

North American COVID-19 Policy Response Monitor: Nunavut

September 4, 2020

What is the North American COVID-19 Policy Response Monitor?

The North American COVID-19 policy monitor has been designed to collect and organize up-to-date information on how jurisdictions are responding to the crisis. It summarizes responses of health systems as well as wider public health initiatives. The North American policy monitor is an offshoot of the international COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor (HSRM), a joint undertaking of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Canadian content to HSRM is contributed by the North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (NAO).

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALTS	Adult Learning and Training Supports
CSSW	Community Social Service Workers
CHARS	Canadian High Arctic Research Station
CPHO	Chief Public Health Officer
EHB	Extended Health Benefits
FANS	Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students
FNIHB	First Nations and Inuit Health Branch
ITK	Inuit Tapariit Kanatami
NHCP	Nunavut Health Care Plan
NIHB	Non-Insured Health Benefits
NML	National Microbiology Laboratory
NRI	Nunavut Research Institute
NTI	Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PUI	Person under investigation
QEC	Qulliq Energy Corporation
QGH	Qikiqtani General Hospital
RCDC	Regional Communicable Disease Coordinator
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RNANT/NU	Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut
TCDS	Territorial Communicable Disease Specialist
WSCC	Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

1. Preventing transmission

This section includes information on key public health measures that aim to prevent the further spread of the disease. It details how jurisdictions are advising the general public and people who (might) have the disease to prevent further spread, as well as measures in place to test and identify cases, trace contacts, and monitor the scale of the outbreak.

1.1 Health communication

Health authorities in Nunavut first addressed the public regarding the novel coronavirus on January 31, 2020 (Government of Nunavut, 2020p). While there were no confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 in Nunavut at this time, the Department of Health notified the public that they were in close contact with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and their partners from other provincial and territorial (PT), specifically PT Chief Medical Officers of Health, to share information and support vigilance in Nunavut's response to the emerging COVID-19 situation. At this time, the Nunavut government recommended that residents of Nunavut, referred to as Nunavummiut, were encouraged to consult the Government of Canada's travel notices before traveling abroad; at this time, Canada's travel notices were limited to regions of China affected by COVID-19 (ibid).

On March 11, Nunavut's Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO), Dr. Michael Patterson, updated the public with assurance that the Government of Nunavut was monitoring the COVID-19 situation closely and, although the territory still had no cases of COVID-19, the territory remained on high alert (Government of Nunavut, 2020r). Further, the CPHO informed Nunavummiut that the territory has extensive pandemic management and response plans already in place to protect their health and safety and ensure the continued delivery of services (ibid). The CPHO advised that prevention and awareness are important and asked all Nunavummiut to practice good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, avoid touching their faces, stay home if feeling sick and monitor for COVID-19 symptoms. Two days later, the CPHO outlined additional measures the Government of Nunavut was taking in preparation for its response to COVID-19 and reassured residents that the territories' community health centers had all necessary supplies and were ready to respond to "uncertain, evolving" situation. He reassured Nunavummiut by saying, "It is normal to be concerned, but we are prepared. The best course of action is to stay aware and use preventive measures: if you are sick, stay home; observe travel restrictions and listen to the advice of health professionals" (ibid).

Between March 17 and May 13, 2020, the Government of Nunavut provided daily COVID-19 media updates, broadcast live Monday to Friday on various local television channels, the CBC Nunavut Facebook page, the Government of Nunavut's Facebook pages and Premier Joe Savikataaq's Facebook page, in both English and Inuktitut, the territory's official Indigenous language (Government of Nunavut, 2020ac). In addition, CBC radio broadcasts recordings of the daily media provided updates three times per day with recordings available through the official Facebook and YouTube pages. Media updates featured CPHO (Dr. Michael Patterson), Nunavut's Premier (Joe Savikataaq) and Minister of Health (George Hickes). Since May 14, 2020, these updates have occurred with less frequency, occurring twice per week (ibid) until June 25, 2020, when they were provided once a week, on Mondays (Government of Nunavut, 2020ap).

On June 1, the Government of Nunavut has also released bi-weekly announcements on the assessment and potential easing of their public health measures (Government of Nunavut, 2020am); notably, this is the basis for informing their re-opening plan (see Section 5.2 for further details).

The territory also operates a COVID-19 Hotline (975-8601 or 1-888-975-8601) and launched a dedicated [COVID-19 website](https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus) (<https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>) containing detailed information on the territory's responses to the pandemic, summaries of the media updates, and pages dedicated to documenting the policy and other responses taken by each governmental department in response to the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020k). Notably, the Government of Nunavut's COVID-19 website is user friendly, easy to navigate, and includes many infographics with clear, plain language messages. Resources are available in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun (the territory's other most common Indigenous language), English and French; Nunavut has three official languages and most residents' first language is Inuktitut (Government of Canada, 2017b). Further, many resources include culturally relevant messaging, including land-based activities and tips for protecting elders (ibid).

Several territory officials are also active on social media, e.g. Facebook and Twitter, including official pages for the Government of Nunavut, where governmental updates are regularly shared (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-b). On March 19, Premier Savikataaq's press secretary, Cate Macleod, stated that she would be personally monitoring the premier's social media feed for questions about COVID-19 and the team would do their best to respond to all questions and concerns (Deuling, 2020).

Many of the messages Nunavut's leaders have sent to the public focus on the activities that they can engage in to protect themselves and others. Minister of Health, George Hicke, consistently ends his messages with some variation of the following sentiment: "be patient and kind, and take care of each other" (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

At the time of writing (September 4, 2020), Nunavut is the only PT in Canada, and one of a few regions globally, without any confirmed cases of COVID-19 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2020; Vandinther, 2020). The territory's strict travel restrictions (see Sections 1.3 and 6.1) are widely viewed as the major contributor to their successful prevention of COVID-19 importation (Vandinther, 2020). Most of Nunavut's 25 communities are only accessible by air or water. Most of the other international regions without any cases of COVID-19 confirmed to date are similar geographically isolated; many are islands (ibid). Although the territory encountered its first suspected case, this was reported to be a false positive by May 4 (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Similarly, on July 2, a presumptive case of COVID-19 was identified at the territory's Mary River Mine (Government of Nunavut, 2020aq) and two additional suspected cases were soon identified at the site (Government of Nunavut, 2020au). Notably, no residents of Nunavut had worked at the mine since March 2020 and these, too, turned out to be false reports following a lack of serological confirmation after the samples were sent to a diagnostic laboratory in Ontario (CBC News, 2020f; Government of Nunavut, 2020ar).

1.2 Physical distancing

Since March 11, 2020, territorial officials have advised Nunavummiut that social distancing, staying home as much as possible, handwashing, and disinfecting high-contact items (e.g. door knobs, toys) are important measures they can take to slow the spread of COVID-19 "even in overcrowded housing" (Government of Nunavut, 2020v); notably, half of the territory's homes have been reported to be

overcrowded (CBC News, 2010).¹ Nunavummiut were also asked to change how they greet people and to avoid physical contact such as handshakes, hugging or kissing (Government of Nunavut, 2020s).

On March 23, Premier Savikataaq emphasised: "social distancing and staying home as much as possible is not a recommendation. It is necessary to keep our Nunavut healthy. Do it for you. Do it for our elders. Do it for the children" (Driscoll, 2020b). Since April 7, CPHO Dr. Patterson has recommended Nunavummiut wear cloth face mask in situations where maintaining two meters of physical distancing is difficult (Sharma, 2020).

Schools, childcare facilities and youth camps

On March 13, schools across the territory were directed to perform enhanced cleaning, hygiene and disinfecting measures and to implement non-sharing protocols (Government of Nunavut, 2020t). On March 16, CPHO Dr. Patterson recommended the temporary closure of all schools and daycares in Nunavut, effective March 17 for a three-week period, to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 (Government of Nunavut, 2020u). Notably, the timing of winter break for elementary and secondary students varies across the territory, with most schools having a week-long break in mid-February and/or early-mid April; however, schools in Rankin Inlet, the territory's second-largest community after the capital of Iqaluit, had a March break scheduled for the week of March 16-20, 2020 (Government of Canada, 2017b; Government of Nunavut, 2020a).

Subsequently, on March 18, the territory's only college, Nunavut Arctic College, suspended programming for three weeks (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). The following day, the CPHO advised that students in the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students (FANS) and Adult Learning and Training Supports (ALTS) out-of-territory training programs to not book return travel home until further notice and asked them to avoid unnecessary travel (Government of Nunavut, 2020aa). He advised that students who receive funding from FANS or ALTS will continue to receive funding for as long as they are away from home (Government of Nunavut, 2020aa).

On March 24, the Department of Education announced a plan for students studying out-of-territory to return to Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). Specifically, students who wished to return home were required to isolate at one of the territory's central isolation points, located in Ottawa and Winnipeg; after completion of a 14-day isolation period, an arranged charter plane would return them Nunavut (ibid). All students from the Kivalliq and Kitikmeot regions of Nunavut were required to muster in

¹ Nunavut has long had a housing crisis. 52% of Nunavummiut live in homes classified as "social housing", i.e., subsidized housing provided to low income residents, and of these units, 63% have been reported to need major repairs. One in five Nunavummiut are currently on a waiting list for social housing, and one in three homes in Nunavut house somebody who would otherwise be homeless, i.e., persons living in precarious housing situations, such as sleeping at the home of a relative. 38% of social housing tenants in Nunavut live in overcrowded conditions; this is as high as 72% in certain communities. Over 50% of Nunavummiut live in crowded homes, defined as having fewer than one bedroom per occupant (excluding room sharing by adult couples, two opposite-sex children under five years of age, or two same-sex children under 17 years of age).

References: The Government of Nunavut. Nunavut Housing Corporation's Appearance before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples; March 23, 2016.

The Government of Nunavut. Nunavut Housing Needs Survey: Background. Oct 29, 2010. Available online: www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/files/NHNS%20Backgrounder%2C%202009-2010_English.pdf

Winnipeg to commence a 14-day period once the last student arrives to the facility; all Baffin and Qikiqtani region students were to muster in Ottawa facility, with similar instructions (Government of Nunavut, 2020f). The first charter, to Kitikmeot, left Winnipeg on March 30 (Nunavut is a geographically dispersed and isolated territory with many of its regions only accessible by air; thus, charter flights are commonly used to access these communities).

On March 20, the Department of Education began limiting in-office work to essential employees only (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). The Department also announced that all Nunavut Arctic College Community Learning Centres and Campuses would close and the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) would be suspending all research activities. Further, public access to the NRI's research facilities in Iqaluit, Arviat, Igloodik, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay were restricted (ibid).

On March 27, Nunavut Arctic College announced it was extending its program suspension to May 4, 2020 but hoped to resume courses for the spring semester alternate online means (Government of Nunavut, 2020ad). Further, it was announced that Nunavut Arctic College's graduations and convocations had been moved to September. Later, on April 24, it was announced that Nunavut Arctic College campuses and facilities would be closed to students until the fall; however, students with families could remain in the college's family residences until after the term ends (no exact date provided) (Government of Nunavut, 2020aj).

On April 7, the Department of Education announced school staff could begin accessing schools on a voluntary basis, should they wish to for the purposes of preparing learning packages for students (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). Teachers requesting to work remotely could apply to do so on a case-by-case basis (Greer, 2020). The Minister of Education stated that a working group was developing guidelines for teachers to identify grade-specific areas of focus for these learning packages and packages may look different for each student. All schools were provided with health and safety protocols; however, they were only permitted to open for the above operational activities. The Minister also announced that all school staff were expected to return to work in their home communities starting April 21 and that all exams for high school students were cancelled until the end of June (ibid).

On April 17, following calls from the Nunavut Teachers' Association, it was announced that all schools in Nunavut would be closed to students for the rest of the 2019-20 school year (Government of Nunavut, 2020d; Greer, 2020). Students would continue to receive learning packages from their schools to support remote learning (ibid). While the decision to re-open schools is under the purview of CPHO Dr. Patterson, the president of the Nunavut Teachers' Association previously stated he would close schools for the rest of the year given public anxiety over in-person classes (Greer, 2020).

Public and private gatherings

On March 13, 2020, the Government of Nunavut ordered that all public events should be cancelled and, further, that Nunavummiut should avoid mass gatherings and refrain from going to community airports, unless required (Government of Nunavut, 2020t). Nunavummiut were also encouraged to limit visiting individuals outside of their households to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (ibid).

On March 16, Premier Savikataaq stated, "We are taking no chances with the health of Nunavummiut, and need to ensure that we take every possible precaution. Stay home and limit visiting, especially with

Elders. Now is the time for our communities to show resiliency and help one another. If you are well, call to check on each other and share what you have, like we have always done. During this uncertain time, our kindness and consideration of others matters more than ever” (Government of Nunavut, 2020u).

Effective March 23, the Government of Nunavut banned all mass gatherings (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). To support the implementation and enforcement of public health measures, a new order *Respecting Social Distancing and Gatherings* came into effect on April 24, 2020, which replaced the mass gathering order issued on March 23 (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). This new order added clarity around gatherings and social distancing, with easy to understand scenarios to help Nunavummiut more easily follow these orders. The new order was also created with the aim of helping businesses understand how to adjust their operations to ensure safety, while continuing operations. Further, the changes were also aimed to support law enforcement and peace officers by providing clearer interpretations of the intent of the order. For example, though subject to closures and limitations, the following businesses were permitted to remain open: any business large enough to maintain a two-metre distance and businesses that limit customers to no more than five at a time (ibid). The five-at-a-time rule did not apply to businesses large enough to maintain 2-meter distancing throughout the entire premise, such as grocery stores or pharmacies. Moreover, the order provided a clear a definition of gatherings: all organized public gatherings and all social gatherings, including social gatherings in private dwellings, were restricted to five persons or fewer. Further, the Government of Nunavut strongly recommended that Nunavummiut limit their close physical contact with persons outside their immediate household, advising that any social gathering carries a degree of risk but especially when including individuals from multiple different households (ibid).

Non-healthcare businesses and services

On March 13, 2020, the Government of Nunavut announced that increased sanitary measures had been implemented at all governmental departments and public airports (Government of Nunavut, 2020t). On March 16, it was announced that starting March 17 Government of Nunavut employees would be encouraged to work flex-hours or from home for the following three-week period (Government of Nunavut, 2020u). The next day, the Department of Human Resources announced that all in-person public service training courses and programs had been cancelled or postponed and all non-essential duty travel was immediately suspended (Government of Nunavut, 2020v).

On March 18, Health Minister Hikes declared a public health emergency, which resulted in the mandatory closure of numerous non-essential businesses effective Friday, March 20 (Government of Nunavut, 2020y). For example, all restaurants were restricted to take-out services only, with no more than ten people in a line-up at any time; all bars were ordered close; and taxis were limited to one pick-up per fare (Government of Nunavut, 2020y). Food centres and soup kitchens were permitted to remain open for five days a weeks to support ongoing food security; however, take-out containers were to be provided to prepare meals for take away (Government of Nunavut, 2020y). Pharmacies, gas stations, and grocery stores were permitted to remain open (ibid). Church services were also limited to funerals, and were advised to be preferably held outside (Deuling, 2020).

Also on March 18, it was announced that Community Social Service Workers (CSSW) were available on an “Emergency on call” basis; individuals in need of these services were asked to use their after hours contact

number for their community to schedule an appointment and were asked to not drop-in in-person (Government of Nunavut, 2020f).

On March 18, Premier Savikataaq advised that the Government of Nunavut will begin transiting non-essential public servants to work from home, effective end of day on March 20 (Government of Nunavut, 2020x). On March 19, the Iqaluit library closed to the public (Government of Nunavut, 2020c). Nunavut's capital city, Iqaluit, introduced similar work-from-home policies for its municipal staff throughout mid-March (Driscoll, 2020a).

On March 23, all Government of Nunavut office buildings were closed to the public and to be locked at all times (Government of Nunavut, 2020f). Thus, all motor vehicles licence and registration services were suspended, and all family services were only offered through telephone (ibid). Any members of the public requiring to meet in person with any Government of Nunavut essential services staff in a government office building was required to contact the individual directly to make suitable arrangements (Government of Nunavut, 2020b).

On March 23, it was also announced that pending by-election for the community of Baker Lake was postponed until the summer, at the request of the municipality (Government of Nunavut, 2020ab).

On March 25, the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission's sole beer and wine store, located in Iqaluit, began implementing social distancing measures, limiting the number of customers allowed in the store at a time, and no longer accepted cash (Government of Nunavut, 2020g).

Outdoor facilities

On March 19, the following wildlife offices were closed: Arctic Bay, Clyde River, Sanikiluaq, Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Nauyaat, Kugaaruk, Taloyoak (Government of Nunavut, 2020e). The Department of Environment stated that it was considering possible ways to continue services while maintaining COVID-19 safety protocols but re-assured residents that essential services, such as problem wildlife and spill response, would continue as usual (ibid).

On March 27, all territorial parks were closed (Government of Nunavut, 2020e). On March 30, it was announced all planned wildlife research projects were put on hold and, further, any associated charter plane trips had been cancelled (Government of Nunavut, 2020e). The following day it was announced that new research permits would not be granted due to the closures and travel restrictions related to COVID-19 (ibid). However, on April 1, it was announced that the Environmental Protection division was working with its federal, territorial and provincial counterparts to document reductions in emissions due to pandemic responses (Government of Nunavut, 2020e).

Healthcare facilities

Since March 20, all patients have been asked to call before presenting at a health facility and all non-essential medical travel out of the territory was postponed (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). With this announcement, the Minister of Health stated that all immediate access to urgent and emergent health care services in Nunavut are and will continue to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Further, physicians would continue community visits and, if this was not possible, telecare would be provided.

Mental health supports were also to continue as normal, as were well baby clinics, prenatal visits and immunizations (ibid).

Further, the Department of Health stated that it was working with specialist and rehabilitation clinics to triage all upcoming appointments and cautioned that some appointments may be postponed (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). The Department of Health stated that no appointments would be cancelled; however, services would be delivered through remote means (e.g. telephone), where possible. For services delivered in Iqaluit, individuals in need of non-emergency care were asked to first call their care provider(s) before going to the Qikiqtani General Hospital. Further, visitation to all health facilities was immediately limited and patients and their families were asked to contact the health centre by phone to have initial assessment before visiting the center in-person. Specialty clinics were cancelled, but the department stated that it would determine which clients could be rebooked via phone/virtual care (ibid).

On March 20, the Department of Health announced that speciality clinics had been cancelled but work was underway to determine which clients can be seen by phone/virtual care (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Further, all non-essential travel for mental health clients and families was cancelled, as was all non-essential travel for families visiting clients in care (ibid).

On March 25, it was announced that all non-emergent obstetrics comprehensive ultrasounds would be temporarily postponed; all pending appointments were to be assessed by the Chief of Obstetrics (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Further, all appointments at health facilities were being triaged and appointments could be rebooked to occur over the phone or in person. All medical travel services were reduced to urgent medical travel only. In Iqaluit, all outpatient and rehabilitation clinics began triaging all appointments; laboratory and diagnostic imaging services at Qikiqtani General Hospital were to operate on a reduced service schedule. Finally, the department announced that all upcoming appointments were being triaged but reassured residents that all affected clients would be advised of any changes and involved in these discussions (ibid).

Long-term care facilities

On March 17, the Department of Health announced that it was working with the nursing agencies to develop contingency plans to support a possible increase in workload across the territory's health centres, in response to the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020v). On April 1, the department announced that no visitors would be allowed at any long-term care (LTC) facilities in Nunavut, including continuing care centres and elders' homes (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

Unlike other jurisdictions in Canada, there have been no reports of any policies limiting staff to working at one LTC facility in Nunavut. However, any local policies would apply to all Nunavummiut receiving LTC outside of the territory.

Other settings

On March 18, the Department of Justice stated that it was focusing on the health and safety of staff, inmates and communities and had developed contingency plans to ensure continued operations (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). The department announced that Community Corrections was closed for in-person client visits and clients were asked to report by phone to their Community Corrections Officer. All visitations to correctional facilities were also suspended to ensure the health and safety of our

inmates and staff (ibid). Further, the Nunavut Court of Justice announced it was suspending all regular operations; however, the Nunavut Court of Justice would continue to hear urgent matters (Government of Nunavut, 2020w).

On March 19, it was announced that all boarding homes across Nunavut had enhanced their cleaning protocols (Government of Nunavut, 2020z). Further, community corrections offices were to close for in-person client visits until further notice (Government of Nunavut, 2020f). The Government of Nunavut also announced that it was working with shelter societies to support extended hours; additional potential spaces were also being identified and developed to support social distancing (Government of Nunavut, 2020f). Notably, there are only three shelters in Nunavut and these were currently closed during the day (Government of Nunavut, 2020f).

On March 31, it was announced that additional measures were in place at correctional facilities: all intakes were isolated for a 14-day period upon intake; nurses were asked to diligently screen inmates upon intake for symptoms of COVID-19; response kits, including gloves, face masks, face shields, gowns and instructions for use, were distributed; correctional facilities had increased food and supply orders to ensure facilities are well stocked in the event of an outbreak; institutions added additional hand sanitizing stations in high traffic areas; and increased cleaning protocols were implemented to ensure communal surfaces are cleaned on an increased schedule throughout the day (Government of Nunavut, 2020j). Further, the Department of Justice stated that it had reviewed all inmates eligible for early release to reduce the inmate population as much as possible (ibid).

COVID-19 poses unique risks upon Nunavut's various Indigenous populations. One member of Nunavut's legislative assembly, Mr. John Main, made the following statement regarding physical distancing in the context of Nunavummiut culture:

"In English it's stated, social distancing, which is don't go visiting around too much when there's a cold happening... It is not our culture as Nunavummiut to not visit other people. We're always inviting people and we're always getting invited to go eat. It is not our culture at all to not visit. However, this virus is very serious. I would like my constituents to be careful and be aware of this" (Driscoll, 2020a).

Similar sentiments have been raised by other prominent members and advocacy groups, such as Inuit Tapariit Kanatami (ITK), a national advocacy group for Inuit (ibid).

Further, the Department of Health's guidance for healthcare provided provides a section dedicated to cultural safety (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). The document outlines why cultural safety is integral to Nunavut's COVID-19 response and reminds providers to remain mindful of the historical and intergenerational trauma caused by communicable diseases to Inuit communities. It underscores the importance of ensuring responses are sensitive to both the past and current trauma of Nunavummiut and alignment with the longer process of reconciliation (ibid). Specific tips for providing culturally safe approaches to managing the pandemic are also provided.

1.3 Isolation and quarantine

The Government of Nunavut's dedicated COVID-19 [website](#) provides clear, detailed and up-to-date documentation explaining its isolation and quarantine requirements, including infographics (Government of Nunavut, 2020n). Specific guidance is provided for ensuring the safety of others living in the isolating

individual's' home, including guidance for protecting Elders and other high-risk individuals (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

While the territory has yet to report any confirmed cases of COVID-19, all probable or confirmed cases will require approval from a local public health officer prior to discontinuing isolation protocols (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). For all persons under investigation, this decision will be based on multiple factors, including a negative COVID-19 test, exposure history, etc. For example, existing pan-Canadian recommendations require at least 10 days since the onset of symptoms, or laboratory confirmation of an asymptomatic case, among other criteria. Notably, the territory's COVID-19 precautions guidance documents for healthcare providers explicitly recommends that providers review isolation, self-isolation and self-monitoring protocols with all persons under investigation (PUIs) (ibid). A summary of these requirements, for both patients and providers, is provided in the territory's COVID-19 precautions document (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020); a script for explaining these requirements is also provided.

On March 11, the Department of Health issued its first request for residents to quarantine (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). A number of Nunavummiut attended a conference in Toronto where a case of COVID-19 was later confirmed; Nunavummiut who attended the conference were asked to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and avoid large gatherings and public settings (ibid). The announcement outlined that the following activities would be still be acceptable for these conference attendees: working (e.g. at a desk) with more than 1-meter separation from others, or behind a closed door; grocery shopping; and running other errands. However, affected individuals were asked to avoid the following activities: face-to-face meetings; air travel; in-person dining at a restaurant or home outside of their household; weddings; etc. Should any affected individuals develop symptoms, they would be asked to contact their health centre and be tested for COVID-19. At that time, they would also be asked self-isolate until the laboratory results were received (ibid).

On March 18, anyone who travelled into Nunavut prior to March 16 was asked to self-isolate for 14 days and to contact their health centre if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). Also on March 18, a territory-wide state of emergency was declared in Nunavut, which provided CPHO Dr. Patterson authority to enforce mandatory 14-day isolation periods for travellers entering the territory (Government of Nunavut, 2020y). See [Section 6.1](#) for further details regarding Nunavut's state of emergency.

On March 30, it was announced that all individuals identified as "PUIs for COVID-19" would be subject to a mandatory 14-day isolation order would could be fined for not following these orders (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Specifically, PUIs could face fines go up to CA\$50,000 or up to six months in jail. It was recommended that individuals isolate at a designated hotel. Anybody living with an individual in isolation is not required to isolate, but is asked to self-monitor for symptoms (Deuling, 2020); they are also asked to be diligent about the non-essential activities they engage in to reduce the risk of potentially spreading COVID-19 (ibid).

All returning travellers are required to isolate for 14 days at a designated hotel in Ottawa (Ontario), Winnipeg (Manitoba), Edmonton (Alberta), or Yellowknife (NWT) before entering Nunavut; Ottawa is the most common isolation hub, housing more than a third of individuals completing their mandatory

isolation period, and the Yellowknife site has since closed (Government of Nunavut, 2020n; Kester, 2020). Notably, there are security guards stationed throughout the hotels ensuring quarantined individuals do not leave the site, follow physical distancing measures and wear a mask while outside of their hotel room (Kester, 2020); nurses also perform daily telephone checks to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms. In order to enter Nunavut, individuals must submit a letter, from the isolation hub's nurse, confirming they have completed their 14-day quarantine period to Nunavut's CPHO (ibid).

Essential workers are excluded from the above isolation requirements when entering Nunavut, including members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), healthcare workers, and municipality staff (Deuling, 2020; Government of Nunavut, 2020n). These individuals can go straight to work upon arriving in Nunavut but are required to undergo enhanced screening and daily check-ins, e.g. to monitor for symptoms. However, if an essential worker arrives to Nunavut through a high-risk region, e.g. with documented community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the worker will be required to undergo a 14-day quarantine before being permitted to work (ibid).

Notably, on August 28, travel to Nunavut from the isolation site at the Ottawa Residence Inn was paused as Ottawa Public Health investigated a positive case of COVID-19 at the site (Government of Nunavut, 2020ay). Specifically, a member of the Government of Nunavut's contracted security team had tested positive for COVID-19. Travel from the site later resumed on August 31, 2020 (ibid).

1.4 Monitoring and surveillance

Screening and surveillance

Since on March 4, all Nunavummiut travelling through regions affected by COVID-19 have been asked to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; individuals who develop symptoms or believe to have been exposed to an individual with SARS-CoV-2 were asked to immediately isolate themselves from others and call their local health centre (Government of Nunavut, 2020q).

On April 24, a free online self-assessment tool for COVID-19 was launched by the Government of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). This resource is user-friendly, available in all four official languages, and can be accessed through the Government of Nunavut's [COVID-19 webpage](#).

Healthcare providers caring for persons suspected to have COVID-19 are required to complete Person Under Investigation Assessment Form and email it to their Regional Communicable Disease Coordinator (RCDC) and the territory's central communicable diseases surveillance email (CDsurveillance@gov.nu.ca), as soon as possible (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

COVID-19 infection is a notifiable communicable disease in Nunavut; thus, the public health officer is expected to immediately notify all other public health officers involved and the Territorial Communicable Disease Specialist (TCDS) (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). The TCDS are responsible for ensuring the RCDCs and other relevant contacts (e.g. epidemiologists) are notified of the case. As a reportable disease, all healthcare providers are required, by law, to immediately report all suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to a public health officer. Notably, the public health officer on call will typically be the CPHO or Deputy CPHO (ibid).

Contact tracing

Contact tracing is performed by local public health nurses in Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020am). Individuals providing direct care for, household members in close with, and other persons in close contact or living with confirmed COVID-19 cases are considered high-risk of exposure (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). Individuals providing direct care for confirm COVID-19 cases who consistently used appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) are required medium risk of exposure, as are other individuals in prolonged but not close (i.e., >2 meters) contact with a confirmed case. Individuals in transient contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case are considered low risk of exposure (ibid). The territory's case contact tracing form is publicly available in its COVID-19 precaution guidance document (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

On May 18, it was announced that one Nunavut resident on medical travel in Southern Canada had tested positive for COVID-19; the resident and their medical escort were required to isolate and the escort was monitored for symptoms before returning to Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020am). As the case occurred out-of-territory, no contact tracing was reportedly performed. With this same announcement, it was reported that a staff member at the Embassy West LTC facility, in Ottawa, where Nunavummiut Elders receive care, had tested positive for COVID-19 (Government of Nunavut, 2020am). While the staff member had no direct contact with residents, the Department of Health was reportedly in contact with all potentially affected families about the situation; e.g. to advise if any precautions were needed for persons at high-risk of exposure (Government of Nunavut, 2020am).

On June 1, CPHO Dr. Patterson issued a warning that contact tracers had noticed the bubbles of Nunavummiut were getting larger (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). He stressed the importance of keeping social bubbles small to reduce the reduce of COVID-19 transmission and support contact tracing efforts (ibid).

Data collection

The Government of Nunavut and Department of Health regularly report data related to COVID-19; unlike other provinces and territories, Nunavut has no dedicated health services research and/or health analytics branch. The Nunavut Bureau of Statistics is Nunavut's central statistical agency (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-h).

Nunavut's COVID-19 [website](#) contains transparent reporting of the number of individuals submitting requests to enter the territory, including the number and reasons (e.g. medical worker versus public) for those approved and number of repatriated Nunavummiut; summary of the status of critical worker requests (e.g. approved, denied) and details on the approved essential workers entering the territory (e.g. date of arrival); and number of individuals in isolation (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

There have been no cases of COVID-19 confirmed in the territory; thus, no case summary data are reported. However, the [website](#) landing page provides a summary on the total number of confirmed cases, suspected cases, total persons followed/under investigation, and current number of individuals followed/under investigation (Government of Nunavut, 2020k).

Unlike other territories, Nunavut's CPHO has confirmed that residents will be informed which communities have confirmed COVID-19 cases (Driscoll, 2020a). CPHO Dr. Patterson has stated: "We will

be as forthcoming and transparent as we can. We will not name names. We will not give identifying data, but we will discuss where they are, how we believe they were exposed, and what Nunavummiut can do to protect themselves” (ibid).

Projections and modelling

The territory has not publicly released any modeling projections to date, and it is not apparent whether any Nunavut-specific models have been developed or being used to inform local decision making.

1.5 Testing

Assessment centres

CPHO Dr. Patterson has stated that, since March 19, in-home testing of suspected cases has been conducted by healthcare professionals (CBC News, 2020a; Deuling, 2020). If personnel capacity allows, a healthcare professional will visit the person’s home to collect a diagnostic swab; otherwise, samples will be taken at a health center, community clinic, rapid access clinic or emergency department (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

Testing criteria

Anyone in Nunavut who thinks they need to be tested for COVID-19 is asked to call their local health centre, hospital or health authority to be assessed over the phone department (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). The territory’s testing criteria are very broad, including asymptomatic and very mild symptomatic persons in order identify any presence of COVID in territory as soon as possible (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). A flowchart has been provided by the Department of Health to support healthcare professionals in determining testing eligibility. Specifically, it outlines that individuals with 1) fever and new or worsening cough or shortness of breath or 2) at least one of the common signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, fatigue, etc.) should be tested for SARS-CoV-2 infection. It further outlines that a test might be sought for recent out-of-territory travellers, persons with a high or medium risk of case contact, and close contacts of symptomatic out-of-territory travellers (ibid).

Routine testing of asymptomatic persons is not currently recommended by CPHO Dr. Patterson (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020); such testing with only be done for surveillance purposes (e.g. cluster investigations) under the guidance of a public health officer (ibid). Further, SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic testing is recommended for all unexplained deaths occurring in Nunavut, in consultation with a public health officer and coroner (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

Laboratory and testing capacity

Early in the pandemic all diagnostic test samples taken in Nunavut were flown to the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg for processing, with results being emailed or faxed back to Nunavut officials (Deuling, 2020). Since May 21, the diagnostic laboratory in Rankin Inlet has been validated by the NML to confirm diagnostic tests positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection using the GeneXpert processing device (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

In-territory testing capacity is currently limited (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020); thus, approval for taking all COVID-19 testing samples must be sought from the on-call Public Health Officer. In-territory testing is currently limited to presumptive purposes and tests require confirmation at a partner laboratory in Alberta, Manitoba, or Ontario (ibid).

The territory is currently piloting a new COVID-19 testing device (BioFire), located in Iqaluit, to supporting faster processing of tests taken in the Qikiqtaaluk region (Frizzell, 2020); it is anticipated that the new device will allow local officials to provide testing results within 5 days. If the two-week pilot is successful, an additional device will be purchased for Rankin Inlet to process tests for the Kivalliq region (ibid). Serological tests are currently not available in Nunavut (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

Test results and reporting

Nunavummiut receive their COVID-19 testing results via telephone from a local public health nurse (CBC News, 2020d; Deuling, 2020). The average turn-around time for SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test results was approximately 4-6 days in mid-March. However, in mid-April, CPHO Dr. Patterson reported that the average turn-around time had increased to 6-7 days (Sharma, 2020).

2. Ensuring sufficient physical infrastructure and workforce capacity

Infrastructure and workforce capacity are crucial for dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak, as there may be both a surge in demand and a decreased availability of health workers. This section considers the physical infrastructure available in the jurisdiction and where there are shortages, it describes any measures being implemented or planned to address them. It also considers the health workforce, including what jurisdictions are doing to maintain or enhance capacity, the responsibilities and skill-mix of the workforce, and any initiatives to train, protect or otherwise support health workers.

2.1 Physical infrastructure

Nunavut's vast geography and Arctic landscape present unique challenges for its physical infrastructure. Nunavut is the most northern territory of Canada and is the fifth largest country subdivision in world, in terms of geography; Nunavut comprises 20% of Canada's land mass (Government of Canada, 2017b; Government of Nunavut, n.d.-f). Nunavut is also the least populous of Canadian PTs, with a population of approximately 36,000; over 80% of the population identifies as Inuit (ibid). Notably, Nunavut is extremely geographically remote, comprised of 25 communities only accessible by air or water (Government of Canada, 2017c). Nunavut shares land borders with the Northwest Territories (NWT), Manitoba, Saskatchewan (only at a quadripoint), and Newfoundland and Labrador (on Killiniq Island only), and all but one of its communities (Baker Lake) are located on its coast, the longest shoreline in Canada (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-f).

Health system capacity

Given its unique infrastructure challenges, many more specialized healthcare services are not provided in Nunavut. Nunavut's Department of Health operates 25 health facilities that are mainly clinics

(Government of Nunavut, n.d.-g). Most communities in Nunavut only have a nursing station, usually staffed by one nurse (Sokic, 2020).

The territory operates one hospital, Qikiqtani General Hospital (QGH), in the capital city, Iqaluit. QGH serves the approximately 16,000 people living in the Qikiqtani (Baffin) Region, home to 12 communities over nearly one million square kilometres. QGH contains 35 acute care beds, specialist clinics, and an emergency room that operates 24/7 (ibid). There are no intensive care beds in Nunavut (Driscoll, 2020a).

There are only 28 LTC spaces in Nunavut, with facilities located in Cambridge Bay, Igloolik and Gjoa Haven (George, 2020b); these three facilities are managed by the Department of Health (Government of Canada, 2017a). Thus, many Nunavummiut also receive LTC outside of the territory. The planned construction of a new 24-bed LTC facility in Rankin Inlet has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic; it is reportedly being re-designed to incorporate appropriate infection prevention standards (ibid).

Given the limited in-territory health services, it is common for Nunavummiut to travel to regional hubs or southern parts of the country to receive medical care and healthcare service agreements are in place between Nunavut and Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and NWT (Nunavut Tunngavik, 2008). Accommodations in medical boarding homes are provided free-of-charge to Land Claim Beneficiaries and their escorts on approved medical travel; accommodations and meals are funded by First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of the Canadian Government (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-a). Other Nunavummiut may also stay in these boarding homes; however, costs must be covered out-of-pocket or by any applicable private insurance plans. In the event a boarding home is full, these individuals may be asked to leave to make room for travelers without insurance plans. Medical boarding homes are located in Iqaluit (Nunavut), Ottawa (Ontario), Churchill (Manitoba), Edmonton (Alberta), Winnipeg (Manitoba), and Yellowknife (NWT) (ibid).

Medical equipment and supplies

Medical supplies in Nunavut are limited; for example, QGH has one CT scanner, but has no MRI machines (Driscoll, 2020a). On April 22, CPHO Dr. Patterson reported the territory had 12 ventilators; in mid-March the territory reportedly had 7 (Sharma, 2020).

In early April, Dr. Patterson reported that an adequate supply of PPE for healthcare staff was a “bit of a concern,” and the territory was looking to increase its supply (Sharma, 2020). On April 22, Premier Savikataaq announced the Government of Nunavut was funding seamstresses to make 5,000 face masks for Elders, persons with underlining health conditions, and non-medical first responders (e.g. firefighters); funding was provided by through the Nunavut Development Corporation (Government of Nunavut, 2020ah). At least 500 of these masks were set aside for air travellers, to help Nunavummiut comply with Transport Canada’s then-new requirements for air travellers (ibid).

Shortly before this announcement, on March 31, the Canadian company Suncor Energy announced they had donated 40,000 N95 masks to the federal government to distribute to communities in Nunavut, NWT and Yukon (Beamish, 2020). At QGH, all used N95 masks are being labelled with the staff member’s name and sanitized for re-use for up to three times in case of a mask shortage (Brown, 2020).

2.2 Workforce

Workforce capacity

Most communities in Nunavut have a community health centre, staffed 24/7 by on-call nurses (Sokic, 2020). Community health nurses are widely considered the backbone of Nunavut's healthcare system (Marchildon & Torgerson, 2013). Critically, community nurses provided a larger scope of practice than traditional registered nurses, including performing diagnostic services (e.g. X-rays), dispensing medication, etc. and some services typically provided by physicians (Cherba et al., 2019). Most nurses are contracted through agencies or on a casual basis, with fewer than 50% of the territory's nurses being hired on a full-time basis. Thus, there have been long cited concerns with under staffing. For example, QGH can only operate at approximately 50% capacity as a result of nursing understaffing; further, clinics in other communities, such as Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay, can only operate as clinics, as opposed to hospitals, due to staffing shortages (ibid). QGH is the only facility with laboratory technicians (Government of Canada, 2017a).

Difficulties in recruiting and retaining nurses in Nunavut, as well as other remote locations in Canada, has been a significant, long-standing challenge (Marchildon & Torgerson, 2013). Notably, this is in the context of wider nursing shortages across Canada (ibid).

The territory's main medical centers, in Rankin Inlet, Pond Inlet, and Iqaluit, have full-time physicians; other communities are serviced by a rotating physician schedule (Cherba et al., 2019). Critically, some years these centers have been without a physician (Nunavut Tunngavik, 2008). It is not uncommon for Nunavummiut to only be able to access a physician after referral from a nurse (Nunavut Tunngavik, 2008). Further, physician services are commonly offered remotely, through telephone, email and telehealth services (Cherba et al., 2019). Out-of-territory specialist also provide consults to patients or nurses remotely (Government of Canada, 2017a). Similar shortages have been long reported for other medical and allied health services, such as dentists (Nunavut Tunngavik, 2008).

Notably, the territory's health system relies substantially on short-term locum healthcare professionals, and many are from outside the territory (Cherba et al., 2019). A recent report found many professionals are drawn to practicing in Nunavut given the broader scope of practice and opportunities to experience Nunavut's land and culture; however, high living costs, travel, limited job opportunities for spouses, and isolation are barriers for the long-term retention of healthcare professionals (Government of Canada, 2017a).

Throughout the pandemic, all Department of Health staff have been deemed essential workers and have been re-deployed as necessary (Government of Nunavut, 2020z); however, no specifics regarding these deployments have been publicly reported.

Workforce training

To work in Nunavut, community health nurses are required to meet minimum education and work experience requirements and be eligible for registration with the Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (RNANT/NU) (Government of Canada, 2017a). However, a recent audit from Canada's Auditor General found that Nunavut's Department of Health does not provide adequate

orientation, training and support to personnel working in its community health centres (Government of Canada, 2017a).

Finally, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called for the training of more Indigenous doctors and nurses, particularly for supporting culturally appropriate care in Indigenous communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Several activities are currently underway to support increased training and retention of Indigenous healthcare professionals, including health science camps for high school students, partnerships with Indigenous organizations and universities, and rural practice programs for medical students to changing student attitudes regarding practicing Northern medicine (Cherba et al., 2019).

Workforce support

A recent audit from Canada's Auditor General reported high rates of turn over for healthcare professional working in Nunavut, including physicians and nurses (Government of Canada, 2017a). Staffing shortages have led to existing staff in Nunavut being "critically over-worked" and many healthcare professionals resigning or taking union actions (Nunavut Tunngavik, 2008). These concerns have led to calls for improved retention and training strategies and supports for healthcare providers (Cherba et al., 2019). There have been specific calls for providing appropriate orientation to the Nunavut healthcare system, which differs drastically from that of other provinces and territories, and cross-cultural training to supports providers in delivering culturally appropriate care, particularly for providers from outside the territory (ibid). Further, the need for increased training of local translators (e.g. in medical terminology) to support effective communication between patients and professionals has also been raised, particularly for professional from outside the territory who do not speak Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun (Government of Canada, 2017a).

Specific to the territory's COVID-19 response, the RNANT/NU has a dedicated [webpage](#) with COVID-19 resources for its nurses, including links to third party online training resources for managing COVID-19 cases, using PPE, etc., and a frequently asked questions document, including questions regarding safe work conditions during the pandemic, PPE use, etc. (RNANT/NU, 2020). New immediate-hire job postings for registered nurses and nurse practitioners have also been created to deal with the additional workload stemming from the pandemic. The RNANT/NU has also created an expediated registration process for new hires during the pandemic (ibid).

3. Providing health services effectively

This section describes approaches for service delivery planning and patient pathways for suspected COVID-19 cases. It also considers efforts by jurisdictions to maintain other essential services during periods of excessive demand for health services.

3.1 Planning services

Infection control

All healthcare providers caring for probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are required to wear a surgical or procedural face mask and place the patient in a private room, maintaining a 2-meter distance from other patients (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). Standard contact and droplet precautions must be followed; e.g. eye protection, gown and gloves should be worn when providing care to persons with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection (ibid).

All suspected patients are instructed to wear a surgical/procedural face mask while in a healthcare facility (ibid). Further, since June 15, all Nunavummiut presenting at a healthcare centre with respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, sneeze, or runny nose) have been asked to wear a mask (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

QGH has protocols in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 from “clean” areas of the hospital to “dirty” areas (Brown, 2020). For example, the maternity ward is a designated “clean” ward, meaning it is screened off from regular traffic flow using dividers. For the emergency department, paramedics are asked to alert staff in advance of arriving to provide adequate time to don PPE. QGH’s clinic has been closed off and is being treated as a separate building to avoid potential transmission; however, many appointments have been held virtually. Further, the hospital’s cafeteria has been closed to the public. In the case of any confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients, they are to be immediately isolated in a single room in the “dirty” side of the hospital (ibid).

Prioritized reduction of services

In March 2020, public health officials reassured Nunavummiut that access to healthcare services will remain available in all communities seven days a week throughout the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Specifically, they stated reassured that all access to urgent and emergent healthcare services would continue to be available 24/7. However, all non-urgent requests would be triaged daily and individuals were asked to call ahead before presenting at a healthcare facility in-person (ibid).

3.2 Managing cases

Patient pathway and treatment protocol

To support self-isolation and reduce strain on the healthcare system, the Nunavut Department of Health stated on March 13, effective immediately and until further notice, it would no longer issue sick notes (Government of Nunavut, 2020t). The department also recommended that all organizations in Nunavut

waive any requirement for sick notes from sick employees, as done by the Government of Nunavut for its employees the week prior (ibid).

According to guidance from the Nunavut Department of Health, care for patients confirmed to have COVID-19 will typically be supportive in nature (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). Unless medical care is required, all PUIs should isolate at home until otherwise advised by a public health official. Daily check-ins, from a public health nurse or other nurse, are required for all PUIs; these will typically occur over telephone, but in-person visits may be arranged (ibid). Notably, these daily check-in forms are publicly available; e.g. included the territory's COVID-19 precaution guidance document (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020). Transportation of patients requiring medevac will be arranged through the usual regional on-call protocols (Nunavut Department of Health, 2020).

Home care and long-term care

No specific policies pertaining to the management of COVID-19 cases in home care and LTC were identified.

3.3 Maintaining essential services

Health services and virtual care

All health staff have been deemed essential by the territory and may be re-deployed, as necessary (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). In mid-March, CPHO Dr. Patterson began asking Nunavummiut to abstain from seeking non-essential medical care, unless "absolutely necessary" to reduce strain on healthcare professionals (Deuling, 2020).

On March 17, the Department of Health requested that all patients call ahead before visiting a healthcare centre for non-emergency reasons (Government of Nunavut, 2020v). Patients are assessed by telephone before being permitted to enter the facility (ibid).

On March 19, the Department of Health advised that a screening process was being implemented for all medical travel clients before they could receive clearance to travel home to Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020z). Travel, if approved, will be to the nearest appropriate facility from the client's place of residence. While all access to all in-territory urgent and emergent healthcare services continued, all regularly scheduled dental services were cancelled until further notice. Emergency dental treatment remained available in Cambridge Bay, Rankin Inlet, and Iqaluit (ibid).

Also with the March 19 announcement, the Department reassured residents that physicians would continue community visits and that public health offices and clinics would remain open, including well baby, prenatal and immunization clinics (Government of Nunavut, 2020z). If community visits are not possible, physicians' visits could be conducted by telehealth (ibid). The territory has a long-standing history of delivery of telehealth services; thus, no new billing codes or policies were created.

Since March 19, visiting physicians have been required to undergo screening prior to working on-site in the territory (Government of Nunavut, 2020z). All non-essential medical travel by residents outside of the territory was also postponed (Government of Nunavut, 2020z).

Since March 19, QGH and other health centres across the territory have limited visitation (Government of Nunavut, 2020z). Exceptions are in place for maternity and palliative patients, and escorts are permitted for minors. Otherwise, one visitor per patient is permitted; visitations to community health centres was temporarily postponed (ibid).

In response to the territory's first presumption COVID-19 case, all regular appointments at the Pond Inlet Health Centre were cancelled on April 30, until further notice (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Only emergency services were available, and residents of Pond Inlet were required to call their health centre before attending in-person. All affected services in Pond Inlet resumed on April 6, after the suspected case was confirmed to be negative for SARS-CoV-2 infection (ibid).

First responders

There are no reports of emergency services or first responders being impacted by the territory's pandemic response. Several organizations have reassured Nunavummiut that emergency services will remain fully operational throughout the pandemic (RCMP, 2020). Some groups, such as members of the RCMP, have been instructed to wear appropriate PPE, such as face masks and gloves, while on duty (RCMP, 2020).

Pharmaceutical services and supply

Notably, not all communities in Nunavut have access to a pharmacy. Medications are typically flown into these community once a week (Sokic, 2020). The territory's state of emergency provides the CPHO with authority to procure and provide the distribution of medical supplies, aid and equipment in any part of Nunavut; however, there are no reports of any pharmaceutical supply change issues resulting from the pandemic (CBC News, 2020a). See [Section 6.1](#) for further details regarding Nunavut's state of emergency.

There have been no reports of stockpile purchasing of supplies, as have occurred in other parts of the country. However, the North West Company, the primary grocery store in northern Canada, has directed its stores to limit the number of toilet paper, cough medicine and disinfectant wipes purchases to one per household (Driscoll, 2020a).

Mental health and additions services

On March 19, the Department of Health advised that all mental health services would remain available and unchanged throughout the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020z). They further advised that the territory's Mental Health Program will host community radio shows across the territory, where possible, and the Youth Wellness team would offer phone-based one-on-one counselling support, by appointment, for those in need. The department also stated that options were being pursued for providing Nunavummiut additional crisis debriefing and counselling support through phone and telehealth (ibid).

On June 8, the Government of Nunavut and Homewood Health² announced they would offer online courses to help Government of Nunavut employees and their families adjust and maintain positive mental health throughout the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Nunavummiut feeling alone or

² Homewood Health is one of Canada's largest providers of mental health and addiction services, including employee and family assistance programs.

Reference: Homewood Health. Our Story. <https://homewoodhealth.com/corporate/about/our-story>

struggling were asked to call the Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line, Crisis Services Canada’s online chat, text and telephone services, or use the Isaksimagit Inuusirmi Kataujjiqatigiit Embrace Life Council’s website (<http://inuusiq.com/>) or telephone helpline (867-975-3233 or 1-866-804-2782). Further, the Government of Nunavut’s Employee and Family Assistance Program has also been available, prior to the pandemic, to support the overall well-being of the government’s employees and their families (ibid).

Services for subpopulations and Indigenous communities

Security guards working at the territory’s southern isolation sites are required to wear PPE, such as face masks, during their shift (Government of Nunavut, 2020ax). Since August, the Department of Health has advised expecting mothers in the Kivalliq region of changes to birthing services offered in Rankin Inlet, due to challenges in the recruitment of midwives in Nunavut and across Canada (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Though not directly related to COVID-19, all birthing services in Rankin Inlet have been temporarily suspended until necessary staffing levels can be achieved (ibid).

Services for seniors and long-term care

Since March 19, all continuing care centres have been instructed by the Department of Health to restrict visitation, where possible, and screen individuals for COVID-19 before entering their facilities (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

Outreach and volunteer services

In his media briefings, the Premier has noted on several occasions the successful volunteer and outreach activities occurring across the territory throughout the pandemic. For example, in the hamlet of Kugluktuk, Nunavummiut have organized an art club, bingo nights, at-home trivia nights and other activities to support members of their communities (Government of Nunavut, 2020a). Further, volunteers in the community of Arviat delivered packages of toys to families with small children to help keep children entertained while at-home (ibid).

4. Paying for services

Adequate funding for health is important to manage the excess demands on the health system. This section considers how jurisdictions are paying for COVID-19 services. The subsection on health financing describes how much is spent on health services, where that money comes from, and the distribution of health spending across different service areas. The section also describes who is covered for COVID-19 testing and treatment, whether there are any notable gaps (in population coverage and service coverage), and how much people pay (if at all) for those services out-of-pocket.

4.1 Health financing

Testing and research financing

On July 16, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Nunavut would receive CA\$18.9 million in federal funding in economic relief as part of the Government of Canada’s Safe Restart Agreement (Nunatsiaq News, 2020e). This funded included CA\$5.7 million in in-kind support for COVID-19 testing and

PPE, procured and allocated by the federal government (ibid). There are no public reports of the Government of Nunavut or local researchers receiving dedicated funding for COVID-19 research.

Medical equipment and supply financing

The Government of Nunavut received the above federal Safe Restart Agreement funding and in-kind PPE contributions. It is not clear if the territory received additional sources of funding to further support the procurement of medical equipment and supplies.

Workforce financing

As part of the federal July 16 Safe Restart Agreement, Nunavut received CA\$1 million to finance sick leave benefits for all Nunavummiut, including its health care workforce (Nunatsiaq News, 2020e). On May 28, the Government of Nunavut introduced the Nunavut Essential Workers Wage Premium to provide top-up wages for frontline workers (Government of Nunavut, 2020g) which is further described below in [Section 6.2](#).

Health services, mental health and virtual care financing

For eligible residents, there are three different government insurance plans: the Nunavut Health Care Plan (NHCP); Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) for recognized members of Inuit organizations (i.e., land claim beneficiaries); and territorial extended health benefits (EHB), for non-beneficiaries aged 65 years or older or with a long-term illness, and residents exceeding their limits for other insurance options (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-e). NHCP provides health insurance for all eligible Nunavummiut for insured services provided in- and out-of-territory (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-c).

These all provide access to standard health care services, including physician and hospital services, and the territory has a long history of telehealth services. Coverage for other services varies by health insurance program; for example, mental health counselling is available free of charge to residents insured through the NIHB (Government of Canada, 2017a).

While HCP and EHB are funded by the Government of Nunavut, NIHB is a federally operated health insurance plan for eligible Inuit persons. All persons living in land claim settlement areas are automatically registered for NIHB; others must be registered with an Inuit organization to receive these health benefits (Health Canada, 2014). NIHB also provides coverage for services not covered by PT health insurance plans, such as over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, dental care, mental health services, medical transportation, etc. (ibid).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Nunavummiut could access telehealth services to connect with community health care facilities within Nunavut and other jurisdictions such as NWT, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-i). This provides access to clinical sessions, consultations, assessments, referrals, case conferencing, follow-ups/post-operative care, debriefing and counselling services. Remote access to non-clinical sessions included long term and home care family visits, patient and client education, professional training and continuing education, and administrative meetings (ibid).

Notably, a 2015 suicide inquest revealed the inadequacy of Nunavut's mental health resources (Nunatsiaq News, 2015). On August 25, 2020, the Government of Canada announced a CA\$82.5 million funding

package to support enhanced mental health and wellness programs for Indigenous communities, including those in Nunavut (ibid). Previously, in May 2020, Nunavut also received CA\$5.2 million in targeted federal funding, as part of a ten-year commitment of approximately CA\$11.2 million, to invest in a range of initiatives expanding home care, community care, and mental health and addiction services, including financial supports for community-driven mental health and addictions projects targeting children and youth (Health Canada, 2019).

Subpopulations and Indigenous Community Financing

There have been numerous calls from advocates for the need for increased funding to support Nunavut's majority Inuit population. For example, on March 12, the IKT urged the federal government to consider Inuit persons at enhanced risk for severe COVID-19 related illness, noting the "long standing social and economic inequities mean that Inuit communities could be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and should be a priority for allocation of resources" (Nunatsiaq News, 2020a).

Long-term care financing

All Nunavummiut enrolled in the NHCP are eligible for home and community care services (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-d). Nunavummiut with long-term illnesses or otherwise needing support in activities of daily living, may be eligible to receive these services through NHCP (ibid).

There are only two elders homes in Nunavut, one each in Arviat and Iqaluit; both have an eight-bed capacity and are designated to provide Level 2 or 3 assisted-living residential care for seniors, aged 55 years or older, in Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-d).

There are three long-term continuing care centres in Nunavut, located in Cambridge Bay, Igloodik and Gjoa Haven, with a total of 28 beds (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-d). Eligibility is restricted to Nunavummiut (age 55+) with a valid NHCP card who have been formally assessed as requiring Level 4 to Level 5 care by representatives of the Nunavut Department of Health (ibid).

Other Nunavummiut, i.e., beyond the above bed and care capacity, maybe eligible to receive LTC outside of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, n.d.-d).

Essential services

There have been no reports of any disruptions to essential services during the pandemic.

It is important to note that many communities in Nunavut have a history of boil water advisories where water is unsafe for consumption without first being boiled to kill bacteria or other contaminants (Nunatsiaq News, 2020g). Several communities have had boil water advisories in place during the pandemic; however, these have been unaffected by the pandemic closures.

4.2 Entitlement and coverage

Coverage for territorial healthcare

As described in [Section 4.1](#), different entitlements and coverages policies are in place in Nunavut.

Coverage for COVID-19 testing

No specific details regarding coverage for COVID-19 diagnostic testing in Nunavut could be identified. Based on reports of non-resident mine workers being tested for COVID-19 in Nunavut, it would appear that testing is provided free of charge for both residents and others in-territory requiring a COVID-19 test (Government of Nunavut, 2020ar).

5. Governance

The governance of the health system with regard to COVID-19 relates to pandemic response plans and the steering of the health system to ensure its continued functioning. It includes emergency response mechanisms, as well as how information is being communicated, and the regulation of health service provision to patients affected by the virus.

5.1 Nunavut's pandemic response plan

Territorial level

Nunavut's new *Public Health Act* came into effect on January 1, 2020 (Government of Nunavut, 2020o). This replaced an older act, which was carried over after the territory's separation from NWT in 1999. Critically, this new act explicitly recognizes the unique needs of Nunavummiut, by outlining requirements for food and water safety, sanitation, and communicable disease response. Further, the new act outlines the responsibilities and powers of Nunavut's Minister of Health, CPHO (formerly the referred to as the Chief Medical Officer of Health) and other public health officers (ibid).

Nunavut has a Territorial Emergency Management Committee, comprised of senior health and emergency management staff and representatives from all regions of Nunavut, which is responsible for monitoring the status of all health facilities across Nunavut and coordinating responses to COVID-19 within the territory (Government of Nunavut, 2020t). Reportedly, members of various Government of Nunavut departments have met daily during the pandemic to coordinate their efforts, and the Department of Health has actively worked with these and other partners across the territory and country to support coordinated responses (ibid).

After the territory's first presumption case was identified in Pond Inlet, the territory's Rapid Response Plan was implemented, which saw the deployment of a Rapid Response Team to immediately initiate containment measures, contact tracing, and monitor persons on home isolation orders (Government of Nunavut, 2020t).

On August 31, 2020, a revised Social Distancing and Gathering Order came into effect to address concerns raised by the Department of Education regarding activities such as fitness classes and emergency evacuations and fire drills during the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020ay); i.e., the new order set specific policies for ensuring physical distancing while maintaining safety during these activities.

Indigenous communities

The Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Division coordinates the development of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit Societal Values initiatives across the Government of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020l). Notably, the new *Public Health Act* explicitly recognizes Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (traditional knowledge) as being critical to the protection and promotion of public health (ibid).

Municipal/Regional level

Due to the enormous size of the territory, the Government of Nunavut operates through three administrative regions: Kitikmeot, Kivalliq, and Qikiqtaaluk. However, of even greater importance is the role of local government (News, 2012). According to the *Hamlets Act*, each municipality has an elected council which is responsible for governing and providing leadership to their community (ibid).

5.2 Nunavut's framework for reopening

On April 29, CPHO Dr. Patterson first announced the territory's plans for re-opening. Specifically, he advised Nunavummiut on three conditions that need to be met before considering easing restrictions:

"We need to achieve in-territory diagnostic capacity. This means that we need to be able to implement a rapid, accurate, and comprehensive COVID-19 testing program here in Nunavut; there needs to be significant indication that rates of COVID-19 are decreasing in the southern jurisdictions to which Nunavummiut most often travel; and there needs to remain no active cases of COVID-19 within Nunavut. The nature of these conditions means that it is difficult to assign a specific timeline to re-opening, but fulfillment of these conditions is necessary to minimize risk to public health and safety. We need to know that Nunavummiut travelling outside of the territory can do so safely, and we need to be able to respond rapidly to any confirmed cases of COVID-19 within Nunavut" (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

Unlike other PTs, Nunavut's responses to the pandemic must consider the context of the five jurisdictions (NWT, Alberta, Manitoba, Québec, and Ontario) upon which it relies for medical and business travel, cargo, food shipments, and medical referrals (Government of Nunavut, 2020m). Thus, the CPHO has stressed the importance of providing clear guidelines for how the territory is determining the risk of COVID-19 in Nunavut, including transmission, testing capacity, health care system capacity, community transmission and case counts in neighbouring regions, etc. (ibid).

On May 25, the Government of Nunavut stated that it was working with its stakeholders to begin re-opening businesses, activities, and programs in a safe and sustainable manner, without posing undue risk to the health and safety of Nunavummiut (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

Since June 1, 2020, day cares in Nunavut have been permitted to re-open up for regular business (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). The size limit for outdoor gatherings also increases to permit up to 25 people and territorial parks re-opened for outdoor activities, if permitted by local circumstances. While all park buildings remained closed, municipal playgrounds were permitted to re-open, if local circumstances permit (ibid).

With the May 25 announcement, Dr. Patterson advised that the territory's plan was to re-assess their condition every two weeks and, if the state of COVID in Nunavut was favorable, public health measures, would continue to be lifted (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). He stated that the territory would begin

with re-opening lower risk services, activities and programs, such as outdoors activities. He further stated that the territory might remain at the “status quo” until he and the Government were confident that lifting additional restrictions would not pose unnecessary risk to Nunavummiut (ibid). He described Nunavut’s re-opening approach as “flexible, cautious, and adaptive to the evolving situation.”

Later that day, the Government of Nunavut released “Nunavut’s Path: moving forward during COVID-19” outlining the specific low-, medium- and high-risk measures that may be lifted in the territory over time (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Notably, no specific dates were provided as Dr. Patterson stated, “Trying to forecast specific dates and timelines for when we can lift our public health measures would be inaccurate and frankly insincere” (ibid). The Government of Nunavut’s dedicated COVID-19 web platform provides dedicated [webpages](#) outlining sector specific guidelines for re-opening (Government of Nunavut, 2020m).

Since June 8, Government of Nunavut employees who were previously working from home have been permitted to return to their regular workplaces (Government of Nunavut, 2020i). This decision was made in consultation with the Public Health Team and the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) (ibid).

On July 24, Nunavut’s Department of Education released its 2020-21 Opening Plan for Nunavut Schools: Health and Safety (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). All schools would opened as usual in September 2020 due to the lack of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the territory . The plan outlined that physical distancing requirements would depend on the local context of the community and, in general, face masks would not be recommended for students; however, at the discretion of the CPHO, there may be some instances where students or staff should wear masks, particularly if unable to physically distance when required by the CPHO. The plan further outlined that school assemblies should be avoided, and classroom cohorts should be created (ibid).

Table 1. Overview of key re-openings

Category	Dates and Relevant Notes
Schools, childcare facilities and youth camps	June 1, 2020: Daycares June 29, 2020: Youth centers and day camps permitted to re-open.
Non-essential businesses and services	June 8, 2020: Workplaces and retail outlets permitted to re-open, with safety measures in place. Galleries, museums, and libraries may open for individual viewing and browsing; group sessions prohibited. June 15, 2020: Gyms and pools permitted to re-open for solo workouts and lap swimming only. June 22, 2020: Personal service providers permitted to re-open for one-on-one sessions, with PPE used. June 22, 2020: Bars and restaurants permitted to re-open at half capacity, last call at 9 pm, practicing social distancing. June 22, 2020: Theatres and churches permitted to reopen. July 20, 2020: All licensed establishments permitted to re-open, with public health measures in place.

	August 10, 2020: Government of Nunavut office buildings permitted to re-open to the public.
Public and private gatherings	June 1, 2020: Outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people permitted June 29, 2020: Outdoor gathering size increases to 50 people; indoor to 10 people (in private dwelling, this is in addition to the residents); and for places of worship, conference facilities, community halls, rental meeting spaces, and gatherings organized by the Government of Canada, Government of Nunavut, municipal corporation, or Regional Inuit Organizations (less of 50 people or 50% of capacity for the facility)
Outdoor facilities	June 1, 2020: Playgrounds, territorial parks
Healthcare service facilities	June 8, 2020: Increased availability of in-person health assessments, including laboratory and diagnostic imaging at QGH. June 15, 2020: Dental, physiotherapy, massage therapy, and chiropractic clinics permitted to re-open. June 15: Visitors permitted at QGH inpatient ward, with screening
Long-term care facilities	June 29, 2020: LTC visitation permitted in a limited capacity; e.g. 1-2 visitors per resident at a time and visitors limited to immediate family
Subpopulations and Indigenous communities	June 15, 2020: Family members can resume visitation at correctional facilities, with public health measures in place.
Mobility and travel	June 1, 2020: In-territory travel advisories lifted

6. Measures in other sectors

Many measures beyond the immediate scope of the health system are being taken to prevent further spread of the virus. This section contains information on many of these areas, including border and travel restrictions and economic and fiscal measures, among others.

6.1 State of emergency

On March 18, 2020, Nunavut's Minister of Health, George Hickes, declared a public health emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020y). This has been extended numerous times throughout the pandemic, with the most recent order in place until September 17, 2020 (Government of Nunavut, 2020az). This state of public health emergency provides Nunavut's CPHO with expanded powers, including the power to procure and provide the distribution of medical supplies and equipment in Nunavut, restrict travel into Nunavut, and other measures they "reasonably believe are necessary for the protection of public health during the public health emergency" (CBC News, 2020a).

On April 24, the Department of Justice and CPHO Dr. Patterson introduced a new order, *Order Respecting Social Distancing and Mass Gatherings*, which came into effect on April 24 at 11:59 pm (Government of Nunavut, 2020j). This order provided clearer language regarding Nunavut's social distancing and gathering orders, and authorized all peace officers appointed under territorial law the ability to enforce these orders. In addition to RCMP officers, this included municipal enforcement officers, sheriffs from the

Nunavut Court of Justice, environmental inspectors, and wildlife officers (ibid). Normally these officers only enforce their own relevant legislation; however, the order ensured the territory had adequate capacity to enforce the new emergency orders. Although unrelated to COVID-19, on May 28, the Department of Health issued a Public Health Advisory to the community of Sanikiluaq due an outbreak of pertussis (Government of Nunavut, 2020an).

6.1 Border Control, Mobility and Travel Restrictions

Internal travel

On March 13, 2020, Transport Canada announced it was suspending all cruise ship traffic in Canada for the entire 2020 season (Driscoll, 2020a). In early-mid March, the community councils of Coral Harbour, Igloodik and Cambridge Bay also asked all visitors to not travel to their communities. In response, the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS), in Cambridge Bay, subsequently suspended the work of eight researchers scheduled to arrive in the community (ibid).

On March 19, residents of Rankin Inlet set up a road blockade outside of Agnico Eagle's Meliadine gold mine, protesting the possibility that out-of-territory mine workers using the hamlet's airport could spread COVID-19 among Nunavummiut (Nunatsiaq News, 2020c). In response, Agnico Eagle announced its Nunavut-based workforces, at both its Meliadine and Meadowbank mines, would be immediately sent home for four weeks with pay (ibid). Further, Nunavut's Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, David Akeeagok, stated the Agnico Eagle had already taken steps to alleviate potential transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from its employees to Nunavummiut, including screening employees for symptoms prior to travel into Nunavut and having them immediately depart to the mine on arrival, without traveling through the airport and potentially having community contacts (CBC News, 2020b).

On April 30, in response to Nunavut's first suspected COVID-19 case, all travel into or out of the community of Pond Inlet was prohibited (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Further, all businesses operating in Pond Inlet were ordered to immediately close, except for grocery stores, fuel and motor vehicle stations, post offices, and restaurant take-out services. All social gatherings were also restricted to no more than five persons; however, no social gatherings were permitted in dwellings. Notably, these measures were lifted on May 4 after the suspected case was confirmed to be a false positive (ibid). Exceptions to this order included persons with a letter from the CPHO; medevac patients and flight crews, who were required to restrict movements to the airport and health care centers and also wear PPE; and Inuit exercising their hunting rights (i.e., as set out in Article 5 of the Nunavut Agreement).

Also on April 30, Chesterfield Inlet passed a notion which prohibited all outside visitors from entering the hamlet and requiring residents returning to the community to self-isolate for a 14-day period (Nunatsiaq News, 2020c). Some residents in Rankin Inlet urged their community leaders to adopt similar travel restrictions; however, most councillors stated they favoured other measures to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, such as physical distancing and face mask use (ibid).

In response, on May 4, the community of Kivalliq announced a new nightly curfew would be in place immediately, which prohibited residents from leaving their homes between 10 pm and 6 am (Nunatsiaq News, 2020c). Emergency and essential workers were exempted from this order, as were hunters leaving and entering the community. Residents were further asked to keep their children at home; council stated

they would deliver a new cleaning supplies, bingo cards for its next free community bingo game, and a box of toys and games to each household to help keep residents entertained. Council further asked each household to send only one person to run errands, e.g. grocery stores, and to avoid shopping at peak hours to limit crowds and promote social distancing (ibid). The mayor of Baker Lake, Richard Aksawnee, similarly urged residents to observe Nunavut's public health orders on social distancing and gatherings and asked residents to only interact with members of their immediate household and avoid gatherings, "such as a card game night with your friends at your dinner table" (Nunatsiaq News, 2020c).

Throughout May 2020, a number of hamlets in Nunavut introduced temporary restrictions on any consumption, possession, or distribution of alcohol to reinforce social distancing laws by discouraging inter-regional travel and social gatherings (George, 2020a). According to the *Nunavut Liquor Act*, communities can pass special prohibitions three times a year. For example, Grise Fiord, the most northern community in Nunavut (and North America), which introduced two back-to-back 14-day resolutions changing the status of Grise Fiord from a no-restriction community; specifically, persons not abiding by these alcohol restriction policies could face between CA\$500 and CA\$5,000 in fines and/or jail time up to 30 days. Further, the hamlet of Kinngait, also passed a special liquor prohibition, effective May 11 through May 24. Kinngait is usually a "liquor restricted" community, meaning it has an alcohol education committee that oversees all alcohol orders into the community. According to Kinngait Mayor, Timoon Toonoo, the resolution aimed to reduce gathering sizes and the number of Nunavummiut in RCMP detachment cells, i.e., on alcohol-related offenses. He also stated that the council hoped the change would help maintain the peace in Kinngait, which recently experienced an armed standoff of a lone gunman with police (ibid).

External travel

On March 4, Nunavut's Department of Health encouraged Nunavummiut to "remain vigilant" while travelling abroad (Government of Nunavut, 2020q). This also included monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, new or worsening cough, and difficulty breathing after returning home to Nunavut. On March 13, Nunavummiut are asked to avoid international travel and, further, reduce non-essential travel within Canada (Government of Nunavut, 2020t). All non-essential duty travel for government employees was immediately cancelled, as were international school-sponsored trips. CPHO Dr. Patterson also issued an advisory requesting resident to reduce their domestic travel and avoid international travel (ibid). Also on March 13, Transport Canada announced cruise ship traffic into Nunavut would be suspended for the remainder of the season (Driscoll, 2020a).

By March 17, travel into Nunavut had reportedly substantially declined; the Government of Nunavut announced that they were working with airlines to ensure food and other supply chain remain open (Government of Nunavut, 2020v). Effective March 25, all air entry into Nunavut by non-residents was prohibited; all travellers into Nunavut were required to self-isolate for a 14-day period at designated facilities outside of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Asymptomatic critical employees who must return to work in Nunavut were required to apply for an exemption from CPHO. All travelers entering Nunavut required approval from the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (ibid).

Starting March 30, only residents of Nunavut and critical workers were permitted to enter Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

Since May 21, 2020, medical travellers from the region of Kitikmeot who were receiving treatment in Yellowknife have not been required to undergo a 14-day isolation; i.e., they have been permitted to immediately return home after their medical treatment (Government of Nunavut, 2020h).

On May 28, CPHO Dr. Patterson stated that Nunavut would have border measures in place for the foreseeable future, as it is the territory's most effective barrier to preventing the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Specifically, he stated that fulfillment of any of the following conditions would influence the territory's decision to modify its border measures: development of a vaccine for COVID-19; development or discovery of an effective treatment for COVID-19; indication that COVID-19 is under control in neighboring jurisdictions (i.e., evidence suggesting community transmission is minimal and contained); and sustainable and on-going diagnostic capacity in every community in Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). He cautioned Nunavummiut that many of these factors were outside of Nunavut's control (ibid).

On June 8, a new email address was introduced for Nunavummiut planning to travel outside of the territory (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). All travellers must submit an Isolation Reservation Request Form to this email address, NUisolationreservations@nunavutcare.ca. Further, on June 15, a new email address, isolationrelations@gov.nu.ca, was introduced specifically for the purposes of addressing concerns, comments and questions from persons at the territory's isolation hubs in southern Canada. Reportedly, this email was created to reduce pressure on the territory's COVID-19 toll free line, patient relations and the CPHO Travel Requests emails (ibid).

Also on June 15, the Governments of the NWT and Nunavut announced it would allow their residents to enter the other territory without undergoing a 14-day isolation period prior to travel or upon arrival home (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). However, travel must originate from Nunavut to the NWT, or vice versa, and travellers cannot have travelled outside their respective territory for 14 days prior to their travel to the NWT or Nunavut, and travellers must remain in either territory for the duration of their travel (ibid).

On June 22, the Government of Nunavut announced it was resuming regular medical travel to Churchill, Manitoba (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Medical travellers, and their escorts, who do not leave the community for the duration of their stay would be permitted to directly return to Nunavut without isolating at a designated isolation facility (ibid).

Also on June 22, the Government of Nunavut provided clarification regarding travel protocols for clients using taxi services. Under the *Order Regarding Social Distancing and Gatherings*, taxi companies are permitted to collect fares from multiple households at once only under specific conditions (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). For example, when multiple passengers are in a taxi, the use of face masks is required, and drivers must provide masks for riders who do not have one. Further, drivers must obtain consent from all passengers before picking up multiple fares; passengers can request they do not share their ride and taxi companies must comply with this request (ibid).

On July 13, it was announced that all restrictions on travel to Churchill would be lifted, pending CPHO approval (CBC News, 2020f).

Since August 17, Nunavummiut travelling between the NWT or Churchill and Nunavut, referred to as a "common travel area" are no longer required to isolate under certain conditions. However, Nunavummiut travelling out of Nunavut into a common travel area must still obtain a letter of exemption from the CPHO

to return to the territory; airlines have been instructed to not permit anyone to board an aircraft without this letter (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). To qualify, travellers must not have left the common travel areas for two weeks prior to their travel to NWT, Churchill or Nunavut and must remain in the common travel area for the duration of their travels (ibid).

Legal challenges

Nunavut's restrictions on travel into the territory have been met with multiple legal and public challenges. For example, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association issued a letter on April 26, 2020 to Nunavut's Minister of Justice, Jeannie Ehaloak, and CPHO Patterson questioning whether Nunavut's travel restrictions complied with Section 6 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CCLA, 2020).

On June 11, following questions in response to the NWT partly loosened its travel restrictions after facing similar legal concerns, Dr. Patterson stated that Nunavut's lawyers supported the territory's order and believed it was allowable under the Charter due to their public health emergency declaration (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Dr. Patterson argued travel restrictions were needed due greater harms an outbreak of COVID-19 could have in Nunavut, relative to other parts of Canada (ibid). In response to questions regarding a potential "travel bubble" with NWT, Dr. Patterson stated that the territory was "still interested in it but we want to understand how this will impact potential risks before we make a firm decision" (CBC News, 2020e; Nunatsiaq News, 2020d).

6.2 Economic Measures

Throughout the pandemic, various financial supports have been introduced to support residents and businesses in Nunavut.

Federal support

On April 14, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the federal government would provide a CA\$129.9 million package to support Canada's territories throughout the pandemic (CBC News, 2020c). Of this, CA\$30.9 million was transferred to Nunavut for the purposes of supporting health care services, businesses, and northern airlines transporting essential goods (ibid). With the July 16 Safe Restart Agreement, the federal government further provided Nunavut with a cash transfer of CA\$12.1 million, including CA\$5.7 million in in-kind contributions for testing and PPE and CA\$1.1 million in sick leave benefits (Nunatsiaq News, 2020e).

Public financial support

On March 25, 2020, the Government of Nunavut announced it would temporarily postpone its internal collection of all funds owing to the Government (Government of Nunavut, 2020g); all accounts that had been previously transferred to the government's collection agency and Canadian Revenue Agency were also put on hold (ibid).

On March 31, Qulliq Energy Corporation (QEC), the sole power generator and distributor in Nunavut, announced it would not be performing disconnections until further notice to avoid undue hardships to its costumers who could not pay their bills during the pandemic (Government of Nunavut, 2020ae). QEC further announced it would offer flexible payment options to both residential and commercial customers

unable to pay their monthly electricity bills in full and it would waive late payment fees for these customers (ibid).

On May 28, the Government of Nunavut launched the Nunavut Essential Workers Wage Premium which provided employees earning CA\$20 or less per hour with a top-up of \$5 per hour; employees earning CA\$20-25 per hour a top-up to a maximum of CA\$25 per hour (Government of Nunavut, 2020g). The Department of Finance provided this funding directly to employers to support top-up wages for eligible employees for a 16-week period, starting on June 1, 2020. While the program started with employees providing health care and social services to vulnerable persons in Nunavut, e.g. shelters, food banks, day care, etc., the Government of Nunavut stated that it would consider expanding eligibility to additional employers over time, depending on funding availability (ibid). A month later, on June 29, the Government of Nunavut announced it was expanding the Nunavut Essential Workers Wage Premium to include more sectors, including essential infrastructure, transportation, accommodation, food, retail and professional services (Government of Nunavut, 2020g).

Sectoral and business financial support

Notably, Nunavut's economy is largely driven by resource extraction. Mining, oil, gas and mineral exploration are important sectors of the territory's economy (Government of Nunavut, 2018). Currently, the territory has three major mine sites, operated by private businesses, and most mine workers are from out-of-territory. Arts, crafts, tourism (mostly business) and hunting/fishing are also important contributors to Nunavut's economy (ibid).

Notably, the pandemic was projected to have a major impact on Nunavut's CA\$300 million tourism industry; e.g. 75% of tourism businesses indicated they may have to shut down during the second quarter of 2020 and 13% anticipated they may have to permanently close their businesses (Neary, 2020). The territory's cruise line industry was also greatly impacted by the pandemic; in previous years, Nunavut typically receives 55 cruise ships with over 10,000 visitors (Driscoll, 2020a; Nunatsiaq News, 2020b).

On March 19, the Nunavut Government approved CA\$25,000 in financial relief for each Hunter and Trapper Organization to support community harvesting, and an additional CA\$531,000 to supplement wages for Nunavut's child care workers in licensed facilities (Government of Nunavut, 2020z).

On March 17, Premier Savikataaq stated that the government was "actively working to put together a fiscal package to make sure Nunavummiut don't have to suffer financially by this situation" (Government of Nunavut, 2020v). Specifically, he stated that the Government of Nunavut was working closely with mining companies to monitor their operations and ensure protocols were in place to protect employees and Nunavummiut, while recognizing that each operation's protocols will vary based on their operational requirements (ibid).

On March 18, the Government of Nunavut stated all licensed child care staff should continue to be paid while facilities are closed, with funds provided by the Department of Education (Government of Nunavut, 2020w). This funding package was equal to the parental fees licenced child care facilities would normally receive during this territory's three-week closure (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). On March 25, a similar announcement was made regarding school bus contracts, which would continued to be paid through the 3-week closure (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). However, there have been many reports of concerns

regarding the financial stability of day cares in Nunavut (Nunatsiaq News, 2020b). An April 19 letter submitted to the Minister of Education, from eight executive (co-)directors of childcare centers in the region of Qikiqtaaluk, asked for immediate financial assistance from the Government of Nunavut (ibid). Previously, on March 19, Nunavut's Finance Minister, George Hickes, announced Nunavut's licensed childcare facilities would receive CA\$531,000 to cover lost revenues during the pandemic (ibid). The total funding was reported to be CA\$885,000 for the period March 17 through April 21; the program ended on April 21 as businesses transitioned to the federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit (Government of Nunavut, 2020d).

On March 27, the Department of Economic Development and Transportation announced a one-time grant of CA\$5,000, through the Small Business Support Program, for eligible small Nunavut-based businesses, defined as a business with less than \$500,000 in annual gross sales or less than 10 employees (Government of Nunavut, 2020ad).

On April 14, the federal government announced CA\$35.8 million in funding for Nunavut to specifically support its health care system, airlines, small businesses, and Nutrition North, a Government of Canada program which subsidizes nutritious foods and other essential items in northern communities to support affordability and access (Government of Nunavut, 2020ag). Notably, at that time, the Government of Nunavut was providing CA\$2.25 million weekly to support its local airlines, to maintain basic scheduling, i.e., between its communities and the rest of Canada, and keep the industry operating (ibid).

On April 20, the Department of Community and Government services announced it was providing an additional CA\$2 million to municipalities to cover expenses related to COVID-19, including the purchase of cleaning materials, hiring of additional janitorial staff, by-law and enforcement patrols, COVID-19 related signage, lost revenues resulting from facility closures, etc. (Government of Nunavut, 2020b).

On May 28, the Government of Nunavut stated it had taken the necessary preparations for construction projects to proceed during the 2020 summer and fall construction seasons of 2020; specifically, it had approved projects in 19 communities across Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020b). The territory relies on skilled out-of-territory workers, alongside local labour. In consultation with Dr. Patterson, arrangements were made to ensure out-of-territory workers complied with the territory's isolation requirements, including transparent reporting (ibid).

On June 8, Premier Savikataaq announced the territory had entered into agreements with Calm Air and Canadian North to provide financial assistance to maintain airline services for medical travel and critical workers into Nunavut for the months of April, May and June 2020 (Government of Nunavut, 2020ao). Specifically, the Government of Nunavut provided CA\$9,810,000 in additional assistance to Canadian North and an additional CA\$6,387,000 to Calm Air (ibid).

On July 20, the Government of Canada announced that Nunavut would receive up to CA\$18.9 million in federal support through the Safe Restart Agreement (Government of Nunavut, 2020at).

Also on July 20, the Government of Nunavut announced launched ShopNunavut.ca, an online platform highlighting local products, services, and experiences available to Nunavummiut taking "staycations" (Nunatsiaq News, 2020f). The [website](#) was part of Nunavut's recovery and resiliency plan for Tourism and

Cultural Industries, particularly small businesses and tourism, and was created in partnership with Destination Nunavut, Travel Nunavut and Nunavut Economic Development Association (ibid).

On July 31, the Government of Nunavut launched the Nunavut Public Art Initiative to support local artists during the pandemic and celebrate local artists (Government of Nunavut, 2020aw). Nunavut artists could receive between CA\$5,000 and CA\$50,000 to cover the costs related to the creation and installation artwork. Artists were encouraged to draw on the theme of “Inuuqatigiitsiarniq”, an Inuit societal value representing respect for others, relationships and caring for people (ibid).

6.4 Other supports for individuals

Throughout the pandemic, various supports and services have been introduced to support Nunavummiut.

Government of Nunavut Employees

On March 17, the Government of Nunavut announced all employees affected by school and daycare closures would receive three weeks of paid leave or other accommodation (Government of Nunavut, 2020v). They further announced all government employees experiencing flu-like symptoms, or otherwise advised to self-isolate, would be eligible for a 14-day paid leave. The Government of Nunavut also temporarily waived the need for medical certificates for its employees requiring sick leave (ibid).

Parents and Children

As described in Section 1.2, on March 18, 2020, the Department of Education was announced that students who receive funding from FANS or ALTS would continue to receive funding for as long as they are away from home. Further, on March 27, the Department announced all Nunavut Arctic College students with families would be permitted to stay in their college residences, despite the campus closing.

On March 31, the Department of Education launched a dedicated [website](http://angirrami.com), Angirrami Ilinniarniq (angirrami.com), to support remote learning (Government of Nunavut, 2020ak). The website, developed by the Department, provides free access to language learning resources, including links to download the Department’s Inuktitut language learning mobile applications, created by the Department and partners, including the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, Children and Youth’s Office, and Departments of Family Services, Health, Environment, and Economic Development and Transportation (ibid).

Since March 26, volunteers in Iqaluit have provided a “Breakfast in a Bag” program for children in need (Sharma, 2020). As of May 20, the program had 30 volunteers creating and distributing breakfast bags to approximately 250 children throughout Iqaluit every weekday morning and approximately \$76,000 had been spent on the breakfast program. The program has received donations from various businesses and individuals across Canada (ibid). The program was planned to continue until the end of June 2020; it is not clear if the program will return for the 2020-21 school year.

On May 25, The Department of Education announced developed guidelines to support the safe re-opening of child care facilities, including enhanced cleaning, hygiene and physical distancing protocols (Government of Nunavut, 2020d). Notably, these plans were publicly posted, in English, French, Inuktitut, and Inuinnaqtun, on May 28 (ibid).

Travelers

Accommodations expenses for travellers at the territory's designated isolation hubs are covered by the Government of Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020n; Kester, 2020). Travelers are also provided access to cable, internet, fresh linens and cleaning supplies, daily garbage pick-up and three meals per day; these and accommodation expenses are covered by the Government of Nunavut. The Government of Nunavut will also pay for diapers, baby formula and feminine products, for those in need. A welcome package also includes information on grocery orders and take-out, which can be delivered to the hotel but are not covered by the government (ibid). On July 13, the Premier announced that he was "pleased to announce that we are now offering country food in our isolation hubs" to support those in isolation and make their stay less stressful (Government of Nunavut, 2020as). He noted that the program was still in its initial stages, and delivery to the Ottawa, Edmonton and Winnipeg isolation sites were still being finalized (ibid).

In late April 2020, it was announced that, starting May 7, Nunavummiut choosing to travel outside Nunavut while the CPHO's travel ban was in effect will have to cover the costs of their 14-day isolation period in one of the government's southern isolation sites; the fee for a single individual was CA\$2,100 and each additional family member (in the same room) would be required to pay CA\$1,050 (Government of Nunavut, 2020h). Medical travel patients would not be required to pay these fees. As of May 4, these isolation hubs had reported cost the Government of Nunavut over CA\$2 million. Notably, in response to concerns from the public, this decision overturned on May 6 without coming into effect (ibid).

On July 20, the Government of Nunavut announced it was looking at the possibility of creating a second hub in Winnipeg, dedicated for medical travellers (Government of Nunavut, 2020at). On July 27, it was announced that a second isolation hub in Winnipeg had opened the week prior to accommodate the large number of backlogged medical travel patients (Government of Nunavut, 2020av). As of July 27, the government had 170 isolation rooms and announced that that it was hopeful to have everybody on its waiting list in Winnipeg into isolation by early that week (ibid). As described in Section 2.1, there is limited physical healthcare infrastructure and specialized personnel located in Nunavut; travel to designated cities outside of Nunavut for the explicit purposes of receiving medical care is common.

Vulnerable populations

Notably, the territory has a history of high rates of poverty; over 50% of Nunavummiut were considered food-insecure prior to the pandemic (Vandinther, 2020). Several local leaders, such as Iqaluit Mayor Kenny Bell, have highlighted that many of the social and economic problems that were "already plaguing Nunavut's most vulnerable are being amplified by COVID-19". The territory also has a high prevalence of tobacco smoking, crowded housing conditions and other conditions which increase the risk of viral transmission and complications (ibid). On March 19, the Government of Nunavut announced it was working on options to ensure food banks and soup kitchens remain open territory-wide (Government of Nunavut, 2020z).

On April 3, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), which coordinates and manages the Inuit responsibilities set out in the Nunavut Agreement and ensures federal and territorial governments fulfill their outlined obligations, announced CA\$2M in new funding for community food programs in Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2020af). The funding would specifically target community

food programs for children and Elders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the funds would be distributed directly to hamlets, providing them flexibility to use the funds to fit their community's needs. Communities with under 1000 people were eligible for CA\$40,000 in funding, communities larger than 1000 for CA\$90,000, and Iqaluit would receive CA\$200,000 (ibid).

On May 1, the Department of Justice announced that its service delivery with clients had remained consistent throughout the pandemic, according to its previously amended service delivery process (Government of Nunavut, 2020j). Notably, in-person meetings had been restricted to emergency situations, i.e., where the client had no access to a telephone or safe location to contact service providers over telephone. A helpline was available to Nunavummiut in need and community justice specialists were available to help with applications and resource referrals (ibid).

On May 6, the Minister of Justice Jeannie Ehaloak reminded Nunavummiut that various programs and services that are available to support victims and survivors of violence. Specifically, she stated that “We want to remind Nunavummiut that we are still here, and we can help during this very difficult time. We are aware that life is very difficult for many families and individuals and it can put added stress on a home. You should not feel isolated or alone, we are here to help” (Government of Nunavut, 2020j).

On June 4, it was announced that Iqaluit's Beer and Wine Store would open exclusively for elders over 60 from 1 pm to 4 pm each Monday (Government of Nunavut, 2020ao).

On March 18, federal Minister of Indigenous Services, Marc Miller, announced CA\$380 million in new financial supports for Indigenous Peoples during the COVID-19 pandemic (Indigenous Services Canada, 2020). On August 12, 2020, an additional CA\$305 million in funding was announced (ibid). Through this Indigenous Community Support Fund, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and Indigenous communities or organizations could access funds to support a variety of activities, including measures such supporting Elders and vulnerable community members, educational and other supports for children and youth, addressing food insecurity, mental health and emergency response services, and public health measures in response to the pandemic (ibid).

6.5 US Aircraft grounded in Iqaluit

On April 23, 2020, a commercial aircraft freighter with five crew members flying to Thule, Greenland from the United States was unable to land and was diverted to Iqaluit (Government of Nunavut, 2020ai). The aircraft was met by Canadian Border Services and Nunavut airport authorities, and the Government of Nunavut and CPHO Patterson were immediately notified. Border Services screened and cleared the crew for symptoms of COVID-19 and, under the direction of the CPHO, the crew was transported using PPE and enhanced safety and physical distancing protocols to a local hotel, where they quarantined, with security in-place, for the duration of their stay. Government officials reassured there would no interaction between the crew and members of the public (ibid).

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Appendix A: Key Resources

Government of Nunavut: Chief Public Health Officer Orders	www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/chief-public-health-officer-orders
Government of Nunavut: COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)	www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus
Government of Nunavut: COVID-19 Department of Health Services Update	www.gov.nu.ca/health/news/covid-19-department-health-services-update
Government of Nunavut: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Special Precautions/ Considerations	www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/covid-19_public_health_protocol_v6_2jul2020.pdf
Government of Nunavut: Nunavut's Path: Moving Forward during COVID-19	www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/nunavuts-path
RNANT/NU: COVID-19 Updates	www.rnantnu.ca/about/covid-19/
Key email addresses:	
Isolation sites concern inbox	isolationrelations@gov.nu.ca
Nunavut patient relations	patientrelations@gov.nu.ca
Travel requests	CPHOtravelrequests@gov.nu.ca
Travellers returning to Nunavut	NUisolationreservations@nunavutcare.ca

The views expressed by the authors are not intended to represent the views of the North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.



Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies with support from a number of individuals, including:

Tiffany Fitzpatrick

Sara Allin

Gregory Marchildon

Monika Roerig

Suggested citation

North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. (2020). North American COVID-19 Policy Response Monitor: Nunavut. Toronto, Canada: North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.

About NAO

The North American Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (NAO) is a collaborative partnership of interested researchers, research organizations, governments, and health organizations promoting evidence-informed health system policy decision-making.

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