

Public Speeches trends/topics

Week of June 8th

Trends

- **Community transmission** as being a troubling spot , being much harder to manage as compared to outbreaks
 - Dr. Tam, June 8th
- **As measures lift, testing increases:** laboratories across the country are increasing their testing capacity, equipment and supplies to keep the epidemic under control. Aiming for 10% or below of lab tests to come back positive
 - Dr.Tam, June 9th

Topics

- **On protests as a harm reduction approach:** it is important to look at the balance on the situation, Canadians have a right to protest against racism. Physical distancing is encouraged, if not possible, mask wearing is encouraged. Those who participated should self-monitor and wait around a week before getting testing if they feel they have symptoms.
 - Dr.Tam, June 8th
- **Stigma is a public health issue (discrimination, racism, sexism, etc):** impacts access to resources that promote good health and can lead to direct negative effects on health.
 - Dr.Tam, June 8th
- **Quarantining for travellers who tested negative:** clarification that individuals must quarantine for two weeks after coming abroad even if they test negative for COVID.
 - Dr.Tam, June 8th
- **Asymptomatic transmission (WHO guidelines):** studies have shown that transmission from asymptomatic people can occur, as the situation evolves in terms of information, still recommend people wear masks when they cannot physically distance.
 - Dr.Tam, June 9th
- **Surgeries resuming:** P/Ts resuming elective surgeries, for those anxiously waiting to resume procedures. This has been a top priority for governments, we must also continue to encourage blood donations. As elective procedures resume there is a critical need for blood donations.
 - Dr.Tam, June 11th
- **Testing of TFW:** focus on populations that have increased mixing, reducing any risk from the importation of cases. Active discussion on how to provide testing more widely in the agricultural section for those not recognizing symptoms, living in congregated settings, etc. Stigma and discrimination has to be looked at carefully, those who are being tested must be supported.
 - Dr.Tam, June 11th

Week of June 15th

Trends

- **Recovery:** over 60% of all cases are recovered, this is a sign that the epidemic has slowed enough that the new cases are no longer overtaking those coming off the long road to recovery. However, there is no room for complacency and we need to keep public health measures, including wearing a non-medical masks in areas where COVID is active and you can't keep 2m distance. (Dr.Tam, June 16th)
 - Younger people are going outside and may not be respecting these measures, even if you feel you are young and invincible, this does not mean that you are immune. (Dr.Tam, June 15th)
 - Everyone is moving ahead with a reopening founded upon the principles that everyone has agreed to which is to take extremely slow and cautious approach.
 - But some of the key agreed upon principles upon we work is first of all the ability to be able to detect, test cases, trace the contacts rapidly isolation and quarantine as well as we heard keeping up with the supplies for the healthcare system, human resource as well as the public health capacity. (Dr.Tam, June 17th)

Topics

- **New mental wellness campaign: Take That Step:** Given the level of uncertainty and changes in our lives over these past months, a wide range of emotions is to be expected. Take that Step was launched this week by the Wellness Together Canada portal. The government funds this portal to offer a wide range of resources from information and self-assessment tools to the opportunity to chat with peer support workers and other mental health professionals. Resources are available free of charge, 24/7. (Dr.Tam, June 17th)
- **Immunity Task Force:** one of the primary objectives is to take representative samples to look at the potential prevalence of COVID in Canada, collaborating with Canadian Blood Services and HEMA Quebec and accumulated tens of thousands of samples. Procurement of serological tests is rapidly being completed. (Dr.Tam June 17th)
- **Family/Gender based violence:** Staying home can increase this type of violence. There are concerns of increases during these times, some jurisdictions have observed increases in reports of domestic violence, calls to crises support lines. Services include: sheltersafe.ca, young people can call the Kids help phone. PHAC has supported the development of evidence based guidance to help social workers respond to family violence. (Dr.Tam, June 15th).
- **Drug Overdoses:** In parallel with the COVID-19 pandemic, many communities across the country continue to struggle with historic rates of drug overdose deaths and substance use related harms. The number of deaths reported in the last two quarters of 2019 were the lowest they have been since 2016 but sadly partners across Canada informed that overdoses and fatalities are on the rise again. (Dr.Tam, June 18th)
 - Stigma stops people from reaching out and using drugs alone is a major risk factor for experiencing a fatal overdose. People who use drugs may be feeling more isolated as a result of the physical distancing measures to control COVID-19

- Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada are also increasing supports for people who use drugs. We are focused on increasing access to treatment and harm reduction services and reducing stigma in health systems, making it easier for people to access the medications they need, including as a safer alternative to highly toxic street drug supply.

Week of June 22

Trends

Vulnerabilities: Throughout this pandemic we have seen COVID-19 disproportionately affect those with existing social and health disparities. Critically our response to the pandemic has revealed failures in how we care for older Canadians. The impact on older adults living in congregate settings has often been severe and tragic.

- While we have made progress in reducing outbreaks in these settings it is vital that we accelerate our efforts to better support our elders

Topics

Substance and Alcohol Use: A recent survey conducted by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction found 1 in 4 respondents aged 35 to 53 years and 1 in 5 aged 18 to 34 years had increased their alcohol use during the pandemic.

- The lack of a regular schedule, stress and boredom were the most common reasons cited among correspondents for increased drinking. Even more concerning are the results published last week by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health where more than 1 in 4 respondents aged 15 to 59 years indicated they had engaged in binge drinking during the past 7 days.
- Tips for taking care of your mental and physical health on the [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus) website or visit wellness together Canada online for a range of mental health and substance use supports at no cost.

Contact Tracing: Public health follow-up needs to continue for weeks until people and their contacts no longer pose a risk for spread to others. The success of case finding and contact tracing is in a speed and completeness with which it is done. The less cases and the fewer contacts per case, the faster and more completely new fires can be extinguished.

- COVID-19 case investigation involves local public health experts identifying cases through laboratory testing and conducted exposure investigations to understand how people become infected and who they may have passed infection to. Contact tracing comes next and involves tracking down every person who may have been exposed to the case, either directly through close contact or indirectly in a shared space, like a home or workplace.

Week of June 28th

Trends

- **Hot Spots:** Ontario/Quebec still accounting for the vast majority of cases in Canada (86%) with hot spots being around Toronto and Montreal
- **Continuous Decrease in Cases:** In order for the epidemic to die out, the R_t (reproduction number) needs to remain consistently below 1 meaning on average each new case infects less than one other person. Nationally, the R_t for Canada has been below 1 for more than 8 weeks.

Topics

- **Socio-Economic vulnerabilities:**
 - COVID-19 has exploited social and economic vulnerabilities and inequalities across Canadian society taking hold in settings and among communities that experience overcrowding, lower incomes and health disparities. Long term care and assisted living homes have been hit the hardest with over 1,000 separate outbreaks accounting for about 20% of confirmed cases and tragically over 80% of all deaths.
 - Outbreaks in other congregate living and work settings are also driving case counts in some provinces. These settings include hospitals, correctional facilities, shelters and workplaces including Canada's largest outbreak linked to a meat processing plant.