

Report to the House of Assembly on the
COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Contents

Background	7
About COVID-19	7
Symptoms	7
Spread	7
Risks	8
Prevention	8
Initial Chronology of COVID-19 in the World, Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador	8
Declaration of Public Health Emergency	9
Special Measures Orders	10
Overview of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Pandemic Response	11
Scope	13
Chapter 1: Wild Type (March to December 2020)	14
Initial Response	14
Funeral Home Cluster	15
Health Care Facilities	16
Re-Opening and the Alert Level System	17
Travel Restrictions	20
Declaration Form Exemptions	22
Self-Isolation Exemptions	22
Updated Measures at the Labrador-Québec Border	23
Atlantic Bubble	24
Rotational Worker Modified Isolation Orders	24
Measures in Response to the Second Wave	25
Chapter 2: Alpha (December 2020 to April 2021)	28
Epidemiology in the World, Canada and NL	28
Availability of COVID-19 Vaccines	29
Response Measures	30
Restrictions for St. John’s Metro	30
Province-wide Restrictions	31
Restrictions for Rotational Workers	32
Relaxation of Response Measures	33
South West Coast Outbreak	35

Chapter 3: Delta (April to December 2021)	36
About Delta	36
Progression of COVID-19 Vaccinations	36
Testing for Travellers	37
Spring 2021 Outbreaks	39
Central Outbreak	39
Western Outbreak	41
Together. Again. Re-Opening Plan	42
Transition	42
Step 1	43
Step 2	45
Removal of Mandatory Mask Order	47
Fall 2021 Resurgence	47
Reinstatement of Mandatory Mask Order	49
Travel Measures	49
Proof of Vaccination	50
Outbreaks	52
Updated Masking Requirements in Schools	56
Updated Gathering Restrictions	56
Updated Definition of Fully Vaccinated	57
Chapter 4: Omicron (December 2021 to March 2022)	59
About Omicron	59
Progression of COVID-19 Vaccinations	60
Availability of COVID-19 Therapeutics	61
Response Measures	61
Travel Measures	62
Change in Alert Levels	63
De-escalation of Measures	66
Travel Measures	66
Businesses and Gatherings	67
Removal of Special Measures Orders	70
Conclusion	72
Annex A: Summary Table of Special Measures Orders (SMOs)	74

[Annex B: List of Indoor Public Settings where Masks were required](#) 85

[Annex C: Together. Again. Reopening Newfoundland and Labrador](#) 87

[Annex D: Policy for Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination in Newfoundland and Labrador](#) 99

[Annex E: 2022 Reopening Plan](#) 105

Background

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2). When the virus was first identified, it was referred to as the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). The World Health Organization (WHO) later announced, in accordance with international virus and disease naming guidelines, “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” as the name of the new virus, and COVID-19 as the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2.¹

Viruses such as SARS-CoV-2 naturally mutate or change over time. Most of these mutations do not change the characteristics of the virus. However, some mutations can affect virus characteristics in a meaningful way, leading to a “variant of concern” (VOC). Changes that are most concerning affect these factors:

- How easy the virus spreads;
- How sick people get when they are infected;
- How the virus responds to vaccines and treatments; and
- How testing can detect the virus.

This report focuses on the Alpha, Delta, and Omicron variants, as these were responsible for widespread outbreaks in Newfoundland and Labrador. Other VOCs identified and monitored in Canada include the Beta and Gamma variants.

Symptoms

The list of COVID-19 symptoms has evolved throughout the pandemic. At first, symptoms were mainly fever, difficulty breathing, and cough. As more was learned about the disease over the course of 2020, the list of possible symptoms grew to include runny nose, sore throat, painful swallowing, diarrhea, headache, loss of smell or taste, loss of appetite, and small red or purple spots on the hands and/or feet.

Before Omicron, the incubation period for COVID-19 (the period of time between being infected with the virus and the onset of clinical symptoms) was estimated to range from two to 14 days, with a median of four to seven days from exposure to symptom onset.² Omicron has shown to have a shorter median incubation period of two to four days.²

Spread

COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets when a person infected with the disease coughs or sneezes. Respiratory droplets can travel in the air as far as two metres. The virus can also spread through aerosols, which are tiny airborne particles that are produced when you breathe, talk, sneeze or cough. Aerosols can linger in the air or travel farther than two metres.

The virus spreads mainly through close (within approximately 2 metres) person-to-person contact. It can also spread in poorly ventilated and/or crowded indoor settings through aerosols. It is possible to

¹ [WHO - Naming the coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) and the virus that causes it](#)

² [Government of Canada - COVID-19 signs, symptoms and severity of disease: A clinician guide](#)

contract the virus by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, however the risk of this type of transmission appears to be low.³

Evidence indicates that someone who is infected but not showing symptoms can transmit the virus. This includes people who have not yet developed symptoms (pre-symptomatic), and who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic).

Risks

Certain individuals are at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. These include those who are 60 years of age and older, immunocompromised, pregnant, living with obesity, have chronic medical conditions, and those who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.⁴

Prevention

Given the modes of transmission described above, individuals can reduce the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Practicing good hygiene, including frequent handwashing, proper cough and sneeze etiquette, and avoiding touching your face;
- Frequently cleaning and disinfecting high-touch areas;
- Staying home and avoiding contact with other people when sick;
- Maintaining at least two metres of distance from other people (physical distancing);
- Keeping your number of close contacts as low as possible;
- Wearing a face mask when physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- Improving indoor ventilation and spending time outdoors where possible; and
- Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines.*

***Note:** COVID-19 vaccines were not widely available as a preventive measure until 2021.

Contact tracing is an important tool used to control the spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing is a process used by public health officials to identify and isolate cases of COVID-19, which helps stop the spread of the virus. Public health officials will do this by interviewing individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 and ask about anyone who they may have caught the illness from, and been in close contact with while they were infectious. Individuals who are identified as close contacts of a positive case are notified by Public Health.** Contacts often require testing and/or isolation.

Public notifications for possible COVID-19 exposures were issued when Public Health was not able to identify or reach all contacts directly. Individuals who were at specific locations during specified times were asked to seek COVID-19 testing.

****Note:** during the Omicron surge, cases exceeded public health capacity to complete contact tracing. Public health guidance was given to individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 to complete their own contact tracing.

Initial Chronology of COVID-19 in the World, Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador

On December 31, 2019, the WHO was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The Chinese authorities identified a new type of coronavirus

³ [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) - Science Brief: SARS-CoV-2 and Surface \(Fomite\) Transmission for Indoor Community Environments](#)

⁴ [Government of Canada - People who are at risk of more severe disease or outcomes from COVID-19](#)

(novel coronavirus, nCoV) as the causal agent. The cluster of the 41 confirmed cases were mostly handlers and frequent visitors to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market.^{5,6}

Two weeks later, on January 13, 2020, the Ministry of Public Health in Thailand reported the first imported case of lab-confirmed novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) from Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.⁷ Over the following week, the virus was identified in Japan⁸ and the Republic of Korea.⁹

In North America, the first case of 2019-nCoV was confirmed in the United States on January 21, 2020.¹⁰ Soon after, Canada confirmed its first travel-related case in Ontario on January 25, 2020.¹¹ Throughout January and February, travel-related cases of 2019-nCoV continued to be identified throughout Canada. To help quickly identify any cases in the province, on February 6, 2020, Public Health asked anyone who visited Hubei province, China in the 14 days prior to their arrival in Newfoundland and Labrador to self-isolate for 14 days.¹² People who arrived from other parts of China were instructed to monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Anyone who developed symptoms that met the travel criteria were advised to contact 811 to arrange for COVID-19 testing.

The first case of community spread was confirmed in British Columbia on March 5, 2020, which means someone was infected with the virus without having a history of travel.¹³ By March 11, 2020, the number of cases outside of China had increased 13-fold in two weeks, and the number of affected countries tripled.¹⁴ As such, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic.

In observance of spread across the country and the world, Newfoundland and Labrador introduced preparatory measures, including advising anyone returning from out-of-province travel to call 811 if they are experiencing respiratory symptoms,¹⁵ and recommending anyone who travelled in the last 14 days to avoid visiting hospitals, long-term care homes and personal care homes.¹⁶ Inevitably, Newfoundland and Labrador announced its first presumptive positive case of COVID-19 on March 14, 2020.

Declaration of Public Health Emergency

In accordance with Section 27 of the **Public Health Protection and Promotion Act (PHPPA)**, the Minister of Health and Community Services (HCS) on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), may declare a public health emergency in all or a part of the province where the Minister is satisfied that:

- A public health emergency exists; and,

⁵ [WHO Disease Outbreak News](#) – January 5, 2020

⁶ [WHO Disease Outbreak News](#) – January 12, 2020

⁷ [WHO Disease Outbreak News – January 14, 2020](#)

⁸ [WHO Disease Outbreak News](#) – January 16, 2020

⁹ [WHO Disease Outbreak News](#) – January 21, 2020

¹⁰ [CDC Press Release – January 21, 2020](#)

¹¹ [Government of Canada Statement by the Minister of Health](#) – January 25, 2020

¹² [Public Advisory](#) – February 6, 2020

¹³ [Government of British Columbia Joint Statement](#) – March 5, 2020

¹⁴ [WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19](#) – March 11, 2020

¹⁵ [Public Advisory](#) – March 6, 2020

¹⁶ [Public Advisory](#) – March 12, 2020

- The public health emergency cannot be sufficiently mitigated or remedied without the implementation of the special measures available under section 28 of the **PHPPA**.

Section 2 of the **Act** defines a public health emergency as an occurrence or imminent threat of one of the following that presents a serious risk to the health of the population:

- a communicable disease;
- a health condition;
- a novel or highly infectious agent or biological substance; or
- the presence of a chemical agent or radioactive material.

A declaration of a public health emergency expires no more than 14 days after it is made and the Minister, on the advice of the CMOH, may extend the public health emergency for 14-day periods.

On March 18, 2020, the Minister of HCS, on the advice of the CMOH, declared a public health emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While a public health emergency is in effect, the CMOH can introduce special measures authorized under section 28 of the **PHPPA** that they believe are necessary to protect the health of the population.

Special Measures Orders

Section 28 of the **PHPPA** prescribes the actions that the CMOH can take to protect the health of the population and prevent, remedy, or mitigate the effects of a public health emergency. In accordance with section 13 of the **PHPPA**, any restrictions put in place must be the least restrictive means to respond to the public health emergency. All orders were reviewed no less than once every five days while the order was in effect to ensure it was still necessary to protect the population.

Anyone subject to an order made by the CMOH could request that the CMOH reconsider the order. Individuals were able to submit a written request for reconsideration within seven days of the date the order was issued. The request for reconsideration was required to include the reasons for the request, a summary of facts relevant to the request, whether the order should be revoked or how it should be varied, and the contact information of the person making the request.

Failure to comply with an order issued under section 28 of the **PHPPA** is considered an offence for which an individual may be liable on summary conviction in accordance with section 56 of the **PHPPA**.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, monitoring compliance with Special Measures Orders was driven by public complaints. Initially, phone and email complaints were sent to the HCS' general intake lines. The Department released a Public Report Form on March 21, 2020, to provide the public with a means to report concerns about an individual or business who they believed were acting contrary to orders issued under the **PHPPA**.

The form collected the individual's name, phone number, city/town, and email address (the former three fields were mandatory while including an email address was optional). The form required the name of the individual or business of concern, and asked the complainant to provide details on the situation and the activities that were concerning. The complainant was also required to provide a phone number, mailing address, and email address of the individual or business in question. Information submitted to the Public Report Form was shared with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) for triaging, follow-up and redirection as appropriate. Complaints regarding individuals were managed by law enforcement (RNC or Royal Canadian Mounted Police depending on the location), and complaints

regarding businesses and organizations were redirected to the Department of Digital Government and Service NL (DGSNL).

The general enforcement approach was to provide education first to ensure individuals and businesses were aware of their requirements and understood how to comply with them. In the event of continued non-compliance on the part of a business, a written warning was issued from the CMOH, and if non-compliance persisted, a referral was sent to law enforcement.

Overview of Newfoundland and Labrador's Pandemic Response

The goal of Newfoundland and Labrador's pandemic response is in alignment with Canada's goal for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic,¹⁷ which is to minimize severe illness and death due to COVID-19 while minimizing societal disruption.

Vaccines for COVID-19 were not widely available until mid-2021 and treatments were available in late 2021 into 2022. In the absence of a vaccine or treatment, non-medical public health measures must be taken to reduce the spread of disease or illness, for example closures of certain businesses to support physical distancing and limit close contacts.

During the public health emergency, the following areas were continually monitored to inform decisions on relaxing or strengthening public health measures. For each of the below criteria, analysis of a range of inter-related data and evidence allowed the CMOH and her team to determine if, in a particular context and on balance, a change in measures was warranted:

1. Spread of COVID-19, within the province and in other jurisdictions, including COVID-19 variants of concern
2. Ability to test, trace and isolate all cases (public health capacity)
3. Health system readiness to handle any surge in COVID-19 cases
4. Risk of outbreaks
5. Workplace preparedness to protect the health and safety of staff and the public
6. Identification and isolation of travel-related cases
7. Community readiness to live with COVID-19

Vaccine coverage and effectiveness were also key indicators from 2021 onward.

Newfoundland and Labrador has an aging population as well as a high prevalence of chronic diseases; in fact, Newfoundland and Labrador's median age is the highest in Canada. As mentioned above, older adults and those with underlying medical conditions have an elevated risk of severe outcomes due to COVID-19. The provincial health care system had limited capacity to respond to a widespread COVID-19 outbreak resulting in high numbers of hospitalizations. Furthermore, the majority of communities in Newfoundland and Labrador are in rural/remote areas with limited access to health care infrastructure required to care for those severely ill with COVID-19. Therefore, in an effort to protect those in the province at increased risk and preserve health system capacity, Newfoundland and Labrador took a precautionary approach to implementing public health measures.

Prior to the Omicron wave, Newfoundland and Labrador adopted a containment approach to respond to COVID-19, which aims to minimize the risk of transmission from infected individuals to non-infected

¹⁷ [Federal, Provincial, Territorial Public Health Response Plan for Ongoing Management of COVID-19](#)

individuals in order to keep the number of cases as low as possible. In addition to broad sweeping public health measures at the population level, a containment approach also involves early detection of cases, tracing of close contacts, and quarantine for individuals at high risk of exposure (i.e., close contacts and travellers). The characteristics of the wild type, Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Gamma variants made a containment approach feasible for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Newfoundland and Labrador focused on travel restrictions as a means to prevent imported cases. Importation was the province's greatest risk for spread of COVID-19. Reducing the importation of COVID-19 was critical to a containment approach to protect an at-risk population in a province with limited response capacity.

When disease spread outpaces containment, a mitigation approach is more appropriate. Mitigation involves moderate public health measures that aim to reduce the impacts of a disease by slowing, but not stopping, the spread. A mitigation approach focuses on protecting vulnerable people and keeping cases at a manageable level for the health system to respond. The Omicron variant was highly transmissible and disease spread continued exponentially despite the presence of restrictive public health measures. Therefore, the province shifted to a mitigation strategy in early 2022, which will be discussed later in this report.

Decisions on Special Measures Orders were made by the CMOH and were guided by advice and expertise from the following groups:

- The Regional Health Authorities (RHAs), particularly as it related to operational matters.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information provided support for analytics and technical solutions.
- The Predictive Analytics Team, led by Dr. Proton Rahman, produced mathematical modelling reports to make predictions about potential COVID-19 spread in the province.
- The provincial COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance Sub-Group collaborated with municipalities and the National Microbiology Laboratory to conduct SARS-CoV-2 wastewater sampling and analysis to monitor COVID-19 activity in the community.
- The NL Science Advisory Group was appointed by Premier Furey and comprised technical experts who provided advice, research and analytical support for government decision-making.
- Indigenous Governments and Organizations provided input and expertise with respect to controlling COVID-19 in their communities.
- Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) COVID-19 Advisory Committees, including:
 - The Special Advisory Committee (SAC) on COVID-19 - established in January 2020 to advise the Conference of FPT Deputy Ministers of Health on the coordination, public health policy and technical content related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The Technical Advisory Committee - focused on the characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic and what needed to be done from a technical, public health perspective to support pandemic response objectives.
 - The Logistics Advisory Committee - a forum for collaborative FPT discussions and joint FPT decision-making on issues such as logistical capability assessments, procurement and distribution, managing surge capacity demands, requests for mutual aid, and recommendations regarding resource acquisitions.

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) provided recommendations for the use of approved COVID-19 vaccines in Canada.

There were many key stakeholders involved in operationalizing public health measures. These included:

- Environmental Health Officers in the DGSNL who monitored businesses and organizations for compliance with Special Measures Orders;
- Law enforcement;
- Officials from the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture and RHAs who were located at points of entry to enforce travel-related measures;
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, which created technical solutions that supported public health measures, including the Travel Form and online COVID-19 Assessment tool;
- 811 HealthLine, which improved access to COVID-19 testing for those who were required to get tested and could not use the online assessment tool;
- Department of Education, Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, and independent schools, which were responsible for implementing public health guidance for schools;
- Businesses and organizations subject to Special Measures Orders, which enforced requirements in their establishments and consulted with Public Health where required to inform public health measures;
- RHAs and private operators of personal care homes, assisted living facilities, and community care homes, who enforced visitation and staff restrictions in congregate living settings for seniors; and,
- Statistics Canada and the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, which were involved in conducting traveller follow-up.

Scope

Section 30 of the **PHPPA** requires the Minister of HCS to table a report with the House of Assembly on the cause and duration of the public health emergency and the special measures implemented under section 28 of the Act.

This report will be limited in scope to only those measures that were implemented through Special Measures Orders issued by the CMOH.

Chapter 1: Wild Type (March to December 2020)

Initial Response

On March 18, 2020, after the Minister declared a public health emergency, the CMOH ordered various recreation and entertainment facilities to close,¹⁸ including gym and fitness facilities, dance studios, bars and lounges, cinemas, arenas, performance spaces, and bingo halls. Restaurants were limited to 50 per cent capacity, provided physical distancing of two metres was maintained. Gatherings of 50 people or more were prohibited. This order aimed to reduce contacts by limiting activities where large groups of people gather, therefore limiting potential spread.

When the provincial public health emergency was declared, the only federal travel measure in place was a prohibition on foreign nationals entering Canada except those from the United States.¹⁹ There were no federal self-isolation orders for international travellers until March 25, 2020.²⁰ As such, on March 18, 2020, the CMOH also ordered travellers entering the province from outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival in Newfoundland and Labrador, including those arriving from the United States.¹⁸ The self-isolation period was set at 14 days to align with the incubation period for COVID-19 (see [Symptoms](#) for more information). This reduced the risk of infected travellers leaving self-isolation and resuming normal activities.

As COVID-19 continued to spread throughout Canada, the risk of imported cases from domestic travel became as great as from international travel. Therefore, on March 20, 2020, self-isolation requirements were extended to anyone entering Newfoundland and Labrador from outside the province, including from other provinces and territories in Canada.²¹ Anyone required to self-isolate was advised to remain on their own property and not go for a drive unless it is to receive medical attention. People self-isolating in apartment or condominium buildings were ordered to stay in their own unit and not go in common areas of the building.

There were certain self-isolation exemptions issued in subsequent orders to ensure continued flow of goods and services and provision of essential services. Initially, the following asymptomatic workers (workers showing no flu-like symptoms) were exempted from the requirement to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival to NL:

- Workers in the transportation,²² trade, mining, hydro-electric and oil and gas sectors,²³ including truck drivers and crew on any plane, helicopter, train, or marine vessel, arriving in NL from another province/territory in Canada
- Workers who reside in the province but work in another province/territory in Canada²³
- Workers essential to the critical maintenance of the province's infrastructure in the trade, transportation, fishing and aquaculture, hydro-electric, mining, and oil and gas sectors.²³

¹⁸ [Special Measures Order](#) – March 18, 2020

¹⁹ [Prime Minister of Canada News Release](#) – March 16, 2020

²⁰ [Government of Canada News Release](#) – March 25, 2020

²¹ [Special Measures Order \(Amending Order\)](#) – March 20, 2020

²² [Special Measures Order \(Exemption Order\)](#) – March 20, 2020

²³ [Special Measures Order \(Exemption Order\)](#) – March 21, 2020

- Health care workers essential to the provision of critical health care in the province, including organ retrieval teams, medical flight specialists, crew on any plane serving as an air ambulance or medevac operation.²⁴

These workers were only exempt from self-isolation while travelling to and from their home and place of work. These individuals were otherwise required to self-isolate in the province when not at work or travelling to or from work. Additional requirements for workers included practicing physical distancing, monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19, and self-isolating should symptoms develop.

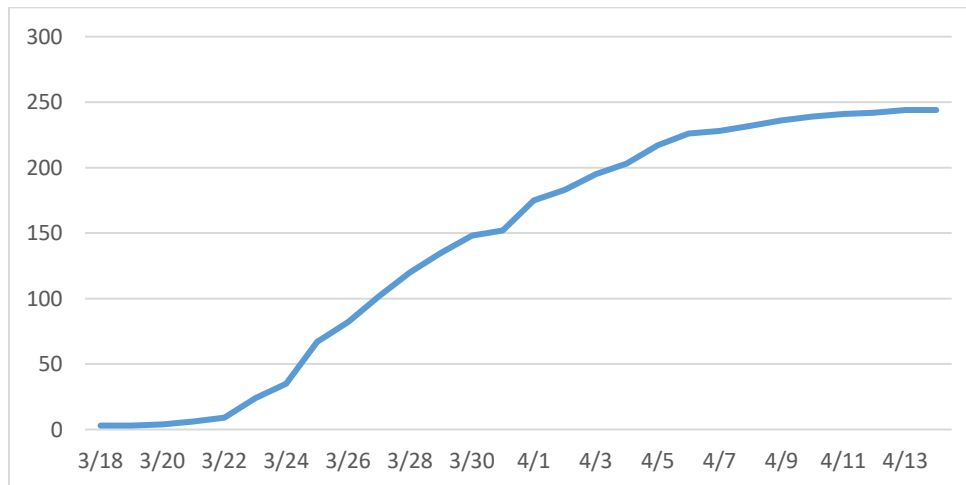
In addition to the workers noted above, asymptomatic individuals crossing the Newfoundland and Labrador-Québec border (i.e., Fermont/Blanc-Sablon) for work and health care purposes were exempted from the requirement to self-isolate for 14 days when arriving in the province from Québec. These individuals were also required to practice physical distancing, monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, and self-isolate if symptoms developed.

By March 21, 2020, there were six active COVID-19 cases in the province across three RHAs (Labrador-Grenfell Health, Eastern Health, and Central Health).

Funeral Home Cluster

Over the next couple of days, more cases appeared. Public health contact tracing efforts revealed that an infected individual attended a gathering at a funeral home on March 15-17, 2020, which led to an outbreak of 178 cases. **Figure 1** illustrates the rapid identification of cases over the last week of March. Attendees at the funeral home during these dates were ordered to self-isolate until April 1, 2020.²⁵ The rapid identification of cases and self-isolation requirements for funeral home attendees slowed the spread of the virus such that epidemic growth plateaued by the beginning of April 2020.

Figure 1: Total number of COVID-19 cases in NL from March 18 to April 14, 2020



More measures were implemented to further reduce movement of people and limit contacts. On March 23, 2020, gatherings were limited to no more than 10 people, including funerals, visitations and

²⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Revised Exemption Order\)](#) – March 25, 2020

²⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 2\)](#) – March 25, 2020

weddings.²⁶ An exemption to the gatherings limit was granted to allow an urgent sitting of the House of Assembly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein 15 people were allowed in the House at any given time.²⁷

More businesses were ordered to close, including personal services establishments, retail stores that did not provide services essential to the life, health or personal safety of individuals and animals, and restaurants (takeout and drive-thru were permitted to continue).²⁶ Private health clinics, except physician and nurse practitioner clinics, were also ordered to close on March 24, 2020. Exceptions to this order included urgent or and emergent services.²⁸

In recognition of continued growth of cases, on March 30, 2020, gatherings were further limited to five people and funerals, visitations and wakes were prohibited. Burials and weddings were permitted with up to five people, including the officiant. Additionally, essential retail stores that remained open to the public were prohibited from selling scratch and pull-tab lotto tickets.²⁹ Lotto ticket sales were causing crowding in stores, and people were staying in the store for extended periods to complete their tickets, contravening the principles of physical distancing.

Municipal and private campgrounds were also prohibited from opening.³⁰ This order was clarified on April 17, 2020 to note that campsites could remain open for individuals who were permanent residents of the campsite and had no other residence.³¹

Health Care Facilities

SARS-CoV-2 was a novel pathogen and little was known about its transmissibility, severity, and to what degree it would affect different populations. Residents in long-term care, personal care homes, assisted living facilities, and community care homes are typically older individuals with complex medical conditions who are generally at higher risk of severe outcomes from other respiratory viruses. During the first wave of the pandemic, COVID-19 had significant impacts in long-term care homes across Canada – 34 and 44 per cent of all long-term care homes in Ontario and Québec, respectively, experienced an outbreak with at least one resident case.³² The high number of outbreaks corresponded with a high number of deaths. In Ontario and Québec during the first wave, 64 and 69 per cent of their total COVID-19 deaths were residents of long-term care, respectively.³³ It was imperative that a similar situation did not happen in NL.

On March 23, 2020, visitation at long-term care and personal care homes was prohibited to protect the most vulnerable.²⁶ Visitation may have been allowed in exceptional circumstances, including end of life. Workers in long-term care, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities were restricted to working in one facility, and were prohibited from engaging in any other employment, unless required in

²⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Revised Order\)](#) – March 23, 2020

²⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Exemption Order\)](#) – March 25, 2020

²⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment\)](#) – March 24, 2020

²⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 3\)](#) – March 30, 2020

³⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 3\)](#) – March 31, 2020

³¹ [Special Measures Order \(Campsite Exemption Order\)](#) – April 17, 2020

³² [Canadian Institute for Health Information - The Impact of COVID-19 on Long-Term Care in Canada: Focus on the First 6 Months](#)

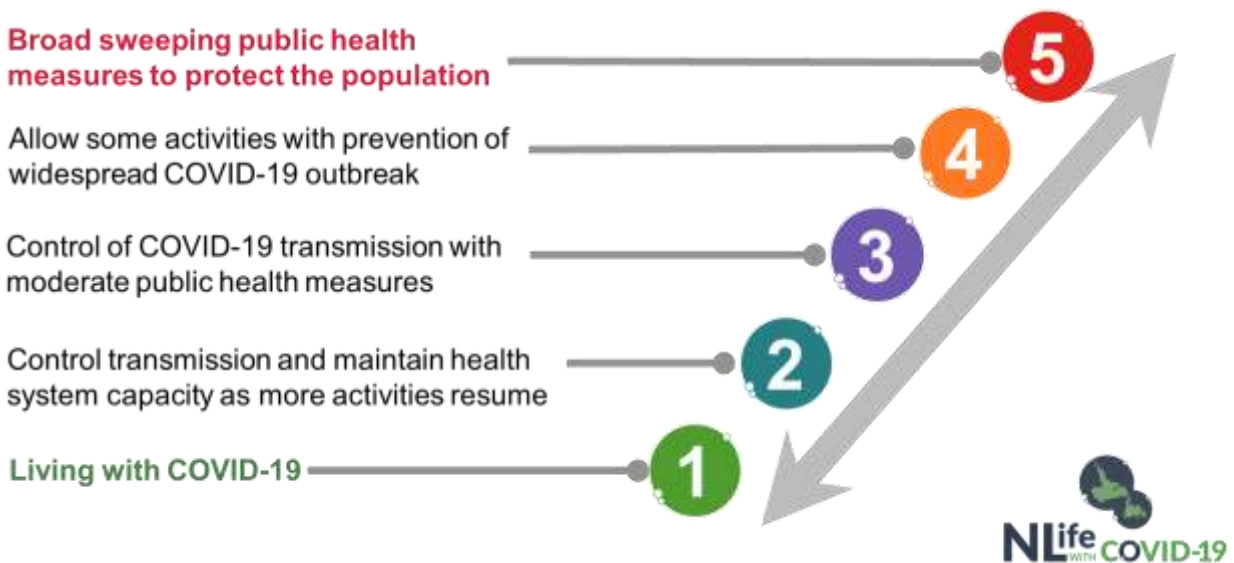
exceptional circumstances and where an exemption has been granted.^{33,34,35} This measure, known colloquially as the “one-worker-one-home policy,” was implemented as a means to prevent transmission between facilities.

In accordance with provincial direction given to long-term care and personal care homes, staff in assisted living facilities were ordered to follow enhanced admission and screening protocols. Routine and short-term admissions were prohibited (unless required in urgent circumstances), and any new clients or those returning to the assisted living facility after an extended period of leave were required to be screened for risk of COVID-19, tested, and isolated for 14 days. Staff were required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when interacting with any clients in isolation. Staff were also required to complete screening at the beginning of each shift and wear PPE as appropriate. Moreover, the prohibition on visitation was extended to assisted living facilities on April 29, 2020, and operators of assisted living facilities were required to cooperate with RHA representatives in order to monitor compliance with the order.

Re-Opening and the Alert Level System

On April 30, 2020, the COVID-19 Alert Level System was announced. It consisted of five alert levels; Alert Level 5 being the most restrictive while Alert Level 1 was the “new normal.” The COVID-19 Alert Level System provided Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with an overview of the steps that would be taken to relax or strengthen public health measures. Guidance documents with health and safety requirements for individuals and businesses operating at each Alert Level were made available on the COVID-19 website (www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19).

Figure 2: Graphic illustrating COVID-19 Alert Level System



Upon release of the COVID-19 Alert Level System, the CMOH announced that the province was currently in Alert Level 5, but that it would be moving to Alert Level 4 on May 11, 2020, provided epidemiology

³³ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 4\)](#) – April 14, 2020

³⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 9\)](#) – April 28, 2020

³⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 10\)](#) – April 29, 2020

remained consistent. Before moving to Alert Level 4, the House of Assembly was granted another exemption to permit House proceedings on May 5, 2020, allowing up to 20 people in the House at a time.³⁶

In terms of Special Measures Orders from the CMOH, the only restriction that changed on May 11, 2020 when the province moved to Alert Level 4 was the expansion of gatherings to 10 people and the resumption of funerals in accordance with gathering limits.³⁷

Community spread remained minimal over the following weeks, so the province moved to Alert Level 3 on June 8, 2020.³⁸ Orders were changed as follows:

- Gatherings at funerals, weddings and burials were expanded to 20 people.
- Limited visitation was permitted provided physical distancing could be maintained between individuals from different households.
- Municipal and private campgrounds were permitted to open for limited overnight camping in self-contained units, including RVs or cabins that have a water supply, holding tanks and personal washroom facilities. Except for pit privies, toilet and laundry facilities, all shared facilities, such as showers, cookhouses, clubhouses, communal fire pits and firewood distribution centres were to remain closed. One household could use laundry facilities at a time.
- Non-essential retail stores were permitted to open. Retail stores could resume the sale of scratch and pull-tab lotto tickets.
- Personal services establishments were permitted to open.
- Restaurants were permitted to open for in-person dining at reduced occupancy, provided physical distancing between patrons seated at adjacent tables may be maintained. Buffets were prohibited.
- Private health clinics could open, in accordance with guidelines developed by their professional organizations in consultation with Public Health.

Shortly after, on June 10, 2020, it was announced that visitation at long-term care, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities could resume with one designated visitor per resident.^{39,40,41} A designated visitor is someone identified by the resident, such as a loved one, friend, paid caregiver, or other person of the resident's choosing. Once identified, the support person/designated visitor was to remain consistent for the duration of the visiting restrictions at residential care homes. In addition to expanded visitation, the prohibition on routine and short-term admissions was repealed on June 12, 2020.⁴²

The CMOH monitored COVID-19 indicators and, in consultation with stakeholders, deemed that it was safe to move to Alert Level 2 a few weeks later, on June 25, 2020.⁴³ This meant that:

- Gatherings, including those at funerals, weddings and burials, were expanded to 50 people.

³⁶ [Special Measures Order \(House of Assembly Exemption Order No. 2\)](#) – May 4, 2020

³⁷ [Special Measures Order \(General\)](#) – May 11, 2020

³⁸ [Special Measures Order \(General – Alert Level 3\)](#) – June 8, 2020

³⁹ [Special Measures Order \(General - Alert Level 3\) \(Personal Care Home Visitation Amendment\)](#) – June 10, 2020

⁴⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 10\) \(Assisted Living Facilities Visitation Amendment\)](#) – June 10, 2020

⁴¹ [Special Measures Order \(General – Alert Level 3\)](#) – June 10, 2020

⁴² [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 10\) \(Assisted Living Facilities Amendments\)](#) – June 12, 2020

⁴³ [Special Measures Order \(General – Alert Level 2\)](#) – June 25, 2020

- Municipal and private campgrounds were permitted to open for day use and overnight use in all forms, including tents.
- Gym and fitness facilities, including yoga studios, indoor tennis, squash facilities and dance studios could open with an occupancy of no more than 50 people or 50 per cent capacity, whichever is less, per room.
- Cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, and arenas could open with an occupancy of no more than 50 people, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Bars and lounges could open at reduced occupancy provided physical distancing could be maintained.

Similar to COVID-19 activity in the province, public health measures for gatherings and businesses remained relatively consistent over summer 2020. However, due to observed crowds at bars in downtown St. John's in July 2020, measures were strengthened on July 8, 2020 to restrict capacity at bars and lounges to 50 per cent, prohibit dance floors, and place accountability on businesses with a license under the **Liquor Control Act** to ensure compliance with the order.⁴⁴

On August 24, 2020, gatherings operated by recognized businesses and organizations were expanded to a maximum of 100 people.⁴⁵ Larger venues with capacities of 500 people or more were permitted to submit an operational plan for approval by DGSNL Environmental Health Officers in order to operate at a capacity higher than 100 people. Informal gatherings (e.g., backyard family event) remained limited to 50 people. The distinction between formal and informal gatherings was meant to be a first step in expanding gatherings, the thought being that gatherings run by a business or organization could be better controlled than a private gathering, with strong enforcement of public health measures.

Also on this date, the CMOH introduced a mandatory mask order in certain indoor public spaces (see **Annex B** for a list of locations).⁴⁶ Updated evidence on the effectiveness of community mask wearing in reducing transmission of COVID-19 supported this decision. The mandatory mask order aimed to protect the population in the context of increased gatherings and movement of people, as well as school re-opening. Exceptions to mandatory masking requirements included:

- Children under the age of five years;
- People with physical or mental health conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask;
- During treatments, services or physical activity (masks could be removed for the duration of the treatment, service or activity only);
- Showing identification;
- At workplaces, as per requirements under the **Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations**;
- The following seated areas, provided physical distancing could be achieved between individuals when seated and provided the mask was replaced when moving around these places:
 - Classrooms at a post-secondary educational institution;
 - Places where activities or services of a religious, cultural, or entertainment nature are offered; and,
 - Restaurants, food courts, or lounges.

⁴⁴ [Special Measures Order \(General - Alert Level 2\) \(Bar Establishments Amendment\)](#) – July 8, 2020

⁴⁵ [Special Measures Order \(General - Alert Level 2\) \(Gatherings Amendment\)](#) – August 24, 2020

⁴⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Masks\)](#) – August 24, 2020

The initial mask order was clarified with a second order stating that masks would not be required where for occupational health and safety reasons a worker could not wear a mask.⁴⁷

Visitation at residential care homes continued with one designated visitor throughout the summer of 2020. After a summer of little to no COVID-19 activity and balanced public health measures (e.g., travel restrictions and mandatory masking), in September 2020, visitation was expanded in assisted living facilities to six designated visitors per resident, except for exceptional circumstances including visiting a resident at end of life.⁴⁸ The updated order aligned with provincial direction given to long-term care and personal care homes. Also at this time, the “one-worker-one-home policy” was repealed for long-term care homes, personal care homes,⁴⁹ and assisted living facilities, allowing workers to be employed in more than one facility and in other areas of employment.

Travel Restrictions

The requirement for out-of-province travellers to self-isolate for 14 days was maintained for most groups throughout 2020. Further border control measures were announced on April 23, 2020, including the requirement for anyone arriving from outside the province to complete and submit a declaration form to a government representative upon entry, submit a self-isolation plan, and be available for contact with public health officials during their 14-day self-isolation period.⁵⁰ The CMOH also ordered employers of out-of-country workers to submit self-isolation plans to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador prior to the arrival of these individuals in the province.⁵¹ The purpose of these orders was to help detect, trace, and prevent the spread of imported cases of COVID-19 efficiently and effectively by ensuring traveller compliance with self-isolation requirements. To help operationalize these orders at the Labrador-Québec border, the CMOH ordered anyone arriving to the province by motor vehicle to stop at their point of entry when indicated by a government representative in order to submit their declaration form and self-isolation plan.⁵²

As noted in the Background section of this report, NL took a precautionous approach to public health measures with a particular focus on travel in order to prevent introduction of the virus to a population at elevated risk of severe outcomes. In this regard, effective May 4, 2020, all individuals were prohibited from entering Newfoundland and Labrador, except for the following:

- Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Asymptomatic workers and individuals who were exempt from 14-day self-isolation; and
- Individuals who were permitted entry to the province in extenuating circumstances, as approved in advance by the CMOH.⁵³

On May 5, 2020, another order was issued to clarify the extenuating circumstances under which an individual could be exempt from the prohibition of entering Newfoundland and Labrador.⁵⁴ The

⁴⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Masks\)](#) – August 24, 2020

⁴⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Restatement of Amendment No. 10\)](#) – September 9, 2020

⁴⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Repeal of Amendment No. 9\)](#) – September 9, 2020

⁵⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 6\)](#) – April 23, 2020

⁵¹ [Special Measures Order \(Employers of Out of Country Workers\)](#) – April 24, 2020

⁵² [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 8\)](#) – April 25, 2020

⁵³ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 11\)](#) – April 29, 2020

⁵⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Travel Exemption Order\)](#) – May 5, 2020

following circumstances were exempt from travel restrictions provided the individual made a formal request to the CMOH:

a) Travel due to medical issues, examples included travel related to:

- Supporting, or being supported by family because of severe illness or injury.
- Being with a family member, or you were someone, who was critically/terminally ill.
- Coming home to have a baby, or joining a partner/spouse who was having a baby.
- Providing care for a family member who was elderly and/or had a disability and required assistance.

b) Requests for relocation or extended stay, examples included travel related to:

- Relocating to Newfoundland and Labrador for work or retirement.
- Job loss and returning to stay with family until circumstances changed.
- Short-term work contract or education internship or placement.
- Finishing an out-of-province school term and returning home.

c) Shared custody/children visiting the province, examples included travel related to:

- A child (or children) returning to Newfoundland and Labrador for a period of time to live with the other parent/guardian. This included a parent/guardian from outside the province acting as a travel escort for the child/children if they unable to travel on their own.

d) Miscellaneous:

- Companies in other provinces that had to bring supplies, automobiles, etc. into the province that did not fall under essential services, but residents had purchased them and these companies needed to transport the product into the province. Company employees needed to leave immediately or they were required to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Individuals who owned a second home, vacation home or cabin in NL (effective August 31, 2020).⁵⁵

Anyone permitted to enter the province was still required to follow other travel requirements, including self-isolating for 14 days (unless otherwise exempt), submitting a declaration form and self-isolation plan, and being available for contact with public health officials during their self-isolation period.

In order to make a formal request to the CMOH, travellers had to complete and submit the Travel Restrictions Exemption Request Application. This was an online form on the provincial COVID-19 website that asked for the traveller's personal information (name, address, phone number, email), reason for the exemption request, expected date of travel, and the names of the individuals requiring an exemption under the application (group requests could be submitted). A team of HCS officials reviewed each application to ensure it met the criteria noted above. If approved, the traveller received an email from the Office of the CMOH, which they were required to show at their point of entry, along with their identification and completed declaration form. Travellers typically received a response on their application within seven business days.

Travel restrictions were introduced to protect NL from importation and spread of COVID-19 resulting from non-essential travel. NL witnessed firsthand through the funeral home cluster how a single case of

⁵⁵ [Public Advisory](#) – August 27, 2020

COVID-19 could easily spread from person to person, some even spreading without knowing they have the disease or presenting with any symptoms.

As the province began to move through the COVID-19 Alert Level System to lift restrictions and return to some sense of normalcy, other public health measures were necessary to protect the population from its greatest risk. For NL, it was the importation of COVID-19 from other jurisdictions. These measures not only reduced the risk of COVID-19 entering the province, but they also reduced the number of people entering the province, which allowed better monitoring of new arrivals and rapid action in the event of an outbreak. Travel restrictions enabled Public Health to conduct contact tracing with better ease and track people coming into the province to ensure they were following their approved self-isolation plan.

Points of entry were monitored to ensure that all travellers entering the province had an approved reason for entry, completed the declaration form, and an adequate self-isolation plan. Public Health monitored arrivals through scheduled commercial flights from other provinces via NL airports, Labrador land borders with Québec, and the Port aux Basques ferry terminal. Depending on the location, border officials were comprised of enforcement officers from the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, RHA officials, and contracted service providers.

Declaration Form Exemptions

There were limited exemptions to completing the declaration form and self-isolation plan.⁵⁶ These included individuals:

- Travelling through the province to another final destination, provided their stay in the province was not more than 24 hours;
- Arriving daily or several times a day in the province from Québec via the Labrador-Québec border, provided they were exempt from the requirement to self-isolate and completed and submitted the declaration form and self-isolation plan at least once in the previous 30 days of their arrival in the province; and,
- Arriving weekly or several times a week in the province who were exempt from the requirement to self-isolate, provided they have completed and submitted the declaration form and self-isolation plan at least once in the previous 30 days of their arrival in the province.

Exemptions were granted in these circumstances given the practicality and utility of requiring these individuals to submit a declaration form. Continuing to require completion of the form upon each entry to the province was onerous for these travellers and strained human resources.

Self-Isolation Exemptions

The CMOH expanded the list of individuals who were exempt from 14-day self-isolation beyond those initially identified in March 2020. First, on April 22, 2020, the exemption was extended to asymptomatic workers in the agriculture sector arriving in NL from another province or territory in Canada, as well as those providing critical maintenance to the province's agriculture infrastructure.⁵⁷ The exemption was granted after further consultation with the agriculture industry and in recognition of the critical role of agriculture in the province's food system. These workers were exempt from isolation only while

⁵⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Declaration Exemption Order\)](#) – May 16, 2020

⁵⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Updated Exemption Order\)](#) – April 22, 2020

travelling to and from their home and place of work in the province. When not working, they were required to self-isolate.

Next, on May 16, 2020, those entering the province via the Labrador-Québec border for school reasons were exempted from the requirement to self-isolate for 14 days.⁵⁸ Again, when the initial exemption orders were issued, schools were not in session due to pandemic-related closures.

On May 29, 2020, exemptions were expanded for air ambulance or medevac operations.⁵⁹ These individuals were previously required to work-isolate if they attended an operation outside of the province, which means that for 14 days they had to isolate at all times when not at work or travelling to or from their place of work. The CMOH issued a complete exemption to self-isolation for medical flight specialists and crew, provided they wore full PPE for the entire operation and travelled directly to and from the airport and hospital without staying overnight outside the province. This exemption also applied to operations arriving from Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. It was deemed low risk for these workers to not self-isolate provided they followed the public health protocols described in the order. It also freed up health human resources to allow continued response to air ambulance and medevac operations.

In September 2020, members of law enforcement and the Canadian Armed Forces were added to the list of asymptomatic workers exempt from self-isolation.⁶⁰ They were only exempted from the requirement while they were travelling to and from their home and place of work in the province. This was to allow personnel to come to the province to conduct essential training exercises.

There were also extensive modified isolation policies implemented for rotational workers, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Updated Measures at the Labrador-Québec Border

Travel measures were further relaxed at the Labrador-Québec border in recognition of the level of social and economic integration between the border communities. On June 25, 2020, the self-isolation and declaration form exemptions for individuals travelling across the Labrador-Québec border was expanded to include all asymptomatic individuals arriving in the province who were permanent residents of Labrador City, Wabush, Fermont, the Labrador Straits area or Blanc Sablon, provided they had not travelled beyond these communities in the previous 14 days.⁶¹ The order outlined specific geographic boundaries for residents to be considered for the self-isolation exemption:

- Residents of Labrador West could not travel beyond the boundary of Fermont or the Mount Wright Mining Complex turn off at Rue 389;
- Residents of Fermont could not travel beyond the community boundaries of Labrador City and Wabush;
- Residents of the Labrador Straits area could not travel beyond the community of Blanc Sablon; and,
- Residents of Blanc Sablon could not travel beyond the Labrador Straits area.

⁵⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Self-Isolation Exemption Order\)](#) – May 16, 2020

⁵⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Self-Isolation Exemption Order\)](#) – May 29, 2020

⁶⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Revised Self-Isolation Exemption Order\)](#) – September 23, 2020

⁶¹ [Special Measures Order \(Labrador-Quebec Border Amendments\)](#) – June 25, 2020

The exemption was later expanded beyond the community of Blanc Sablon to the greater Quebec Lower North Shore area in recognition of the area's integration with Labrador given that it is not connected to Quebec by road.⁶²

Atlantic Bubble

Due to consistently low case numbers in the Atlantic Provinces, travel restrictions were eased in Atlantic Canada in summer 2020. Interprovincial travel without the requirement to self-isolate was permitted for residents of Atlantic Canada as of July 3, 2020.⁶³ In order to meet the Atlantic Bubble entry requirements, travellers were required to:

- Be a permanent resident of Atlantic Canada;
- Not have travelled beyond Atlantic Canada in the last 14 days; and,
- Be asymptomatic at the time of travel.

Visitors from other Canadian provinces and territories were still required to have an approved reason for travel to the province and complete the 14-day self-isolation period upon entry to NL.

Atlantic Canadians arriving in NL under the Atlantic Bubble were required to complete a declaration form, but did not need to submit a self-isolation plan.

Rotational Worker Modified Isolation Orders

Rotational workers travelled frequently in and out of the province and posed an elevated risk of importation to the population, as they visited areas with higher prevalence of COVID-19. The nature of work camps meant that public health measures such as physical distancing, cleaning and disinfection, and having space to isolate away from others if sick were not possible, making them susceptible to outbreaks. As an example, there was an outbreak at a Northern Alberta oil sands site that was linked to more than 100 COVID-19 cases across five provinces.⁶⁴ This led to the CMOH ordering anyone returning to the province from this site to, in addition to self-isolating for 14 days, contact 811 to arrange for immediate testing in order to rapidly identify cases.⁶⁵ This order was repealed in June 2020 when the outbreak was declared over by Alberta Health.⁶⁶ While rotational workers entering the province posed a risk of imported cases, it was recognized that constant self-isolation was taking a toll on the health and wellbeing of workers, along with their families.

Self-isolation requirements were updated to improve work-life balance and improve mental health for rotational workers. On May 29, 2020, modified self-isolation was permitted for domestic rotational workers, provided they were not returning from an area where there was an active outbreak investigation as identified on the provincial COVID-19 website. Rotational workers were no longer required to remain on their property during the 14-day self-isolation period, meaning they could go for drives, walks, bike rides, visit their cabin or vacation home, etc. They also no longer needed to isolate away from family members that lived with them. However, they remained prohibited from entering public spaces, visiting family or friends outside their household, and allowing visitors to enter their home during their 14-day modified isolation period. As of August 25, 2020, those returning from outside the

⁶² [Special Measures Order \(Updated Self-Isolation Exemption Order\)](#) – November 27, 2020

⁶³ [Special Measures Order \(Atlantic Travel Amendments\)](#) – July 3, 2020

⁶⁴ [Fort McMurray Today Article](#) – June 15, 2020

⁶⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Amendment No. 5\)](#) – April 22, 2020

⁶⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Repeal of Amendment No. 5\)](#) – June 25, 2020

Atlantic Bubble were also permitted to attend medical appointments provided they informed the health care practitioner that they were a rotational worker, attended non-urgent appointments only while asymptomatic, and followed public health protocols when attending urgent or emergent appointments.⁶⁷

The domestic rotational worker policy was further expanded effective September 9, 2020.⁶⁸ Workers returning from outside the Atlantic Bubble were given the option to self-isolate for seven days with a negative COVID-19 test, or 14 days without a test, upon return to the province. Testing could occur any time after day five by contacting 811. The worker could leave isolation after seven days, provided they were asymptomatic and had received their negative test result. Those who received a negative COVID-19 test result and left isolation after seven days were permitted to visit indoor public spaces but were required to wear a mask. They were also ordered to avoid mass gatherings until 14 days passed after their return to NL.

A review of this policy in late October 2020 found that there were no community-acquired cases arising from rotational workers following the modified isolation orders, and the incidence in rotational workers participating in the testing protocol was zero.⁶⁹ As such, the modified isolation orders continued while COVID-19 epidemiology remained consistent.

It is important to note that provincial rotational worker policies could only apply to domestic rotational workers at this time, as there were federal self-isolation requirements for international rotational workers that superseded any provincial orders.

Measures in Response to the Second Wave

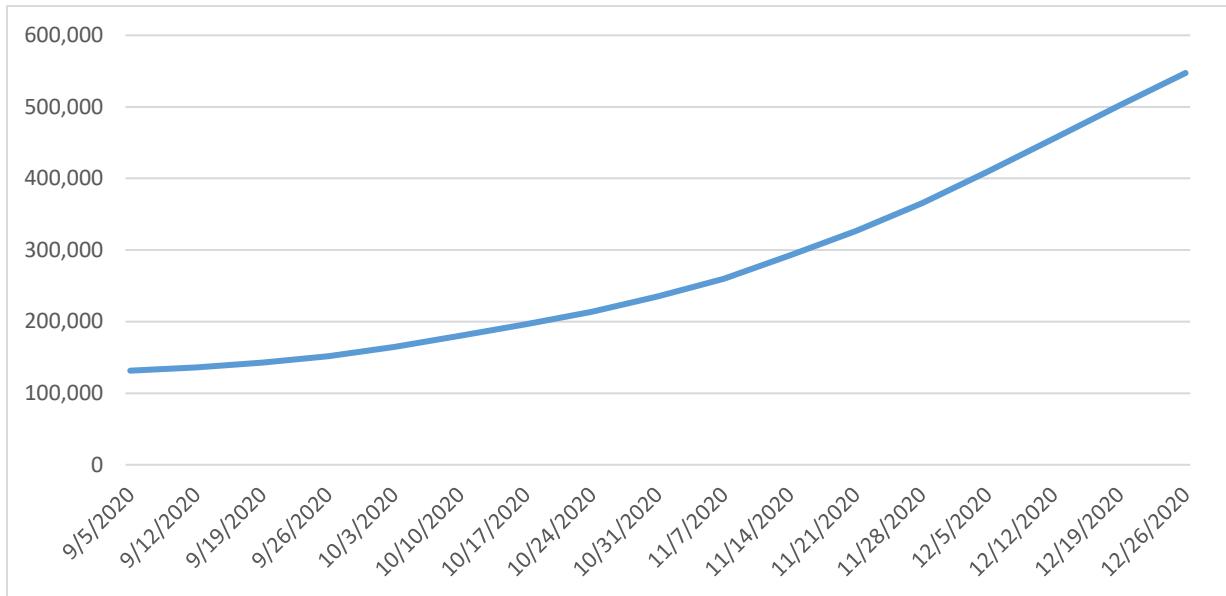
In fall 2020, Canada experienced a second wave of COVID-19. **Figure 3** illustrates the sharp increase in the total number of cases from September to December 2020. The virus was spreading amongst people of all ages, with high infection rates in every age group. However, infection rates were highest among those aged 80 years and older.⁷⁰ Outbreaks in high-risk settings were increasing across the country, including acute care, long-term care, correctional facilities, and other congregate living settings.

⁶⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Self-Isolation Exemption Order – Rotational Workers\)](#) – August 25, 2020

⁶⁸ [Self-Isolation Exemption Order \(Rotational Workers\)](#) – September 3, 2020

⁶⁹ [Quality of Care NL Rotational Worker Policy Review](#) – October 28, 2020

⁷⁰ [Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada](#) – December 21, 2020

Figure 3: Total number of COVID-19 cases in Canada from September 5 to December 26, 2020

(source: Government of Canada COVID-19 epidemiology update⁷¹)

The Atlantic Provinces experienced increased COVID-19 activity in November 2020, especially New Brunswick and parts of Nova Scotia.^{72,73} Most of the cases arising in Nova Scotia were among young people who went to late-night bars and restaurants,⁷⁴ so on November 24, 2020 Public Health requested people returning from Nova Scotia who visited bars in Halifax and surrounding metro communities to contact 811 to arrange for COVID-19 testing.⁷⁵ The risk of importation from Maritime travellers was increasing as community transmission persisted in the region. Therefore, effective November 25, 2020, people arriving in Newfoundland and Labrador from within the Atlantic Bubble were ordered to self-isolate for 14 days, the same requirements as other travellers arriving from within Canada.⁷⁶

The rotational worker modified isolation orders were changed. Effective November 25, 2020, workers were required to wait until day seven to be tested in order to leave isolation (previously they could test after five days).⁷⁷ Adding two additional days before testing decreased the chance of a false negative result, thereby reducing the risk of spread once the worker left self-isolation. Workers were also ordered to not visit long-term care facilities, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities, except for exceptional circumstances such as end of life. Furthermore, the November 25 order introduced additional requirements for household members of rotational workers. Any adults in the household were required to wear a mask outside their household, and were ordered to avoid gatherings and visits to long-term care facilities, personal care homes and assisted living facilities as much as possible.

⁷¹ [Government of Canada COVID-19 epidemiology update](#)

⁷² [Government of New Brunswick News Release](#) – November 21, 2020

⁷³ [Government of Nova Scotia News Release](#) – November 20, 2020

⁷⁴ [Government of Nova Scotia News Release](#) – November 24, 2020

⁷⁵ [Public Advisory](#) – November 24, 2020

⁷⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Revised Travel Exemption Order\)](#) – November 23, 2020

⁷⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Revised Self-Isolation Exemption Order – Rotational Workers\)](#) – November 23, 2020

In November 2020, Public Health established a follow-up process with rotational workers to see if they, or their family, required support in any way during the 14-day period following their arrival, and also to provide them with a point of contact for any questions they may have around precautions the family should be taking. While supportive in nature, rotational workers were legally required to be available for contact with public health officials in the 14 days following their arrival in accordance with the **Special Measures Order (Travel)** dated May 15, 2020.⁷⁸ Traveller follow-up was expanded to all travellers later in December 2020.

On December 1, 2020, improvements were made to the travel process. Before this, anyone who required an exemption in order to enter NL had to complete two different forms – the Travel Restrictions Exemption Request Application, and the online declaration form in which they declared they would adhere to the 14-day self-isolation requirement and other public health measures. On December 1, 2020, the new Travel Form was launched which merged both processes into one online form. The form very clearly outlined the reasons travellers were allowed to enter the province, and travellers were required to declare which criteria they were entering the province for. The Travel Form could be completed up to 30 days in advance of their travel date. Upon completion, travellers received an email with a reference number that they were required to present to border officials at their point of entry. Travellers who did not meet the approved criteria for travel set out on the form (and described in the [Travel Restrictions](#) section) were still required to submit an exemption request through the Travel Restrictions Exemption Request Application.

The second wave was peaking near Christmas, a time of increased social interaction in Newfoundland and Labrador. Gathering sizes were reduced in an effort to control the number of contacts people had over the Christmas season. On December 10, 2020, the number of people permitted at informal gatherings was reduced from 50 to 20 people.⁷⁹ There were no changes made to gatherings run by a recognized business or organization.

⁷⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Travel\)](#) – May 15, 2020

⁷⁹ [Special Measures Order \(General- Alert Level 2 – Updated\)](#) – December 9, 2020

Chapter 2: Alpha (December 2020 to April 2021)

Epidemiology in the World, Canada and NL

On December 14, 2020, the United Kingdom announced a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 was identified across the South East of England, which we now know as B.1.1.7 or Alpha.⁸⁰ There were 1,108 cases of the variant identified as of December 13, 2020. The WHO designated Alpha as a VOC on December 18, 2020,⁸¹ and initial analysis indicated that the variant might spread more readily between people.⁸² Alpha spread to multiple countries beyond the United Kingdom, including Denmark, Belgium, Australia, and the Netherlands, before its arrival in Canada.⁸³

In Canada, the first two cases of Alpha were identified in Ontario on December 26, 2020.⁸³ More cases were identified before the end of December in British Columbia,⁸⁴ Alberta,⁸⁵ and Quebec.⁸⁶ Alpha continued to spread across the country and the world, and we continued to learn more about it. By February 2021, there was evidence to suggest that Alpha was more transmissible and virulent (higher risk of hospitalization and death) than wild type COVID-19.⁸⁷

On February 6, 2021, Public Health issued a potential COVID-19 exposure notification asking anyone who was at a restaurant in Mount Pearl from January 21 to February 4 to contact 811 to arrange COVID-19 testing.⁸⁸ The advisory resulted in identification of cases associated with a high school in Mount Pearl.⁸⁹ The CMOH indicated there were a significant number of contacts associated with these cases, through the school and various extracurricular activities.⁹⁰

On February 8, 2021, the CMOH announced 11 new cases of COVID-19 in the Eastern Health region.⁹¹ This was the first time a daily new case count was over 10 cases since April 5, 2020 and brought the total number of active cases in the province to 27. Cases continued to increase with sustained community transmission in the St. John's Metro region, culminating in the announcement on the evening of February 12, 2021 that the source of the outbreak was the Alpha variant. At the time of the announcement, there were 260 active cases,⁹² an increase of 863 per cent over four days.

The province had sustained low levels of COVID-19 activity for months, meaning the perceived risk of COVID-19 and adherence to public health measures amongst the public was low. Children and youth were involved in extensive extracurricular and social activities, resulting in high numbers of close contacts and widespread virus transmission. There were little public health measures in place in these

⁸⁰ [Public Health England News Release](#) – December 14, 2020

⁸¹ [WHO - Tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants](#)

⁸² [WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update](#) – December 22, 2020

⁸³ [Government of Ontario News Release](#) – December 26, 2020

⁸⁴ [Government of British Columbia Joint Statement](#) – December 27, 2020

⁸⁵ [Alberta CMOH COVID-19 Update](#) – December 28, 2020

⁸⁶ [Government of Québec News Release](#) – December 29, 2020

⁸⁷ [Public Health Ontario Knowledge Synthesis on COVID-19 B.1.1.7 Variant of Concern](#) – February 17, 2021

⁸⁸ [Public Advisory](#) – February 6, 2021

⁸⁹ [Public Advisory](#) – February 8, 2021

⁹⁰ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – February 8, 2021

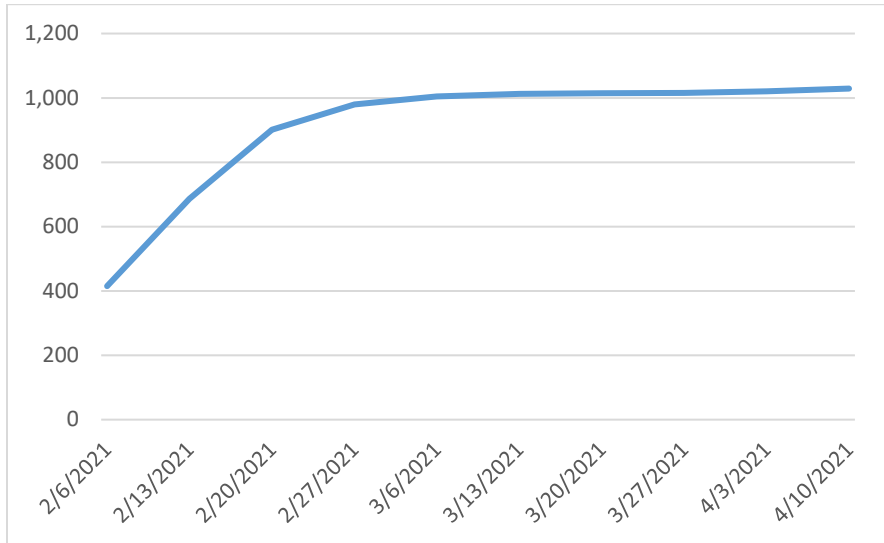
⁹¹ [Public Advisory](#) – February 8, 2021

⁹² [Public Advisory](#) – February 12, 2021

settings. Furthermore, the public health investigation revealed that some people with mild symptoms were not seeking testing and were unknowingly transmitting COVID-19.

Figure 4 shows the sharp increase in cases over the course of February 2021.

Figure 4: Total number of COVID-19 cases in Newfoundland and Labrador from February 6 to April 10, 2021



Availability of COVID-19 Vaccines

On December 9, 2020, Health Canada authorized the first COVID-19 vaccine for use in individuals aged 16 years and older.⁹³ Coincidentally, the United Kingdom announced identification of the Alpha variant just a day before the first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines was received in NL. The province received 1,950 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on December 15, 2020, with the first doses administered the following day.⁹⁴ Soon after, the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was approved by Health Canada for use in individuals aged 18 years and older,⁹⁵ and the province received an initial shipment of 2,400 doses on December 31, 2020.⁹⁶ Availability of both vaccines was limited at first due to limited supply, so the province identified priority groups to receive the vaccine according to a three-phased plan.⁹⁷ Phase One of the **COVID-19 Immunization Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador** focused on those most at risk of exposure to COVID-19, those most likely to experience severe complications due to COVID-19 infection, and those essential to maintaining the provincial pandemic response. This included:

- Individuals living in congregate living settings for seniors (long-term care, personal care homes, assisted living facilities, and community care homes);
- Health care workers at high risk of exposure to COVID-19, and those who are directly involved in the pandemic response;
- Adults aged 85 years and older; and,

⁹³ [Government of Canada Statement](#) – December 9, 2020

⁹⁴ [VOCM Article](#) – December 16, 2020

⁹⁵ [Government of Canada Statement](#) – December 23, 2020

⁹⁶ [VOCM Article](#) – January 1, 2021

⁹⁷ [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador COVID-19 Vaccine Priority Groups](#)

- Adults in remote and isolated Indigenous communities.

Health care workers included staff in acute care, long-term care, personal care homes, and community, including home care workers, working in the following settings: COVID-19 testing and assessments; emergency departments and labour and delivery rooms (case rooms); COVID-19 immunization programs; COVID-19 units; and, critical care units.

The news of a COVID-19 vaccine was exciting and signaled the beginning of a new way of living with COVID-19. On February 8, 2021, 4,865 people had been vaccinated with two doses, representing 0.9 per cent of the total population. Later evidence showed that two doses of vaccine were required to provide adequate protection against Alpha,⁹⁸ so the little progress made in administering COVID-19 vaccinations was not particularly helpful in containing the Alpha outbreak.

Response Measures

Public health measures were initially concentrated in the St. John's Metro region where the first cases were identified. There is a lot of travel in and out of the St. John's Metro region by individuals accessing health care and shopping facilities, visiting family, sports teams travelling for tournaments, etc. Once the outbreak was confirmed to be due to Alpha, broad sweeping public health measures were put in place province-wide to protect the population.

Restrictions for St. John's Metro

In response to indications of community spread in the St. John's Metro area, on February 8, 2021, the CMOH announced restrictions on extracurricular activities in the St. John's Metro area:⁹⁹

- Group and team sports and recreation activities where children, youth and/or adults gather in-person and where close contact was required, were suspended. Individual activities such as walking tracks, gyms or private lessons could continue.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings where close contact was required, were suspended. This included bands, choirs, dance and music classes. Solo performances and individuals lessons could continue.¹⁰⁰

These measures were implemented based on the epidemiology of current cases, and were intended to limit contacts in the primary areas of risk.

A second order was issued on February 8 to protect those most vulnerable.¹⁰¹ Restrictions were placed on long-term care facilities, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities in St. John's Metro as follows:

- Group activities were suspended;
- Activities for residents outside the home were suspended;
- Visitation was limited to two designated visitors per resident;

⁹⁸ [COVID-19 Immunity Task Force - Effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against VOCs in Canada](#)

⁹⁹ The St. John's Metro area referred to St. John's, Mount Pearl, Paradise, Conception Bay South and those towns and communities east of Conception Bay South, and Witless Bay and those towns and communities north of Witless Bay.

¹⁰⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Extracurricular Activities\)](#) – February 8, 2021

¹⁰¹ [Special Measures Order \(Personal Care Homes, Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities\)](#) – February 8, 2021

- Residents admitted from the community were required to undergo screening, testing and isolation prior to admission;
- Staff could only be shared between homes in urgent situations where resident care would be negatively affected; and,
- Facilities were responsible for monitoring residents daily for symptoms if COVID-19.

Cases continued to increase as shown in **Figure 4**. Effective February 10, 2021, the CMOH announced a two-week circuit-breaker to slow the spread of the virus.¹⁰² A circuit-breaker is a set of restrictions designed to limit the spread in a particular region to bring the number of cases down for a specified period of time. This meant that, in addition to the above-noted restrictions on extracurricular activities:

- Certain businesses were ordered to close, including gym and fitness facilities, dance studios, cinemas, performance spaces, arenas, bingo halls, and businesses that hold a license under the **Liquor Control Act** whose primary purpose is the consumption of beer, wine or spirits.
- Restaurants could remain open at 50 per cent capacity provided physical distancing of two metres between patrons seated at adjacent table could be maintained.
- Personal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were limited to no more than 20 people.

Given the regional and provincial nature of extracurricular activities, the prohibition on group extracurricular activities was extended to the entire province effective February 10, 2021.¹⁰³

The public health investigation continued and revealed a large amount of spread in the St. John's Metro region. Based on the volume of cases and extent of transmission, the CMOH announced additional measures for the area that were effective February 11, 2021:¹⁰⁴

- Personal services establishments were ordered to close.
- The following businesses were ordered to close for in-person service: retail stores that did not provide services essential to life, health or personal safety of individuals and animals, and restaurants.
- Animal daycares and grooming facilities could remain open provided they follow a contactless drop-off and pick-up service model.
- Formal gatherings were limited to no more than 10 people.
- Wakes and visitation were prohibited.

Based on recommendations from the CMOH, in-class instruction at K-12 schools in the Avalon region was suspended as of February 11, 2021.¹⁰⁵

Province-wide Restrictions

The source of the outbreak in St. John's metro was identified to be the Alpha variant. Additionally, there were non-epidemiologically linked cases¹⁰⁶ identified in Central Health, causing concern for spread throughout the province. The CMOH announced on February 12, 2021, that the province would be

¹⁰² [Special Measures Order \(St. John's Metropolitan Area\)](#) – February 9, 2021

¹⁰³ [Special Measures Order \(Extracurricular Activities Outside of St. John's Metropolitan Area\)](#) – February 10, 2021

¹⁰⁴ [Special Measures Order \(St. John's Metropolitan Area – Updated\)](#) – February 10, 2021

¹⁰⁵ [NLESD News Release](#) – February 11, 2021

¹⁰⁶ A non-epidemiologically linked case is someone infected with COVID-19 whose source of exposure is unknown.

moving to Alert Level 5 of the COVID-19 Alert Level System.¹⁰⁷ This meant all the measures in place in St. John's Metro now applied province-wide. The following new measures were implemented:

- Formal gatherings were further restricted to no more than five people.
- All private health care clinics, except physician and nurse practitioner clinics, were ordered to close immediately. Clinicians could open only to provide emergency services.

It was unknown how the Alpha variant would affect older people as cases in the province were largely amongst younger people. Therefore, restrictions at congregate living settings for seniors were applied to all facilities in the province. Visitation at long-term care, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities was reduced from two designated visitors to one essential visitor per resident.¹⁰⁸ An essential visitor is an individual considered, by the resident's care team, to be paramount to the resident's physical care and mental well-being, including assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care, communication assistance, or assistance with significant behavioral symptoms.

In consultation with the CMOH, it was announced that in-class instruction at K-12 schools across the province was suspended effective February 15, 2021.¹⁰⁹

Restrictions for Rotational Workers

On February 13, 2021, the modified isolation orders for rotational workers were suspended¹¹⁰ such that domestic rotational workers were no longer permitted to test out of self-isolation after day seven. Rotational workers were required to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival to the province, and were only allowed to leave self-isolation during this period when travelling to and from their home and place of work. This measure was deemed necessary to control further spread of Alpha and other COVID-19 variants as public health officials were working to contain the outbreak.

The modified isolation orders were quickly reinstated as cases plateaued in March 2021 (see **Figure 4**). On March 12, 2021, rotational workers could once again avail of COVID-19 testing to avail of modified self-isolation measures, however three tests were now required.¹¹¹ Workers were required to be tested:

- As soon as possible upon arrival in the province (day 0-2);
- No earlier than seven days after their return to the province (day 7); and,
- On day 11, 12 or 13 after their return to the province.

Rotational workers could follow modified self-isolation when they received a second negative COVID-19 test result at least seven days after their return to the province. Modified self-isolation measures were the same as the first iteration of the policy (see [Rotational Worker Modified Isolation Orders](#)), in that it was not available for international rotational workers or domestic rotational workers returning from an outbreak site. Modified self-isolation ended after 14 days, provided the worker did not have symptoms. While the day 11-13 test was required by the Order, rotational workers were not required to wait for the test result before ending modified self-isolation. It was an added measure to protect rotational workers, their families, and their communities.

¹⁰⁷ [Special Measures Order \(General — Alert Level 5\)](#) – February 12, 2021

¹⁰⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Personal Care Homes, Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities – Updated\)](#) – February 12, 2021

¹⁰⁹ [NLESD News Release](#) – February 14, 2021

¹¹⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Rotational Workers — Alert Level 5\)](#) – February 13, 2021

¹¹¹ [Special Measures Order \(Rotational Workers – Self-Isolation Order\)](#) – March 12, 2021

Household members were given the opportunity to avail of testing on day 7-9 if they wished. This was not included in the Order.

Relaxation of Response Measures

By the end of February 2021, the outbreak had not resulted in community spread to the rest of the province. The CMOH started to ease restrictions outside the Avalon Peninsula by moving those regions to Alert Level 4 on February 26, 2021.¹¹² This meant:

- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were expanded to 10 people.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household with the exception of immediately family members as necessary for child care purposes or to provide support to isolated people.
- Private health care clinics could open in accordance with public health guidelines.
- Retail stores could open at 50 per cent capacity.
- Personal services establishments could open in accordance with public health guidelines.

All other restrictions remained in place. There were no changes in measures on the Avalon Peninsula.¹¹³

The CMOH recommended that all schools outside the Avalon region could return to in-person learning with additional measures in place. To support school re-opening, on Friday, February 26, 2021, the CMOH ordered that students in Grades four to 12 and staff were required to wear masks at all times when in school, including when seated in classrooms.¹¹⁴ Teachers were recommended to wear a Level 1 mask and eye protection at all times when in close contact with students and/or staff but this was not included in the Order. Schools returned to in-person learning the following Wednesday, March 3, 2021.¹¹⁵

The February 26 amending order for masking in schools also introduced the requirement to wear a mask when seated in classrooms at a post-secondary educational institution and places where activities or services of a religious, cultural, or entertainment nature were offered.

New cases of the virus continued to decrease. The measures put in place on February 26 did not lead to increased transmission. After two weeks, effective March 13, 2021, the Avalon Peninsula moved to Alert Level 4¹¹⁶ and the remainder of the province moved to Alert Level 3.¹¹⁷ The Avalon Peninsula now had the same restrictions that the rest of the province were under for the previous two weeks. The remainder of the province was subject to the following measures:

- Gyms and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could open provided that capacity was limited to no more than 20 people per room or ice surface and provided that physical distancing could be maintained.

¹¹² [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4 – Newfoundland and Labrador except Avalon Peninsula\)](#) – February 26, 2021

¹¹³ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 5 – Avalon Peninsula\)](#) – February 26, 2021

¹¹⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Masks\) \(Schools Amendment\)](#) – February 26, 2021

¹¹⁵ [NLESD News Release](#) – February 26, 2021

¹¹⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4\) \(Avalon Peninsula\)](#) – March 12, 2021

¹¹⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3\) \(Newfoundland and Labrador except Avalon Peninsula\)](#) – March 12, 2021

- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables.
- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Visitation was permitted provided physical distancing could be maintained between individuals outside of the household. Wakes remained prohibited.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were permitted with up to 20 people.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 10 close and consistent contacts (Tight 10).
- Cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, and bars and lounges remained closed.

Visitation at long-term care, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities was also expanded to allow two designated visitors and, as required, one essential visitor.¹¹⁸

In the two weeks following the move to Alert Level 3 and 4, there were three new cases identified. Therefore, it was deemed safe for all regions of the province to move to Alert Level 2 effective March 27, 2021.¹¹⁹ This meant that:

- Gyms and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could operate at an occupancy of no more than 50 people per rink surface, playing space or room provided that physical distancing could be maintained between participants. With the exception of one person per child as required to assist the child in preparing to participate in a group activity, spectators were not permitted.
- Cinemas and performance spaces could open with a maximum capacity of 50 people per auditorium or room, provided that physical distancing may be maintained.
- Bingo halls could operate with no more than 50 people, provided that physical distancing may be maintained.
- Businesses that held a license under the **Liquor Control Act** whose primary purpose is the consumption of beer, wine, or spirits could open and operate at 50 per cent of the Fire Commissioner's posted capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent table. Dance floors were prohibited.
- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables.
- Formal gatherings were limited to no more than 50 people.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 20 close and consistent contacts (Steady 20).

As of mid-April 2021, there was no evidence of community transmission since re-opening began. The CMOH announced that effective April 17, 2021, formal gatherings were permitted to return to operating at a maximum of 100 people.¹²⁰ Larger venues with capacities of 500 people or more were permitted to submit an operational plan for approval by DGSNL Environmental Health Officers in order to operate at a capacity higher than 100 people. Larger venues with previously-approved operational plans could

¹¹⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Personal Care Homes, Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities\) \(Updated\)](#) – March 12, 2021

¹¹⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 2\)](#) – March 27, 2021

¹²⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Updated Alert Level 2\)](#) – April 17, 2021

resume hosting larger gatherings in accordance with their plans, provided they now follow the new mask requirements where individuals keep their mask on when seated and not eating.¹²¹

South West Coast Outbreak

In May 2021, cases started to increase on the south west coast of the island. There were three confirmed cases associated with a school. While there was no evidence of widespread community transmission in the region, there was spread among contacts. Given this, and the fact that cases were due to the Alpha variant which was more transmissible, a Special Measures Order was introduced to move communities from South Branch down to Port aux Basques, including Codroy Valley, and across to Rose Blanche-Harbour le Cou to Alert Level 4, effective May 13, 2021.¹²² This was intended to give Public Health the ability to carry out their investigation and conduct community-wide testing in the area, while reducing the risk of onward transmission and spread. Alert Level 4 meant:

- Gyms and fitness facilities, dance studios, cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, arenas, and businesses that hold a license under the **Liquor Control Act** whose primary purpose is the consumption of beer, wine, or spirits, were ordered to close;
- Restaurants were ordered to close for in-person dining; take-out, delivery and drive-thru services could continue;
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were permitted with up to 10 people;
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household with the exception of immediately family members as necessary for child care purposes or to provide support to isolated people;
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines;
- Retail stores could open at 50 per cent capacity; and,
- Personal services establishments could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.

The measures were to be re-evaluated in one week.

Western Health conducted increased testing in the Codroy Valley and Port aux Basques region where it was determined there was no evidence of widespread community spread in the area. As such, effective May 20, 2021, communities on the South West Coast returned to Alert Level 2.¹²³ In total, there were nine confirmed cases associated with the outbreak.

¹²¹ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – April 14, 2021

¹²² [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4 – Certain Communities on the South West Coast\)](#) – May 12, 2021

¹²³ [Special Measures Order \(South West Coast Alert Level 4 Repeal Order\)](#) – May 20, 2021

Chapter 3: Delta (April to December 2021)

About Delta

On March 24, 2021, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in India announced a new variant with mutations suggesting potential for immune escape and increased transmissibility.¹²⁴ The variant had been detected in samples since December 2020. This was the Delta variant, otherwise known as B.1.617. By April 27, 2021, Delta had been identified in at least 17 countries, with most sequences coming from India, the United Kingdom, United States, and Singapore.¹²⁵ The WHO designated Delta as a variant of concern on May 11, 2021.¹²⁶

The first cases of Delta in Canada were announced in British Columbia on April 22, 2021, where 42 cases were identified.¹²⁷ NL announced its first case of Delta soon after on April 28, 2021.¹²⁸ Within the following weeks, the variant was identified in nine provinces and territories.¹²⁹

It is important to note that while this chapter focuses on the response to the Delta variant, the Beta (B.1.351) and Gamma (P.1) variants were circulating throughout Canada around the same time. Cases of both variants were identified in NL, but did not lead to any significant outbreaks in the way that Delta did. Alpha also continued to circulate in NL and Canada. Preemptive measures, such as those related to travel, were intended to protect the population from all variants of concern, not just Delta.

The spread of Delta in NL looked different from the previous outbreaks caused by Alpha and wild type virus. Instead of one large outbreak affecting a large region, there were several outbreaks located in certain communities and smaller regions across the province. Rather than province-wide restrictions, the COVID-19 Alert Level System was applied on a regional basis to only those communities experiencing an outbreak, and measures used were the least restrictive means possible to control spread.

Scientists learned more about Delta as it continued to circulate in Canada and around the world. By June 2021, there was evidence to suggest that, compared to Alpha, Delta was 50 per cent more transmissible, presented increased risk of hospitalization, and there was reduced vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection after one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.¹³⁰ There was a four-fold increase in Delta cases in Canada from April 25 to May 23, 2021, and Delta cases were 54 per cent more likely to be hospitalized compared to Alpha cases.¹³⁰

Progression of COVID-19 Vaccinations

The COVID-19 Immunization Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador was progressing well over the course of early 2021. Vaccine supply for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA COVID-19 vaccines stabilized and became much more reliable and predictable, and the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD viral vector COVID-19 vaccine was also approved by Health Canada on February 26, 2021 for use in Canada. This allowed

¹²⁴ [India Ministry of Health and Family Welfare News Release](#) – March 24, 2021

¹²⁵ [WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update](#) – April 27, 2021

¹²⁶ [WHO - Tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants](#)

¹²⁷ [Government of British Columbia Joint Statement](#) – April 22, 2021

¹²⁸ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – April 28, 2021

¹²⁹ [Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada](#) – May 15, 2021

¹³⁰ [Update on COVID-19 in Canada: Epidemiology and Modelling](#) – June 25, 2021

the province to begin Phase Two of the COVID-19 Immunization Plan in February 2021.¹³¹ Phase Two aimed to protect vulnerable individuals and prioritize workers involved in responding to incidents that posed significant risk to public safety.¹³² This included:

- Adults 70 years of age and older;
- Adults who identified as First Nations, Inuit or Métis;
- Staff, residents, and essential visitors at congregate living settings (shelters, group homes, transition houses, correctional facilities, and children or youth residential settings);
- Adults 60 to 69 years of age;
- Adults in marginalized populations where infection could have had disproportionate consequences (e.g. people experiencing homelessness or with precarious housing arrangements);
- First responders (including career and volunteer firefighters, police officers, border services, and search and rescue crew);
- Frontline health care workers who were not immunized in Phase One and who may come into direct contact with patients (including private health care workers);
- People ages 16 to 59 who were clinically extremely vulnerable (as defined in the Plan and following consultation with their health care provider);
- People who were required to regularly travel in and out of the province for work, including truck drivers and other rotational workers; and
- Frontline essential workers who had direct contact with the public and could not work from home during Alert Level 5 (including teachers and educational staff who work directly with students).

At the time of Delta's arrival in the province in late April 2021, mRNA vaccines were being offered to people 65 years of age and older, Indigenous adults, those deemed clinically extremely vulnerable, rotational workers, frontline health care workers, and staff, residents, and essential visitors in congregate living settings. People aged 55 to 64 years were being offered the AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine.

Health Canada authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use in individuals aged 12 to 15 years of age.¹³³ This was the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized for this age group. The timing of this approval coincided well with the completion of the Phase Two priority groups such that, on May 17, 2021, all individuals aged 12 years and older were invited to book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment. On this date, 227,900 people had received their first dose (47 per cent of those aged 12 years and older) and 9,886 people had received their second dose.

Testing for Travellers

In April 2021, there was higher incidence of COVID-19 in other provinces and circulation of variants of concern was increasing; the risk of importation into Newfoundland and Labrador remained high. Essential workers travelling to the province who were subject to the **Special Measures Order (Updated Self-Isolation Exemption Order)** dated November 27, 2020 were at higher risk of onward transmission

¹³¹ [Public Advisory](#) – February 26, 2021

¹³² [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador COVID-19 Vaccine Priority Groups](#)

¹³³ [Government of Canada Statement](#) – May 5, 2021

of COVID-19, as they were permitted to leave self-isolation to travel to and from work. Therefore, effective April 19, 2021, new requirements were put in place for these workers.¹³⁴ The new requirements included:

- Requiring employers of the essential worker to complete the Essential Worker Work-Isolation Letter, which was available on the government COVID-19 website (this letter was not required for pilots and flight crew¹³⁵);
- A three-test regime during the 14-day work-isolation period (testing upon arrival day 0, 1, or 2; day 7, 8, or 9; and day 11, 12, or 13), except for those workers who were in the province for two days or less. These workers did not require an arrival test;
- Requiring workers to isolate away from others at their self-isolation accommodation and wait until receipt of their negative arrival test (day 0, 1, or 2) result before beginning work in the province, unless their employer indicated the worker was required immediately for urgent and critical work as indicated on the Essential Worker Work-Isolation Letter;
- An exemption to testing for non-resident truck drivers entering the province due to the frequency of travel, associated COVID-19 risk, and limited duration of time in the province; and,
- Requiring Newfoundland and Labrador resident truck drivers (when in the province for less than seven days) to be tested upon arrival in the province (up to once per week) and not requiring them to self-isolate away from other household members. When in the province for longer than seven days, these workers could avail of the [modified self-isolation policy for rotational workers](#).

If essential workers did not get tested as described above, they were required to fully self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival and could not avail of work-isolation.

Asymptomatic household members of Newfoundland and Labrador resident essential workers could choose to avail of testing at day 7, 8, or 9 upon an essential worker returning to the province from work, but this was not required under the Order. It was an added measure for these families to protect themselves and their communities.

On May 15, 2021, testing requirements were extended to all travellers entering the province who were not already required to be tested.¹³⁶ The goals of this Order were to quickly identify new cases, prevent positive cases from exiting quarantine, and enhance surveillance of variants of concern in the province. The requirements applied to asymptomatic travellers aged five years and older as follows:

- Asymptomatic travellers who could self-isolate fully away from others upon arrival were required to be tested near the end of the 14-day self-isolation period (on day 11, 12, or 13);
- Asymptomatic travellers who could not self-isolate away from others upon arrival were required to be tested twice during the 14-day self-isolation period (on day 0, 1 or 2, and near the end of the self-isolation period, on day 11, 12, or 13).
 - In this option, travellers could also avail of an optional test at day 7, 8, or 9, and after day 7, household members of the traveller could also avail of testing (not required by the Order).
- Travellers in the province for two days or less did not require an arrival test.

¹³⁴ [Self-Isolation Exemption Order \(Essential Worker Work-Isolation Order\)](#) – April 19, 2021

¹³⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Essential Worker Work-Isolation Order\)](#) – April 23, 2021

¹³⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Traveler COVID-19 Testing\)](#) – May 15, 2021

- Essential workers and rotational workers who did not follow testing provisions in the **Special Measures Order (Essential Workers Work-Isolation Order)** dated April 23, 2021 and **Special Measures Order (Rotational Workers – Self-Isolation Order)** dated March 12, 2021 were required to self-isolate for 14 days and comply with the testing requirements for general travellers.
- Travellers who developed symptoms at any time during the 14-day self-isolation period were required to undergo COVID-19 testing even if they received a previous negative test result.

The testing protocol for travellers was determined by their ability to completely self-isolate away from others. During the Alpha outbreak, there were instances where travellers had transmitted COVID-19 to others in the household, even when self-isolating separately. This approach also sought to balance the number of tests for travellers who are able to self-isolate completely away from others with the necessity of the public health measure.

Spring 2021 Outbreaks

There were two outbreaks of the Delta variant in the Central and Western Health regions in spring 2021.

Central Outbreak

On May 21, 2021, the CMOH announced a cluster of cases in the Notre Dame Bay area.¹³⁷ At that time, there were seven confirmed cases, seven presumptive cases, and one probable case, with the source of infection under investigation, signaling community spread in the area. Therefore, the CMOH announced that the Lewisporte to Summerford areas would move to Alert Level 4 effective May 22, 2021.¹³⁸ This meant:

- Gyms and fitness facilities, dance studios, cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, arenas, and businesses that hold a license under the **Liquor Control Act** whose primary purpose is the consumption of beer, wine, or spirits, were ordered to close;
- Restaurants were ordered to close for in-person dining; take-out, delivery and drive-thru services could continue;
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were permitted with up to 10 people;
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household with the exception of immediately family members as necessary for child care purposes or to provide support to isolated people;
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines;
- Retail stores could open at 50 per cent capacity; and,
- Personal services establishments could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.

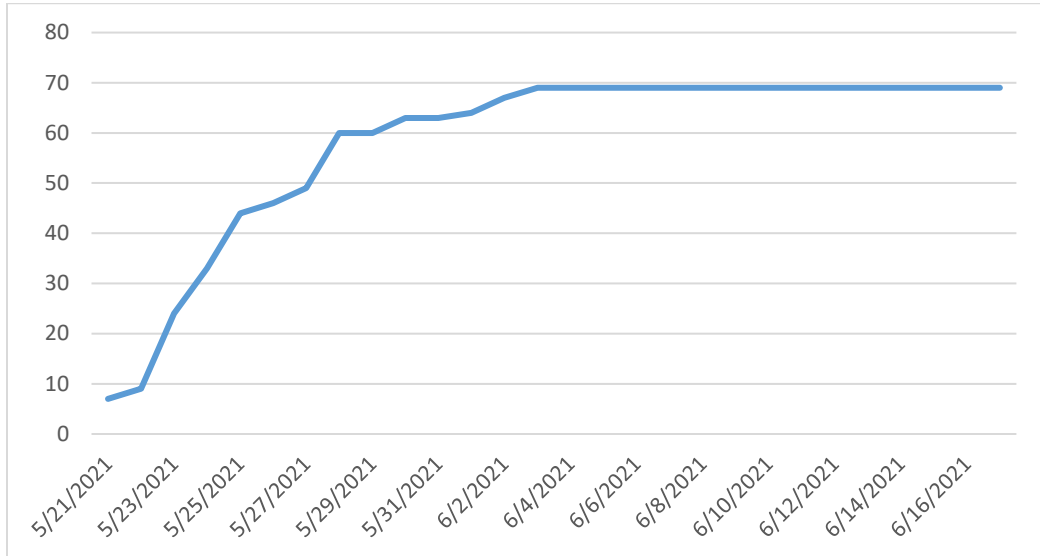
The outbreak continued to spread despite the Alert Level 4 restrictions. More cases and contacts were identified outside of the Lewisporte to Summerford area, meaning the virus had spread well beyond these communities. Effective May 24, 2021, Alert Level 4 was extended to certain towns and communities in the Northeast and Central region, which were delineated by highway routes in the

¹³⁷ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – May 21, 2021

¹³⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4\)](#) – May 22, 2021

Special Measures Order.¹³⁹ At this point, there were 24 confirmed cases associated with the cluster, as well as eight presumptive positive cases.¹⁴⁰

Figure 5: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases associated with Central Health cluster, May 21 to June 17, 2021



As shown in **Figure 5**, spread was slowed by the end of May 2021, and the few new cases identified in the region were close contacts of previous cases. On June 1, 2021, communities in the Lewisporte to Summerford area moved to Alert Level 3, and all other towns and communities in the Central region moved back to Alert Level 2 (i.e., all communities along the Trans-Canada Highway from Gambo to Badger, those communities accessed via Routes 320, 330 and 350, and most of the branches of these routes).¹⁴¹ Alert Level 3 meant:

- Gyms and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could open provided that capacity was limited to no more than 20 people per room or ice surface and provided that physical distancing could be maintained.
- Group and team sports and recreation activities where children, youth and/or adults gathered in-person and where close contact was required, were suspended. Individual activities such as walking tracks, gyms or private lessons could continue.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings where close contact was required, were suspended. This included bands, choirs, dance and music classes. Solo performances and individuals lessons could continue.
- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables.
- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.

¹³⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4 – Certain Towns and Communities in the Northeast and Central Region\)](#) – May 24, 2021

¹⁴⁰ [Public Advisory](#) – May 23, 2021

¹⁴¹ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3 – Certain Towns and Communities in Northeast Central Region\)](#) – June 1, 2021

- Visitation was permitted provided physical distancing could be maintained between individuals outside of the household. Wakes remained prohibited.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were permitted with up to 20 people provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 10 close and consistent contacts (Tight 10).
- Cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, and bars and lounges remained closed.

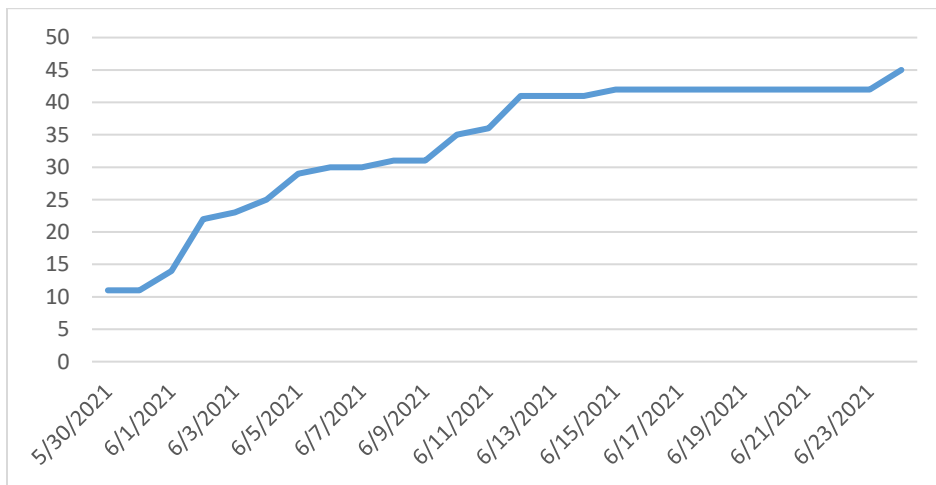
After sustained levels of little to no community transmission, on June 8, 2021, the Lewisporte to Summerford area moved back to Alert Level 2.¹⁴²

The investigation into the cluster of cases in the Central Health region concluded on June 18, 2021.¹⁴³ There were 69 confirmed cases associated with the cluster. Public Health was not able to identify a source for this cluster, but the risk to the public was deemed low.

Western Outbreak

On May 30, 2021, the Acting CMOH announced a cluster of cases in the St. George's, Stephenville and Port-au-Port area.¹⁴⁴ There were 11 confirmed cases and three presumptive cases without an identified source of exposure. Therefore, the towns of St. George's, Stephenville Crossing, Stephenville, Port au Port East, and all towns on the Port au Port Peninsula moved to Alert Level 4 on May 30, 2021.¹⁴⁵ The CMOH extended Alert Level 4 on June 1, 2021 to include towns and communities along highway route 403, which included Flat Bay, St. Theresa's, and Journois.¹⁴⁶ This expansion better reflected the impacted region in Western Health based on the public health investigation to date.

Figure 6: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases associated with Western Health cluster, May 30 to June 24, 2021



¹⁴² [Special Measures Order \(Northeast Central Region Alert Level 3 Repeal Order\)](#) – June 8, 2021

¹⁴³ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2021/health/0618n04/>

¹⁴⁴ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – May 30, 2021

¹⁴⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4 – St. George's, Stephenville, Port-au-Port area\)](#) – May 30, 2021

¹⁴⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 4 – St. George's, Stephenville, Port-au-Port area\)](#) – June 1, 2021

Figure 6 illustrates that by mid-June 2021, spread of the virus had slowed. As such, all communities in the Western Health region moved back to Alert Level 2 on June 12, 2021.¹⁴⁷

The investigation into the cluster of cases in the Western Health region concluded on June 25, 2021.¹⁴⁸ Like the cluster in Central Health, Public Health was not able to identify a source, but the risk to the public was deemed low. There were 45 confirmed cases associated with the cluster.

Together. Again. Re-Opening Plan

COVID-19 vaccination rates were steadily increasing in NL and case counts were stabilizing following the spring 2021 outbreaks. It was time to define a way forward towards a new normal of living with COVID-19. On June 2, 2021, NL released **Together. Again. Reopening Newfoundland and Labrador**, which provided Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with an overview of the phased approach to be taken to lift long-term public health measures (**Annex C**). Areas for further relaxation included opening the province to travel, relaxing restrictions for businesses and services operations, and increasing capacity for recreational activities and gatherings.

The plan included four steps (Transition, Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3) with criteria related to vaccination rates and epidemiology that were to be met in order to move to the next step. The plan also included estimated timelines by which vaccination targets were expected to be met:

- **Transition:** anticipated timeline of June 15.
- **Step 1:** anticipated timeline of July 1, provided about 75 per cent of people ages 12 years and older were vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations were low.
- **Step 2:** anticipated timeline of August 15, provided about 80 per cent of people ages 12 years and older were vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, 50 per cent of people ages 12 years and older were vaccinated with two doses, and COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations were low.
- **Step 3:** anticipated timeline of September 15, provided about 80 per cent of people ages 12 and older were vaccinated with two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, and COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations were low.

Timelines were subject to change based on epidemiology, vaccination rates, public health capacity, health system capacity, and other factors.

The COVID-19 Alert Level System would continue to be used throughout the **Together Again Plan** as needed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in NL.

Transition

NL moved to the Transition Phase of the **Together Again Plan** on June 15, 2021, which eased outdoor gathering restrictions.¹⁴⁹ Public health measures were relaxed as follows:

- Outdoor formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were expanded to allow up to 150 people provided physical distancing could be maintained; and

¹⁴⁷ [Special Measures Order \(St. George's, Stephenville, Port-au-Port Area Alert Level 4 Repeal Order\)](#) – June 12, 2021

¹⁴⁸ [Public Advisory](#) – June 25, 2021

¹⁴⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Updated Alert Level 2 – Outdoor Gatherings\)](#) – June 15, 2021

- Outdoor informal gatherings were expanded to allow up to 30 people.

Effective June 23, 2021, Atlantic Canadians were permitted to travel to NL without having to self-isolate for 14 days or undergo COVID-19 testing, provided they were asymptomatic and had not travelled beyond Atlantic Canada in the last 14 days.¹⁵⁰ They were still required to complete the personal information section of the Travel Form, but were not required to complete the self-isolation plan section. Re-opening the Atlantic Bubble was the first step in relaxing travel restrictions as the Atlantic Provinces had similar epidemiology to NL.

Step 1

Step 1 of the **Together Again Plan** was contingent on about 75 per cent of people ages 12 years and older being vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and there had to be low COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations. The vaccination target was met earlier than anticipated on June 18, 2021,¹⁵¹ however Step 1 remained scheduled for July 1 to allow for operational preparations required to re-open travel (e.g., technical updates to the digital Travel Form to allow submission of proof of vaccination and negative test results, RHA preparations for increased traveller testing, etc.). The following measures came into effect on July 1, 2021:

Travel¹⁵²

- Travellers were no longer required to have an approved reason to travel to NL, meaning non-essential was permitted for the first time since May 2020.
- Fully vaccinated¹⁵³ travellers were not required to self-isolate or get tested.
- Partially vaccinated¹⁵⁴ travellers were required to present a negative COVID-19 PCR test result administered within 72 hours of their arrival to the province, or self-isolate following arrival until receipt of a negative test result.
- Unvaccinated¹⁵⁵ travellers were required to self-isolate for 14 days following arrival and get tested in accordance with existing protocols (see [Testing for Travellers](#)).
- Vaccinated rotational workers and essential workers could follow the rules noted above for other travellers based on their vaccination status.
- Unvaccinated rotational workers and essential workers were required to follow existing self-isolation and testing protocols (see [Restrictions for Rotational Workers](#) and [Testing for Travellers](#)).
- Residents of Atlantic Canada were exempt from all self-isolation and testing requirements, regardless of vaccinations status.
- The requirement to complete the Travel Form remained in place.

There were no longer differential rules for rotational workers coming from outbreak sites.

¹⁵⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Atlantic Canada Travelers\)](#) – June 23, 2021

¹⁵¹ [VOCM Article](#) – June 18, 2021

¹⁵² [Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Travel\)](#) – July 1, 2021

¹⁵³ Fully vaccinated meant at least two weeks had passed since an individual's second dose of a Health Canada approved COVID-19 vaccine, or first dose where an individual received a one-dose vaccine.

¹⁵⁴ Partially vaccinated meant at least two weeks had passed since an individual's first dose of a Health Canada approved COVID-19 vaccine where the vaccine consisted of two doses.

¹⁵⁵ Unvaccinated meant that the individual did not meet the definition of fully vaccinated or partially vaccinated.

Differential rules were in place for fully vaccinated and partially vaccinated travellers as there was emerging evidence that one dose of vaccine was only about 33 per cent effective against symptomatic disease with the Delta variant.¹⁵⁶

The initial Special Measures Order respecting travel was updated to provide clarification on group travel, requirements for children under the age of 12 who were not eligible to be vaccinated, as well as provisions for communities along the Labrador-Québec border:¹⁵⁷

- Mixed groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers aged 12 years and older were required to follow the rules for unvaccinated travellers and self-isolate for 14 days and get tested in accordance with existing traveller testing protocols.
- Unvaccinated children under the age of 12 who were travelling to the province with a parent or guardian were required to comply with the self-isolation and testing requirements of their least vaccinated parent or guardian. When travelling alone, they were to follow requirements based on the least vaccinated parent or guardian they would be staying with upon arrival in the province.
- Children under the age of five were not required to avail of COVID-19 testing.
- Individuals crossing the Labrador- Québec border were exempt from requirements to complete the Travel Form, self-isolate, and get tested for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, provide that:
 - Residents of Fermont and NL had not travelled beyond the boundary of the community of Fermont or the Mount Wright Mining Complex turn off at Rue 389 in the previous 14 days; and,
 - Residents of the Québec Lower North Shore area and residents of NL had not travelled beyond the community boundary of Old Fort in the previous 14 days.

HCS officials established an audit process to ensure traveller compliance with submitting valid proof of vaccination and/or proof of a negative COVID-19 test result in accordance with the Special Measures Order. Officials reviewed 20 per cent or more of the daily volume of vaccination forms and testing reports using a systematic selection method. Any irregular findings between the vaccination and/or laboratory record and the information supplied by the traveller were investigated further. If necessary, these cases were escalated to law enforcement.

On July 14, 2021, further clarification was issued regarding travel restrictions for those in the province less than two days, and individuals who were not residents of Atlantic Canada but had been in Atlantic Canada for the last 14 days.¹⁵⁸ Unvaccinated travellers in the province for two days or less were not required to get tested for COVID-19. Individuals who had, for a period of at least 14 days, stayed in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and/or New Brunswick prior to entering NL, were exempt from the requirement to self-isolate or get tested, regardless of vaccination status. The latter was put in place as the risk profile for these individuals would be the exact same as a resident of those provinces given similar epidemiology in the Atlantic Provinces.

¹⁵⁶[Public Health England Technical Briefing](#) – June 11, 2021

¹⁵⁷[Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Travel\)](#) – July 1, 2021

¹⁵⁸[Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Travel – Amendment\)](#) – July 14, 2021

Restrictions for Businesses and Gatherings¹⁵⁹

- Outdoor formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were limited to no more than 250 people provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Indoor formal gatherings were limited to no more than 200 people or 75 per cent capacity with physical distancing (whichever is less).
- Larger venues with capacities of 500 people or more were permitted to submit an operational plan for approval by DGSNL Environmental Health Officers in order to operate at a capacity higher than 200 people.
- Outdoor informal gatherings were limited to no more than 50 people.
- Indoor informal gatherings were limited to a household and their 20 close, consistent contacts (Steady 20).
- Funeral home visitation was permitted with up to 25 people at a time, provided physical distancing could be maintained between individuals from different households. Wakes held outside of a funeral home/place of worship were permitted in accordance with the limit for informal gatherings.
- Outdoor personal gatherings up to 50 people.
- Retail stores had no capacity restrictions as long as physical distancing could be maintained between patrons.
- Restaurants, bars and lounges could open at 75 per cent capacity, with physical distancing maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Self-serve buffets remained prohibited.
- Dance floors were permitted at private wedding receptions, but were otherwise prohibited.
- Recreational and arts facilities (e.g., performance spaces, cinemas, bingo halls, arenas, gym and fitness facilities) could follow the limits for formal gatherings.

Indoor and outdoor gatherings were subject to differential capacity limits as indoor crowded settings posed a higher risk for COVID-19 transmission.

The list of facilities for which the indoor formal gathering limit applied was clarified effective July 21, 2021 to include indoor swimming pools.¹⁶⁰

Step 2

The COVID-19 Immunization Plan for NL was progressing more quickly than originally anticipated, due to an unexpected increase in supply of the Moderna vaccine. Public Health also shortened the minimum interval between doses from eight weeks to 28 days on July 15, 2021, which may have had a positive impact on the number of individuals receiving two doses of COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁶¹ The **Together Again Plan** estimated that 50 per cent of the eligible population would be vaccinated with two doses of COVID-19 vaccine as early as August 15; however, as of July 26, 2021 this milestone was achieved. Over 80 per cent of the eligible population had received one dose. As COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations were low and the criteria for Step 2 of the **Together Again Plan** was achieved, Newfoundland and Labrador entered Step 2 on August 1, 2021. The following measures took effect on August 1, 2021:

¹⁵⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Step 1\)](#) – July 1, 2021

¹⁶⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Step 1 – Swimming Pools amendment\)](#) – July 14, 2021

¹⁶¹ [Public Advisory](#) – July 15, 2021

Travel¹⁶²

- Fully and partially vaccinated travellers had no testing or self-isolation requirements.
- Unvaccinated travellers aged 12 years and older were required to be tested on day 7, 8 or 9 following their arrival, and self-isolate until receipt of a negative test result. If they did not undergo testing, they were required to self-isolate for 14 days.
 - The testing requirement did not apply to those travellers in the province for two days or less.
- Mixed groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers aged 12 years and older were required to follow the rules for unvaccinated travellers. Children under the age of five were not required to avail of COVID-19 testing.
- Unvaccinated children under the age of 12 who were travelling to the province with a parent or guardian were required to comply with the self-isolation and testing requirements of their least vaccinated parent or guardian. When travelling alone, they were to follow requirements based on the least vaccinated parent or guardian they would be staying with upon arrival in the province.
- Vaccinated rotational workers and essential workers could follow the rules noted above for other travellers based on their vaccination status.
- Unvaccinated rotational workers and essential workers were required to follow existing self-isolation and testing protocols (see [Restrictions for Rotational Workers](#) and [Testing for Travellers](#)).
- Residents of Atlantic Canada were exempt from all self-isolation and testing requirements, regardless of vaccinations status.
- The requirement to complete the Travel Form remained in place.

Restrictions for Businesses and Gatherings¹⁶³

- Outdoor formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were limited to no more than 500 people provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Indoor formal gatherings were limited to no more than 350 people with physical distancing.
- Larger venues with capacities of 500 people or more were permitted to submit an operational plan for approval by DGSNL Environmental Health Officers in order to operate at a capacity higher than 500 people.
- Informal gatherings were limited to the number of people that the space could accommodate while maintaining physical distancing.
- Funeral home visitation was permitted with up to 50 people in a room at a time, provided physical distancing could be maintained. Wakes held outside of a funeral home/place of worship were permitted in accordance with the limit for informal gatherings.
- Retail stores had no capacity restrictions as long as physical distancing could be maintained between patrons.
- Bars and lounges could operate at 100 per cent capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables.
- Self-serve buffets remained prohibited at restaurants and in businesses that served food.

¹⁶² [Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Travel – Step 2\)](#) – August 1, 2021

¹⁶³ [Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Step 2\)](#) – August 1, 2021

- Dance floors were permitted in all venues.
- Recreational and arts facilities (e.g., performance spaces, cinemas, bingo halls, arenas, gym and fitness facilities) could follow the limits for formal gatherings.

After continued low case counts (excluding cases on vessels that were re-routed to the province due to illness onboard), the gatherings limit was amended on August 10, 2021, to allow indoor formal gatherings to also operate with no more than 500 people, provided physical distancing could be maintained.¹⁶⁴

Removal of Mandatory Mask Order

On July 21, 2021, the CMOH announced that she would remove the mandatory mask order two weeks after the province achieved the milestone of 50 per cent of individuals aged 12 years and older having two doses of COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁶⁵ At this time, Canada was seeing less than 400 new cases daily, there had been no new cases in NL in two weeks, and the rate of individuals who had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine was steadily increasing. As stated above, NL reached the 50 per cent milestone on July 26, 2021. As such, the mandatory mask order was removed for most indoor public settings on August 10, 2021.¹⁶⁶ However, masking continued to be mandatory in congregate living facility for seniors, including long-term care homes, personal care homes and assisted living facilities. Residents of these facilities were not required to wear a mask. Masking also continued to be required in other health facilities operated by the RHAs, but this was direction given from HCS and did not require a Special Measures Order from the CMOH.

Masking continued to be strongly recommended by Public Health for all other individuals and settings, particularly in situations where physical distancing was not possible.

Fall 2021 Resurgence

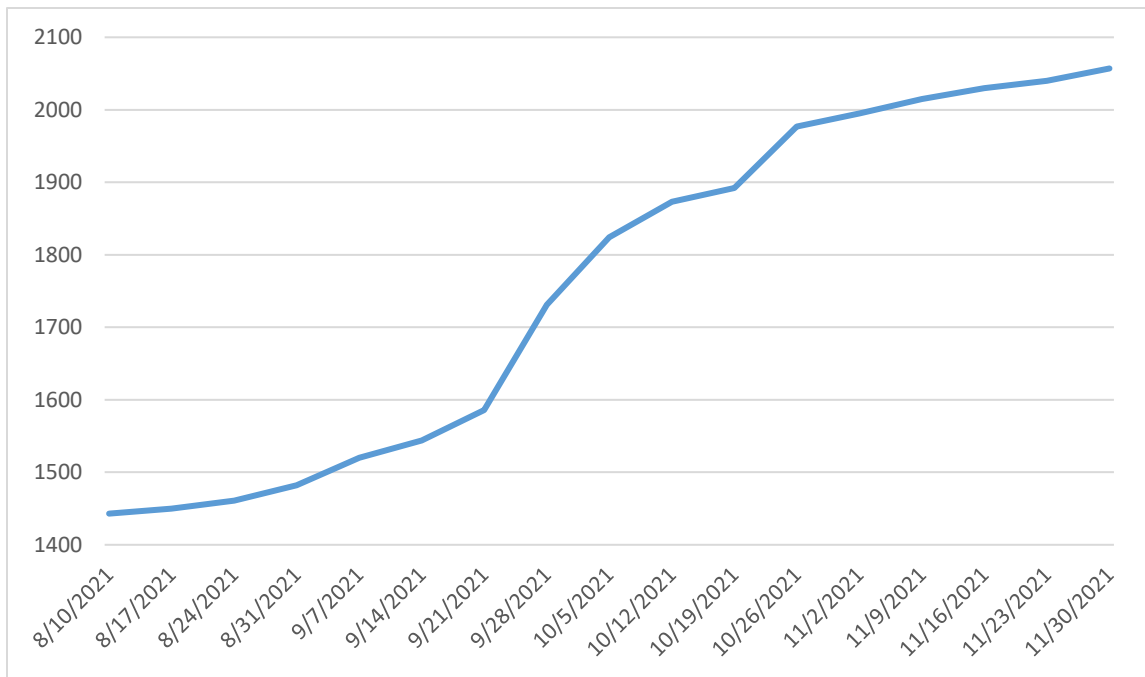
By mid-August 2021, national surveillance data indicated that a fourth wave was underway in Canada.¹⁶⁷ The more transmissible and severe Delta variant accounted for the majority of newly reported cases. Resurgence across Canada started to be reflected in NL as shown in **Figure 6**.

¹⁶⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Step 2 – Updated\)](#) – August 10, 2021

¹⁶⁵ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – July 21, 2021

¹⁶⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2\)](#)– August 10, 2021

¹⁶⁷ [Remarks from the Chief Public Health Officer – August 12, 2021](#)

Figure 6: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in NL, August 10 to November 30, 2021

In addition, on average, each case had a higher number of close contacts than they did in July 2021. Eastern Health was regularly seeing over 100 close contacts per case in August to September 2021. This put significant strain on public health contact tracing resources. The reason for the increase in close contacts was two-fold: increased interaction due to less restrictive public health measures (e.g., higher gathering limits, no capacity limits in businesses, return to workplaces), and more contacts were meeting the criteria of a close contact due to little or no adherence to personal protective measures (i.e., masking).

Step 3 of the **Together Again Plan** required about 80 per cent of individuals aged 12 years and older to have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine and low case counts and hospitalizations. Step 3 would have consisted of a shortened self-isolation period for unvaccinated travellers, no capacity restrictions at outdoor formal gatherings, and increased capacity at indoor formal gatherings.

The COVID-19 Immunization Plan progressed quickly over the summer but slowed into the fall. Given the 50 per cent milestone was reached over two weeks ahead of schedule, Public Health anticipated that 80 per cent of the eligible population would have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by the end of August 2021. By September 15 (the originally anticipated timeline for 80 per cent of the eligible population to have received two doses), 78.1 per cent of those aged 12 years and older had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, and 87.3 had received one dose. While the province had a high overall vaccination rate, certain areas, particularly rural, had substantially lower coverage rates than the provincial average. Vaccination rates also varied across age groups, with younger individuals having lower rates. Case counts were also increasing in September with outbreaks occurring throughout the province, and hospitalizations started to rise by the end of September into October 2021. As such, the province never did move to Step 3 of the **Together Again Plan**.

Reinstatement of Mandatory Mask Order

While masking continued to be strongly recommended in indoor public spaces where physical distancing could not be maintained, adherence had appeared to decline since the mask mandate was removed. By September 17, 2021, there had been an increase of 112 new cases in NL since the mandatory mask order was removed, representing an increase of 7.8 per cent. As noted above, the number of contacts per case was putting a significant strain on public health contact tracing resources. Furthermore, there were 58 potential COVID-19 exposure advisories issued from August 27 to September 17, 2021, putting significant strain on testing capacity due to the number of people presenting for testing (see the [Prevention](#) section for more information on COVID-19 exposure advisories). In the context of high mask compliance and vaccination rates, many of the settings indicated in the public advisories would have been considered low risk for transmission. (e.g., retail settings).

In an effort to decrease cases and preserve public health capacity, effective September 18, 2021, the CMOH reinstated the mandatory mask order for all indoor public settings where masking was previously required, except for personal service establishments and animal daycare and grooming businesses.¹⁶⁸ There were some adjustments for office buildings and schools as noted in **Annex B**. In addition, mask requirements in restaurants and other businesses that serve food were strengthened such that masks could only be removed when individuals were actively eating or drinking (previously the individual could remove their mask when seated).

Travel Measures

Canada continued to see increases in case counts and severity trends throughout September. The Atlantic Provinces experienced similar epidemiology throughout the summer, but in September, all provinces started to see an increase in cases. From September 14 to 27, a total of 1,329 new cases were reported in the Maritime provinces, a 195 per cent increase from the previous two-week period. Therefore, the CMOH announced that effective September 30, 2021, the Atlantic Bubble was suspended.¹⁶⁹ This meant that travellers from Atlantic Canada were required to follow the self-isolation and testing requirements based on their vaccination status.

Additional travel measures for partially vaccinated travellers and children under the age of 12 came into effect on September 30, 2021.¹⁶⁹ Partially vaccinated travellers were now subject to the same requirements as unvaccinated travellers, given evidence of reduced effectiveness of one dose of COVID-19 vaccine against symptomatic infection with Delta. Additionally, partially vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers were required to follow modified self-isolation measures after they received their day 7-9 negative test result. For the remainder of the 14 days following their arrival, these travellers were required to avoid contact with medically vulnerable people, not attend sporting events and large crowded settings, and not visit long-term care facilities or personal care homes.

Children under the age of 12 returning from out-of-province travel were subject to additional precautions given that they were not eligible to be vaccinated and to reduce the risk of spread in schools, thereby keeping schools open. The requirements were as follows:

¹⁶⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021\)](#) – September 18, 2021

¹⁶⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Travel – Step 2 – UPDATED\)](#) – September 30, 2021

- For the 14 days after arriving in the province, they were required to avoid vulnerable people, and could not visit long-term care facilities or personal care homes. They could not attend daycare, camp, sporting events, or large crowded settings.
- School-aged children could not attend school until they received a negative result from a COVID-19 test administered no earlier than seven days following their arrival in NL. If the results were negative, they were permitted to attend school but were still required to adhere to the other limitations described above for the full 14-day self-isolation period.
- Children travelling with partially vaccinated or unvaccinated parents or guardians were required to fully self-isolate until they received their negative test result administered on day seven or later. If the travellers chose to not get tested, they were required to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Unless they attended school, children under the age of five were not required to comply with COVID-19 testing requirements during their period of self-isolation.

Proof of Vaccination

A vaccine passport is a certified record that provides proof of vaccination for a certain purpose (e.g., enabling access to travel or a business). Premier Furey announced on September 7, 2021 that NL would pursue implementation of a COVID-19 vaccine passport.¹⁷⁰ Premier Furey further announced on September 17, 2021 that the COVID-19 vaccine passport would be mandatory in non-essential, recreational activities.¹⁷¹

The purpose of a mandatory vaccine passport was two-fold – to increase provincial COVID-19 vaccination rates, particularly in younger age groups, and to decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the community. This would help prevent widespread closures due to COVID-19 transmission and provide a means for the economy to function during the COVID-19 pandemic. The province had a high overall vaccination rate around this time, but those aged 20 to 39 years were lagging behind the provincial average. To illustrate, on September 15, 2021, 78.1 per cent of those aged 12 years and older had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, whereas 63.4 of those aged 20-29 and 66.6 per cent of those aged 30-39 had received two doses.

From September 28 to October 5, 2021, HCS, DGSNL, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information hosted a series of consultation sessions with businesses, community organizations, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations. The purpose of the consultations was to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed vaccine passport rollout.

In total, over 400 people participated in the consultation sessions from across the province. Participants were given an overview of the technical components of the vaccine passport, the draft list of businesses and activities where it would and would not be required, and supports that would be in place for businesses and residents.

To support implementation of the Proof of Vaccination Program, the Government of NL released two digital applications: NLVaxPass allowed residents to add their COVID-19 vaccination record QR code, which could be scanned at businesses and organizations, and NLVaxVerify allowed businesses and organizations to securely verify COVID-19 vaccination records. Both apps were offline solutions that did not require an Internet connection to operate; however, both apps needed to connect to the Internet

¹⁷⁰ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – September 7, 2021

¹⁷¹ [Premier of NL Tweet](#) – September 17, 2021

occasionally to update public health rules. Personal health information was not stored in the verifier application.

There were three different policy instruments used to enforce proof of vaccination requirements. The Acting CMOH issued a Special Measures Order, which applied to patrons accessing certain businesses and settings, but not employees (described below). The **COVID-19 Vaccine Regulations** came into force on December 17, 2021, which required employees and service providers of certain businesses and settings to provide proof of vaccination or an approved medical exemption in order to enter the work premises. The Government of NL also introduced a Mandatory Vaccination Policy for its employees and service providers. The **Regulations** and the Provincial Government's Mandatory Vaccination Policy were not issued under the authority of the CMOH.

The **Special Measures Order (Proof of Vaccination Status)** was signed on October 7, 2021, but did not take effect until October 22, 2021.¹⁷² The Order outlined the list of businesses and settings where proof of vaccination would be required, what was considered acceptable proof of vaccination and identification, exceptions to the requirements, and responsibilities of individuals, businesses and organizations. The Order was posted two weeks before taking effect in order to provide businesses and organizations a two-week grace period for enforcement to address any unforeseen issues and provide time for further education.

Public Health received a great deal of feedback on the Order, and as such, it underwent several revisions before taking effect on October 22, 2021.^{173,174} Changes included:

- Revising the list of businesses and settings where proof of vaccination would be required to remove auto dealerships, add conferences, conventions and trade shows, and provide clarification on the types of gatherings subject to the Order;
- Adding provisions to allow unvaccinated individuals to visit assisted living facilities, community care homes, personal care homes, and long-term care facilities under the following circumstances:
 - **End of life:** Unvaccinated individuals could visit a loved one who was in the end stages of life, upon consultation with the resident's care team. Under these circumstances, the visitor was required to remain in the resident's room, wear a mask at all times and follow the required hand hygiene practices.
 - **Essential visitors:** Unvaccinated individuals could provide assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care, communication assistance or assistance with significant behavioural symptoms of a resident where they were considered by the resident's care team to be an essential visitor/support person paramount to the resident's physical care and mental well-being. Where a resident's essential visitor/support person was not fully vaccinated by October 22, 2021, and there was no alternate visitor to take their place, the unvaccinated essential visitor/support person was permitted to continue to visit the resident only until December 17, 2021;

¹⁷² [Special Measures Order \(Proof of Vaccination Status\)](#) – October 22, 2021

¹⁷³ [Special Measures Order \(Proof of Vaccination Status – Updated\)](#) – October 22, 2021

¹⁷⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Proof of Vaccination Status – Updated October 21, 2021\)](#) – October 22, 2021

- Clarifying that employees, volunteers, contractors, vendors or suppliers were not subject to the Order (they were required to be fully vaccinated or have an approved medical exemption under the **COVID-19 Vaccine Regulations**);
- Adding an exemption for first responders to respond to an emergency call without having to show proof of vaccination;
- Adding an exemption for children aged 12 to 18 years to attend dedicated children’s religious or faith-based programs (e.g., Sunday School) without having to show proof of vaccination;
- Revising identification requirements such that individuals aged 19 years and older had two choices for verifying their identity. They could provide one piece of photo identification with their name and date of birth, or two pieces of non-photo identification that included their name and at least one must have included their date of birth; and,
- Adding requirements for approved medical exemptions.

Starting October 22, 2021, individuals 12 years of age plus three months, and older, were required to show proof of vaccination and identification in order to access certain businesses and settings. The final policy, including the list of businesses and activities to which the Order applied, is found at **Annex D**.

Outbreaks

There were four major outbreaks throughout fall 2021 on the Northern, Baie Verte, and Burin Peninsulas, and New World Island.

Northern Peninsula Outbreak

On September 6, 2021, Public Health announced a cluster of cases in the Labrador-Grenfell Health region.¹⁷⁵ At that time, there were eight confirmed cases, with the source of infection under investigation. Public Health continued to find cases in all groups of contacts, indicating community spread. There were several large gatherings involved in the investigation leading to high numbers of contacts. The outbreak was caused by the Delta variant, and there were low vaccination rates in communities in the area. Therefore, the CMOH announced that certain communities in the Northern Peninsula – East region would move to Alert Level 3 effective September 7, 2021.¹⁷⁶ This meant:

- Gyms and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could open if capacity was limited to no more than 20 people per room or ice surface and provided that physical distancing could be maintained.
- Group and team sports and recreation activities where children, youth and/or adults gathered in-person and where close proximity was required, were suspended. Individual activities such as walking tracks, gyms or private lessons could continue, as well as lessons involving members of the same household.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings where close proximity was required, were suspended. This included bands, choirs, dance and music classes. Performances and lessons involving members of the same household could continue.

¹⁷⁵ [Public Advisory](#) – September 6, 2021

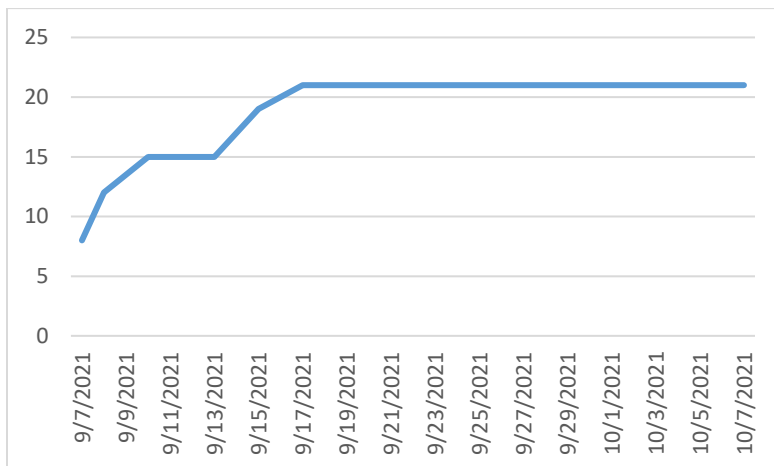
¹⁷⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3 – Certain Towns and Communities on the Northern Peninsula – East Region\)](#) – September 7, 2021

- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables.
- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Visitation was permitted provided physical distancing could be maintained between individuals outside of the household. Wakes were prohibited.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were permitted with up to 20 people provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 10 close and consistent contacts (Tight 10).
- Personal services establishment could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with guidelines developed by their professional organizations in consultation with Public Health.
- Cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, and bars and lounges were ordered to close.
- Masks were required to be worn in certain indoor public settings (the same settings where masking was previously required before removal of the mandatory mask order – see **Annex B** for details).

Out of an abundance of caution, Public Health also recommended the delayed opening of three schools in the Roddickton area to allow time for contact tracing.

As shown in **Figure 7**, newly identified cases plateaued by mid-September 2021. On September 21, 2021, communities in the Northern Peninsula – East Region moved back to Step 2 of the **Together Again Plan**.¹⁷⁷ The investigation into the cluster of cases concluded on October 7, 2021.¹⁷⁸ There were 21 confirmed cases associated with the cluster. Public Health was not able to identify a source of transmission.

Figure 7: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases associated with Northern Peninsula – East cluster, September 7 to October 7, 2021



¹⁷⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Certain Towns and Communities on the Northern Peninsula – East Region Alert Level 3 Repeal Order\)](#) – September 21, 2021

¹⁷⁸ [Public Advisory](#) – October 7, 2021

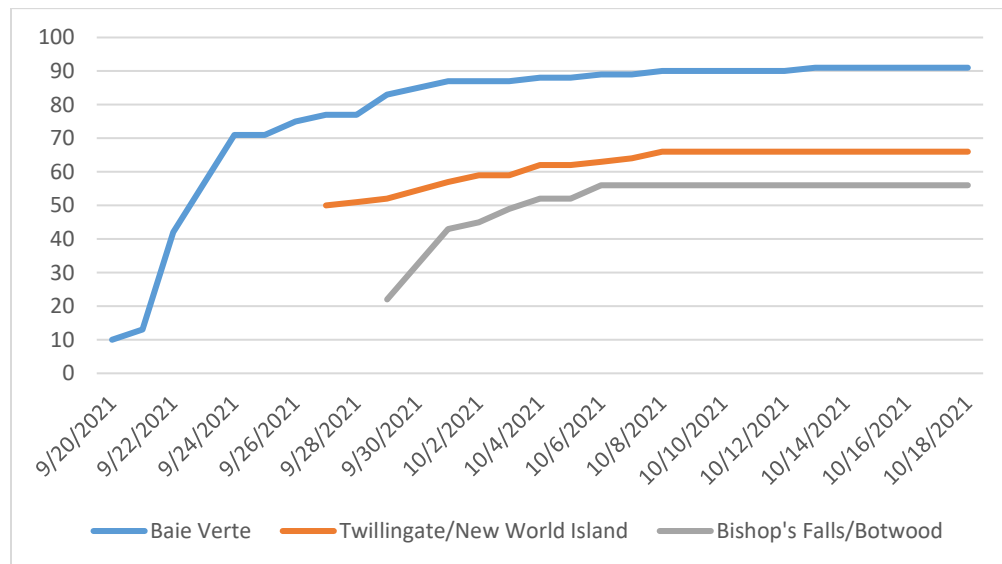
Central Health Outbreak

On September 20, 2021, Public Health announced that 10 cases had been identified at a personal care home in Baie Verte.¹⁷⁹ The source was under investigation. Central Health offered community testing in the region and implemented visitor restrictions at the home, in collaboration with the owner/operators of the facility. Because of the cases in Baie Verte and low vaccination rates in the area, towns and communities on the Baie Verte Peninsula moved to Alert Level 3 effective September 22, 2021.¹⁸⁰ This was intended to give Public Health the ability to carry out their investigation and conduct community wide testing in the area, while reducing the risk of onward transmission and spread.

The outbreak started to shift, with fewer new cases being detected in the Baie Verte region, and an increase in new cases in the Twillingate region. Therefore, Twillingate, New World Island and those towns and communities accessed via Route 340 starting at and including Boyd's Cove, moved to Alert Level 3 on September 25, 2021.¹⁸¹ Again, this was intended to give Public Health the ability to conduct their investigation while reducing onward spread. There were 10 confirmed cases associated with a primary/elementary school in Summerford, so Public Health recommended that this school close for in-person learning.

There was also a cluster announced in Bishop's Falls and Botwood on September 29, 2021, which was amongst a group that was closely socially connected.¹⁸² Given the cases in the cluster were epidemiologically linked, there was no need for a change in alert level.

Figure 8: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases associated with clusters in Central Health, September 20 to October 18, 2021



¹⁷⁹ [Public Advisory](#) – September 20, 2021

¹⁸⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3 – Towns and Communities on the Baie Verte Peninsula\)](#) – September 22, 2021

¹⁸¹ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3 – Towns and Communities accessed via Route 340 and New World Island\)](#) – September 25, 2021

¹⁸² [Public Advisory](#) – September 29, 2021

As demonstrated in **Figure 8**, after a sharp increase in cases in all three clusters, identification of new cases was slowed by mid-October 2021. As such, the Baie Verte Peninsula moved back to Step 2 of the **Together Again Plan** on October 7, 2021.¹⁸³ This change happened based on the public health investigation to date and the epidemiology in the region. While a source had not yet been determined, the risk to the public was deemed low. In addition, towns and communities accessed via Route 340 and New World Island moved back to Step 2 on October 12, 2021.¹⁸⁴

The investigation into the cluster of cases concluded on November 17, 2021.¹⁸⁵ There were 91 cases associated with the Baie Verte cluster, 66 cases associated with the Twillingate/New World Island cluster, and 56 cases associated with the Bishop's Falls/Botwood cluster. Public Health was unable to identify a source of transmission.

Burin Peninsula Outbreak

On October 22, 2021, a cluster of cases was announced in the Marystown area of the Burin Peninsula.¹⁸⁶ There were 25 confirmed cases of COVID-19 connected to the cluster at that time, with 22 of these under the age of 12. There was an outbreak at a school in Marystown with 21 students testing positive. Public Health recommended that school move to online learning, and the CMOH announced that towns and communities in the Marystown and Burin area would move to Alert Level 3 on October 23, 2021.¹⁸⁷ A day later, on October 24, 2021, Public Health also recommended that a school in Burin move to online learning.

Figure 9 shows that after a sharp increase in cases, growth of the outbreak slowed by the end of October. The area moved back to Step 2 of the **Together Again Plan** on November 5, 2021.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ [Special Measures Order \(Towns and Communities on the Baie Verte Peninsula – Alert Level 3 – Repeal Order\)](#) – October 7, 2021

¹⁸⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Towns and Communities accessed via Route 340 and New World Island Alert Level 3 Repeal Order\)](#) – October 12, 2021

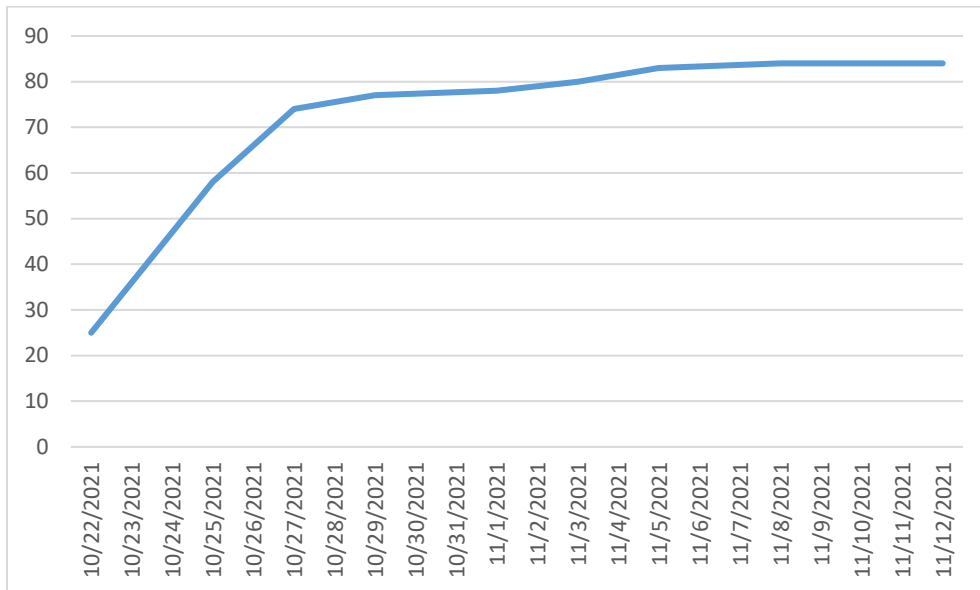
¹⁸⁵ [Public Advisory](#) – November 17, 2021

¹⁸⁶ [Public Advisory](#) – October 22, 2021

¹⁸⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3 – Towns and Communities in the Greater Marystown – Burin Area\)](#) – October 22, 2021

¹⁸⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Towns and Communities in the Greater Marystown – Burin Area – Repeal Order\)](#) – November 5, 2021

Figure 9: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases associated with Burin Peninsula cluster, October 22 to November 12, 2021



Updated Masking Requirements in Schools

Before the Burin Peninsula outbreak, COVID-19 cases in schools were often the result of transmission that occurred in the community. However, the public health investigation on the Burin Peninsula revealed that spread of COVID-19 occurred in the school through kindergarten to Grade 6. Several other Canadian jurisdictions were also reporting outbreaks in schools as well as a rising proportion of COVID-19 cases in children under 12, due to the more contagious Delta variant.

One of the goals of the provincial pandemic response was to maximize in-person learning for children in and youth in schools. Masking in younger age groups likely would have prevented some of the spread on the Burin Peninsula and the two school closures that resulted. Therefore, on November 1, 2021, the CMOH expanded masking requirements to include students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 while in the classroom.¹⁸⁹ Additionally, regulated child care centres were added to the list of indoor settings where masks were required for individuals aged five years and older. This measure was introduced in an effort to reduce the risk of COVID-19, preserve public health capacity, protect unvaccinated children, and prevent school closures, and was meant to be temporary until these children had an opportunity to be fully vaccinated.

Updated Gathering Restrictions

With NL's fourth wave concluding it was time to relax some restrictions to allow more business activities to continue. As of November 12, 2021, there were 40 active cases in the province across three RHAs, and approximately 88.7 per cent of those aged 12 and older had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine. As a result of decreasing COVID-19 cases and high vaccination rates in the province, effective November 13, 2021, capacity limits were increased for formal gatherings and select venues where proof

¹⁸⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Re-opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021\) \(Amendment\)](#) – November 1, 2021

of vaccination was required.¹⁹⁰ Capacity limits were based on whether eating or drinking occurred at the gathering. There were differential rules because in a setting where eating or drinking did not occur, individuals would wear a mask for the entire event, thereby presenting reduced risk of spread of COVID-19.

Indoor and outdoor gatherings operated by a recognized business or organization and recreational and arts facilities could operate at 100 per cent capacity, without physical distancing between seated spectators/attendees, provided the following measures were in place:

- Eating and drinking was not permitted at the gathering or venue;
- Names and contact information of all individuals in attendance was collected and retained for 14 days for the purpose of providing to public health officials for contact tracing where requested; and,
- Physical distancing of two metres could be maintained between spectators/attendees in common areas, including line-ups at ticket counters and washrooms.

Indoor and outdoor gatherings operated by a recognized business or organization and recreational and arts facilities where eating and drinking was permitted, could operate as described below, without physical distancing between seated spectators/attendees, provided the following measures were in place:

- Spectators/attendees were separated into cohorts of no more than 200 people, provided that two metres of distance between cohorts could be maintained in the seating areas;
- Names and contact information of all individuals in attendance was collected and retained for 14 days for the purpose of providing to public health officials for contact tracing where requested;
- Physical distancing of two metres could be maintained between spectators/attendees in common areas, including line-ups at ticket counters, concessions and washrooms; and,
- Eating and drinking only occurred in the seated area.

These measures were meant to balance the risk of larger groups of people gathering together with ensuring that cases and contacts could be identified quickly.

Updated Definition of Fully Vaccinated

Effective November 30, 2021, the Government of Canada expanded the list of COVID-19 vaccines that travellers could receive to be considered fully vaccinated for the purpose of travel to Canada.¹⁹¹ New additions to the list included Sinopharm, Sinovac and COVAXIN, matching the WHO Emergency Use Listing. The CMOH amended the definition of “fully vaccinated” as it pertained to travel and proof of vaccination requirements to align with the Government of Canada’s new definition.^{192,193}

On December 14, 2021, the CMOH also permitted medical deferrals for vaccination under the Proof of Vaccination Program.¹⁹³ Temporary deferrals for getting a COVID-19 vaccine may have been granted by

¹⁹⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Step 2 – Modified Gatherings\)](#) – November 13, 2021

¹⁹¹ [Government of Canada News Release](#) – November 19, 2021

¹⁹² [Special Measures Order \(Travel – Definitions Amendment\)](#) – November 30, 2021

¹⁹³ [Special Measures Order \(Proof of Vaccination Status – Deferral and Definitions Amendment\)](#) – December 14, 2021

the CMOH in the following situations: the individual required a medical intervention or unique setting to get their vaccine (e.g., conscious sedation, calming home environment); or, the individual was currently undergoing therapy or treatment that would affect their response to the vaccine. If a deferral was granted, the individual was provided with a Deferral for COVID-19 Vaccination letter signed by the CMOH that they could present at businesses and activities where proof of vaccination was required. Deferrals could only be granted by the CMOH and were time-limited in nature. Deferrals only applied to the Proof of Vaccination Program and could not be used under the **COVID-19 Vaccine Regulations** or the Provincial Government's Mandatory Vaccination Policy.

Chapter 4: Omicron (December 2021 to March 2022)

About Omicron

On November 25, 2021, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa announced that it had detected a new COVID-19 variant, B.1.1.529, otherwise known as Omicron.¹⁹⁴ Twenty-two positive cases had been recorded in the country. The number of cases and proportion of individuals testing positive (percent positivity) were both increasing quickly. The WHO quickly designated Omicron as a variant of concern on November 26, 2021, as the variant had a large number of mutations, some of which were concerning.¹⁹⁵ Preliminary evidence suggested that the mutations conferred increased risk of reinfection and higher transmissibility compared to other variants of concern. It appeared to cause less severe disease than Delta. By November 28, 2021, the variant had been detected in several additional countries in four WHO regions,¹⁹⁶ and by December 9, 2021, it had been identified in 63 countries in all six WHO regions.¹⁹⁷

The first two cases of Omicron in Canada were identified in Ontario.¹⁹⁸ Both individuals had recently travelled from Nigeria. Over the coming days, the variant was also identified in Québec,¹⁹⁹ British Columbia,²⁰⁰ and Alberta.²⁰¹ There was an outbreak declared at a university in Nova Scotia due to the Omicron variant,²⁰² which led to onward spread to New Brunswick²⁰³ and Prince Edward Island.²⁰⁴ There was also an outbreak identified at a university in Ontario.²⁰⁵

The Omicron wave eclipsed all previous waves in Canada and rapidly replaced Delta to become the predominant variant in Canada.²⁰⁶ Nationally, there were 55,542 new cases reported from December 14 to 20, 2021, an increase of 94 per cent compared to the previous week. Hospitalizations and critical care admissions were increasing in Ontario and Québec and it was anticipated that the national trend could shift similarly.

The Omicron variant was first identified in NL on December 15, 2021.²⁰⁷ Cases quickly increased over December, with 776 new cases reported from December 14 to 27, a 2,056 per cent increase compared to the previous two-week period.

¹⁹⁴ [South Africa National Institute for Communicable Diseases News Release](#) – November 25, 2021

¹⁹⁵ [WHO Statement](#) – November 26, 2021

¹⁹⁶ [WHO Technical Brief and Priority Actions for Member States](#) – November 28, 2021

¹⁹⁷ [WHO Technical Brief and Priority Actions for Member States](#) – December 10, 2021

¹⁹⁸ [Government of Ontario Statement](#) – November 28, 2021

¹⁹⁹ [CBC Article](#) – November 29, 2021

²⁰⁰ [CBC Article](#) – November 30, 2021

²⁰¹ [CBC Article](#) – November 30, 2021

²⁰² [Government of Nova Scotia News Release](#) – December 8, 2021

²⁰³ [Government of New Brunswick News Release](#) – December 13, 2021

²⁰⁴ [Government of Prince Edward Island News Release](#) – December 14, 2021

²⁰⁵ [Queen's University News Release](#) – December 10, 2021

²⁰⁶ [Update on COVID-19 in Canada: Epidemiology and Modelling](#) – January 14, 2022

²⁰⁷ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – December 15, 2021

By January 2022, evidence suggested low to very low vaccine effectiveness against Omicron infection after two doses of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.²⁰⁸ The booster dose provided better protection against infection, but effectiveness was still lower than against Delta. However, two doses of vaccine continued to provide good protection against severe outcomes, with even better protection after a booster dose. Although Omicron appeared to be less severe than Delta, record high infections meant there would be more hospitalizations and deaths. With less infectious variants fewer people were infected, so fewer people were at risk of hospitalization or death. Omicron was much more contagious than previous variants like Alpha and Delta. Even with high vaccination rates and a milder variant like Omicron, COVID-19 affected everyone differently and some people still had serious outcomes from infection.

Progression of COVID-19 Vaccinations

NL began offering COVID-19 booster doses to certain populations on November 8, 2021 when at least six months had passed after their second dose. In accordance with recommendations from NACI, booster doses were offered to:

- Adults living in long-term care or other congregate settings for seniors;
- Adults 70 years of age and older;
- Individuals who had only received two doses of the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria/COVISHIELD vaccine;
- Individuals who had only received one dose of the Janssen vaccine;
- Adults who identified as Indigenous or who lived in an Indigenous community; and,
- Adults who were frontline healthcare workers who had direct in-person contact with patients and who were vaccinated with a very short interval (less than 28 days).

Health Canada approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for use in children ages five to 11 years on November 19, 2021.²⁰⁹ This was the first vaccine authorized for this age group. Vaccinations started in NL on November 25, 2021 in public health mass vaccination clinics. Public Health also offered vaccination clinics in every school in the province before the holiday break. By December 22, 2021, 64.4 per cent of children aged five to 11 had received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

NL had a high proportion of vaccinated individuals when Omicron arrived in mid-December 2021, with approximately 92 per cent of those aged 12 years and older having received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine. However, emerging evidence indicated that vaccine effectiveness against Omicron was low after two doses. Federal modelling indicated that vaccinating children **and** providing booster doses to adults aged 18 and older could help reduce the impact of COVID-19 through 2022.²¹⁰ Therefore, on December 13, 2021, Public Health expanded eligibility for booster doses to all individuals aged 18 years and older.²¹¹ To expedite delivery of booster doses, the dosing interval was reduced from six months to 22 weeks since completion of the primary series.²¹² RHAs implemented a variety of strategies to improve access to booster doses, including walk-in clinics, specific clinics for seniors and essential workers, and adding additional clinic sites to meet demand. Pharmacists, physicians, nurse practitioners, and private employers were also engaged to support the booster dose campaign. By January 11, 2022, at least 25

²⁰⁸ [Update on COVID-19 in Canada: Epidemiology and Modelling](#) – January 14, 2022

²⁰⁹ [Government of Canada Statement](#) – November 19, 2021

²¹⁰ [Update on COVID-19 in Canada: Epidemiology and Modelling](#) – December 10, 2021

²¹¹ [Public Advisory](#) – December 13, 2021

²¹² [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – December 17, 2021

per cent of those aged 12 and older had received a third dose, though this was an underestimation due to the increase in paper-based clinics and required back entry of those records.

Availability of COVID-19 Therapeutics

On January 17, 2022, Health Canada authorized the combination of two antiviral drugs, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir (brand named Paxlovid) to treat adults with mild to moderate COVID-19 who were at high risk of progressing to serious disease, including hospitalization or death.²¹³ Before this, the only COVID-19 treatments available had to be administered in a hospital or health care setting. Paxlovid was the first COVID-19 therapy that could be administered at home.

The province's high vaccination rates, less severe disease caused by Omicron, and the availability of Paxlovid, allowed the CMOH to relax measures during the Omicron wave much sooner than in previous waves.

Response Measures

The response to Omicron quickly shifted from a containment to mitigation approach (see [Overview of Newfoundland and Labrador's Pandemic Response](#) for more information). On December 17, 2021, the CMOH stated "our goal is to keep the spread at a manageable level to prevent our health care resources from becoming overwhelmed."²¹⁴ A mitigation approach focuses on protecting vulnerable people and keeping cases and hospitalizations at a manageable level for the health system to respond, and less on identifying every single case and contact. Throughout the Omicron wave, the rate of hospitalizations and ICU admissions was an indicator that was closely monitored to determine the measures necessary to control spread.

Given the high vaccination rates in NL, the population was highly protected against severe outcomes, which supported adoption of a mitigation approach. NL had the highest vaccination rate in the country. This allowed Public Health to slowly remove public health measures and allow resumption of social and business activities without overwhelming the health care system. When public health measures were eased, Public Health continued to closely monitor cases, hospitalizations, and modelling data to manage disease spread and monitor the province's health care capacity.

Hospitalizations remained steady and at manageable level throughout the Omicron wave, which indicated that the approach to implementing and easing public health measures was effective at managing spread.

Decisions to adjust measures during the Omicron wave were based on a number of indicators including:

- The epidemiology in NL and elsewhere in Canada;
- Test positivity rates;
- Extent of community transmission;
- Characteristics of the circulating variant;
- The rate of hospitalizations and ICU admissions; and,
- Public health capacity to respond.

²¹³ [Government of Canada Statement](#) – January 17, 2022

²¹⁴ [COVID-19 Media Availability](#) – December 17, 2021

Travel Measures

In response to the outbreaks at universities in Nova Scotia and Ontario, the CMOH ordered that, effective December 17, 2021, all individuals arriving in NL who visited a post-secondary institution outside the province in the previous 14 days was required to get a COVID-19 molecular test upon arrival in NL (day 0, 1 or 2), regardless of vaccination status.²¹⁵ Fully vaccinated travellers were not required to self-isolate while they were waiting for their test result. If travellers chose not to get tested, they were required to self-isolate for 14 days. The intention of this order was to enable Public Health to quickly identify and isolate new cases of the Omicron variant to reduce onward spread.

Omicron spread very quickly across the country and it was becoming clear that individuals travelling from post-secondary institutions were not the only risk of imported cases. Additionally, the province had received a free supply of rapid antigen tests (RATs) from the Government of Canada, which individuals could use at home to determine if they had COVID-19. However, RATs were less sensitive than COVID-19 molecular tests (meaning there was a greater chance of a false negative result). Use of RATs in a series, rather than a single standalone test, improved test performance. When testing high-risk individuals (e.g., close contacts, those with symptoms, travellers), serial testing reduced the uncertainty of a single negative test result and increased the likelihood of case identification early in the infection. Performing at least two to three tests 48 hours apart increased the chance that an individual would be tested when their viral loads were highest.

With the limitations of RATs in mind, and the evidence of low vaccine effectiveness against Omicron infection, the CMOH ordered that, effective 3:00 p.m. NST on December 21, 2021, all fully vaccinated travellers were required to self-isolate for five days after their arrival in the province and complete a RAT on each of the five days upon arrival, with the first test taken on the day of arrival.²¹⁶ The self-isolation period was set at five days to align with the much shorter incubation period for Omicron (see [Symptoms](#) for more information). Self-isolation ended when 120 hours passed since the traveller's arrival, provided each RAT result was negative. If they did not complete the testing regimen, they were required to self-isolate for 14 days.

Partially vaccinated and unvaccinated children under 12 travelling with fully vaccinated parents or guardians were also required to self-isolate and complete a RAT each day for five days. Children under five were not required to complete the tests but they were required to self-isolate along with their parents/guardians.

RATs were distributed to all travellers, aged five years and older, at airports and the Port aux Basques ferry terminal, free of charge. Each kit contained five tests and instructions for use. Anyone arriving by motor vehicle or rail from the province of Québec could obtain their test package from either the Wabush or Happy Valley-Goose Bay airports by showing their Travel Form reference number.

RATs were given to partially vaccinated or unvaccinated travellers but completing them was not mandatory.

²¹⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Requirements for Visitors from Post-Secondary Institutions\)](#) – December 17, 2021

²¹⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Travel – Step 2 – December 21, 2021 Update\)](#) – December 21, 2021

Change in Alert Levels

It was expected that case counts would continue to rapidly increase based on what was seen in other jurisdictions. In mid-December 2021, Delta was still circulating in addition to Omicron. The province had very high vaccination rates but several layers of protection were needed against the Omicron variant to curb spread. Vaccinations alone were not enough. New restrictions were introduced province-wide in order to reduce the number of contacts people had, reduce the risk of province-wide spread, and to keep businesses open to the greatest extent possible. The restrictions were referred to as a modified Alert Level 2:²¹⁷

- Effective December 18, 2021, out-of-region individual and group travel for amateur sport, arts and recreation activities, such as competitions and training camps, was not permitted. Tournaments were also not permitted.
- Effective December 20, 2021:
 - Weddings, funerals, burials, and religious and cultural ceremonies were limited to 50 per cent of the venue's capacity where proof of vaccination was required, and 25 per cent capacity where proof of vaccination was not required.
 - Other formal gatherings were limited to 50 per cent of the venue's capacity. Larger venues with an approved operating plan could operate at higher than 50 per cent of the venue's capacity.
 - Recreational and arts facilities (e.g., performance spaces, cinemas, bingo halls, arenas, gym and fitness facilities) could follow the limits for formal gatherings.
 - Organizers of formal gatherings, and recreational and arts facilities, were required to collect names and contact information for all attendees and retain this information for 14 days for the purposes of public health contact tracing, where required.
 - Bars and lounges were limited to 50 per cent capacity with physical distancing between patrons seated at adjacent tables.
 - Restaurants were limited to 75 per cent capacity with physical distancing between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Self-serve buffets were prohibited.
 - Retail stores could operate without any specific occupancy limit provided physical distancing could be maintained.
 - Informal gatherings in a person's home or property were limited to a maximum of 25 people.

Public Health was seeing rapid spread of COVID-19 in central Newfoundland. Active cases in Central Health jumped from four to 37 in two days (December 17 to 19, 2021). Spread was concentrated in certain communities in the region. Therefore, the CMOH announced that Badger, Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander and Twillingate would move to Alert Level 3 effective December 20, 2021.²¹⁸ This meant:

- Amateur sport and recreation activities were limited to team practice and training only. Competition and training with other teams, even within an association, were not permitted.
- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables.

²¹⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Modified Alert Level 2\)](#) – December 18, 2021

²¹⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Alert Level 3 – Towns and Communities in the Central Region\)](#) – December 19, 2021

- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Visitation at funeral homes/places of worship was permitted provided physical distancing could be maintained between individuals from different households. Wakes were prohibited.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were limited to no more than 100 people or 50 per cent of the venue's capacity, whichever was less, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Gym and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could follow the limits for formal gatherings.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 20 close and consistent contacts (Steady 20).
- Personal services establishments could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with guidelines developed by their professional organizations in consultation with Public Health.
- Cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, and bars and lounges were ordered to close.

Over the coming week, active outbreaks continued in Western, Central, and Eastern Health; active cases in the province increased from 34 to 223 in one week (December 15 to 23, 2021), an increase of 556 per cent compared to the previous week. This trend was expected to continue. Health care workers were redeployed from other areas in order to support COVID-19 vaccinations and testing, putting health system capacity at risk. Therefore, the CMOH extended Alert Level 3 restrictions to the entire province effective December 23, 2021,²¹⁹ with some modifications to what is noted above:

- Weddings, funerals, burials, and religious and cultural ceremonies were limited to no more than 100 people or 50 per cent of the venue's capacity where proof of vaccination was required, whichever was less, and 25 per cent capacity where proof of vaccination was not required.
- Group and team sports and recreation activities where children, youth and/or adults gathered in-person and where close proximity was required were suspended, except for amateur sport and recreation activities, which were limited to team practice and training only. Competition and training with other teams, even within an association was not permitted. Individual activities such as walking tracks, gyms or private lessons could continue, as well as lessons involving members of the same household.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings where close proximity was required were suspended. This included bands, choirs, and dance and music classes.

Performances and lessons involving members of the same household could continue.

As expected, the number of active cases dramatically increased over the Christmas holidays from 34 to over 3,500 in just over two weeks (**Figure 10**). Epidemic growth was outpacing public health case management capacity, which meant that epidemiological data to inform decisions on public health measures was now limited. The goal of identifying every case and contact was no longer achievable with the number of new cases breaking records every day. The goal shifted to slowing the spread of disease so that everyone did not get infected all at once, which would have overwhelmed health system capacity. Therefore, the province moved to Alert Level 4 effective January 4, 2022,²²⁰ which meant:

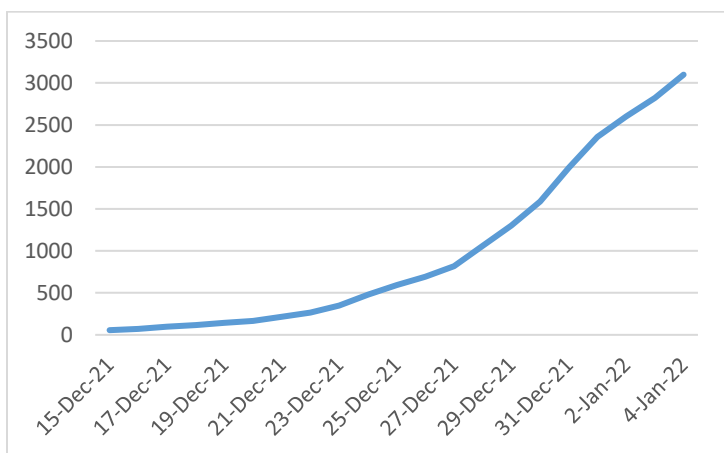
²¹⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Province-Wide Alert Level 3\)](#) – December 22, 2021

²²⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Province-Wide Alert Level 4\)](#) – January, 4 2022

- Group and team sports and recreation activities where children, youth and/or adults gathered in-person and where close proximity was required remained suspended, except for amateur sport and recreation activities, which were limited to team practice and training only. Competition and training with other teams, even within an association was not permitted. Individual activities such as walking tracks, gyms or private lessons could continue, as well as lessons involving members of the same household.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings where close proximity was required also remained suspended. This included bands, choirs, and dance and music classes. Performances and lessons involving members of the same household could continue.
- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. There was a maximum of six people per table.
- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Limited visitation at funeral homes/places of worship was permitted with members of one household visiting at a time. Wakes remained prohibited.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were limited to no more than 50 people or 25 per cent of the venue's capacity, whichever was less, provided physical distancing could be maintained. Dancing was prohibited.
- Gym and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could follow the limits for formal gatherings.
- Larger venues with an approved operating plan could operate at a capacity higher than 25 per cent.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 10 close and consistent contacts (Tight 10).
- Personal services establishments could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with guidelines developed by their professional organizations in consultation with Public Health.
- Cinemas, performance spaces, bingo halls, and bars and lounges were ordered to remain closed.

Alert Level 4 would be reassessed in two weeks, on January 17, 2022.

Figure 10: Total number of active COVID-19 cases in NL, December 15, 2021 to January 4, 2022



After several reassessments by the CMOH and her team, Alert Level 4 continued beyond January 17. Schools reopened for in-person learning on January 25, 2022.²²¹ At this time, the province was seeing an average of 300 laboratory-confirmed cases per day. With school reopening, cases were expected to increase due to direct and indirect exposures through school, which could have resulted in increased hospitalizations. However, a goal of the provincial pandemic response was to keep schools open as much as possible, with schools being the last to close and the first to open. An increase in cases due to school reopening was considered acceptable to Public Health considering the negative impacts on children and youth if schools were to remain closed. It was necessary to maintain public health measures in the community in order to prevent another increase in cases due to non-school related activities.

Public health measures were also implemented in schools to reduce the risk of spread. Public Health provided all staff and students in K-12 schools with RATs to use before returning to class. They were instructed to do one RAT three days before school started and another the morning of January 25 before going to school. This was meant to reduce the risk of someone attending school while infected. They were also given additional tests to keep on hand for use when symptomatic.

De-escalation of Measures

Measures were gradually relaxed over the course of January and February 2022, starting first with relaxation of travel measures followed by adjustments in restrictions for businesses and gatherings.

Travel Measures

Before the Omicron wave, travel measures were an effective way to reduce the risk of imported cases of COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 activity in NL was usually lower than the rest of Canada; therefore, other jurisdictions posed a risk to NL. After Omicron arrived and cases exploded, importation was no longer the province's greatest risk as there was widespread community transmission in the province. Gradual adjustments to travel measures began in mid-January, less than one month after introduction of strengthened travel restrictions.

Requirements for flight crews were relaxed effective January 15, 2022, such that they could follow modified self-isolation measures for five days following their arrival.²²² They were required to complete a RAT each day for five days following their arrival, or their duration of stay in the province if less than five days. Modified isolation meant that during the five-day period, the requirements for crew on any plane or helicopter were as follows:

- They had to avoid contact with medically vulnerable people;
- They were not permitted to attend sporting events and large crowded settings; and,
- They were not permitted to visit long-term care facilities or personal care homes.

This reflected the level of risk flight crews posed to the population given they did not interact with a large number of people while travelling and they were required to be fully vaccinated as federally regulated transport sector workers.²²³ These measures were not permitted if the individual tested positive on any of the RATs.

²²¹ [Public Advisory](#) – January 20, 2022

²²² [Special Measures Order \(Travel – Air Flight Crew\)](#) – January 14, 2022

²²³ [Government of Canada Backgrounder](#) – October 6, 2021

On January 22, 2022, the self-isolation period for fully vaccinated travellers was reduced from 120 hours to 24 hours, provided they received two negative RAT results administered at least 24 hours apart.²²⁴ These travellers were still required to complete a RAT each day for five days and could stay out of self-isolation as long as all results were negative. The period of modified isolation was also reduced to 24 hours for fully vaccinated rotational workers and all flight crew.²²⁵ The additional testing requirements for visitors from post-secondary institutions were removed.

Two weeks later, cases were trending downward and hospitalizations remained steady. Therefore, effective February 5, 2022, self-isolation requirements were removed for fully vaccinated travellers, but they were still required to complete a RAT each day for five days upon arrival.²²⁶ This was meant to balance the risk of no self-isolation by providing a means for early identification of cases. There were no changes for partially vaccinated or unvaccinated cases.

Businesses and Gatherings

Public Health waited two weeks after schools reopened before adjusting public health measures in order to assess the impact on cases and hospitalizations. By February, the 7-day rolling average of laboratory-confirmed cases was trending downward while the number of people in hospital due to COVID-19 severity remained stable. Therefore, the CMOH announced the province would move to a modified Alert Level 3 on February 7, 2022.²²⁷

- Amateur sport and recreation activities were limited to team practice and training only. Competition and training with other teams, even within an association, were not permitted.
- Gym and fitness facilities, dance studios, and arenas could operate at 50 per cent capacity per rink surface, playing space or room, with physical distancing.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings were limited to practices, rehearsals and performances within their own practice or performance group, with physical distancing maintained where possible. This included bands, choirs and music classes.
- Restaurants, bars and lounges could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. The maximum number of people permitted per table was increased to 10. Patrons were permitted to eat or drink while seated only. Dance floors were not permitted.
- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Limited visitation at funeral homes/places of worship was permitted with members of one household visiting at a time. Wakes remained prohibited.
- Formal gatherings run by a recognized business or organization were limited to no more than 50 people or 25 per cent of the venue's capacity, whichever was less,²²⁸ provided physical distancing could be maintained. Dancing was prohibited.
- Cinemas, performance spaces, and bingo halls could follow the limits for formal gatherings.

²²⁴ [Special Measures Order \(Reopening - Travel - Step 2 - December 21, 2021 Update\)\(Self-Isolation Amendment\)](#) – January 22, 2022

²²⁵ [Special Measures Order \(Travel – Air Flight Crew – Self-Isolation Update\)](#) – January 22, 2022

²²⁶ [Special Measures Order \(Re-Opening – Travel – Step 2 – February 5, 2022 Update\)](#) – February 5, 2022

²²⁷ [Special Measures Order \(Modified Alert Level 3\)](#) – February 7, 2022

²²⁸ [Special Measures Order \(Modified Alert Level 3 – Gatherings Clarification\)](#) – February 7, 2022

- Larger venues with an approved operating plan could operate at a capacity higher than 25 per cent.
- Informal gatherings were limited to individuals within the same household and their 20 close and consistent contacts (Steady 20).
- Personal services establishments could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with guidelines developed by their professional organizations in consultation with Public Health.

By the third week back to school, there had been no significant impact on the number of laboratory-confirmed cases. Although laboratory-confirmed cases did not represent the total number of cases in the province due to restricted testing criteria and widespread use of at-home RATs, it was still an important indicator to determine the magnitude of spread. In addition, there was no change in the rate of hospitalizations in NL, and hospitalizations across Canada were decreasing.

The CMOH deemed it safe to relax measures a week later effective Monday, February 14, 2022.²²⁹

- Amateur sport and recreation activities could play games within their usual region against one single team per day. Tournaments were not permitted.
- Group arts and cultural activities that involved in-person gatherings were limited to practices, rehearsals and performances within their own practice or performance group, with physical distancing maintained where possible. This included bands, choirs and music classes.
- Restaurants, bars and lounges could open for in-person dining at 50 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. The maximum number of people permitted per table was increased to 10. Patrons were permitted to eat or drink while seated only. Dance floors were not permitted.
- Retail stores could open at reduced capacity, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Limited visitation at funeral homes/places of worship was permitted with members of one household visiting at a time. Wakes remained prohibited.
- Weddings, funerals, burials, and religious and cultural ceremonies were limited to 50 per cent of the venue's capacity where proof of vaccination was required, and 25 per cent capacity where proof of vaccination was not required. The expanded capacity came into effect on February 12, 2022 for faith-based gatherings as most services took place over the weekend and attendees were physically distanced wearing masks.
- Other formal gatherings were limited to 50 per cent of the venue's capacity. Larger venues with an approved operating plan could operate at higher than 50 per cent of the venue's capacity.
- Recreational and arts facilities (e.g., performance spaces, cinemas, bingo halls, arenas, gym and fitness facilities) could follow the limits for formal gatherings. Food and drink were permitted only while seated and where physical distancing could be maintained.
- Informal gatherings in a person's home were limited to 20 people.
- Personal services establishments could remain open in accordance with public health guidelines.
- Private health care clinics could remain open in accordance with guidelines developed by their professional organizations in consultation with Public Health.

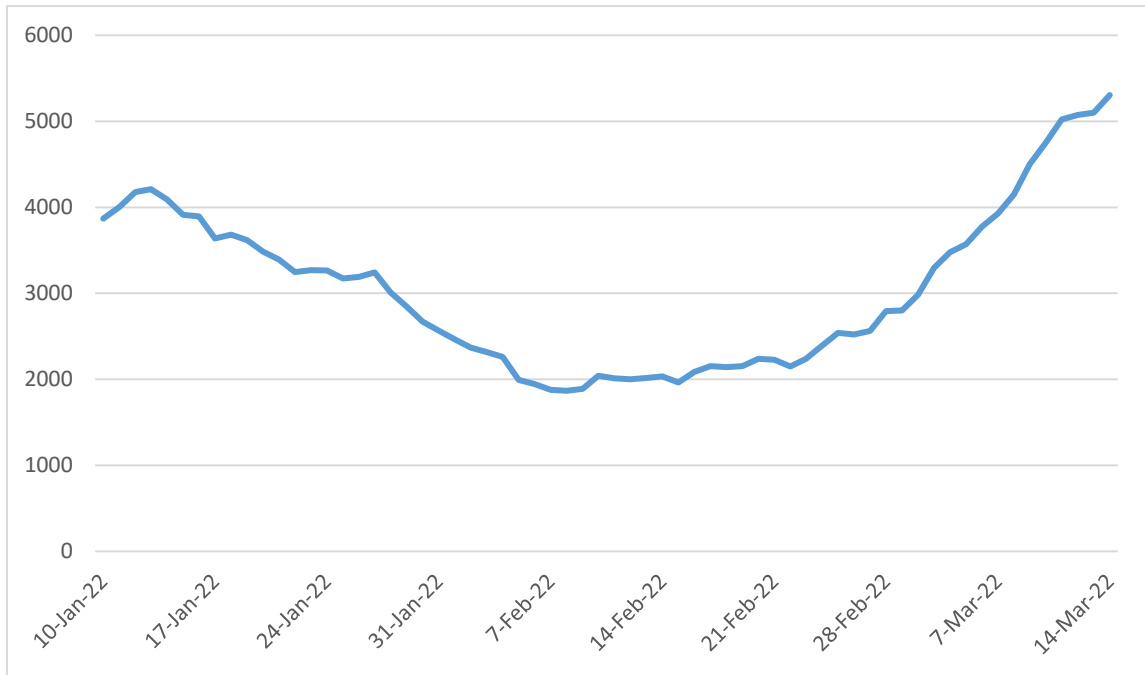
²²⁹ [Special Measures Order \(Activities and Gatherings Restrictions\)](#) – February 10, 2022

It was at this point that Public Health stopped using Alert Levels to describe current restrictions in place. With restrictions changing rapidly, it was difficult to make an association between the current restrictions and Alert Levels. Instead, the list of current restrictions were posted on the provincial COVID-19 website, as well as any planned upcoming restrictions that had been announced.

The 2022 Reopening Plan was released on February 16, 2022 (**Annex E**). It provided an overview of the steps that would be taken to remove all public health measures by March 14, 2022. Laboratory-confirmed cases remained stable (as shown in **Figure 11**) and there was a reduction in hospitalizations (from 23 to 16 from February 14 to 21, 2022). Outbreaks in congregative living settings for seniors were closely monitored, and most residents were recovering from infections and did not require hospitalization. With 94 per cent of those aged 12 years and older having received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, this showed that vaccines were working well against severe outcomes. Additionally, the medication Paxlovid was available to prevent severe disease in higher-risk adults. With these factors in mind, in accordance with the Plan, on February 21, 2022, the following measures were relaxed:²³⁰

- Amateur sport and recreation activities could play games outside their usual region against one single team per day. Tournaments were not permitted.
- All restrictions were removed from retail stores (except mandatory masking).
- Capacity at gym and fitness facilities was expanded to 75 per cent capacity per rink surface, playing space or room, provided physical distancing could be maintained.
- Weddings, funerals, burials, and religious and cultural ceremonies were limited to 75 per cent of the venue's capacity where proof of vaccination was required, and 50 per cent capacity where proof of vaccination was not required.
- Other formal gatherings were limited to 50 per cent of the venue's capacity. Larger venues with an approved operating plan could operate at higher than 50 per cent of the venue's capacity.
- Visitation at funeral homes/places of worship were limited to 50 per cent capacity per room. Wakes held outside of a funeral home or place of worship could resume with up to 25 people.
- Informal gatherings in a person's home or property were limited to 25 people.
- Restaurants could open for in-person dining at 75 per cent capacity where physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Patrons were permitted to eat or drink while seated only.
- Other venues, including bars and lounges, cinemas, performance spaces, and bingo halls, remained limited at 50 per cent capacity per room with physical distancing.

²³⁰ [Special Measures Order \(Activities and Gatherings Restrictions – Updated February 21, 2022\)](#) -February 21, 2022

Figure 11: Total number of active COVID-19 cases in NL, January 10 to March 14, 2022

Based on several indicators such as the active case count, increased PCR testing and wastewater testing, by late February Public Health was seeing an increase in COVID-19 activity (see **Figure 11**). This was expected as restrictions eased. Despite this, the hospitalization rate remained relatively stable over February and at manageable levels. More restrictions were lifted on February 28, 2022:²³¹

- Limits at public visitations were increased to 75 per cent capacity per room.
- Capacity at bars and lounges increased to 75 per cent capacity provided physical distancing could be maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Eating and drinking were only permitted while seated. Dance floors were permitted, but masks were required to be worn on the dance floor.
- Performance spaces, cinemas, and bingo halls could operate at 75 per cent capacity.
- The additional restrictions that were in place since October 2021 for religious and faith-based services where proof of vaccination was not required (e.g., masking required at all times, prohibition on congregational singing, etc.) were removed.²³²
- All other measures effective February 21 remained in effect.

Removal of Special Measures Orders

Effective February 28, 2022, all travel restrictions were removed.²³³ Travellers were no longer required to self-isolate, get tested, or complete the Travel Form before arriving in NL, regardless of vaccination status. Those travelling to NL from outside of Canada were still subject to the Government of Canada's

²³¹ [Special Measures Order \(Activities and Gatherings Restrictions – Updated February 28, 2022\)](#) – February 28, 2022

²³² [Special Measures Order \(Proof of Vaccination Status – Religious and Faith Based Organizations Amendment\)](#) – February 28, 2022

²³³ [Special Measures Order \(Travel Repeal Order\)](#) – February 28, 2022

testing, quarantine and entry restrictions. This was the first time in nearly two years that travel restrictions were not in place.

By March 9, 2022, the active case count was 3,675 and the total case count was 28,103. The actual number of people in NL that had COVID was much higher, estimated at about 15 to 20 per cent of the population. The combination of a milder variant, a high vaccination rate and growing natural immunity from infection significantly reduced the impacts of COVID-19. Despite the fact that NL was experiencing community spread, the hospitalization rate remained stable and manageable.

The rest of the Special Measures Orders relating to capacity limits, physical distancing requirements at businesses, mandatory masking in indoor public spaces, and proof of vaccination requirements, were repealed on March 14, 2022.²³⁴ This was also when the Minister of HCS declared that the COVID-19 public health emergency was no longer in effect.²³⁵

²³⁴ [Repeal of all Special Measures Orders](#) – March 14, 2022

²³⁵ [Cancellation of Public Health Emergency](#) – March 14, 2022

Conclusion

The **PHPPA** came into force on July 1, 2019. It enabled the province to address gaps in the previous legislation, which was enacted over 50 years ago, and to embrace best practices in public health from other jurisdictions. The new legislation aimed to help the public health workforce to respond quickly to emerging challenges like the potential for fast-moving infectious diseases. It clearly identified the roles and responsibilities of the Minister of HCS and public health officials, including the CMOH, regional Medical Officers of Health, and Environmental Health Officers.

The enactment of the new Act could not have come at a better time, just six months before SARS-CoV-2 was first identified in China on December 31, 2019. The legislation gives extensive authority to the CMOH during a public health emergency. When the legislation was drafted, public health officials never thought that the first public health emergency declared under section 27 of the **PHPPA** would last for nearly two years. In total, the public health emergency was extended 48 times for 14-days periods, and there were 125 Special Measures Orders issued under section 28 of the **PHPPA**.

The COVID-19 public health emergency was unprecedented. At the time of writing, COVID-19 is still circulating widely in NL, Canada, and the world, with increasing activity in many jurisdictions due to the highly infectious BA.5 sublineage of Omicron, which also poses higher risk of re-infection. The benefit of having lived with this virus for over two years is that public health officials continually learned about it as time and research progressed. This report illustrates how measures over time were adjusted based on the level of a risk, including vaccine coverage, and the best evidence available on the characteristics of the virus. As an example, the first iteration of Alert Level 4 in May 2020 looked different from the Alert Level 4 of January 2022. As well, measures were generally more relaxed as vaccination coverage increased in the population.

While most public health measures were lifted when the public health emergency was cancelled, some did remain:

- Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts were still recommended to follow public health guidelines for isolation and testing.
- The **COVID-19 Vaccine Regulations**, which required employees of certain businesses and organizations to be fully vaccinated in order to work, remained in place, as did the Provincial Government's Mandatory Vaccination Policy for public service employees. The **Regulations** and **Policy** were not made under the authority of the CMOH.
- Visitor restrictions remained in place at all health facilities in the province in order to protect those most vulnerable, and masks were required to be worn in these facilities.
- Public health measures remained in place in K-12 schools to protect children and youth (e.g., masking, cohorting).
- Public Health continued to provide rapid tests to staff working in settings with vulnerable populations to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in these high-risk settings. Rapid test kits

were also provided to schools, daycares, and other special circumstances to reduce the risk of spread.

While these were not the level of restrictions the population was accustomed to, they did offer protection to those most at risk.

Personal public health measures continue to be strongly encouraged, including wearing a mask, practicing physical distancing, improving indoor ventilation, and staying at home when sick, to reduce the risk of COVID-19. Public Health also strongly recommends that everyone receive every COVID-19 vaccine dose that they are eligible for.

If poorly managed, the COVID-19 pandemic could have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of hospitalizations in Canada. The combination of restrictions and vaccinations were effective at preventing severe outcomes. Based on a study done by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canada could have seen up to 34 million cases, two million hospitalizations, and 800,000 deaths from COVID-19.²³⁶ As of July 22, 2022, Canada has had approximately four million cases, 169,500 hospitalizations, and 42,400 deaths, which is significantly lower than what could have had happened without public health measures. The success of NL's response, particularly in the second half of the public health emergency, undoubtedly resulted from the province's high vaccination rates and concerted efforts to increase vaccine uptake, as well as the public's compliance in following public health measures.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are known for supporting one another through difficult times. The dedication of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in doing their part to protect their communities reflected the powerful sense of community and togetherness in NL that was palpable throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. When it was time to get the shot, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rolled up their sleeves and made the choice to get vaccinated, resulting in the highest vaccination rates in Canada. The success of the province's pandemic response would have been nothing without the population's hard work and efforts.

²³⁶ Ogden NH, Turgeon P, Fazil A, Clark J, Gabriele-Rivet V, Tam T, Ng V. Counterfactuals of effects of vaccination and public health measures on COVID-19 cases in Canada: What could have happened? *Can Commun Dis Rep* 2022;48(7/8):292–302. <https://doi.org/10.14745/ccdr.v48i78a01>

Annex A: Summary Table of Special Measures Orders (SMOs)

NO.	DATE	TITLE	SUMMARY
1.	March 18, 2020	Special Measures Order	50 people gatherings, restaurants closed for in person dining
2.	March 20, 2020	SMO (Amending Order)	Self-Isolation for Travelers
3.	March 20, 2020	SMO (Exemption Order)	Self-Isolation Exemption for certain asymptomatic workers
4.	March 21, 2020	SMO (Exemption Order)	Expansion of categories of asymptomatic workers
5.	March 23, 2020	SMO (Revised Order)	General lock down – gatherings limited to 10 people, closure of personal services, certain retail stores, and restrictions on long-term care and personal care home visitation
6.	March 24, 2020	SMO (Amendment)	Closure of private health clinics for in-person care
7.	March 25, 2020	SMO (Revised Exemption Order)	Adds asymptomatic health care workers to category of workers exempted from self-isolation
8.	March 25, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 2)	Caul's Funeral Home (self-isolation requirement)
9.	March, 25, 2020 (effective March 26)	SMO (Exemption Order)	Exemption to gatherings for House of Assembly
10.	March 30, 2020	SMO (Amendment No.3)	Gatherings restricted to 5 people and prohibition on sale of scratch and pull tab lottery tickets
11.	March 31 (orders 1-4 effective March 30, order #5 effective March 31)	SMO (Amendment No. 3)	Adds campsite restrictions
12.	April 14, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 4)	Personal care homes and long term care staff cross-facility work restrictions
13.	April 17, 2020	SMO (Campsite Exemption Order)	Campsites open for permanent residents
14.	April 22, 2020	SMO (Updated Exemption Order)	Add agriculture workers to self-isolation exemption
15.	April 22, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 5)	Kearl Lake (imposes self-isolation and contact to 811)
16.	April 23, 2020 (orders 1-3 effective noon on April 24 and order 2 effective noon on April 27)	SMO (Amendment No. 6)	Declaration form, self-isolation plan and availability for contact required

17.	April 24, 2020 (effective noon on April 27)	SMO (Amendment No. 7)	Employers to provide self-isolation plans for foreign workers
18.	April 25, 2020 (effective noon on April 27)	SMO (Amendment No. 8)	Requires motor vehicle travelers from QC to stop at Labrador border
19.	April 28, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 9)	Personal care home and long term care facilities' workers restricted from working elsewhere
20.	April 29, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 10)	Restrictions on workers, admissions and visitors in assisted living facilities
21.	April 29, 2020 (effective May 4, 2020)	SMO (Amendment No. 11)	Travel restrictions
22.	May 4, 2020 (effective May 5)	SMO (House of Assembly Exemption Order # 2)	Gathering size exemption in HOA
23.	May 5, 2020	SMO (Travel Exemption Order)	Exemptions to travel restrictions
24.	May 11, 2020	SMO (General)	Gatherings restricted to 10 – consolidation of some previous SMOs
25.	May 15, 2020	SMO (Travel)	Consolidation of SMOs dated April 25 and April 29 and restatement of self-isolation requirement
26.	May 16, 2020	SMO (Declaration Exemption Order)	Exemptions to requirement to complete declaration form
27.	May 16, 2020	SMO (Self Isolation Exemption Order)	Add attending school to QC-Labrador border exemptions
28.	May 29, 2020	SMO (Self Isolation Exemption Order)	Adds rotational workers and medevac staff
29.	June 8, 2020	SMO (General – Alert Level 3)	Eases restrictions including gatherings increased to 20; restaurants re-opened for in-person dining
30.	June 10, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 10) (Assisted Living Facilities Visitation Amendment)	Visitation limited to 1 designated person per resident
31.	June 10, 2020	SMO (General – Alert Level 3) (Personal Care Homes Visitation Amendment)	Visitation limited to 1 designated person per resident
32.	June 10, 2020	SMO (General – Alert Level 3)	Update to personal care home visitation
33.	June 12, 2020	SMO (Amendment No. 10) (Assisted Living Facilities Amendments)	Prohibition on routine and short-term admissions unless urgent
34.	June 25, 2020	SMO (Repeal of Amendment No. 5 – Kearn Lake)	Repeals SMO dated April 22, 2020

35.	June 25, 2020	SMO (General – Alert Level 2)	Re-opening, increase of gatherings to 50 people
36.	June 25, 2020	SMO (Labrador-Quebec Border Amendment)	Easing of restrictions for cross-border travel between certain Lab-QC communities
37.	July 3, 2020	SMO (Atlantic Travel Amendments)	Exemption from self-isolation for residents of Atlantic Canada
38.	July 8, 2020	SMO (General Alert Level 2) (Bar Establishments Amendment)	Capacity restricted to 50 % and dance floors prohibited
39.	August 24, 2020	SMO (General – Alert Level 2) (Gatherings Amendment)	Increases gatherings to 100
40.	August 24, 2020 (signed August 17)	SMO (Masks)	Mandatory mask wearing in indoor public settings
41.	August 24, 2020 (signed August 24)	SMO (Masks)	Replaces SMO signed on August 17 and clarifies the wearing of mask in workplaces
42.	August 25, 2020	SMO (Self-Isolation Exemption Order) (Rotational Workers)	Easing of restrictions for rotational workers to attend medical/dental appointments
43.	September 3, 2020 (effective September 4 with Order No. 4 effective September 9)	SMO (Self-Isolation Exemption Order) (Rotational Workers)	Modified self-isolation with negative COVID-19 test
44.	September 9, 2020 (effective September 10)	SMO (Restatement of Amendment No. 10)	Increases designated visitors to 6 per resident in an assisted living facility, removes staff cross-facility work restrictions
45.	September 9, 2020 (effective September 10)	SMO (Repeal of Amendment No. 9)	Personal care home and long term care facilities' staff permitted to work elsewhere
46.	September 23, 2020	SMO (Revised Self-Isolation Exemption Order)	Removes rotational workers as there is a SMO specific to them and adds law enforcement to categories of workers exempted from self-isolation
47.	November 23, 2020 (effective November 25)	SMO (Revised Travel Exemption Order)	Atlantic Canadians permitted to enter NL but must comply with SMOs
48.	November 23, 2020 (effective November 25)	SMO (Revised Self-Isolation Exemption Order) (Rotational Workers)	Clarifies modified self-isolation, requires mask wearing for members of the household and restricts their visitation to certain public places (i.e ltc)

49.	November 27, 2020	SMO (Updated Self-Isolation Exemption Order)	Expands self-isolation exemption to residents of QC Lower North Shore area
50.	December 9, 2020 (effective December 10)	SMO (General – Alert Level 2) (Updated)	Personal gatherings limited to 20 people
51.	February 8, 2021	SMO (Personal Care Homes, Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities)	Restrictions on group activities for residents of homes and facilities in Metro St. John’s area
52.	February 8, 2021 (effective @2pm)	SMO (Extracurricular Activities)	Restrictions on indoor sport and group activities for residents in Metro St. John’s area
53.	February 9, 2021 (effective February 10)	SMO (St. John’s Metropolitan Area)	Restrictions imposed in St. John’s Metro area
54.	February 10, 2021 (effective @3:30 pm)	SMO (Extracurricular Activities Outside of St. John’s Metropolitan Area)	Restrictions on indoor sport and group activities for residents outside of Metro St. John’s area
55.	February 10, 2021 (effective February 11)	SMO (St. John’s Metropolitan Area) (Updated)	Level 5 like restrictions in St. John’s Metro area (gatherings limited to 10)
56.	February 12, 2021	SMO (General – Alert Level 5)	Province wide lock down (gatherings limited to 5)
57.	February 12, 2021	SMO (Personal Care Homes, Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities) (Updated)	Restrictions on visitation and suspension of group activities)
58.	February 13, 2021	SMO (Rotational Workers – Alert Level 5)	Mandatory self-isolation for rotational workers during Alert Level 5
59.	February 26, 2021 (effective February 27)	SMO (Masks) (Schools Amendment)	Mandatory mask wearing while seated
60.	February 26, 2021 (effective February 27)	SMO (Alert Level 5 – Avalon Peninsula)	Lock down on Avalon Peninsula only
61.	February 26, 2021 (effective February 27)	SMO (Alert Level 4) (Newfoundland and Labrador except Avalon Peninsula)	Restrictions outside of Avalon Peninsula
62.	March 12, 2021 (effective @2pm)	SMO (Rotational Worker Self-Isolation Order)	Re-instates modified self-isolation
63.	March 12, 2021 (effective March 13)	SMO (Alert Level 4 – Avalon Peninsula)	Easing of some restrictions on Avalon Peninsula (gatherings increased to 10)

64.	March 12, 2021 (effective March 13)	SMO (Personal Care Homes, Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities) (Updated)	Increase visitation to 2 designated visitors and 1 essential visitor per resident
65.	March 12, 2021 (effective March 13)	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Newfoundland and Labrador except Avalon Peninsula)	Easing of restrictions outside of Avalon (gatherings increased to 20)
66.	March 27, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 2)	Easing of restrictions province-wide (gatherings increased to 50)
67.	April 17, 2021	SMO (Updated Alert Level 2)	Gatherings increased to 100
68.	April 19, 2021	SMO (Essential Worker Work-Isolation Order)	Testing requirements for essential workers
69.	April 23, 2021	SMO (Essential Worker Work-Isolation Order)	Clarifies those workers required to provide employer letter and confirm that essential in certain circumstances and to undergo COVID-19 testing
70.	May 12, 2021 (effective May 13)	SMO (Alert Level 4) (Certain Communities on the South West Coast)	Restrictions imposed on certain communities
71.	May 15, 2021	SMO (Traveler COVID-19 Testing)	Mandatory COVID-19 testing for travelers in self-isolation
72.	May 20, 2021	SMO (South West Coast Alert Level 4 Repeal Order)	Repeal SMO dated May 12, 2021
73.	May 22, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 4)	Restrictions in Lewisporte/Summerford area
74.	May 24, 2021 (effective @10am)	SMO (Alert Level 4) (Certain Towns and Communities in the Northeast and Central Region)	Expands communities beyond Lewisporte/Summerford area
75.	May 30, 2021 (effective @4pm)	SMO (Alert Level 4) (St. George's, Stephenville, Port-au-Port area)	Imposes restrictions in certain towns and communities on the west coast
76.	June 1, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Certain Towns and Communities in Northeast Central Region)	Easing of restrictions in towns and communities along certain highway routes
77.	June 1, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 4) (St. George's, Stephenville, Port-au-Port area)	Adds route 403 to area under restrictions
78.	June 8, 2021	SMO (Northeast Central Region Alert Level 3 Repeal Order)	Repeals SMO dated June 1, 2021

79.	June 12, 2021	SMO (St. George's, Stephenville, Port-au-Port area Alert Level 4 Repeal Order)	Repeals SMO dated June 1, 2021
80.	June 15, 2021	SMO (Updated Alert Level 2) (Outdoor Gatherings)	Increases outdoor gatherings to 150 for organized groups and 30 for personal gatherings
81.	June 23, 2021	SMO (Atlantic Canadian Travelers)	Atlantic Canadians exempted from the requirement to self-isolate and undergo COVID-19 testing
82.	July 1, 2021 (signed June 27, 2021)	SMO (Re-Opening - Travel)	Restrictions for partially and unvaccinated travelers to the province
83.	July 1, 2021 (signed June 30, 2021)	SMO (Re-Opening - Travel)	Updates to requirements for children under 12 and Lab-QC border
84.	July 1, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Step 1)	Eases restrictions and increases gatherings size
85.	July 14, 2021 (signed July 21 without retroactive effect)	SMO (Re-Opening – Step 1) (Swimming Pools amendment)	Clarify that 200 gathering restriction applies to indoor pools
86.	July 14, 2021 (signed July 21 without retroactive effect)	SMO (Re-Opening – Travel) (Amendment)	Clarify restrictions for travelers who are in the province for 2 days or less and travelers who are not Atlantic Canadians but who spend at least 14 days in an Atlantic province before arriving in NL
87.	August 1, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Step 2)	Further eases restrictions and increases gatherings size
88.	August 1, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Travel – Step 2)	Easing of restrictions for partially and unvaccinated travelers to the province
89.	August 10, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Step 2 – Updated)	Increases gatherings size
90.	August 10, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening- Masks – Step 2)	Easing of mask wearing requirements
91.	September 7, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Certain Towns and Communities on the Northern Peninsula – East Region)	Imposing Alert Level 3 restrictions on Roddickton-Bide Arm, Main Brook areas
92.	September 18, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated – September 18, 2021)	Re-instating broad mask wearing mandate in indoor public spaces
93.	September 21, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Certain Towns and Communities on the	Repeals SMO dated September 7, 2021

		Northern Peninsula – East Region) Repeal Order	
94.	September 22, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Towns and Communities on the Baie Verte Peninsula)	Imposing Alert Level 3 restrictions in Baie Verte Peninsula area
95.	September 25, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Towns and Communities accessed via Route 340 and New World Island)	Imposing Alert Level 3 restrictions in Twillingate, New World Island, Boyd's Cove area
96.	September 30, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Travel – Step 2 – UPDATED)	Imposing increased restrictions on travelers including those arriving from Atlantic Canada, partially vaccinated individuals and children under the age of 12, and modified isolation for unvaccinated travellers
97.	October 7, 2021, effective at 2:00 pm.	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Towns and Communities on the Baie Verte Peninsula) Repeal Order	Repeals SMO dated September 22, 2021
98.	October 7, 2021 effective October 22, 2021	SMO (Proof of Vaccination Status)	Establishes NL VaxPass Program with access to non-essential businesses, organizations and activities to individuals who are fully vaccinated or have an approved medical exemption
99.	October 12, 2021 effective at 2:00 pm.	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Towns and Communities accessed via Route 340 and New World Island) Repeal Order	Repeals SMO dated September 25, 2021
100.	October 20, 2021 effective October 22, 2021	SMO (Proof of Vaccination Status) Updated	Clarify that employees are not covered under the SMO and imposes restrictions on visitors to long term care facilities, update identification requirements, and update list of businesses where proof of vaccination was required
101.	October 21, 2021, effective October 22, 2021	SMO (Proof of Vaccination Status) Updated – October 21, 2021	Edits made to align with medical exemption process in the COVID-19 Vaccine Regulations
102.	October 23, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Towns and Communities in the Greater Marystown-Burin Area)	Imposing Alert Level 3 restrictions in Marystown, Burin and surrounding area.

103.	November 1, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated – September 18, 2021) (Amendment)	Adding K-3 to masking requirement in classrooms and adding regulated childcare centres to requirement to wear masks indoors.
104.	November 5, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Towns and Communities in the Greater Marystown-Burin Area – Repeal Order)	Repeals SMO dated October 23, 2021
105.	November 13, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Step 2- Modified Gatherings)	Eases gathering restrictions and physical distance requirements in certain circumstances
106.	November 30, 2021	SMO (Re-Opening – Travel - Step 2 – UPDATED) (Definitions Amendment)	Updates the definition of “fully vaccinated” to align with the federal government’s definition which includes vaccines authorized by the WHO.
107.	December 14, 2021, effective December 15, 2021	SMO (Proof of Vaccination Status- Updated – October 21, 2021) (Deferral and Definitions Amendment)	Amends definition of “fully vaccinated” and adds an approved deferral as an acceptable means of accessing the listed businesses, facilities and organizations.
108.	December 17, 2021, effective as of 2 p.m.	SMO (Re-opening - Travel - Step 2 - UPDATED) (Requirements for Visitors from Post-Secondary Institutions)	Amending Travel SMO to require PCR testing upon arrival for individuals who have visited a post-secondary institution in the previous 14 days.
109.	December 18, 2021 (Orders 1-2 effective as of December 18, 2021 and Orders 3-17 effective as of December 20, 2021)	SMO (Modified Alert Level 2)	Imposing restrictions on sport activities and decreasing gathering sizes.
110.	December 19, 2021 effective 12:01 a.m. December 20, 2021	SMO (Alert Level 3) (Certain Towns and Communities in the Central Region)	Imposing (modified) Alert Level 3 restrictions in Badger, Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander and Twillingate.
111.	December 21, 2021 (effective as of 3 p.m.)	SMO (Re-opening — Travel — Step 2 — December 21, 2021 Update)	Imposing additional testing and isolation requirements for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers.

112.	December 23, 2021	SMO (Province-wide Alert Level 3)	Repealing SMO (Alert Level 3) (Certain Towns and Communities in the Central Region) and imposing Alert Level 3 restrictions province-wide.
113.	January 4, 2022	SMO (Province-wide Alert Level 4)	Repealing SMO (Province-wide Alert Level 3) and imposing further restrictions on group sports and activities, as well as gathering sizes.
114.	January 14, 2022 effective January 15, 2022	SMO (Travel – Air Flight Crew)	Relaxes isolation and testing requirements for air crew so that they are only required to do rapid tests during self-isolation period and can benefit from a modified 5 day self-isolation period.
115.	January 22, 2022	SMO (Travel – Air Flight Crew) (Self-Isolation Update)	Reduces period of modified isolation to 24 hours with 2 negative COVID-19 Rapid test results.
116.	January 22, 2022	SMO (Re-opening – Travel – Step 2 – December 21, 2021 Update) (Self-Isolation Amendment)	Reduces self-isolation period for vaccinated travelers to 24 with 2 negative COVID-19 Rapid test results and clarifies requirements for truck drivers. Removes testing requirement for individuals who visited a post-secondary institution in the previous 14 days.
117.	February 5, 2022	SMO (Re-opening – Travel – Step 2 – February 5, 2022 Update)	Remove self-isolation requirement for fully vaccinated travelers.
118.	February 7, 2022	SMO (Modified Alert Level 3)	Re-opening bars, cinemas, performance spaces, bingos and relaxing some of the gathering measures.
119.	February 7, 2022	SMO (Modified Alert Level 3) (Gatherings Clarification)	Clarifies that under Order No. 16, gatherings are limited to 50 people or 25 % capacity, whichever is less.
120.	February 10, 2022 (Order No. 4 effective February 12 at 12:01 a.m.	SMO (Activities and Gatherings Restrictions)	Relaxing of restrictions on sports and recreation activities; and increasing of gathering sizes.

	and remaining orders effective February 14 at 12:01 am.)		
121.	February 21, 2022	SMO (Activities and Gatherings Restrictions – Updated February 21, 2022)	Further relaxing of restrictions on sports and recreation activities; and increasing of gathering sizes.
122.	February 28, 2022	SMO (Activities and Gatherings Restrictions – Updated February 28, 2022)	Further relaxing of restrictions on sports and recreation activities; and increasing of gathering sizes.
123.	February 28, 2022	SMO (Religious and Faith-Based Organizations Amendment)	Removing additional restrictions on religious and faith based gatherings where VaxPass is not used.
124.	February 28, 2022	SMO (Travel Repeal Order)	Removing all mandatory travel restrictions and requirements
125.	March 14, 2022	Repeal of All Special Measures Order	Removing all remaining restrictions related to mask wearing, gathering sizes and the VaxPass program.

Annex B: List of Indoor Public Settings where Masks were required

Effective August 24, 2020, wearing a non-medical mask that covers the nose and mouth was mandatory for people 5 years of age or older, with exceptions, in the following public indoor settings:

- Public transit, including buses, taxis, car services and public areas of ferries;
- A retail business;
- A service company;
- A professional's private office, where physical distancing cannot be maintained or physical barriers are not in place;*
- Common areas of an office building including lobby, elevators, reception areas, conference rooms, washrooms and breakrooms;*
- A place where municipal or government services are offered;**
- A personal care business including hair salons, tattoo shops, tanning salons (removed in the **Special Measures Order (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021)**);
- An animal daycare or grooming business (removed in the **Special Measures Order (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021)**);
- A shopping mall or community market;
- A place of worship;
- A funeral home;
- A theatre or performing arts venue;
- A movie cinema;
- An indoor entertainment business;
- A rental room, community centre, or other venue used to host gatherings;
- A sports-related clubhouse;
- A community museum or historic site;
- A bingo hall;
- A fitness centre, dance studio or yoga studio;
- An arena;
- A place where sports or recreational activities are practiced;
- A restaurant or lounge;
- A common area, including an elevator, of a tourist accommodation establishment such as a hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, rental cabins or cottages;
- A post-secondary educational institution including colleges, universities and trades schools; and
- Regulated child care centres (added in the **Special Measures Order (Re-opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021) (Amendment)**).

*Revised in the **Special Measures Order (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021)** to read “common areas of an office building which the public has access, including lobbies, elevators, reception areas, hallways, stairways, and public washrooms.”

Revised in the **Special Measures Order (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021) to read “A place where municipal or government services are offered to the public.”

In school settings, masks were required in the following situations:

- On a school bus;
- Common areas of all high schools and junior high schools where cohorts of students change classes (revised in the **Special Measures Order (Re-Opening – Masks – Step 2 – Updated September 18, 2021)** to require all students in kindergarten through high school);
- Staff were required to wear masks when:
 - Physical distancing was not achievable outside their student cohort;
 - They moved between cohorts or instructed multiple cohorts and if distancing could not be maintained between themselves and other staff or students;
 - Preparing and serving food to students or staff; and,
 - Physical distancing was not achievable and physical barriers were not in place in the school office environment.
 - As of September 7, 2021, staff in the Northern Peninsula – East Region were required to wear masks while in common areas of the school and while in the classroom. As of September 18, 2021, this requirement was extended to the entire province.
- As of September 7, 2021, students in Grade 4 through high school in the Northern Peninsula – East Region were required to wear masks while in the classroom. As of September 18, 2021, this requirement was extended to the entire province, and as of November 1, 2021, the requirement was extended to include children in kindergarten to Grade 3.

Annex C: Together. Again. Reopening Newfoundland and Labrador

Together.Again.

Reopening Newfoundland and Labrador



Newfoundland
&
Labrador

Together.Again.

Reopening Newfoundland and Labrador



The **Together Again** Plan provides Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with an overview of the phased approach that will be taken as we start to lift long-term public health measures. As we reopen Newfoundland and Labrador to increased social and economic activity and welcome travellers to the province, movement between steps will be based on:

- 1** Continued success of the [COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#), particularly in vulnerable populations;
- 2** Evidence that vaccines are effective in reducing hospitalizations and deaths in people who are vaccinated;
- 3** Controlled spread of COVID-19, including COVID-19 variants of concern;
- 4** Ability to test, trace and isolate all cases (public health capacity); and
- 5** Health system readiness to handle any surge in COVID-19 cases.

The plan, including projected timelines, is subject to change based on these factors.

Newfoundland and Labrador has enjoyed relatively low levels of COVID-19 activity and, consequently, has relaxed public health measures since April 2020. Areas for further relaxation in the plan include the following:

- 1 Opening the province to travel;**
- 2 Relaxing restrictions for business and service operations; and**
- 3 Increasing capacity for recreational activities and gatherings.**

Businesses and workplaces are expected to have operational plans in place to support compliance with COVID-19 protocols. While businesses will not be required to submit these plans for approval (unless otherwise noted), they may be requested to present them for inspection by a Digital Government and Service NL Environmental Health Officer.



Alert Level System

The COVID-19 Alert Level System will continue to be used throughout this plan as needed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in our communities. We may move up or down Alert Levels as needed. Community-level approaches will be taken wherever possible.

Transition: June 15 to July 1

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will see select public health measures start to lift on June 15 as we enter the Transition Phase.

Your responsibility:

- Wear a non-medical mask in indoor public spaces.
- Maintain physical distancing from others.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, isolate away from others and get tested.
- Get two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, once available to you.

Activities	What you can do
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective June 23, 2021, Atlantic Canadians have no testing or self-isolation requirements, regardless of vaccination status.
Formal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor gatherings up to 150 people with physical distancing. • Community fireworks, parades and outdoor ceremonial events are permitted with physical distancing.
Personal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor personal gatherings up to 30 people. • Indoor personal gatherings limited to a household and their Steady 20.
Recreational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor sports tournaments permitted as part of Return to Play Plans.
Offices and Workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin gradual return to offices and workplaces.

Step 1 as early as July 1

The criteria for Step 1 are:

- About 75 per cent of people ages 12 years and older are vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine; AND
- Low COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations.

Your responsibility:

- Wear a non-medical mask in indoor public spaces.
- Maintain physical distancing from others.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms isolate away from others and get tested.
- Get two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, once available to you.

Activities

What you can do

Travel

- Non-essential travel permitted.
- Fully vaccinated travellers have no testing or self-isolation requirements.
- Partially vaccinated travellers must present a negative COVID-19 PCR test result administered within three days of their departure date, or self-isolate following arrival until receipt of a negative test result.
- Unvaccinated travellers must self-isolate for 14 days following arrival
- Atlantic Canadians have no testing or self-isolation requirements, regardless of vaccination status.
- Mixed groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated adult travellers follow the rules for unvaccinated travellers.
- Vaccinated adults travelling with unvaccinated children under the age of 12 years follow the rules applicable to the adults' vaccination status.
- Newfoundlanders and Labradorians returning home from out-of-province travel will be required to follow the rules above according to their vaccination status.

Travel	<p>Rotational Workers and Essential Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully and partially vaccinated rotational workers follow the rules above for other travellers. Fully and partially vaccinated essential workers follow the rules above for other travellers. Unvaccinated workers follow current testing and isolation protocols.
Formal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor gatherings up to 250 people with physical distancing. Indoor gatherings up to 200 people or 75 per cent capacity with physical distancing (whichever is less). Larger venues can have separated cohorts with physical distancing. Funeral home visitation up to 25 people at a time. Dancing permitted at weddings.
Personal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor personal gatherings up to 50 people. Indoor personal gatherings limited to a household and their Steady 20. Wakes held outside of a funeral home/place of worship are permitted in accordance with the limit for personal gatherings.
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No capacity restrictions for retail stores as long as physical distancing can be maintained between patrons. Restaurants and lounges can open at 75 per cent capacity, with physical distancing maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Self-serve buffets are prohibited.
Recreational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor sports tournaments permitted with appropriate COVID-19 protocols in place. Recreational and arts facilities follow the limits for formal gatherings. Cohorting continues at child care centres, after school programs and day camps; cohorts can be combined for outdoor play.
Offices and Workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued return to work. Workplaces can have small in-person meetings.

Step 2 as early as August 15

The criteria for Step 2 are:

- About 80 per cent of people ages 12 years and older are vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine; AND
- About 50 per cent of people ages 12 years and older are vaccinated with two doses of COVID-19 vaccine; AND
- Low COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations.

Your responsibility:

- Wear a non-medical mask in indoor public spaces.
- Maintain physical distancing from others.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, isolate away from others and get tested.
- Get two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, once available to you.

Activities	What you can do
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fully and partially vaccinated travellers have no testing or self-isolation requirements. (Effective September 30, 2021 partially vaccinated travellers were treated the same as unvaccinated travellers). ● Unvaccinated travellers are tested on day 7, 8 or 9, and self-isolate until receipt of a negative test result. ● Atlantic Canadians have no testing or self-isolation requirements, regardless of vaccination status (effective September 30, 2021, travellers from Atlantic Canada were required to follow self-isolation and testing requirements based on their vaccination status). ● Mixed groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated adult travellers follow the rules for unvaccinated travellers. ● Vaccinated adults travelling with unvaccinated children under the age of 12 years follow the rules applicable to the adults' vaccination status. ● Newfoundlanders and Labradorians returning home from out-of-province travel will be required to follow the rules above according to their vaccination status.

Travel	<p>Rotational Workers and Essential Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully and partially vaccinated rotational workers follow the rules above for other travellers. Fully and partially vaccinated essential workers follow the rules above for other travellers. Unvaccinated workers follow current testing and isolation protocols.
Formal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor gatherings up to 500 people with physical distancing. Indoor gatherings up to 350 people as long as physical distancing can be maintained. (Expanded to 500 people effective August 10, 2021) Larger indoor and outdoor venues can have separated cohorts with physical distancing. Funeral home visitation up to 50 people at a time.
Personal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to the number of people that can fit in the space with physical distancing.
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No capacity restrictions at restaurants and lounges, with physical distancing maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Self-serve buffets are prohibited. Dance floors permitted.
Recreational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor and outdoor sports tournaments permitted with appropriate COVID-19 protocols in place. Recreational and arts facilities follow the limits for formal gatherings. Cohorting continues at child care centres, after school programs and day camps; large group outdoor activities are permitted.
Offices and Workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued return to work. Larger meetings and conferences can happen.

Step 3 > as early as September 15

The criteria for Step 3 are:

- About 80 per cent of people ages 12 years and older are vaccinated with two doses of COVID-19 vaccine; AND
- Low COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations.

Your responsibility:

- Mask requirements will be reviewed based on current evidence.
- Maintain physical distancing from others.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, isolate away from others and get tested.
- Get two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, once available to you.

Activities What you can do

Travel

- Fully and partially vaccinated travellers have no testing or self-isolation requirements.
- Unvaccinated travellers self-isolate until receipt of a negative test result.
- Mixed groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated adult travellers follow the rules for unvaccinated travellers.
- Vaccinated adults travelling with unvaccinated children under the age of 12 years follow the rules applicable to the adults' vaccination status.
- Newfoundlanders and Labradorians returning home from out-of-province travel will be required to follow the rules above according to their vaccination status.

Activities	What you can do
Travel	<p>Rotational Workers and Essential Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully and partially vaccinated rotational workers have no testing or self-isolation requirements. Fully and partially vaccinated essential workers have no testing or self-isolation requirements. Unvaccinated workers follow current testing and isolation protocols.
Formal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor gatherings have no capacity restrictions with physical distancing. Increased capacity at indoor gatherings to be determined based on current evidence. This includes funeral home visitation.
Personal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to the number of people that can fit in the space with physical distancing.
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No capacity restrictions at restaurants and lounges, with physical distancing maintained between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Self-serve buffets are prohibited. Dance floors permitted.
Recreational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor and outdoor sports tournaments permitted with appropriate COVID-19 protocols in place. Recreational and arts facilities follow the limits for formal gatherings.
Offices and Workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplaces are back to normal with appropriate COVID-19 protocols in place as required.

Definitions

Fully vaccinated: For two-dose COVID-19 vaccines, a person is considered to be fully vaccinated when at least two weeks has passed since their second dose of COVID-19 vaccine. For one-dose COVID-19 vaccines, a person is considered to be fully vaccinated when at least two weeks has passed since their vaccination.

Partially vaccinated: A person is considered to be partially vaccinated when at least two weeks have passed since their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. This only applies to vaccines that consist of two doses.

Unvaccinated: A person is considered to be unvaccinated if they have not received any doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

Annex D: Policy for Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination in Newfoundland and Labrador

Purpose

The Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a Special Measures Order under section 28 of the **Public Health Protection and Promotion Act** that requires all individuals accessing certain businesses and activities to present proof of COVID-19 vaccination.

The purpose of this policy is to increase vaccination uptake in the province, and to decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the community. This will help prevent widespread closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks and provide a means for the economy to function during the COVID-19 pandemic. This policy outlines requirements for individuals to provide proof of vaccination to participate in certain activities and be admitted to certain places, and for businesses and organizations to verify proof of vaccination.

Scope

This policy applies to the following businesses and settings:

- Gatherings of any size held for socializing, celebration, ceremony or entertainment that are hosted at a recognized business or organization, a rental room, community centre, or other venue used to host gatherings;
- Conferences, conventions and trade shows;
- Arenas;
- Indoor gyms and fitness facilities, yoga studios, and dance studios;
- Places where sports or recreational activities are practiced indoors;
- Places where group music, art, dance, and drama activities are practiced indoors, including bands, choirs, dance and music classes;
- Indoor entertainment facilities;
- Businesses that hold a license under the **Liquor Control Act** whose primary purpose is the consumption of beer, wine, or spirits;
- Restaurants (indoor seated dining only, including food courts; does not apply to outdoor patios, take-out, delivery, or drive-thru services);
- Cinemas and performance spaces;
- Bingo halls;
- Personal service establishments including spas, esthetic services, hair salons, barber shops, body piercing, tattooing and tanning salons;
- Congregate living settings for seniors (visitors only; does not apply to residents living in these settings).

All other businesses and settings are exempt from this policy. For greater certainty, this policy does not apply to the following businesses and settings:

- At school or school-based activities;
- Child care;
- Post-secondary institutions;
- Retail stores, shopping malls, and public markets;
- Health care facilities, including private health clinics;
- Community agencies offering essential services;
- Taxis and public transit;
- Hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, and hostel accommodations;
- Places where government and other public services are offered; and,
- Financial institutions.

The requirements in this policy do not apply to:

- Children under the age of 12 years;
- Employees, volunteers, contractors, vendors or suppliers of the businesses, organizations or activities to which the policy applies;
- First responders accessing those businesses and organizations in scope of the policy to respond to an emergency call; and,
- Those who qualify for an exemption as described in this policy.

Legislation

The applicable legislation is section 27 of the **Public Health Protection and Promotion Act**.

Definitions

Fully vaccinated means, for the purposes of this policy, that an individual has received:

- A full series of a COVID-19 vaccine, or any combination of such vaccines, or
- One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine; and
- At least 14 days have passed since their final dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Contraindication means a severe allergy or anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine or to any of its components that cannot be mitigated, and/or a diagnosed episode of myocarditis/pericarditis after receipt of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine.

COVID-19 mRNA vaccine means mRNA vaccines approved by Health Canada.

COVID-19 vaccination record means the QR code issued by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for the purpose of providing vaccination status under this policy.

COVID-19 vaccine means vaccines approved by Health Canada.

Identification means:

- For individuals under the age of 19 years, valid documentation issued by a government, public body, or an educational institution that includes the name of the holder and date of birth; or
- For individuals aged 19 years and older, valid documentation issued by a government, public body, or an educational institution that includes the name of the holder, date of birth, and photograph; or, in the absence of photo identification, means two documents that includes the name of the holder and at least one of which includes the individual's date of birth.

Verifier application means the application issued by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to verify an individual's COVID-19 vaccination record.

Public Health Emergency means, as defined in the **Public Health Protection and Promotion Act**, an occurrence or imminent threat of one of the following that presents a serious risk to the health of the population: a communicable disease; a health condition; a novel or highly infectious agent or biological substance; or, the presence of a chemical agent or radioactive material.

Policy

This policy outlines the situations in which an individual is required to provide proof of vaccination. Individuals are expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements before frequenting businesses and activities.

Proof of Vaccination

All members of the public who are aged 12 years and older must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated and identification in order to participate in activities or be admitted to places within the scope of this policy, unless they qualify for an exemption.

For the purposes of this policy, acceptable proof of vaccination includes one of the following forms:

- a. Electronic QR Code using the NLVaxPass application, as downloaded by individuals, or saved to a mobile device;
- b. Physical copy of QR code;
- c. Physical copy of a COVID-19 vaccination record issued in Newfoundland and Labrador;
- d. Physical or electronic copy of an official vaccination record issued outside of Newfoundland and Labrador;

- e. Proof, on a form approved by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, that an individual has received an approved medical exemption.

Businesses and organizations are required to verify an individual's proof of vaccination and identity before allowing participation in activities and admission to places within the scope of this policy.

A person's name on their identification must match the name on their COVID-19 vaccination record or their official vaccination record from another jurisdiction.

Businesses and organizations are required to use the verifier application to verify an individual's COVID-19 vaccination record. Businesses and organizations **are not permitted** to use any other electronic application to verify an individual's COVID-19 vaccination record.

Businesses and organizations shall not retain any form of an individual's COVID-19 vaccination record or identification. With an individual's consent, businesses and organizations may keep a record that an individual's COVID-19 vaccination record has been previously verified for the purposes of fulfilling requirements under this policy for recurrent activities. Businesses and organizations must immediately destroy any such records upon termination of this policy or at the individual's request.

Individuals seeking to participate in activities or be admitted to places within the scope of this policy are solely responsible for demonstrating they are the legitimate holder of their vaccination record, and that the information being provided is complete and accurate. If they cannot demonstrate that to the business or organization, the individual will not be allowed to participate in the activity or be admitted to the place.

Exemptions

Children aged 12 to 18 years

Individuals ages 12 to 18 years are not required to provide proof of vaccination in the following settings:

- Indoor sport or recreational activities, including those practiced at arenas, indoor gyms, fitness facilities, yoga studios and dance studios;
- Indoor group music, art, dance, and drama activities; and
- Dedicated children's religious or faith-based programs.

Individuals aged 19 years and older are required to provide proof of vaccination and identification in order to access these settings.

For greater certainty, individuals ages 12 to 18 years are required to provide proof of vaccination in all other settings within the scope of this policy.

Children who turn 12 have three months from their birthday to obtain fully vaccinated status.

Businesses and organizations may check the child's identification to confirm that it has been less than three months since their 12th birthday. If this is the case, they will be able to access businesses and activities within the scope of this policy without showing proof of vaccination.

Faith-Based Organizations

Faith-based gatherings may choose to forego proof of vaccination requirements provided they comply with additional restrictions. If faith-based organizations do not verify proof of vaccination for all attendees at faith-based gatherings, they will be subject to the following restrictions:

- Occupancy is limited to no more than 50 per cent;
- Everyone in attendance must wear a non-medical mask at all times (including the officiant and musicians);
- Congregational singing is not permitted;
- The names and contact information of all attendees must be recorded and retained for 14 days for contact tracing, and must be shared with public health officials if requested;
- Physical distancing must be maintained between individuals from different family groups; and,
- Entry must be restricted to only those who do not have COVID-19 symptoms and who are not required to self-isolate for any reason.

Assisted Living Facilities, Community Care Homes, Long-Term Care Facilities and Personal Care Homes

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated:

- may be permitted to visit a loved one who is in the end stages of life, upon consultation with the resident's care team where the visitor remains in the resident's room, wears a mask at all times and follows the required hand hygiene practices; and
- may provide assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care, communication assistance or assistance with significant behavioural symptoms of a resident where they have been considered by the resident's care team to be an essential visitor/support person as they are paramount to the resident's physical care and mental well-being.

Where a resident's essential visitor/support person is not fully vaccinated by October 22, 2021, and there is no alternate visitor to take their place, that essential visitor/support person who is unvaccinated may be permitted to continue to visit the resident only until December 17, 2021.

Medical Exemptions

Exemptions will be considered for those individuals who request an exemption because of a contraindication to COVID-19 vaccines. Individuals requesting an exemption will be required to have a medical practitioner licensed under the **Medical Act, 2011**, or a nurse practitioner licensed under the **Registered Nurses Act, 2008**, confirm and document the contraindication in their Electronic Medical Record. Individuals with approved exemptions will be issued a COVID-19 vaccination record in order to participate in activities or be admitted to places within the scope of the policy.

Failure to present

Any individual who does not provide proof of vaccination and identification where required and does not have valid exemption documentation is not permitted to participate in activities or be admitted to places within the scope of the policy.

COVID-19 Vaccination Availability

COVID-19 vaccination is available, free of cost, to all individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of immigration and/or residency status. This includes refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependent children of temporary residents, temporary foreign workers, undocumented residents, and residents with lapsed legal status.

Individuals can visit www.gov.nl.ca/vaccine/gettheshot to book a vaccine appointment. Individuals can also receive COVID-19 vaccines through participating physicians and pharmacies.

Roles and Responsibilities

All individuals are required to present identification and proof of vaccination in order to participate in activities or be admitted to places within the scope of the policy, and to ensure that any information provided to demonstrate proof of vaccination is complete and accurate.

All businesses and organizations are required to confirm identity and proof of vaccination of individuals wishing to participate in activities or be admitted to places within the scope of the policy.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is responsible for implementing and ensuring adherence of the policy.

Public Health in the Regional Health Authorities are responsible for administering COVID-19 vaccinations.

Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information is responsible for vaccination records for Newfoundland and Labrador residents, and for implementing the technical solution for secure proof of vaccination.

Compliance and Monitoring

All individuals must comply with the requirements of the Special Measures Order including the requirements to provide proof of vaccination.

Environmental Health Officers with Digital Government and Service NL have authority to monitor business compliance with proof of vaccination requirements.

Non-compliance with the Special Measures Order may result in an individual being fined between \$500 and \$2,500, and/or being imprisoned for up to 6 months, for a first offence, or a corporation being fined between \$5,000 to \$50,000.

Annex E: 2022 Reopening Plan



2022 Reopening Plan



	February 14	February 21	February 28	March 14
Key Public Health Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of vaccination (where required) • Masking required • Physical distancing required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of vaccination (where required) • Masking required • Physical distancing to the greatest extent possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of vaccination (where required) • Masking required • Physical distancing to the greatest extent possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masking strongly recommended
Gym and Fitness Facilities	Gym and Fitness Facilities limited to 50% capacity.	Gym and Fitness Facilities limited to 75% capacity.	Gym and Fitness Facilities limited to 75% capacity.	No restrictions
Formal Gatherings	Formal gatherings limited to 50% of the venue's capacity.	Formal gatherings limited to 50% of the venue's capacity.	Formal gatherings limited to 75% of the venue's capacity.	No restrictions
Religious and Cultural Ceremonies	Religious and cultural ceremonies that require proof of vaccination are limited to 50% capacity; those who do not require proof of vaccination are at 25% capacity.	Religious and cultural ceremonies that require proof of vaccination are limited to 75% capacity; those who do not require proof of vaccination are at 50% capacity.	Religious and cultural ceremonies that require proof of vaccination are limited to 75% capacity; those who do not require proof of vaccination are at 50% capacity.	No restrictions
Informal Gatherings	Informal gatherings limited to 20 people.	Informal gatherings limited to 25 people.	Informal gatherings limited to 25 people.	No restrictions
Public Visitations and Wakes	Public visitations permitted with one household permitted at a time. Wakes held outside of a funeral home/place of worship are not permitted.	Public visitations limited to 50% capacity per room. Wakes held outside of a funeral home/place of worship limited to 25 people.	Public visitations limited to 75% capacity per room. Wakes held outside of a funeral home/place of worship limited to 25 people.	No restrictions
Sports and Recreation	Amateur sports and recreation can play games within their usual region; competition is permitted against one single team per day.	Out-of-region amateur sport and recreation activities permitted. Tournaments not permitted.	Out-of-region amateur sport and recreation activities permitted. Tournaments not permitted.	No restrictions
Retail	Reduced capacity with physical distancing.	No restrictions	No restrictions	No restrictions
Restaurants	Restaurants at 50% capacity, maximum table size of 10 people, physical distancing between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Eating or drinking only permitted while seated. Masks may only be removed when eating or drinking (while seated).	Restaurants at 75% capacity. Eating or drinking only permitted while seated. Masks may only be removed when eating or drinking (while seated).	Restaurants at 75% capacity. Eating or drinking only permitted while seated. Masks may only be removed when eating or drinking (while seated).	No restrictions
Bars and Lounges	Bars open at 50% capacity, maximum table size of 10 people, physical distancing between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Eating or drinking only permitted while seated. Masks may only be removed when eating or drinking (while seated). No dance floors.	Bars open at 50% capacity, maximum table size of 10 people, physical distancing between patrons seated at adjacent tables. Eating or drinking only permitted while seated. Masks may only be removed when eating or drinking (while seated). No dance floors.	Bars at 75% capacity. Eating or drinking only permitted while seated. Masks may only be removed when eating or drinking (while seated). Dance floors permitted; masks must be worn while dancing.	No restrictions
Cinemas	Cinemas are open at 50% capacity (food or drink permitted provided physical distancing can be maintained between patrons who are not each other's close, consistent contacts).	Cinemas are open at 50% capacity (food or drink permitted provided physical distancing can be maintained between patrons who are not each other's close, consistent contacts).	Cinemas are open at 75% capacity.	No restrictions
Performance Spaces and Bingo Halls	Performance spaces and bingo halls open at 50% capacity (food or drink permitted provided physical distancing can be maintained between patrons who are not each other's close, consistent contacts). Food or drink only permitted when seated, or when seated in a designated eating/drinking area.	Performance spaces and bingo halls open at 50% capacity (food or drink permitted provided physical distancing can be maintained between patrons who are not each other's close, consistent contacts). Food or drink only permitted when seated, or when seated in a designated eating/drinking area.	Performance spaces and bingo halls are open at 75% capacity. Food or drink only permitted when seated, or when seated in a designated eating/drinking area.	No restrictions
Travel	Fully vaccinated travellers are not required to isolate but must adhere to mandatory rapid testing for five days. Partially vaccinated/unvaccinated travellers isolate until receipt of a negative PCR test administered on day 7 or later. All travellers required to complete the Travel Form. Border screeners present at airports and ferry terminal.	Fully vaccinated travellers are not required to isolate but must adhere to mandatory rapid testing for five days. Partially vaccinated/unvaccinated travellers isolate until receipt of a negative PCR test administered on day 7 or later. All travellers required to complete the Travel Form. Border screeners present at airports and ferry terminal.	No isolation or testing for all travellers. Travel Form no longer required. Remove active border enforcement including staffing at airports and ferry terminal.	No restrictions