That's what a majority of the public, and those who interpret technical policy-making for the public, are looking for.

(Note that all three institutions — the federal Department of Finance, the Bank of Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada — need to continue to make their work, and the concepts that guide them, more understandable to Canadians. This is a project we support through First Policy Response, and it's good to see Freeland's candour and plain-spokenness, and Macklem's recognition of this challenge.)

But it's not a real policy discussion to say that interest rates should be kept low for a long time, that we can rely on government borrowing and central bank intervention to sustain people and businesses, that the health system needs emergency investments, or that we will require some sort of fiscal anchor or plan to set limits on borrowing and/or stave off inflation. Nor is it controversial to observe that the health and other effects of the pandemic are being felt unequally across demographic groups, and that policy measures need to take this into account.

That's not to underplay their efforts or observations. But the

economic and public health debates have to be nested in a larger debate about the political and public-policy objectives during this fight. And for too long, too many policy leaders have preferred generalities to specifics.

Take the Bank's statement that it "expects this growth to be uneven across sectors and choppy over time. Some parts of the economy will simply be unable to completely reopen until a vaccine is widely available, so sectors will recover at very different speeds." Yes — but which sectors, at which pace? The risk the Bank has identified is real. Policy guidance could help to resolve it.

Charting a path to recovery will require trade-offs. It's up to politicians and other leaders to more clearly identify those trade-offs, and to prioritize the most important outcomes in the short-to medium-term. Of course, politicians are loath to make specific prioritizations. They'd rather appeal to broadly-based shared sacrifice, or support for frontline workers, or a generalized desire to "flatten the curve." But none of these generalized appeals can guide public policy enough. And crucially, that results in politically damaging and confrontational debates about edge cases: Why open malls and not gyms? Why gathering limits for stores but not schools? What should we do about Halloween?

We need to know what's most important, in the eyes of our leaders, with more specifics. Is it supporting as much retail spending as possible, while attending to the most vulnerable populations and neighbourhoods? Is it to ensure that we don't repeat the spring mistakes in long-term care, and making schools and childcare the last facilities to close? Is it to pay special attention to Main Street, or to artists, performers, trainers and others who make our cultural and physical lives fuller?

It's time for more public leadership around the specific trade-offs, and around what the endgame is with these trade-offs, on what kind of timeline. Just "trusting" public health officials and the emerging broad economic policy consensus is not a plan.

### **Matthew Mendelsohn: Leaving room for flexibility is the smart policy approach**

Karim – dude! Why are you so negative? How can you say the government doesn't have a plan? Sure, there are some details to work out, but the two major economic statements lay out a strategic direction for the government and the country: low interest rates for several years and continued significant deficit spending to support Canadians, businesses, organizations, communities and the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. It is pretty clear!

Yes, there is some vagueness about timing, but that seems appropriate: Why be specific about when programs will shut down until we know when vaccines will be widely available, and when we have no idea about the nature, pace and timing of economic recovery? I like the idea that the government is remaining flexible and will respond in real time to changing circumstances. That is how good public policy should be done.

And yes, some of the programs are still being worked out. The future of the Canada Recovery Benefit is still TBD and the details of some of the programs to accelerate transition to a low-carbon economy are not yet known. But again, that is the right thing to do.

I want the government to get the details for these programs right. I don't think we should spend the next five years arguing about minutiae but I think the timelines so far have been reasonable. Talk to me again in six months. If we don't have clarity by the spring, then I'll be on Team Karim and co-sign your piece.

Now go get your kids ready for Halloween!

[Karim Bardeesy](#) is Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Ryerson Leadership Lab and co-director of First Policy Response.

[Matthew Mendelsohn](#) is Visiting Professor at Ryerson University and a co-creator, with the Ryerson Leadership Lab and the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship, of First Policy Response.

**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Bardeesy, K., & Mendelsohn, M. (2020). [Did this week's economic policy statements go far enough?](#) First Policy Response.

## Quiz

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# 4e. "Racialized and Indigenous workers are bearing the brunt of pandemic job loss"

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## [Racialized and Indigenous workers are bearing the brunt of pandemic job loss](#)

*The Monitor*, January 14, 2021, Sheila Block

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, Job loss

**Citation:** Block, S. (2021, January 14). [Racialized and Indigenous workers are bearing the brunt of pandemic job loss](#). *The Monitor*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Block's article "Racialized and Indigenous workers are bearing the brunt of pandemic job loss":**



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# 4f. "Indigenous businesses faced barriers accessing COVID-19 relief programs, survey finds"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [Indigenous businesses faced barriers accessing COVID-19 relief programs, survey finds](#)

CBC News, June 24, 2021, Pete Evans

**Keywords:** Indigenous people, Business, COVID-19, CBC News

**Citation:** Evans, P. (2021, June 24). [Indigenous businesses faced barriers accessing COVID-19 relief programs, survey finds](#). CBC News.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Evans article "Indigenous businesses faced barriers accessing COVID-19 relief programs, survey finds":**

4f. "Indigenous businesses faced barriers accessing COVID-19 relief



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# 4g. "First Nations need to play a role in post-COVID recovery"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [First Nations need to play a role in post-COVID recovery](#)

Policy Options, April 29, 2020, Sharleen Gale

**Keywords:** First Nations, Indigenous people, Economy, COVID-19, Policy Options

**Citation:** Gale, S. (2020, April 29). [First Nations need to play a role in post-COVID recovery](#). Policy Options.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Gale's article "First Nations need to play a role in post-COVID recovery":**



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# 4h. "COVID-19 Indigenous Business Survey: Phase II"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [COVID-19 Indigenous business survey: Phase II](#)

*Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), & National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB), June 2021*

**Keywords:** Indigenous business, COVID-19, Economic development, Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB)

**Citation:** Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), & National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB). (2021, June). [COVID-19 Indigenous business survey: Phase II](#).

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), &**

**National Indigenous Economic Development Board's (NIEDB)  
report "COVID-19 Indigenous business survey: Phase II":**



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# Policy Brief Assessment

Based on the articles above from *First Policy Response*, please engage in the following assessments to test your learning.

## **Policy Brief:**

You are a policy analyst for the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The ministry focuses on, “[s]upporting a strong, innovative economy that can provide jobs, opportunities and prosperity for all Ontarians.”

The COVID-19 pandemic had large impacts on many of those in the skilled trades, as these jobs often require hands-on and close-proximity interactions. As a result, there have been outbreaks of COVID-19 in the workplace and many skilled-traded labourers have been furloughed and/or laid off.

With the number of employees being furloughed, employers are dealing with a province-wide labour shortage with the need to replace vacant positions.

Write a short policy brief (750 – 1,500 words in length) that focuses on Ontario’s economic development system. It will be presented to the Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Outline three major policy recommendations that can help deal with this job loss from the pandemic.

## 5. EDUCATION



*Illustration of red school house with COVID-19 particles floating onto it*

# Learning Objectives

## Education Disruption due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Examine the educational infrastructure in Ontario from the primary to post-secondary levels
- Analyze how the pandemic changed the primary to post-secondary education system for students, educators, and parents
- Understand the post-secondary education system and identify a pathway towards student advocacy
- Utilize the *DIVE: Student Aid Platform* to learn about how the Ontario government transformed student financial aid

This module will help learners understand how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the primary to post-secondary education system. By the end, learners will be able to apply this knowledge to improve educational outcomes across a broad student demographic.

5a. "How do we navigate a return to school and childcare?"

## How do we navigate a return to school and childcare?

First Policy Response, JUNE 25, 2020 | IN [CHILDREN, YOUTH + EDUCATION](#) | BY [VARIOUS CONTRIBUTORS](#)

One of the biggest differences between the COVID-19 pandemic and past crises is that this time, [the kids are at home](#). With schools and childcare centres shut down to prevent the spread of the virus, parents and caregivers have had to find ways to keep their children supervised and educated while simultaneously trying to maintain their own livelihoods — and mental health. The effects of this have been profound for Canadian families of all kinds. After three months, the consensus is clear: we can't go on like this.

But where do we go from here? How do we get children back to childcare centres and classrooms in a way that supports students and children, educators and childcare workers, public health and the Canadian economy as a whole? We reached out to experts in education, childcare, economics and public health with one question: *"What is the most important thing to consider when reopening schools and childcare?"* Here are 18 answers.

[Anna Banerji: We can minimize health risks without keeping all kids at home](#)

[Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant: Labour force gender gaps are in danger of widening](#)

[Tesfai Mengesha: We need to bring an equity lens to the reopening of schools](#)

[Jeffrey Schiffer: Access to greenspace can mitigate COVID-19 closures for Indigenous children and youth](#)

[Annie Kidder: Crisis has amplified differences in families' capacities to support children](#)

[Medeana Moussa: Schools must have adequate funding to keep students healthy](#)

[Liz Stuart: Teachers need proper tools to support student learning and wellbeing](#)

[Charles E. Pascal: Going back to school requires focus on students' mental health](#)

[Konrad Glogowski: Focus on community partnerships and data collection to support students' wellbeing](#)

[Corinne Payne: Parents need more support and clear communication with schools](#)

[Harvey Bischof: Teachers' professional judgment is key to supporting students](#)

[Natalie Sadowski: What school reopening looked like in Vancouver](#)

[Linda White: We need to better value and regulate care work](#)

[Carolyn Ferns and Alana Powell: Public investment is needed to build an early learning and childcare system](#)

[Brian Dijkema: Diverse families require diverse childcare alternatives](#)

[Amanda Munday: Support small businesses to develop safe childcare options](#)

[Petr Varmuza: Open classrooms this summer for early learning for our most vulnerable children](#)

[Anneke Van den Berg and Shawna Vander Velden: All families deserve the opportunity to advocate for their mental safety](#)

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We can minimize health risks without keeping all kids at home

**Anna Banerji – Dalla Lana School of Public  
Health Pediatric Infectious Disease Specialist,  
University of Toronto**

In the months since COVID-19 arrived in Canada, we have learned that this virus targets the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. In Canada, only [seven per cent of children and youth under 19 have tested positive](#), and less than one per cent were sick enough to be hospitalized. Of the more than 8,000 deaths in Canada, none of them have been children. Basically, COVID is a different disease in children.

Although children have different ways of learning, structured learning at school is beneficial to the vast majority. Children also need the socialization aspects of school. The lockdown has also created a significant amount of stress for children and parents, and school closures have had a great impact on parents' ability to work. Prolonged lockdown is not sustainable.

Many governments are in discussions about wearing masks, physical distancing and hand hygiene in schools. Hand hygiene is always a good idea, and masks could be implemented for older students and teachers, but it will be impossible to keep younger children continuously distancing and using masks. The bottom line is that when schools open, it will not be possible to contain the virus, and despite the best efforts, children and staff *will* get infected. At this point in time it is really about learning to live with COVID-19.

While most children who contract COVID can be expected to have a mild case of the disease, children or teachers at higher risk for severe COVID could turn to online learning. This may also reduce the demands on physical space, which was already a struggle with large class sizes prior to COVID-19.

In the early weeks to months after schools reopen, it will be important to avoid transmitting this virus to high-risk people such as elderly grandparents, parents or teachers with health concerns



that would increase their risk for severe COVID. Children would need to be “cocooned” away from these high-risk adults in the first term back at school when there is a higher degree of transmission. However, this initial phase may also lead to herd immunity, making it safer for vulnerable people to return to school as we continue to wait for that sacred vaccine.

Labour force gender gaps are in danger of widening

**Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant** – Associate Professor,  
Department of Political Studies, Queen’s  
University

Health and safety are the paramount priorities in reopening schools and daycare. Beyond this, there are numerous lenses that must inform planning. One of these is gender.

COVID-related job losses have been borne disproportionately by women. There will be no economic recovery without full-time care, because the workers hit hardest are women. A path out of the “[she-cession](#)” is impossible without full-time care and on-site schooling, yet this seems unlikely right now. The Ontario government, for example, is currently considering three possibilities for September: full-time return to school, full-time online, and some hybrid. Indications currently point to a hybrid, so parents should anticipate some level of daytime care and academic support for children in grades JK-12.

How will parents, and especially mothers, be affected by hybrid models of school or part-time daycare – not to mention, how they will manage during July and August? Women tend to do a disproportionate share of childcare, domestic chores and family management tasks, including in households where both parents work full-time. During COVID-19, this pattern continued, with remote schooling added to the list. Many of these mothers have

also been working, either in or outside the home, and more will rejoin the workforce as the economy heals. [Statistics Canada](#) data also show a widening gender gap in self-reported mental wellbeing. Women are faring worse psychologically than men during the pandemic, likely due to worry about the disease and the burden of balancing so much.

Worryingly, many workplaces seem to be normalizing business as usual while increasingly strained mothers struggle to do it all. Planning for September must address the challenges faced by working mothers or risk widening current gender inequalities in incomes, lifetime earnings, pensions, career advancement, and much more. A gender lens on policy and planning is always prudent, and in this case it is vital. Part-time care/school is not sustainable for women without additional supports.

We need to bring an equity lens to the reopening of schools

## [Tesfai Mengesha](#) – Co-Executive Director, **Success Beyond Limits**

COVID-19 has put on full display the glaring socio-economic disparities that exist and have been further exacerbated by the global pandemic. The City of Toronto, Canada's largest city, released its [COVID-19 Toronto Neighbourhood Maps](#) which detail cases of the coronavirus by neighbourhood. Predictably, the communities with the highest number of cases are also those that are predominantly lower income, higher density with more social housing, and whose residents perform the kind of essential work that cannot be done virtually. These often-neglected neighbourhoods are indeed the front lines of the pandemic.

As we plan to return to school in September, we should account for the fact that many of our students will have experienced learning loss and gaps in learning while they were out of school. Due to

deepening economic, social and health inequities, alongside the education system's inadequate response to COVID-19, many students have been left behind. These same students still do not have adequate learning resources and [technology](#) to engage in online (a)synchronous learning. The plan for this fall should begin with addressing this pressing reality.

The Ministry of Education has mandated that local school boards prepare for three scenarios: in-class instruction, remote learning and a blend of both. Local school boards are working with the province on how to move forward, but what must be considered are the local complexities and challenges of communities *within* individual school boards. Schooling experiences have always been inequitable whether students live in Northern, rural or urban communities, high-income or low-income neighbourhoods, and of course differences across race.

Equity must be the lens that guides policies and plans to return come September. The approach we take will have to look both ways at the same time: backward to recover learning loss and address gaps in learning, particularly for students whose education needs have traditionally not been met, but also forward to attend to local complexities so that school boards – with the support and resources of the Ministry – are able to provide safe and effective learning environments as we collectively move forward.

Access to greenspace can mitigate COVID-19 closures for Indigenous children and youth

## [Jeffrey Schiffer](#) – Executive Director, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

Since the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic, we have seen the face-to-face social services Indigenous families in Ontario rely on recede like a wave pulled back into the ocean. With

the closure of schools and daycares, the majority of community referral sources for child abuse and neglect concerns have been suspended.

A sharp reduction in community referrals in combination with necessary provincial orders directing self-isolation have resulted in increases in domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. Research emerging from countries further ahead in the pandemic process shows that children and youth are suffering. Anxiety, depression, boredom, difficulty concentrating, loneliness and isolation, and other mental health concerns are beginning to characterize the most vulnerable children within the context of this pandemic.

This is especially true for Indigenous children already impacted by systemic racism and the legacies of intergenerational trauma, and for whom the intergenerational realities of disease epidemics, geographical confinement and inability to access land for wellness within their families, communities and nations make COVID-19 a perfect storm.

At the same time, a well-developed canon of research tells us that designated access to greenspace will not only help mitigate the mental health impacts of COVID-19 in the present, but may play an essential role in preventing a secondary pandemic of stunted physiological development and poor mental health – particularly in urban COVID-19 hotspots like Toronto.

We must balance the impacts of continued social isolation against the risks of opening schools and childcare centres. In the interest of physical development and mental health, it is critical that we develop safe ways for children and youth to get outside, access green space, and attend school in some fashion.

Crisis has amplified differences in families' capacities to support children

[Annie Kidder](#) – Executive Director, People for

## Education

For the last three months we have been in a state of “crisis response” in childcare and education, but it’s time to move beyond that.

The crisis has made everyone realize that schools are important – as places where learning happens, vital relationships are built, staff can support the vast array of students, and we can attempt to mitigate the impact of things like poverty, race, parental education and family stress.

Even more importantly, the crisis has amplified the huge differences in families’ capacities to provide around-the-clock learning and support for their children.

Families that were already struggling, struggled more. For students already facing barriers, those barriers became insurmountable. Yes, a component of the inequity was about who had laptops and good internet, but much more than that, it was about which families had the social capital, the privilege and the human resources (flexible jobs that were doable from home, time to spend on homework, more than one adult at home, English as a first language, a university education etc.) to act as nearly full-time supports or teachers for their children.

So what should the post-crisis response look like?

First, we need a Task Force – we need all the players at one table, working together to design a comprehensive, sustainable plan for the next year. Beyond education experts, practitioners and students, the table must also include municipal service providers, and childcare and health experts.

Second, we need resources. If we need more human supports for families who cannot be asked to do more, municipalities must have the funding to hire more staff or improve social services. If we need kids to be in classes of 15, we need to hire more teachers. If students are being taught partly at home and partly at school, teachers need to be supported to work in teams. We must carve out (and fund) time for teachers, principals, and support staff to plan together to

ensure that no more students are falling through cracks. And we must listen to the childcare experts – not just about how to keep kids apart, but about how to make sure that kids are still benefiting from all the things that quality early learning and care brings.

There was a massive response at the federal level to the financial crisis brought on by COVID-19. Now it's time to recognize the human crisis, and provide the policy, planning and resources needed to support children and young people, so that all of them can thrive

Schools must have adequate funding to keep students healthy

## [Medeana Moussa](#) – Public Education Advocate, Support Our Students Alberta

The safety of students and education workers is the most important consideration for the reopening of schools. Public schools deliver so much more than education to our children. Support extends to lunch programs for food-insecure students, assistance for complex learning needs, and counselling services to help families navigate various challenges. COVID-19 has shone a bright light on the crevasses of inequality in our society and that inequality has been deepened with school closures.

Governments have asked schools to deliver more than academic lessons without providing the funding and resources that this enormous task requires. Schools are essential to the functioning of our communities and, as we have seen during COVID-19, to the functioning of our economies. Governments need to provide adequate additional funding in order for schools to implement the necessary safety measures to reopen and continue this essential work.

SOS has outlined safety measure [checklists](#) for school reopening. We recommend that parents have a safety tour of schools

prior to reopening. This is an opportunity for governments to be transparent about the measures they are implementing to ensure the safety of children and staff.

Recommendations include:

- Social distancing measures; desks two metres apart
- Minimize hallway time; minimize exposure to multiple classes, teachers and substitute teachers
- Face masks and PPE available to staff with clear protocols outlined
- Sanitization stations at entranceways, hallways and bathrooms
- Dedicated isolation rooms with a nurse for sick students as they wait for pickup
- Transparent outbreak protocol and a clear plan
- Adequate caretakers and resources to meet frequent cleaning requirements

Many schools lack the necessary infrastructure to accommodate these safety measures. They are often overcrowded, with students sharing lockers and lunch spaces, and there are often only a dozen sinks for several hundred students. Governments have an obligation to ensure the school environment is improved to meet the safety protocols provincial health services have mandated and prioritize the health and safety of children and education workers.

Teachers need proper tools to support student learning and wellbeing

## **Liz Stuart – President, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association**

The Ontario government's announcements about school reopening and education funding for the 2020-21 school year leave much to

be desired. Beyond the lack of clear direction to school boards regarding their responsibilities to protect the health and safety of all students and staff, Catholic teachers are most disappointed in the apparent lack of urgency about giving us the tools we need to support student learning and wellbeing.

We all want to return to more normal ways of teaching and learning, but we must recognize that everyone will be returning in September having experienced some level of fear, anxiety, uncertainty and grief. Also, as a result of the inequities inherent in emergency distance learning, many students will be behind in some or all subjects, and there will be greater variability between students than under normal circumstances.

Although we still have not been meaningfully consulted about reopening, our association has nevertheless offered the government a number of ideas about how to address these issues. Recognizing that much time at the beginning of the year will be spent catching up, we have highlighted the need to modify curriculum expectations, and to pause the introduction of the new math curriculum. Understanding the stress that standardized testing places on the whole school community, and that it will be impossible to compare data from next year to previous years, we have called for EQAO standardized testing to be suspended. And given the variety of mental health and learning challenges students will be facing, we have called for significant investments in professional supports.

Thus far, none of these matters have been adequately addressed. Moving forward, Catholic teachers hope much more attention will be paid to the need to create learning conditions that fit these unique circumstances, including real investments in education that match the scale of this unprecedented crisis.

Going back to school requires focus on students' mental health

[Charles E. Pascal](#) – Professor, Ontario Institute of



## Studies in Education & Former Ontario Deputy Minister of Education

There is a plethora of comments and ideas about how and when schools should open. Most of the advice boils down to the need to follow the public health data, as well as the usual basics including handwashing, distancing (including the need for smaller class sizes) and personal protective equipment (PPE). Proper government funding is key to ensuring these things are in place. This is the easy stuff.

But the most important concern is getting the short shrift: the social and emotional issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The old normal wasn't working for far too many students who were falling through the cracks of a non-system when it comes to early identification and interventions for mental health issues. Educators, as well, need "resilience" support. The pandemic crisis has exacerbated problems that were there before.

Few jurisdictions are planning properly for this. It is critical to recognize that educators need support for dealing with their own issues, and they need support to deal with the issues that will arise with many of their students. All this requires proper training from psychologists and social workers well before schools are opened. "Hey, glad you are all back, how was your time away?" will not cut it.

Finally, imagining and developing a "new normal" will take time over the next few years to answer questions arising from the pandemic, including:

- How can we ensure education is informed by a whole-student approach that recognizes, respects and supports students of varying incomes, diverse identities, cultures and race?
- How can we turn the preschool-through-post-secondary continuum into a force for enabling mental health and wellbeing?
- How can we ensure more effective collaborations among and

between parents/ guardians and educators?

- How can we create a renewed curriculum that focuses on creative problem-solving and social competence — a curriculum that moves away from discipline to a transdisciplinary project-based approach that builds on students' interests and prior knowledge?
- How can we develop new, creative and effective approaches to remote learning that work for diverse students *and* educators?

Focus on community partnerships and data collection to support students' wellbeing

## Konrad Glogowski – Director, Research and Evaluation, Pathways to Education Canada

At Pathways to Education, we help youth living in low-income communities to graduate from high school and build the foundation for a successful future. The students we serve have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing measures have increased the already precarious situations of many socio-economically disadvantaged families and amplified existing barriers to youth success.

As they return to school, students will need additional supports to help reduce their anxiety about both personal and academic challenges. They will require personally relevant academic support and guidance, as well as assurance that the academic barriers created by the pandemic are not insurmountable.

When considering school re-openings, we offer the following recommendations.

### **1) Recognize community-based after-school programs as allies in supporting students who face complex barriers**

Community-based organizations possess a strong understanding

of the communities where they operate – they understand youth, family and community assets, needs and goals. Partnerships with programs that support youth who face complex barriers can provide insights into the lived experience of young people, including barriers and challenges they faced during the pandemic, as well as those they are likely to face as they transition back into classrooms.

**2) Focus on students' social and emotional wellbeing, especially their sense of personal agency and self-regulation skills**

Schools would do well to invest in students' ability to thrive as individuals and to help them develop a strong sense of agency and self-regulation so they can continue to identify personally meaningful academic goals and develop plans to work toward them. Use of reassurance, routines and regulation will be crucial during this time: creating safe spaces for connection with educators and peers, helping develop and strengthen school-related routines, and support youth in managing difficult feelings and stress.

**3) Collect and analyze key data to understand who is adjusting and who needs additional supports**

Re-opening schools after a significant period of disruption will undoubtedly focus on assessing student readiness and potential learning gaps, and implementing the supports required to ensure a successful future. All efforts to support student academic success should be carefully monitored and analyzed to ensure they are effective. It is critical that the data and insights emerging from this work be shared with a wide network of those committed to supporting student success. If schools need to again be closed in response to a resurgence of COVID-19, this type of data will also help inform the work of teachers teaching remotely and community programs that engage students virtually.

Parents need more support and clear communication with schools

[Corinne Payne](#) – Executive Director, Quebec

## Federation of Parents Committees

At the end of May, the Quebec Federation of Parents Committees, which represents parents of a million students from all corners of Quebec, consulted parents about the return to school in the fall. An in-depth survey was sent to its 60 regional branches and a social media survey garnered more than 43,000 responses within four days.

Everyone was itching to get back to “normal,” ideally with all children back in school full-time. Barring that possibility, there was clear support for getting 100 per cent of students back to school at least 50 per cent of the time. It was imperative that students with special needs return to school full-time.

Nearly half of parents of elementary school students said they would need childcare services if their children were not in school full-time. Parents would not be able to stay at home indefinitely or balance their work schedules to match the educational system (for example, alternating days or half-days). Likewise, more than two-thirds of parents said they could offer limited to no support or supervision for their children if they were to be at home.

Parents were nearly unanimous that the arts, sports, special projects, social clubs, extracurricular activities — in other words, school life beyond reading, writing and arithmetic — must be maintained or adapted to the new reality, these activities being the drivers of perseverance and motivation for students.

Parents also said it was crucial to be prepared for a potential second wave of the virus. The education system needed to be operational from Day 1, with all students equipped with the appropriate tools for learning from home, and work-family balance initiatives must be implemented.

Whether a return to normal, a new normal or another period of confinement, parents emphasised the importance of communications between home and school: the need for improved communications that are clear and constant at all times.

Teachers' professional judgment is key to supporting students

## **Harvey Bischof – President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation**

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is a strong, independent, socially active union that promotes and advances the cause of public education and the rights of students, educators and educational workers. When we are asked what is the most important thing to consider when reopening schools, we answer: the education and wellbeing of our students. This has always been our mandate and we will not lose sight of it during a pandemic.

Central to everything we do is professional judgment, which is defined as judgment that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. OSSTF/FEESO's comprehensive paper, "[A safe return for all: OSSTF/FEESO's framework for reopening schools in 2020-2021](#)," outlines that one of the main pedagogical principles to be considered when reopening schools is that educators' professional judgment should be at the centre of the planning and delivery of the curriculum. Educators will identify the core expectations required for each course, set realistic academic expectations and identify what parts of the curriculum will be covered in priority order.

Educators have always had to adapt to the needs of the students in front of them (or physically distant from them, as the case may be). This pandemic does not change the fundamental need for the educator to make sure every student is ready to take on the next task or learning outcome. We have always done this, recognizing that students come from a variety of experiences the year before.

We are confident that the public will put their trust in us as educators and know that we are professionals with a very compelling mandate – the education of our students. We insist that the Ministry of Education exercise its leadership role and require school boards to respect and support educator professional judgment.

What school reopening looked like in Vancouver

## Natalie Sadowski – Digital Communications Coordinator, Vancouver School District

It is hard to know exactly what to expect on the first day back to school during a global pandemic. As British Columbia schools have adjusted to the resumption of voluntary part-time, in-class instruction, the Vancouver School District continues to follow the direction of the Provincial Health Officer with respect to health and safety measures in schools.

As part of Stage 3 in B.C.'s Education Restart Plan, families had the choice for students to return to class on a part-time basis for the remainder of the current school year. About 42 per cent of Vancouver families surveyed said they were planning to return and a little under that number attended the first week back to school.

Students in kindergarten to Grade 5 were offered in-class instruction two days a week. Students in Grades 6 and 7 were able to attend school 1 day a week. For students in Grades 8-12, blocked times of two hours per day were offered and staggered throughout the week.

The resumption of voluntary in-class instruction helped the district prepare for the start of the 2020-21 school year in September. We are currently moving toward Stage 2 (full-time, in-

class instruction), but are prepared for all circumstances, with health and safety being the top priority.

In preparation for the reopening of schools, teachers, support staff and engineers did extensive work to ensure the safety of staff and students – and to make the transition a smooth one for all. In schools, arrows were placed on hallway floors to manage the flow of people. Only staff and students are permitted to come in and out of the buildings, and as they enter, everyone is asked to wash or sanitize their hands. There are designated entrances and exits to help control traffic flow. There are signs posted with informative health and safety tips throughout the buildings, and classroom doors are propped open to avoid contact with door handles. There are also enhanced and frequent cleaning schedules in place at every school.

While the task of transitioning has not been a small one, everyone across the Vancouver School District pulled together to transform the delivery of education for students.

We need to better value and regulate care work

## [Linda White](#) – RBC Chair in Economic and Public Policy, University of Toronto

When it comes to the choice to re-open schools and childcare facilities, the health and safety of their overwhelmingly female labour force must be taken into consideration.

First, we must avoid the impetus to return to the status quo, with only a small or short-term infusion of cash into the system. The pandemic presents us with the opportunity to fix what is fundamentally broken in the childcare and long-term care systems. We could start with permanent wage enhancements and other benefits to workers who are expected to step up to the front lines and deliver essential care services. We should also vastly expand the

system of regulated and high-quality centre-based care – preferably not-for-profit so that monies earned are reinvested in the centres and not the pocketbooks of owners. We need to recognize that care services such as childcare and long-term care are especially vulnerable to market failures and the costs of those failures are tragically high, given the vulnerability of the ages of those in the care of others. We need to fundamentally revalue care work to acknowledge their essential role not just to a functioning economy but to a decent, caring society.

The time is ripe to introduce more, not less, regulation and oversight of these services. While lack of oversight of long-term care facilities has received a great deal of media attention, lack of oversight in unlicensed home childcare (HCC) has gone virtually unnoticed. It boggles the mind that governments across Canada allow a portion of the childcare sector to operate with virtually no oversight and regulation other than the number of children who can be legally cared for at one time. How, for example, can provincial governments communicate important health and safety guidelines to HCC providers they don't even know about? How can they track outbreaks in HCC settings that have no obligation to report? As colleagues and I have written elsewhere, it is long past time for all provincial and territorial governments to require – at minimum – all HCC providers to be licensed and subject to regular oversight and supports for professional development.

Public investment is needed to build an early learning and childcare system

**Carolyn Ferns** – Public Policy and Government Relations Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

**Alana Powell** – Executive Coordinator, Association of Early Childhood Educators



## Ontario

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the childcare crisis in Canada and created a new challenge. The old market model that we have relied on to provide childcare in this country will not fit back together in our new reality. The truth is, that system wasn't working well for many and it was past time for change. But now the necessary health and safety precautions to combat COVID-19, including smaller group sizes and additional skilled staff, are in direct tension with the old way that childcare centres used to maintain their financial viability: full enrolment, high parent fees and low wages.

Once we understand the depth and extent of the problem, we must respond in kind. This crisis must force the federal and provincial governments to reexamine childcare and move to a much more public system. Government funding must be tied to system-building.

To build a new early learning and childcare (ELCC) system, we need the federal government to provide funding and leadership, including an immediate investment of \$2.5 billion, that grows year-on-year as the system expands. It requires a national childcare secretariat to organize the system-building work. And it requires national legislation that enshrines principles and goals for the new system.

Three important goals when building an ELCC system must be addressed simultaneously:

1. Supporting parents in the workforce with enough spaces for all and relief from fees
2. Supporting child wellbeing through trauma-informed programs to help a generation of children overcome the impact of a global pandemic.
3. Supporting decent work for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), who will be essential to accomplishing the first two goals.

ECEs are competent, educated professionals, whose relational and caring work has gone undervalued for too long. But a system that had a recruitment and retention crisis pre-COVID must better address the needs of the childcare workforce in order to successfully reopen, recover and grow. The working conditions of ECEs are the learning conditions of children.

If government investment focuses on meeting these goals, Canada will gain an ELCC system that supports our economic and social recovery.

Diverse families require diverse childcare alternatives

## **Brian Dijkema – Vice-president, External Affairs, Cardus**

As provinces scramble to reopen childcare, the most important consideration should be that diverse families require diverse childcare options. In a [First Policy Response Panel last month](#), I said, “Childcare should be thought of as the care of the child” not something done primarily to help the economy grow. Policy-makers should keep that as a top consideration. As I said then, “the economy should be at service of the family,” not the other way around.

According to Statistics Canada data, most Canadian families access a mix of non-parental childcare options, provided publicly, privately, by family and through civil society. Any federal support for childcare should maintain and enhance that diverse ecosystem of care instead of constraining options in the way the national, universal system some are calling for would. [Research](#) from Quebec’s experiment with universal state-provided daycare [shows](#) negative outcomes for children and families. It shifts care from informal arrangements to cheaper options; makes children more aggressive, sicker and less well off; makes parents worse at parenting, sicker, and places serious stress on

marriages. [Research](#) also shows that higher-income families disproportionately accessed the system compared to lower-income families.

If we want to pursue positive ways of helping people return to the labour force – and especially women, whose return to work is most affected by childcare needs – we need to pursue policy that supports childcare options as diverse as the families it serves. A more imaginative approach would consider childcare as part of a cohesive suite of policies including flexible and generous parental leave, child benefits, and subsidies that would help families navigate their unique needs and lead to the best outcomes for children, parents, the economy and civil society together.

Support small businesses to develop safe childcare options

## [Amanda Munday](#) – Founder and CEO, The Workaround Coworking and Childcare

We must bring innovation to childcare. The decision to return to in-person operations in schools and childcare is nuanced, and the emotional wellbeing of families must be front and centre as we return to these spaces.

The decision to reopen a childcare centre like mine has been excruciating. Owners are being asked to balance health and safety needs, the financial implications for employees, and the threat of losing hundreds of thousands of dollars given the hard costs required to set up a socially distant classroom for young children.

Asking children to wear or not to wear masks misses the systemic inequities facing thousands of families in Ontario and across Canada. Before the pandemic, childcare was already inaccessible, unaffordable and not at all flexible. Years-long waitlists and fees of \$2,500 a month per child are the norm in many urban areas. Childcare centres and schools are being asked to reopen at a

reduced capacity, to not raise fees and to hold spots from previous patrons, all without government funding to support the losses.

If we do not bring a critical, innovative lens to childcare, the emotional and physical health of our children will be threatened and the effects long lasting, as reported in the recent [guidelines from SickKids](#). Families need more spaces, not less, and more affordable spaces, not expensive annual commitments. Children need social and emotional support and opportunities for play. Childcare centres and schools are left with the decision to stay open under grave financial and operating conditions, or close and further reduce access for those who need it. We need to support small businesses to create and offer childcare in order to find a way to safely support the needs of young families, especially from vulnerable communities and single-parent households.

Open classrooms this summer for early learning for our most vulnerable children

## **Petr Varmuza – Doctoral student, OISE & Former director, City of Toronto Children’s Services**

The summer learning gap that affects all children, and especially those from disadvantaged families and neighbourhoods, is likely to become even more pronounced this year because of school closures and lack of recreation facilities. Meanwhile, school buildings across the country sit empty. The Toronto District School Board alone has between 1,200 to 1,300 kindergarten classrooms – with tens of thousands of classrooms across the country. Those school buildings are public property, held by school boards in trust for public purposes. And they tend to be located within walking distance of people’s homes.

Given the current circumstances, provincial ministries could

temporarily convert those kindergarten classrooms to provide age-appropriate early learning and child care, employing qualified early childhood educators. While strict restrictions on groups are likely to remain, each of these empty classrooms could be converted immediately into a true early learning and care environment for children ages 4 and 5. This would relieve the pressure on childcare facilities, which could refocus on care for younger ages.

To reduce inequality, as spaces become available, access should be prioritized for disadvantaged children and their families. Socially distanced school lunches that provide important nutrition to children could be restored, offering relief to families already under stress to provide appropriate nutrition during those times. And this plan would offer employment to the many ECEs currently furloughed or unemployed.

All families deserve the opportunity to advocate for their mental safety

**Anneke Van den Berg – Peer Health Worker, Our Place Family Resource and Early Years Centre**  
**Shawna Vander Velden – Lead Registered Early Childhood Educator, Our Place Family Resource and Early Years Centre**

Over the last few months while facilitating Our Place's "Parenting in a Pandemic" virtual peer support group, we have been using the term "mental safety" to acknowledge that during this period of concern for physical safety, we need to be equally aware of how our mental health is affected by COVID-19. We have seen parents shift from fears of being unable to protect their families from the virus, to concerns about the mental safety of their children, and maybe even

more importantly, themselves. The mental safety of all families is at stake when daycares and schools do not open.

In our contemporary world, schools and daycares have become our village. For many families, schools have become an essential part of their lives, and education plays just a part in this. Many families are not concerned about their children's academics as much as their lack of socialization, and the lack of resources that especially children with exceptionalities need during this pandemic. Schools and childcare centres are places where children learn and practise important social skills, like exploring common interests with peers. Schools also provide families with a sense of normalcy and structure.

As parents, we know our children best and we know what they need. Right now, for many parents the question really comes down to whether fear of the virus outweighs their growing concerns about the mental safety of both children and themselves. All families deserve the opportunity to advocate for their needs, and the need for school and childcare is real, even if they look different in September. While not all families will feel comfortable sending their children to school or childcare in a couple of months, every family should have that guilt-free choice. Parents deserve to put their mental health, and that of their children, first.

### [Various Contributors](#)

**Keywords:** [CHILDCARE](#), [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Banerji, A., Goodyear-Grant, E., Mengesha, T., Schiffer, J., Kidder, A., Moussa, M., Stuart, L., Pascal, C. E., Glogowski, K., Payne, C., Bischof, H., Sakowski, N., White, L., Ferns, C., & Powell, A., Dijkema, B., Munday, A., Varmuza, P., Van den Berg, A., & Vander Velden, S. (2020, June 25). [How do we navigate a return to school and childcare?](#) *First Policy Response*.

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## Quiz

### Quiz on Banerji at al.'s article "How do we navigate a return to school and childcare?":



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# 5b. "The choice for education: Change school plans or face 'generational catastrophe'"

## The choice for education: Change school plans or face 'generational catastrophe'

First Policy Response, OCTOBER 5, 2020 | IN [CHILDREN, YOUTH + EDUCATION](#) | BY [CAROL CAMPBELL](#)

Oct. 5 is [World Teachers' Day](#) – a time to give special thanks to educators in this highly challenging year. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, says students are facing a ["generational catastrophe"](#) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally, more than 90 per cent of students have been affected by [school closures](#). Students, educators and families have had to pivot to emergency response remote learning and, now, to a range of in-person, online and hybrid learning options in different [education systems](#).

In Ontario, the government announced, changed and revised back-to-school plans in the run up to the new school year. Schools and school boards are working flat-out to fulfil the government's current directives. Ontario's [back-to-school plan](#) has encountered many [implementation challenges and concerns](#). As we enter October, while some students are safely continuing their learning, many students are in crowded classrooms where the recommended [physical distancing is not feasible](#). With concerns about in-school conditions and rising numbers of COVID-19 cases, more parents are switching to [online learning](#), which requires

further reorganization of classes – including combining grades and collapsing students into larger class sizes, in some cases. Some online students are only now being [allocated teachers](#).

Already [one out of every 10](#) schools in Ontario has a confirmed COVID-19 case. Families are dealing with students staying home with symptoms and awaiting test results. School staff are becoming unwell.

The current reality is undesirable and unsustainable. Doubling down on the existing back-to-school plan is not going to fix this. It is time for the government to revise its plan and to provide resources to fully ensure distancing on school buses, small class sizes across Ontario, and access to internet and personal devices for all students and educators. These goals are affordable and doable within the existing provincial budget and federal back-to-school funding. We cannot afford to wait.

The decisions needed now are not just about what will happen over the next few weeks. We have reached a fork in the road for schooling and students, and the pathway chosen will affect individual and societal progress for many years. Already the pandemic is having negative consequences for students' education, including:

**Increasing inequities in learning opportunities:** A [survey](#) by the Canadian Teachers' Federation found that the students who had the most negative experiences with online learning in the spring were those living in poverty, those with special education needs, and those learning the English language. The impact of the digital divide has become pronounced, with concerns about [inequitable choices](#) and consequences between in-school and online learning, especially for racialized and low-income communities who have been [disproportionately affected by COVID-19](#).

**Impacting learning outcomes:** While remote learning continues, school closures negatively impact students' learning. The U.K. [Education Endowment Foundation](#) concluded: "school closures are likely to reverse progress to narrow the gap (between disadvantaged students and their peers) in the last decade."

Ontario [research](#) found that during school breaks, achievement gaps between students of higher and lower socio-economic status increase and can be cumulative over time.

**Declining physical activity:** Students [report](#) being less physically active. It is important for children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development to [play](#) and spend time outdoors. Extra-curricular opportunities and after-school clubs support students' interests and engagement, yet availability of these activities is at risk.

**Deteriorating mental health:** Many students have experienced deteriorating [mental health](#), including anxiety, feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Students are spending more time on screens than is advised by the Canadian Paediatric Society, which is of major concern with continued reliance on online learning.

**Overstretching adults:** Parents, educators and support staff have stepped up to navigate challenges and support students' learning in new ways, but they are [overstretched](#) with [increasing demands](#).

Back-to-school will continue to be bumpy unless we seize this moment to address the current issues. The short-term consequences of not fully investing in our education system will be continued disruption. The long-term consequences may be a generation of students with reduced future opportunities, which also negatively effects wider social and economic development. Positive educational outcomes connect to future health, happiness, employability, income, community engagement and reduced criminal behaviour.

This is the government's fork in the road for education plans. It is a deciding moment in history when a major choice is required. The government can continue with directive, reactive, short-term decisions and current plans. Or it can shift to a collaborative, respectful and supportive partnership with the education sector and families to co-develop proactive plans to deal with issues together over the long haul of the pandemic. It is this second choice that is needed. The government must fulfil its mandate to the people of Ontario by listening carefully to the voices, experiences

and expertise of all involved in our education system who know what is best for students and follow through with action to ensure that we do not have a “generational catastrophe.”

Our students’ futures are at stake. Together, we can create the path ahead for a better Ontario.

**Dr. Carol Campbell** is Associate Professor of Leadership and Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

**Keywords:** FPR ORIGINAL

**Citation:** Campbell, C. (2020, October 5). The choice for education: Change school plans or face ‘generational catastrophe.’ First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Campbell’s article “The choice for education: Change school plans or face ‘generational catastrophe.’”:**



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# 5c. "National childcare system must support childcare workers"

## National childcare system must support childcare workers

First Policy Response, MAY 20, 2021 | IN [CHILDREN, YOUTH + EDUCATION](#) | BY [MONICA LYSACK](#)

*Published as part of a collaboration between First Policy Response and the [Toronto Star](#).*

With last month's federal budget, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland declared her commitment to a Canada-wide childcare system not just as Canada's first female finance minister, but also as a working mother.

Freeland's conviction may come from her own experience, but the principles outlined in Budget 2021 reflect an understanding of [Canada's childcare crisis](#) as a double-whammy for women and the economy. With childcare fees in Canada among the most expensive in the world, many women can't afford to work, while many others spend nearly all their after-tax income on childcare.

But it's not yet clear if the new childcare plan will go far enough to support another group of working women: the professional early childhood educators (ECEs) who work for poverty wages, often in poor conditions. Dozens of ECEs who recently [shared their experiences](#) spoke about working long hours with no benefits, sometimes working multiple jobs to make ends meet.

*Without significant government investment, we cannot resolve the tension between the cost of childcare and the wages of childcare workers. For decades, Canada's market-based childcare system has been pitting the interests of working women against those who work in childcare, and the pandemic has laid bare the cost to Canadian families – and our economy.*

In a [new survey](#) of Ontario ECEs from the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 43 per cent say they have considered leaving the sector since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The problem is the free market. Compensating ECEs more fairly would drive up childcare fees beyond what most families can afford, pushing even more tax-paying women out of the workforce.

Without significant government investment, we cannot resolve the tension between the cost of childcare and the wages of childcare workers. For decades, Canada's market-based childcare system has been pitting the interests of working women against those who work in childcare, and the pandemic has laid bare the cost to Canadian families – and our economy.

Freeland has promised to reduce childcare fees to an average of \$10 per day, which will address affordability for parents. But she hasn't explained where ECE wages or working conditions might fit into that \$10-a-day plan.

Canada can't realize Freeland's childcare vision without a robust workforce strategy, beginning with addressing the immediate ECE retention crisis.

First of all, direct operating funds are necessary to stabilize childcare services in the aftermath of the pandemic, as many centres have been forced to close their doors and lose out on user



fees because of public health guidelines. The federal government recognized as much when it provided Safe Restart funds for childcare to the provinces last fall. This funding must be continued, and in some provinces, expanded while a full workforce strategy is developed and implemented.

Once the immediate crisis is addressed, the new federal childcare legislation should require provinces to take a three-pronged approach to an ECE workforce strategy:

- **Establish provincial wage grids**, similar to those for teachers, that recognize differentiated staffing levels. These should provide a minimum of \$25 per hour for one-year college certificate-qualified educators, increasing appropriately for ECEs with diplomas, bachelor's degrees and additional qualifications.
- **Increase educational requirements for ECEs** to a two-year diploma, and eventually require a bachelor's degree as the minimum qualification. This will strengthen program quality and provide parity between those working with young children inside and outside the school system, which will help with ECE recruitment and retention. As the national childcare system grows, requiring thousands of additional ECEs, provinces should expand the capacity of their post-secondary systems to provide flexible full-time, part-time and online programs for new and upgrading students and reimburse tuition for successful graduates.
- **Establish decent work standards to support pedagogical practices** that strengthen children's well-being and development. This includes paid planning time, paid sick time, ongoing educational opportunities, engagement in communities of practice, career laddering that supports ECEs in transitioning to leadership roles, and cross-over with kindergarten programs. Decent work and ongoing professional learning will support ECEs to critically interpret provincial

curriculum frameworks and practise ethically in their contexts.

Without a doubt, ECEs are the heart of the childcare system; without them, there is no system. Women's economic empowerment can only be realized through policy that aligns the interests of working parents with those of childcare workers. The well-being of children, the quality of the care they receive, and the ability of parents to work all depend on the essential childcare workforce. Canada's families and economy can't thrive unless ECEs do.

[Monica Lysack](#) is professor of Early Childhood Education at Sheridan College and former special adviser to the Ontario Minister responsible for Early Years and Child Care and the Status of Women.

**Keywords:** [CHILDCARE](#), [EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS](#), [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Lysack, M. (2021, May 20). [National childcare system must support childcare workers](#). First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Lysack's article "National childcare system must support childcare workers":**



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# 5d. "How will post-secondary education change in the next two years?"

## How will post-secondary education change in the next two years?

First Policy Response, AUGUST 4, 2020 | IN [CHILDREN, YOUTH + EDUCATION](#) | BY [VARIOUS CONTRIBUTORS](#)

Canadian colleges and universities are still coping with the fallout of COVID-19, which forced them to adapt mid-semester to online learning models and rapidly develop new plans for the school year that starts next month. We asked a variety of experts — including administrators, advocates, faculty and policy specialists — to look ahead to how the changes to the sector will play out over a longer timeline. We sent them all the same question: “*How will post-secondary education be different two years from now as a result of COVID-19?*” Thirteen of their answers are below.

This is the second of two compilations from First Policy Response on the topic of post-secondary education. You can find the first one [here](#).

[Paul Davidson: Top issues for universities include upskilling, equity and international students](#)

[André Côté: Higher education sector must respond to changing business model and student needs](#)

[Mitchell Davidson: More mid-career students will need skills training and credentials](#)

[Dana Stephenson: Post-pandemic labour market will require on-demand learning and soft-skills training](#)

[Duane McNair: Colleges can use pandemic experience to become more flexible](#)

[Gladys Okine-Ahovi: COVID-19 has shown that post-secondary institutions need to reach more vulnerable youth](#)

[Jen Laliberte: Remote learning might help remote Indigenous communities – but they need support first](#)

[Philippe LeBel: Governments should step up to improve access to online education](#)

[Colin Furness: Classrooms and residences need contagion-resistant redesigns](#)

[Philip Oreopoulos: Advantages of on-campus education may be limited to those who can afford it](#)

[Julia Pereira: It's time to rethink work-integrated education for a remote-learning world](#)

[Hilary Hagar: Students need new alternatives to develop marketable skills](#)

[Helen Tewolde: New approaches to education must focus on student well-being](#)

—

Top issues for universities include upskilling, equity and international students

## [Paul Davidson](#) – President, Universities Canada

Two years from now, we can expect to see more robust and more sophisticated use of online education. This will be coupled with a recognition of the increased value of face-to-face instruction and campus life.

Universities will also draw on the lessons of moving online to be able to increase offerings in the upskilling and reskilling space to meet the needs of those displaced by the pandemic.

There will be continued attention to equity, diversity and inclusion to help universities “build back better,” including attention to those students most seriously impacted by COVID-19. While “we are all in this together,” the impacts of the pandemic have illustrated long-standing inequities.

There is a potential for international students to become even more important to Canada’s higher education ecosystem, drawing on how Canada distinguished itself from competitor countries. We anticipate a period to recover existing markets and also continue to diversify source countries.

There is also a recognition that the fiscal capacity of provinces will be significantly constrained, and that there is a risk post-secondary education will once again be pitted against other priorities such as childcare, health care and long-term care.

Higher education sector must respond to changing business model and student needs

### **André Côté – Public affairs consultant, former advisor to the Ontario minister for higher education and employment services**

Higher ed institutions were already facing headwinds before the COVID-19 crisis: Limited growth in domestic enrolments. Flat, falling and, in some cases, increasingly performance-based provincial operating grants. Students and employers questioning job readiness at graduation. Now, the crisis is catalyzing more existential challenges to the pre-COVID “business model” – massively disrupting the experience for [two million students](#), closing borders on [international students](#), and requiring large-scale operational restructuring. How institutions (and governments) address these challenges will impact how post-secondary education looks in 24 months.

Still, as important public trusts, there's a bigger test for PSE institutions: how they adapt to the urgent needs of Canadian learners and workers sideswiped by this crisis. The scale of disruption in the Canadian economy and job market is unprecedented. The job losses and hardship have been heavily concentrated: among low-wage and precarious workers, women, students and younger workers, immigrants, and hard-hit sectors like retail, hospitality and tourism. The damage to certain industries will take years to recover, if ever. Many of the jobs will never come back; many others will be profoundly changed.

Equipping these Canadians with the knowledge, skills and capabilities for re-employment will be an essential factor in the recovery – for households, for the economy and for the country. Rapidly deploying the education, (re-)training and upskilling opportunities calibrated to the demand in this new labour market will require innovation, adaptation and partnership in PSE and workforce systems – and with employers and policy-makers. It will need to happen at extraordinary speed and scale.

In a [recent piece](#) for FPR, myself and a number of co-authors from across the country took a first stab at a recovery agenda for policy-makers and post-secondary leaders. We make no claim that ours is the definitive list of needed interventions or solutions. I do believe, however, that it signals a level of urgency and boldness that we haven't yet seen from PSE in meeting this generational moment. Let's up our game.

More mid-career students will need skills training and credentials

**[Mitchell Davidson](#) – Executive Director,  
StrategyCorp Institute of Public Policy and  
Economy**

The COVID-19 pandemic will serve as a wakeup call to post-



secondary institutions by accelerating trends that were already slowly developing, primarily the need to tailor post-secondary education to the employment market. First, post-secondary institutions will likely see an influx of mid-career workers returning, particularly at the college level. This will force the adoption of programs that speak to employers' needs while understanding students' time and monetary limitations. Mid-career students have mortgages, bills to pay and families to feed. Therefore, they need quicker programming without the electives and filler that other younger students may desire. A move to micro-credential programming is both needed and necessary.

[Eighteen percent](#) of college students already have university degrees, meaning that students are voting with their feet in order to secure skills for employment. Universities would do well to recognize this trend and accelerate their plans to become employment- and skill-centric. That means further distancing themselves from restrictive faculty practices like tenure and developing new courses and fields outside of the social studies. The efficacy of a university degree fades when there are more applicants for fewer jobs (ie. in a recession) and differentiating skills will become more important than ever. Post-secondary institutions will need to recognize employers need both hard and soft skills and adapt their programming accordingly.

Post-pandemic labour market will require on-demand learning and soft-skills training

## [Dana Stephenson](#) – CEO and co-founder, Riipen

I think post-secondary education will expand its offerings beyond what we see today. Continuing Education was already one of the fastest-growing demographics for post-secondary schools. As a result of COVID-19 and its impact on unemployment rates, many

people will be looking to make career changes and develop skills that are more aligned with the workplaces we have today. In a challenging labour market, people will be looking for ways to become more competitive, and furthering their education has always been a great pathway for this. I believe post-secondary schools have a massive opportunity in the mid-career reskilling and upskilling space but these learners require a different type of flexibility. As the sector adapts, I think we will see more modular and on-demand learning that enables students to access the skills they need when they need them. We will also see an increase in micro-credentialling, giving people the ability to stack their educational qualifications based on their unique backgrounds and future plans.

We will see students of all ages start to demand more career readiness skills and human skills training from post-secondary institutions. COVID-19 changed the way employers value skills like adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork and communication. We were already seeing a shift in post-secondary education to providing more of this type of training, and I think post-pandemic, this will become more important than ever.

Lastly, I think we will see a growing demand for online education. Although many learners have found that online classes take away from the on-campus experience, others have seen that it gives them the flexibility to study from anywhere and at any time. This pandemic forced all of us to become more comfortable interacting in a virtual world, and with improvements to remote learning, I believe that many students will prefer this option in the future.

Colleges can use pandemic experience to become more flexible

## Duane McNair – Acting President, Algonquin College

COVID-19 has already caused a transformative shift in post-secondary education. Remote learning has altered the relationships students and employees have with their institution. Colleges and universities were pushed into transformative change – almost overnight – once campuses were closed in March and their winter terms moved entirely online. We were challenged to try new things in order to best meet the needs of our learners and employees remotely.

At Algonquin College, we rapidly adapted our programs, courses, instructional approaches, academic-support strategies and supports in order to deliver a high-quality remote experience. This meant experimenting, discovering new approaches, and establishing new best practices that could stay with us short-, medium- and long-term. This entire process accelerated Algonquin College's work to enhance and personalize our learners' college experience and give our students maximum flexibility – be that in a physical or a digital space.

For example, we had to come up with unique ways to deliver the majority of our student support services, campus services and events virtually. Even when things become somewhat normalized again, and the majority of the College community returns to campus, many of the lessons learned during the pandemic will potentially allow for more flexible delivery of some college experiences and services.

Looking to the future, Algonquin College will continue to create an environment that responds to individual learners – meeting them when, where and how they wish to achieve their educational goals.

Personalization, flexibility and innovation will remain foundational to our goals – both inside and outside the classroom – as we adapt to new realities post-COVID-19. The pandemic has

proven that institutions have the ability to quickly make wide-scale and far-reaching changes. Those are truly valuable lessons; they could allow for the next two years to be a dynamic period of experimentation, reinvention and creativity in the field of post-secondary education.

COVID-19 has shown that post-secondary institutions need to reach more vulnerable youth

## **Gladys Okine-Ahovi – Executive Lead, Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity**

Academia is not typically known to be nimble, but COVID-19 has pushed post-secondary education far beyond its comfort zone of bricks and mortar and opened a door to tremendous opportunities for allyship and championship for stronger and more resilient communities across Canada.

The pandemic has exacerbated inequities and inefficiencies that have long challenged Canada's post-secondary system to be one that leaves no one behind. Institutions will be held to account to ensure learning is accessible, affordable and provided in culturally safe and respectful environments.

Offerings will be dynamic and competitive on a global scale, as the pandemic has thrust learners into a space where they can access education from around the world through their phones and tablets. It must have creativity, collaboration and adaptability as its guiding principles. These soft and evergreen skills are vital for students, formally (in curriculum, regardless of field) and informally (through the student experience).

Post-secondary institutions will be a lifeline for young people, extending their reach into more remote/rural communities to reach those who are further away from traditional learning and training environments. COVID has shown us how quickly and easily

large segments of our population can be separated from the workforce. Two years from now, they should have established pathways to bring vulnerable youth into the fold so that they, too, can gain the soft skills that enable them to pivot in an ever-changing world of work — skills that help level the playing field. Fast change is possible. COVID has opened the door.

Remote learning might help remote Indigenous communities — but they need support first

### [Jen Laliberte](#) – eleV Coordinator, First Nations Initiatives, Yukon University

The shift to the virtual realm prompted by COVID-19 doesn't have a defined end date. There is no certainty in planning for a future beyond COVID-19, as we are still in the early stages of this pandemic, and timelines for vaccines and herd immunity are unknown. This could mean the “new normal” of online meetings, classes and lecture continues well past this semester, and perhaps even well beyond two years.

As institutions, post-secondary and otherwise, move to adapt and innovate programs and services, new investments in technology and infrastructure will also shape the path moving forward. Online delivery means students in rural or remote locations can potentially access the same programs and services as their counterparts in urban centres, as long as the technology to support them is available. This could have profound impacts on smaller Indigenous communities being able to retain more young people, and help students pursue their educational goals without leaving their families, communities and cultural connections.

But there are barriers to online learning as well, so while this is a moment of opportunity, it is not without challenges in implementation and delivery. Ideally, in two years, there will be

more broad acceptance of the necessity for internet and technology access for all students, and government and institutional support to make that happen.

The abrupt impact of COVID has demonstrated that it is possible for institutions to show incredible flexibility and innovation. This provides a path for the future, where options are diverse and students can be supported to learn in ways that work best for their communities, nations, families and selves. New partnerships can also be forged to work collaboratively toward common vision and goals. In Yukon, self-governing First Nations are directing education in innovative ways, creating opportunities for post-secondary connections and possibilities. Though we may not know what learning models and platforms will be available two years from now, we can be dedicated to continued adaptation and responsiveness. Post-secondary institutions should always be learning, too.

Governments should step up to improve access to online education

## **Philippe LeBel – Policy and Research Analyst, Canadian Alliance of Students Associations**

The main change COVID-19 will have on the post-secondary education community will be that most people who had not tried remote teaching before will now have experienced online learning. Hopefully, if everyone is able to properly prepare for the upcoming fall semester, it will be a good experience for most people.

We see a similar phenomenon happening in the workforce. Recent studies have revealed that many companies are planning to have more full-time remote employees, even after the end of the crisis. And employers, like employees, seem to find advantages to working remotely.

In the PSE community, we will surely see a similar tendency for

remote learning. For different reasons, students, educators and administrators may enjoy this new way of teaching. It will be important for policy-makers to take this into consideration. Many tools can be provided by all governments to improve access to PSE. From grants to accessible educational material, not to mention universal high-speed internet access, the PSE policy-makers of today will have to get the country ready for tomorrow.

Classrooms and residences need contagion-resistant redesigns

## **Colin Furness – Assistant Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health**

I'm hoping that in two years, school will look nearly the same as it did before COVID-19. Everything we are discovering about online learning tells us that it is not great. Because I have studied the intersection of people and technology, I already knew that, but it has not been a widely held view – even at the venerable Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, there has been a remarkable (and dismaying) embrace of technology in learning because it is assumed to represent an improvement.

It is my belief (or at least my hope) that the discourse around the benefits of remote learning will change to recognize that learning is a social process, and it's social in a way that can't be replicated adequately on a computer screen. Physical campuses with physical classrooms and labs and social interaction form the best environment for learning. Universities already know how to do that reasonably well.

I think (or at least hope) that we will see a shift in how we design new buildings, classrooms and workspaces to be resilient to contagion – smaller crowds and better ventilation. Residences also form a significant piece of post-secondary education for many students, and they need to be rethought, too – private bathrooms,

separate entrances and the ability to modulate from large dining halls when needed. This kind of redesign will only happen in the long run, but I'm hopeful that what we have experienced will embed a new wisdom among architects and institutions about what constitutes smart design, with a new emphasis on resilience and small gatherings, instead of reliance on technology and large classes.

Advantages of on-campus education may be limited to those who can afford it

## Philip Oreopoulos – Professor of Economics and Public Policy, University of Toronto

Online learning offers potential advantages. For example, I can record videos of lectures that, with the help of a pause button, come across to the student as fluid and to the point. Students can watch these videos and we can spend our classroom time focused on active dialogue, answering questions and working through problems. We save in commute time, and the chat box seems to generate more active participation than a large class.

Technology for facilitating online is booming, and the pandemic has produced an active discussion about how best to learn in a virtual environment. After iterating and with discussion and research, we are bound to become very good at providing high-quality lectures and smoothly run virtual classrooms.

And yet, there is something about online learning that seems to drain student motivation and interest in a way that in-person education does not. Most students prefer to have a routine to their learning that includes face-to-face interactions with instructors and classmates. Two experimental studies [both revealed](#) that students taking a class online did significantly worse on the final exam than students taking the same class in person. Attendance



and participation rates were appreciatively higher in the face-to-face case. Students seem to find it difficult to motivate themselves without social interaction.

Online learning is on order of magnitudes cheaper to provide than face-to-face. Finding ways to motivate students to focus and self-learn while using online learning could provide better instruction and facilitate greater learning. I worry, however, that a two-tier system could arise from the pandemic: those who can afford it will prefer on-campus and in-person learning because of the education and learning experiences gained from outside the classroom, but also for its consumption value. Those who cannot may end up pursuing a second system of high-quality online learning that offers higher education at a vastly lower cost. If employers come to value these programs, then perhaps this second tier will still generate high returns and create greater access. But it may also increase inequality.

It's time to rethink work-integrated education for a remote-learning world

## [Julia Pereira](#) – President, Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

We anticipate that within two years, online learning will be more prevalent than it was prior to COVID-19. This has the potential to be a positive shift that enhances the accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education across the province, creating more opportunities to diversify learning and prepare students for a shift to an increasingly online workforce. However, the benefits of increased online learning cannot be realized without a strong foundation to support quality of and access to online learning. By creating this foundation, we can ensure that post-secondary institutions can offer affordable, accessible, high-quality online

learning two years from now. This will require quality assurance standards and review mechanisms to guide the expansion of online learning. To improve access, we also need to expand and strengthen internet and broadband connectivity, particularly for students in rural and remote communities.

Furthermore, this pandemic has forced employers and institutions to rethink work-integrated learning opportunities such as co-op placements or practicums. Throughout COVID-19, these opportunities have been offered through alternative delivery methods that still provided students with an opportunity to engage in meaningful work. These solutions have supported innovative and enhanced ways of learning, and moving forward, they can ensure that students in remote or rural areas are still able to pursue work-integrated learning. To support these opportunities, the provincial government should re-invest \$68 million in the Career Ready Fund over three years to incentivize employers to create more job opportunities for students and recent graduates.

Students need new alternatives to develop marketable skills

## **Hilary Hagar – Policy analyst, Northern Policy Institute**

Due to COVID-19, higher education is likely to continue online in the coming years. While this allows learners to complete their studies remotely, some of the benefits students get from post-secondary learning will be lost.

For most new graduates to get work in their fields, they need more than just their degree or diploma. The soft skills graduates learn from study abroad experiences, experiential learning and leadership in extracurriculars, for example, all go a long way in job competition.

The heightened hurdles for students to gain work experience

this summer and the lack of opportunities to develop soft skills in post-secondary settings could mean new graduates will have fewer marketable skills, and will suffer in the labour market.

Of course, there was a federal [plan](#) to address summer experience for students. While the Canada Student Service Grant (CSSG) has become associated with [controversy](#), it's students that are disadvantaged. As we enter the last month of summer break, there does not appear to be a solution.

Post-secondary leaders should consider ways to engage students beyond Zoom classes. Supporting students' remote co-ops and offering remote work-integrated learning opportunities are potential options. Perhaps non-profits that could have benefitted from CSSG volunteers could partner with education institutions so students can receive course credits to volunteer during the semester. The federal funds allocated to the CSSG could be directed to post-secondary institutions to help facilitate these opportunities and pay students for their contributions. Not only will this make institutions more competitive, students will benefit post-graduation.

New approaches to education must focus on student well-being

## [Helen Tewelde](#) – Director of Policy and Programs, The Law Foundation of Ontario

It was abundantly clear even before the pandemic that the workforce — and the education, skill development and training that learners require for it — was rapidly changing. The pandemic has simply necessitated a faster response to this reality.

In two years, public policy related to post-secondary education will have likely advanced to responding more directly, and with greater coordination, to the role of post-secondary education in a world of increasingly precarious and unpredictable work. Post-

secondary actors will thus have to define a high-quality education and training experience through the lens of overall well-being. It is no longer about tracking numbers, like how many complete a course or graduate, but about the *significance* of such milestones on the life chances of all learners.

Government and post-secondary institutions will have developed and adapted to newly emerging performance indicators related to: student learning and experience; skill development, particularly digital skills (and this is for everyone — administrators, students and faculty alike); the use of instructional design tools and techniques to create easy-to-navigate online formats; and the availability and applicability of resources such as disability and mental health supports, as well as more mainstream services for faculty and students.

Quality through well-being will be defined by the extent to which faculty, with the support of administrators, are able to convey the significance of whatever is being taught and learned: connecting it in a relevant way to personal life-skill development and to work opportunities that sustain livelihoods. This does not mean a loss of learning in the humanities and social science, just that creativity is the name of the game. Leveraging the skills and experiences of students themselves, who are mostly “digital natives” and have a fresh and unique vantage point, will support in the development of new approaches.

Significant regional, socioeconomic and individual-level differences in digital access and opportunity will only be exacerbated post-pandemic. New approaches for post-secondary systems to sensitively respond to these variations will hopefully be shared across the system to ensure an optimized quality experience and well-being for all.

[Various Contributors](#)

**Keywords:** [FPR ORIGINAL](#)

**Citation:** Davidson, P., Côté, A., Davidson, M., Stephenson, D., McNair, D., Okine-Ahovi, G., Laliberte, J., LeBel, P., Furness, C.,

Oreopoulos, P., Pereira, J., Hagar, H., Tewolde, H. (2020, August 4). [How will post-secondary education change in the next two years?](#) First Policy Response.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Davidson et al.'s article "How will post-secondary education change in the next two years?"<sup>5d</sup>:**



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**Please click on the photo below to learn more about the history of Ontario's post-secondary education system:**



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[“Mackenzie King riding with friends, University of Toronto, circa 1890-1896 / Mackenzie King à cheval, en compagnie d'amis.](#)



## 5e. Video—"An activist goes to (policy) school"

### [DIVE: Student Aid](#)

Watch "*Episode 3: An activist goes to (policy) school*"

- How the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) advocates for change
- What's it like to be a student politician? (2 minutes)
- Hear more about the influence of research on student activism (1 minute)
- What's the difference between political staff and bureaucrats? (3 minutes)
- Grants, tax credits, and the student aid context explained (1 minute)

**Citation:** DIVE: Student Aid. (2006). [Episode 3: An activist goes to \(policy\) school](#) [Video]. (7 minutes)



## 5f. Video—"Revolution in the cafeteria"

### [DIVE: Student Aid](#)

Watch "Episode 4: Revolution in the cafeteria"

- Evidence-based advocacy makes a difference (1 minute)
- Hear Deb Matthews on the inner workings of government (2 minutes)

**Citation:** DIVE: Student Aid. (2006). [Episode 4: Revolution in the cafeteria](#) [Video]. (3 minutes)

# 5g. "Indigenous and remote communities can't wait any longer for high-speed internet"

## Indigenous and remote communities can't wait any longer for high-speed internet

First Policy Response, APRIL 15, 2021 | IN [IMPLEMENTATION + GOVERNANCE](#), [TECHNOLOGY + DIGITAL POLICY](#) | BY [NOUR ABDELAAL](#) AND [SAM ANDREY](#)

Investments from telecommunication companies and governments over the past decade have sought to connect more rural and Indigenous communities to high-speed internet, but there is little progress to show for it in too many of Canada's remote communities. Amid a global pandemic that has required a shift to online work, education and social connections, quality internet connection is an [essential service](#) that communities can no longer forgo.

An effective COVID-19 response plan requires identifying gaps in Canada's connectivity strategy to better understand why [54 per cent of households outside urban centres](#) still cannot meet the CRTC's target of unlimited 50/10 Mbps internet speed. In the northern territories, [no households at all meet the CRTC target](#).

According to Indigenous Services Canada's count, there have been more than [25,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases](#) in First Nation reserves, and [more than 1,100 hospitalizations](#). Access to high-

speed internet is necessary to provide patients the efficient communication and public health tools they need.

*Canada's profit-driven market model of telecommunications is a significant impediment to fully connecting remote and Indigenous communities.*

Due to the pandemic, many First Nations have [closed their borders to visitors](#), allowing only essential workers and pandemic relief to enter. Without the right communications technology to allow them to easily access help, these communities are at increased risk of isolation and inadequate outbreak management.

To explore these realities, the Ryerson Leadership Lab hosted a [virtual workshop](#) last month featuring representatives from community, government and industry to discuss what sustains connectivity gaps in Indigenous communities and remote areas. The discussion was the first in the [Overcoming Digital Divides Workshop Series](#), a six-part public series to explore how Canada can pave a clearer path toward meaningful digital inclusion. The discussion raised several policy considerations that should inform Canada's pandemic response and connectivity strategy:

## Lack of digital infrastructure

Canada's profit-driven market model of telecommunications is a significant impediment to fully connecting remote and Indigenous communities: returns on investment for expanding internet infrastructure to remote areas with low population densities aren't high enough to incentivize service providers to take on

transformative infrastructure projects, according to Denise Williams, CEO of the First Nations Technology Council.

This places a greater burden on government initiatives. The federal government has announced its \$1.75 billion [Universal Broadband Fund](#) and provinces have committed [approximately \\$1.7 billion](#) since 2018. This influx of public funds has enabled some projects to expand internet connectivity to remote communities, according to Susan Stanford, British Columbia's Assistant Deputy Minister for connectivity, and Shazia Sobani, VP of customer network implementation for Telus.

While these initiatives are a step in the right direction, many projects are still in progress, are poorly coordinated, do not always address last-mile connectivity (the connection between the main network and an individual user's home), and give undue consideration to costs and profits rather than the projects' real long-term value. For example, a project is under way in British Columbia to connect communities along the coast using undersea fibre optic cables; but for non-coastal communities, building out this kind of digital infrastructure over land would be cost prohibitive and therefore less likely to go ahead, according to Stanford.

*Canada's profit-driven market model of telecommunications is a significant impediment to fully connecting remote and Indigenous communities.*

## Inclusion of Indigenous voices and upskilling

Expanding access to digital infrastructure and ensuring remote connectivity are the first steps to creating an effective pandemic response strategy. However, [full digital inclusion](#) requires much more than just infrastructure. The meaningful inclusion of Indigenous voices as equal and knowledgeable partners, capable of determining their own vision and managing their own community

infrastructure, is just as important. Upskilling programs can provide Indigenous people with the right tools to advocate for advanced community infrastructure networks, and to keep using these state-of-the-art technologies even after the pandemic.

Indigenous peoples' lived experiences also paint an important picture for policy-makers and service providers to understand. Jennifer Manitowabi is a mother of three and the community lead at Connected North, a not-for-profit connecting northern remote Indigenous communities to educators in the south. As a resident of Lac Seul First Nation in Ontario, she described having to drive through underdeveloped roads without any signage and undertake multiple jobs at once to provide basic educational programming for Indigenous students with minimal access to technology or devices.

Moreover, many Indigenous groups that are in desperate need of digital infrastructure investment spend an inordinate amount of time working on funding applications, only to be rejected because they do not measure up to requests written by experts from better-served communities, Manitowabi said. Public investments to expand internet access will not reach their full potential if smaller service providers and Indigenous communities cannot access these funds for community-based projects, according to Williams.

## Three-level coordination of partnerships: Public, private and community

Providing sufficient access to quality internet requires high-level coordination between public, private and Indigenous stakeholders. A single group is not enough to create the necessary momentum for change. Canada's national broadband strategy is missing a robust and coordinated policy and regulatory framework that upholds Indigenous peoples' rights to equal and affordable internet access and integrates technology-informed, educated Indigenous voices, Williams said. For example, the potential for low-Earth orbit

satellites to expand internet access is contingent on the ability of, a) public initiatives to foster competition between service providers; b) industry to successfully adapt to disruptive technologies at affordable prices; and c) local communities to understand how this new technology can be used or how it can complement existing services.

Before digital infrastructure can be built, multiple stepping stones must be in place to get the right infrastructure into the areas where it's most needed. Last-mile initiatives, transportation development and capacity-building must first be coordinated across service providers and other actors, Stanford said. The complexity of addressing connectivity in a vast and geographically diverse country such as Canada also requires us to think about a multi-jurisdictional approach to connectivity: large and small service providers must develop initiatives with an eye to empowering and meeting the needs of their host communities. This involves not only adding more funds into our current system, but also re-imagining what is possible, including what a system that is multi-layered, cooperative and inclusive of all stakeholder needs could look like.

A comprehensive coordination strategy is particularly urgent for Indigenous communities during the pandemic because inadequate housing, pre-existing health conditions and geographic isolation can significantly [aggravate risks associated with COVID-19](#). Therefore, government responses must build the technical capacity of Indigenous communities to ensure access to digital services, reliable online communication networks and public health resources in the long term. If not, we will fall short of addressing the most fundamental needs of those most at risk.

## Data sovereignty

Meaningful, transformative strategies to expand internet access also require that Indigenous communities can control their own

data. Data sovereignty is a key priority for Indigenous people looking to create and use networks that accurately reflect their communities' unique needs and vision. How data from Indigenous communities will be used and commodified is often overlooked in policy discussions, with stakeholders prioritizing the need to build digital infrastructure as quickly as possible. Much of the frustration comes from the fact that Indigenous communities' information is given to the government for reporting purposes rather than helping to build self-determined Indigenous nations that can control the actual impact of these technologies, Williams said. Including Indigenous people in conversations around expanding high-speed internet access requires upholding the First Nation principles of [ownership, control, access and possession \(OCAP\)](#).

Expanding high-speed internet access to Indigenous and remote communities requires an evidence-informed approach that combines infrastructure investment, upskilling for Indigenous people through educational programming, and a real commitment to First Nations' ownership and control of data and technology. The pandemic has shown us why access to the internet is crucial, and policy-makers must take seriously Indigenous peoples' call for change amid this crisis — as well as their vision of what community-based infrastructure should look like post-pandemic.

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**Keywords:** Indigenous communities, Remote communities, Digital divide, High-speed internet

**Citation:** Abdelaal, N., & Andrey, S. (2021, April 15). [Indigenous and remote communities can't wait any longer for high-speed internet](#). *First Policy Response*.

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## Quiz

### Quiz on Abdelaal & Andrey's article "Indigenous and remote communities can't wait any longer for high-speed internet":



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# 5h. "How universities can support Indigenous online learners in the COVID-19 pandemic"

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, please click the link below to access the suggested content.

## [How universities can support Indigenous online learners in the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

*The Conversation*, February 22, 2021, Josephine Auger & Janelle Marie Baker

**Keywords:** Education, Post-secondary education, Indigenous students, COVID-19, *The Conversation*

**Citation:** Auger, J., & Baker J. M. (2021, February 22). [How universities can support Indigenous online learners in the COVID-19 pandemic](#). *The Conversation*.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Auger and Baker's article "How universities can support Indigenous online learners in the COVID-19 pandemic":**



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# 5i. "'Land-based' learning online? How one U of T professor reimagined a ground-breaking course amid COVID-19"

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['Land-based' learning online? How one U of T professor reimagined a ground-breaking course amid COVID-19](#)

U of T News, September 9, 2020, Heidi Singer

**Keywords:** Education, Post-secondary education, Indigenous students, COVID-19, Online learning, U of T news

**Citation:** Singer, H. (2020, September 9). ['Land-based' learning online? How one U of T professor reimagined a ground-breaking course amid COVID-19](#). U of T News.

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## Quiz

**Quiz on Singer's article "‘Land-based’ learning online? How one U of T professor reimagined a ground-breaking course amid COVID-19":**



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# Policy Brief Assessment

Based on the articles above from *First Policy Response*, please engage in the following assessments to test your learning.

## **Policy Brief:**

You are a policy analyst for the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#). COVID-19 caused a great deal of disruption across Ontario's diverse educational landscape. K-20 educators and students dealt with an unsustainable amount of stress and fatigue as a result of the rapid transition to online learning.

Write a short policy brief (750 – 1,500 words in length) that focuses on Ontario's education system. Choose either the K-12 or post-secondary education sector, not both. It will be presented to the Ontario Minister of Education. You have a choice of two possible briefs:

1. Describe your top three educational policy recommendations to improve online learning in the province with a special focus on helping vulnerable communities.
2. It is essential that the needs of students, teachers, and staff are prioritized to ensure sustained in-person school attendance moving forward. It is fall 2021 and the government is hoping to resume in-person learning. To prepare for the re-opening of schools articulate three policy recommendations to create a sustainable plan and improved learning experience.



# FINAL PAPER

## Final Paper

Having completed each module, write a 1,000 – 1,500 worded expository essay based on two of the twelve topics below. Your Final Paper must analyze one level of governance (e.g., federal, provincial, or municipal) or an institution that has been active in some aspect of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., a corporation, advocacy group, or non-profit) in relation to your chosen topics.

### Module 1. Pandemic Control Basics:

1a. **Mask mandates:** How can policy makers and health care advocates promote sustainable mask mandate policies to control future COVID-19 outbreaks? In short, how do we perpetuate masking as a long-term pandemic control measure without overly burdening citizens who are already fatigued from life under COVID-19?

1b. **Future vaccine doses:** As COVID-19's daily impact decreases and life improves over the course of the pandemic, how can policy makers ensure continued high rates of vaccination booster shots in the long-term as well as an equitable distribution of shots across Ontario?

### Module 2. Health:

2a. **Transmission and case management:** Researchers combine traditional data collection tools and scenario modeling to identify new COVID-19 threats. What lessons have emerged from planning across government and health authorities to produce stronger COVID-19 protocols and responses during the pandemic?

2b. **COVID-19's social costs:** The pandemic has created massive social impacts, increasing vulnerabilities and inequalities across Ontario. How can policy makers and social actors reshape post-crisis society by promoting inclusive and sustainable governance models that also improve health outcomes?

### **Module 3. Economy:**

3a. **Gendered aspects of the pandemic:** COVID-19 worsened gender disparities in the labour market. How can policy makers and gender equality groups advocate for more inclusive labour policies that will improve gender equality outcomes in the Ontario labour force?

3b. **Income support:** The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was received positively and helped a broad range of Canadians stay financially afloat. What lessons emerged from the pandemic to guide future income supports for unexpected disruptive events like another pandemic?

### **Module 4. Education:**

4a. **Digital divide in education:** COVID-19's impact clearly revealed how access to online resources differed greatly depending on various student demographics (e.g., income level, race, rural vs. urban settings, etc.). How can policy makers narrow the worst aspects of the digital divide and promote more equitable educational outcomes?

4b. **Online, hybrid, and face-to-face education:** Many students across the K-20 landscape were forced to learn online for over a year. What lessons from the pandemic can guide future education delivery. Consider whether the future of Ontario education should be online, hybrid, face-to-face, or some combination of all three?

### **Module 5. Indigenous Perspectives:**

5a. **Governmental support during the pandemic and beyond:** How can policy makers, Indigenous peoples, and human rights groups advocate to improve economic, educational, and healthcare outcomes for Indigenous communities?

5b. **Territorial sovereignty:** What lessons from the pandemic can inform future policies regarding Indigenous territorial sovereignty? In short, what emergency power should Indigenous communities

have in policing their own territorial borders during acute situations like a pandemic?



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