

**AFN C-19 National Task Force  
Daily Update for: May 13, 2020**

**Health Sector**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html#a1>

**Areas in Canada with cases of COVID-19, as of 2020-05-13 11:00AM EDT**

Province	Confirmed Cases	Hospitalization (ICU)*	Deaths	Recovered
BC	2,360	63 (16)	131	1,832
AB	6,345	73 (12)	118	4,886
SK	573	11 (3)	6	374
MB	290	4 (1)	7	251
ON	21,236	1,014 (194)	1,765	15,845
QC	39,225	1,655 (186)	3,131	10,056
Newfoundland/Lab	261	4 (1)	3	247
NB	120	0 (0)	-	118
NS	1,020	9 (4)	48	864
PEI	27		-	27
Yukon	11		-	11
NWT	5		-	5
Nunavut	0			
Repatriated Travelers	13			
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,486</b>	<b>3,032 (427)</b>	<b>5,209</b>	<b>34,516</b>
<b>Active Cases=</b>				
<b>31,716</b>				

\*These are numbers of *current* hospitalizations and ICU admissions. Some sources report the total *cumulative* number of hospitalizations and ICU admissions. Also, hospitalization data are amalgamated as they are reported by various hospitals; they are therefore updated sporadically, intermittently, and are likely to be less accurate and current than other data points.



## Data Sources:

British Columbia: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/a6f23959a8b14bfa989e3cda29297ded>

Alberta: <https://covid19stats.alberta.ca/#cases>

Saskatchewan: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/cases-and-risk-of-covid-19-in-saskatchewan>

Manitoba: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/updates/index.html#cases>

Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-0>

Quebec: <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/covid-19/donnees>

New Brunswick:

[https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory\\_diseases/coronavirus/case-map.html](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus/case-map.html)

Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/data/>

Prince Edward Island: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/pei-covid-19-testing-data>

Newfoundland and Labrador: <https://covid-19-newfoundland-and-labrador-gnl.hub.arcgis.com/>

Yukon: <https://yukon.ca/covid-19>

Northwest Territories: <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

Additional source (national): <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/tracking-every-case-of-covid-19-in-canada-1.4852102#alberta>

## **Housing, Infrastructure, Water & Emergency Management Sector**

### **Local States of Emergencies:**

#### **First Nations Local States of Emergencies:**

First Nation States of Emergency- As per ISC report May 12,2020									
Region	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	ATL	Territories	Total
Confirmed	57	33	4	20	68	4	7	2	195

**2020 Flood Season General Assessments:** As Per ISC EMD 2020 FN Flood / Wildland Fire Situation Report as of May 11, 2020 - **Updates in Bold**

**\*\*Please note that given the decrease in significant incidents, this report will now be issued on a bi-weekly basis\*\***

**FLOODING** – No Change

**2020 Flood Season General Risk Assessments:**

● BC: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – DECREASING

11MAY2020: Flood watch for the Cariboo and tributaries near and east of Williams Lake and Quesnel downgraded to a High Streamflow Advisory and this will be the final notification for the following First Nations unless significant changes occur:

- Nazko First Nation (720) (Chief Stuart Alec) Population 130 - 11MAY2020
- Canim Lake First Nation (713) (Chief Helen Henderson) Population 408 - 11MAY2020
- Osoyoos (596) (Chief Clarence Louie) Population: 322, Located within 50 Km of the nearest service centre to which it has year-round road access - 11MAY2020

● AB: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – MODERATE TO HIGH; This will be the final notification for the following First Nations unless significant changes occur;

- Louis Bull First Nation (439) (Chief Irving Bull) Population 1,898
- O'Chiese First Nation (431) (Chief Ray Douglas Beaverbone) Population 995, Within 350 km of a significant town - 11MAY2020
- Ermineskin Tribe First Nation (443) (Chief Craig Mackinaw) Population: 3,756, Within 50 km of a significant town
- Dene Tha' First Nation (448) (Chief James Ahnassay) Within 350 km of a significant town Population 2,171,
- Horse Lake First Nation (449) (Chief Ramona Horseman) Population: 515, Within 350 km of a significant town
- Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation (455) (Chief Clyde Goodswimmer) Population 1,555, Within 50 km of a significant town
- Swan River First Nation (457) (Chief Gerald Giroux) Population: 430, Within 350 km of a significant town
- Loon River Cree (476) (Chief Ivan Sawan) Population: 523, Within 350 km of a significant town
- Alexander First Nation (438) (Chief Kurt Burnstick)
- Whitefish Lake (459) (Chief Albert Thunder) Population: 1,302, Within 350 km of a significant town

● SK: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – MODERATE

- Red Earth First Nation (356) (Chief Fabian Head) On-Reserve Population 1,642 - 11MAY2020: This will be the final notification unless significant changes occur;
- Cumberland House Cree Nation (350) (Chief Rene Chaboyer) On-Reserve Population 921 - 11MAY2020: This will be the final notification unless significant changes occur.

● MB: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – LOWERED IN SOUTHERN MANITOBA

● ON: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – HIGH IN GREAT LAKES AREA DUE TO ELEVATED WATER LEVELS

- Kashechewan (243) – Chief Leo Friday (sub-community of Albany) Population 1,800, No year-round road access - 11MAY2020: Water levels are down. Flood coordinator is closely monitoring the river. Camper's repatriation scheduled to start on May 13, 2020. Full re-entry estimated to take two weeks.

- **QC: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – MODERATE**

- **ATL: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – MODERATE TO LOW**

- 11MAY2020: Predicted flooding has not occurred. Flood risk of the following FNs has been downgraded to LOW -
  - Indian Island First Nation – Chief Kenneth Barlow
  - Elsipogtog First Nation – Chief Arren Sock
  - Esgenoopetitj First Nation – Chief Alvery Paul
  - Eel Ground First Nation – Chief George Ginnish
  - Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation – Chief William Ward
  - Pabineau – Chief Terry Richardson
  - Eel River Bar First Nation – Chief Sacha Labillois

- **YT: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – LOW RISK**

- **NWT: FLOOD RISK FORECAST – HIGH RISK**

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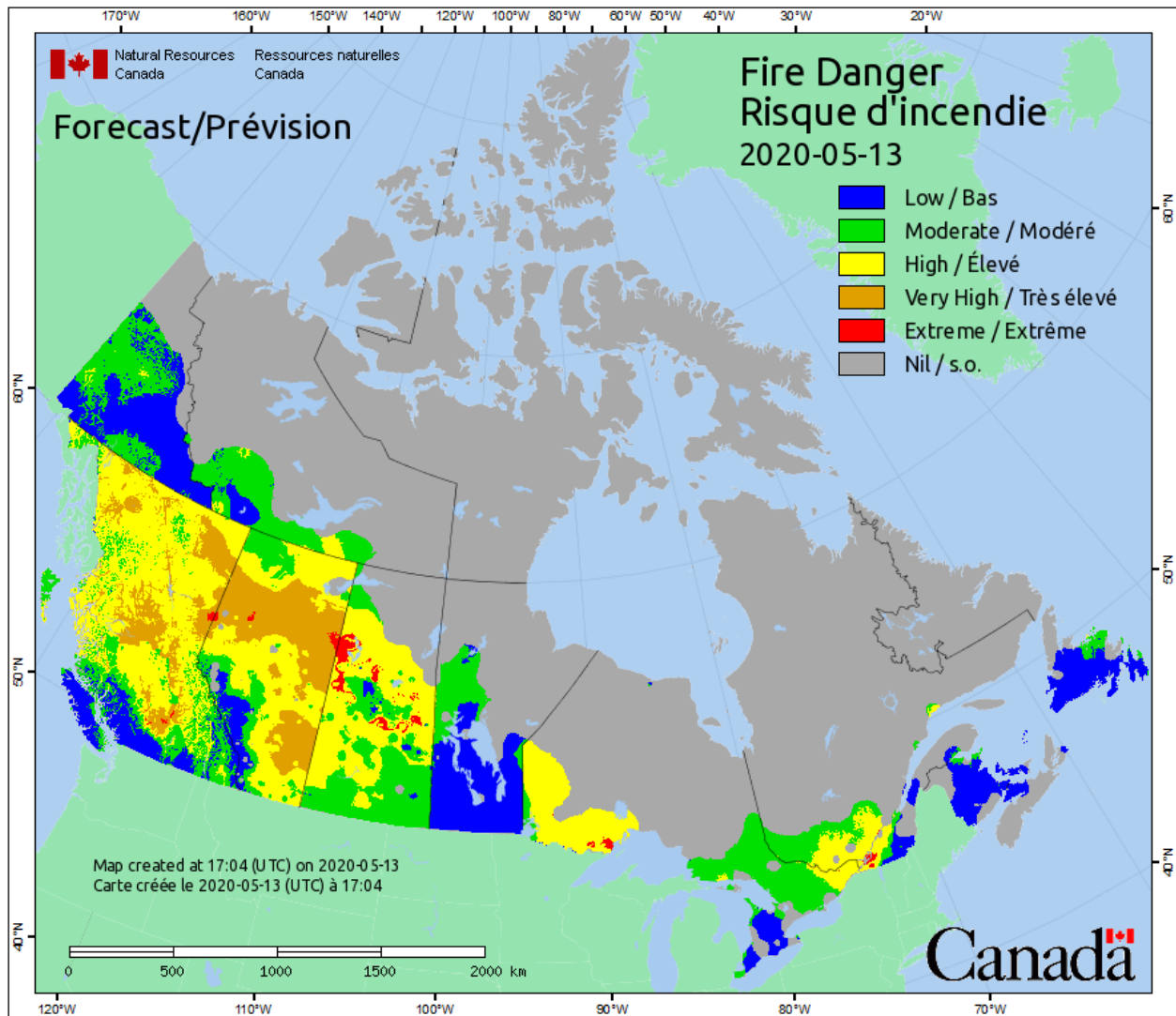
**Wildfire:** No Change

**1. British Columbia – No wildfires of note;**

**2. Alberta:**

- a) Calgary Area - The wildfire danger rating for the Calgary Forest Area is LOW. There are currently no wildfires currently burning in the area;
- b) Edson Area - The wildfire danger in the Edson Forest Area is MODERATE. There are currently no active wildfires;
- c) Fort McMurray Area - The wildfire danger rating in the Fort McMurray Forest Area is MODERATE south of Fort Chipewyan and is LOW to the north of Lake Athabasca;
- d) Grand Prairie Area - The wildfire danger rating for the Grande Prairie Forest Area is Moderate. There are currently no wildfires burning in the area;
- e) High River Area - The fire danger is High for the High Level Forest Area. Due to the warmer temperatures, wind and no significant rain in the forecast;
- f) Lac La Biche Area - The wildfire danger for the Lac La Biche Forest Area is HIGH. The Fire Ban remains in effect;
- g) Peace River Area - Due to cooler temperatures over the weekend, the wildfire danger in the Peace River Forest Area is expected to remain MODERATE;
- h) Rocky Mountain House - The wildfire danger rating for the Rocky Mountain House Forest Area is LOW. There are currently no wildfires burning in the area;
- i) Slave Lake Area - The wildfire danger is HIGH in the Slave Lake Forest Area;
- j) Whitecourt Area - The wildfire danger rating for the Whitecourt Forest Area is MODERATE;

3. Saskatchewan – There are no new wildfires and one (1) wildfire being contained with suppression action taking place; the fire is not expected to grow in size;
4. Manitoba - The 2020 Wildfire season is now in cycle. The Wildfire danger across Southern Manitoba remains low to moderate, while conditions in the north remain low with some snow still on the ground;
5. Ontario Wildfire Update –
  - a) There were no new fires discovered by mid-afternoon on May 11, 2020;
  - b) There are no active fires in the Northeast;
  - c) There are no active fires in the Northwest Region
6. Quebec Wildfire Update - There are two wildfires in Quebec, one (1) in the Gatineau area and one (1) in the Antoine Labelle area; both are under control;
7. New Brunswick Wildfire Update – There are no new wildfires in all areas of the province;
8. Nova Scotia Wildfire Update - No new wildfires - all areas Not Applicable, Low or Moderate;
9. Prince Edward Island - No fires reported to date;
10. Newfoundland/Labrador - No fires reported to date;
11. Yukon Territories Wildfire Update – There was one (1) wildfire in Duke River which has been extinguished;
12. Northwest Territories Wildfire Update – There are currently no territorial fires.



## Communications Sector

**Indigenous organization says it's taking Ottawa to court over 'discriminatory' COVID-19 aid**

**Congress of Aboriginal Peoples says it's received \$250K in COVID-19 funding**

**CBC News - May 13, 2020**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/congress-aboriginal-peoples-coronavirus-funding-1.5567059>

**Over 450 Indigenous COVID-19 cases across Canada and 7 deaths, reports Yellowhead Institute**

**Indigenous Services Canada's COVID-19 case count failing to reflect true picture, says report**

**CBC News - May 12, 2020**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/yellowhead-institute-coronavirus-report-1.5565954>

**'Alberta didn't contain it': COVID-19 outbreak at oilsands camp has spread across the country**

**National Observer - May 13, 2020**

<https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/05/13/news/alberta-didnt-contain-it-covid-19-outbreak-oilsands-camp-has-spread-across-country>

**Kashechewan spared from spring flooding, but now has to keep COVID-19 away  
About half of the community of 2,000 moved out to tents in the bush to avoid possible flooding  
CBC News - May 13, 2020**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/kashechewan-flooding-danger-over-1.5566517>

## **Numbers**

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298#chap5>

### **Confirmed cases of COVID-19**

On First Nations reserves in provinces, as of May 11, ISC is aware of:

- 183 confirmed positive COVID-19
- 18 hospitalizations
- 2 deaths

Case numbers per region:

- British Columbia: 39
- Alberta: 29
- Saskatchewan: 43
- Ontario: 41
- Quebec: 31

## **Full Stories**

**Indigenous organization says it's taking Ottawa to court over 'discriminatory' COVID-19 aid  
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples says it's received \$250K in COVID-19 funding  
CBC News - May 13, 2020**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/congress-aboriginal-peoples-coronavirus-funding-1.5567059>

An organization that represents off-reserve status and non-status First Nations people, Métis and southern Inuit is taking Ottawa to court over what it says is inadequate and "discriminatory" COVID-19 aid funding.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is filing for a judicial review with the Federal Court on Wednesday over Ottawa's funding levels to the organization, which it argues were discriminatory under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, according to a statement from the organization.

"The application seeks to address the fact that despite the federal government's laudable goals, the funding allocations have been discriminatory and at the expense of the doubly-disadvantaged Indigenous population served by CAP," said the statement.

"The large majority of Canada's Indigenous population lives off-reserve and this court action addresses the needs of this population," said the statement.

CAP says it's received \$250,000 in COVID-19 funding from Indigenous Services Canada, which amounted to \$25,000 for each of its 10 affiliated regional organizations.

"It is simply not possible for CAP... and its [affiliated organizations] to provide any meaningful relief both to the many thousands of off-reserve Indigenous peoples it actively supports," said the statement.



"Or to the hundreds of thousands of off-reserve Indigenous peoples that CAP has been advocating support for."

The statement said Ottawa's lack of funding contravened the 2016 Daniels decision by the Supreme Court of Canada that found the federal government had responsibilities toward Métis and non-status First Nations people.

"The federal government has abandoned its fiduciary responsibility towards a significant number of Indigenous peoples during this pandemic," said CAP President Robert Bertrand, according to the statement.

The federal government set aside \$15 million in COVID-19 for Indigenous organizations providing services to Indigenous people living in urban centres or off-reserve.

The National Association of Friendship Centres received \$3.75 million to distribute among its 100 organizations.

Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller has said more COVID-19 funding will become available for off-reserve and urban Indigenous people.

**Over 450 Indigenous COVID-19 cases across Canada and 7 deaths, reports Yellowhead Institute  
Indigenous Services Canada's COVID-19 case count failing to reflect true picture, says report  
CBC News - May 12, 2020**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/yellowhead-institute-coronavirus-report-1.5565954>

There are at least 465 Indigenous COVID-19 cases across 42 communities and seven virus-related deaths, far above what is reported by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), according to a report released Tuesday by the Yellowhead Institute.

A team of researchers supported by the Yellowhead Institute compiled the numbers by combing through media reports, band council updates to members, confidential local reports and obituaries.

"ISC continues to release numbers that don't provide the whole picture," said the Yellowhead Institute report.

"By only reporting what is happening on-reserve, the realities of Indigenous Peoples are erased. Indigenous Peoples do not only live on-reserve, nor do they live in 'distinction-based' silos in urban and rural places."

The Yellowhead Institute is a think-tank based out of Ryerson University's Faculty of Arts, ISC has reported there were 183 COVID-19 cases on-reserve in five provinces, 18 hospitalizations and two deaths as of May 11.

ISC, which has admitted it has a data gap, reports only on-reserve COVID-19 cases and it relies on information either voluntarily provided by First Nations or from provincial and territorial health authorities.

Courtney Skye, a research fellow at the institute and author of the report, said the institute's numbers are based on compiling on and off-reserve First Nations, Inuit and Métis COVID-19 cases.

"This is just the information available publicly," said Skye.

"There are likely more cases."

'Patchwork of service'

The report said Indigenous people are subject to a patchwork of services and ongoing jurisdictional battles between Ottawa and the provinces that undermines data on the true impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples and communities, said the report.

"There is no agency or organization in Canada reliably recording and releasing COVID-19 data that indicates whether or not a person is Indigenous," said the report.

"This patchwork of service is a direct result of colonialism . . . The jurisdictional fight between provinces and the federal government, where both claim the other is responsible for services, more often than not leaves Indigenous people without any services."

Separately, CBC News has obtained numbers from the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) in British Columbia that shows it is keeping track of off-reserve cases.

The FNHA provides health services to First Nations people in British Columbia under a tripartite agreement with B.C. and Ottawa.

A May 7 report from the FNHA, said that as of May 4 there were a total of 69 First Nations COVID-19 cases in B.C. — 37 in or near a community and 32 off-reserve.

ISC's B.C. tally for that day matched the FNHA's in-community tally, but excluded the off-reserve numbers.

The Yellowhead report said another example of the data gap exists in Saskatchewan, where the department reported 43 COVID-19 cases on reserve as of May 11.

The report notes there is a serious outbreak in the northern Saskatchewan community of La Loche. On Monday, the province reported 151 active COVID-19 cases in its Far North region, the majority of which are in the village and neighbouring Clearwater River Dene Nation.

"La Loche, often identified as a Dene community with reserves nearby, provides a glimpse into how taking a distinction-based approach is impractical when First Nations and Métis communities are so interconnected," said the report.

"It is presumed that all ... cases in La Loche are Indigenous people as the majority of the people in the community are Dene and Métis. Additionally, Saskatchewan is the only province with COVID-19 cases reported in Métis communities."

Another gap exists in Ontario, where the Chiefs of Ontario organization is reporting 40 on-reserve cases and 75 off-reserve, according to the report.

On May 11, ISC reported 41 on-reserve cases in Ontario.

'Jurisdictional web'

Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller said he knows his department's data is only partial as a result of jurisdictional challenges.

"What you get is a jurisdictional web that is difficult to navigate on a good day," said Miller.

He said ISC knows how many COVID-19 test kits are made available to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. It also receives information from First Nations that choose to report their numbers to the federal department.

"We will not report on a community that has chosen not to report its data, and it's out of respect," said Miller.

Miller said the department has a less reliable grip on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Métis communities and First Nations populations off-reserve.

For that, he said, they rely almost exclusively on data that would be reported to ISC by the provinces based on their gathering of data that has broad ethno-cultural identifiers — and that don't always get filled out.

"We communicate regularly with provinces and tell them the importance of having that data collection point with respect to ethno-cultural identifiers. It's critical to getting a sense of how this epidemic is impacting and how we deal with it in the immediate term," said Miller.

Quebec, for example, has an ethnocultural identifier used on testing forms that allows someone getting tested to self-identify as First Nations, Inuit, or living in a remote area that does not have access to a hospital.

Ontario has a box to check if you are First Nations, Inuit or Métis.

"I think we all could do more," said Miller.

"Right now the data on Indigenous populations across Canada is partial, and the reflection of a divide that exists on-reserve and off-reserve but also with the various jurisdictional distinctions that exist in Canada."

**'Alberta didn't contain it': COVID-19 outbreak at oilsands camp has spread across the country**  
**National Observer - May 13, 2020**

<https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/05/13/news/alberta-didnt-contain-it-covid-19-outbreak-oilsands-camp-has-spread-across-country>

A COVID-19 outbreak from an oilsands camp in Alberta started spreading across Canada in mid-April. It started with a few cases at a work camp housing thousands of fly-in, fly-out workers at Imperial Oil's Kearl Lake facility, 70 kilometres north of Fort McMurray, Alta. When those employees headed home, the virus went with them.

By the end of April, workers from Kearl had unwittingly spread COVID-19 to a remote northern Saskatchewan Dene village, starting an outbreak that killed two elders, and into a long-term care home in British Columbia. Cases have also been reported in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The outbreak now spans 106 cases in five provinces, including Alberta.

Critics say the province could have prevented further outbreaks if it had restricted fly-in, fly-out work in the oilsands. Of the 106 cases linked to Kearl Lake, 24 are in other provinces.

"There's absolutely no doubt that the Alberta government's decision to not close down the camps, or at least put constraints on fly-in and fly-out operations, has cost lives," said Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan, who wrote to the provincial government in April to ask for restrictions on fly-in, fly-out work. (The federation is an association of 29 unions.)

"It started with Kearl Lake," said Rick Laliberte, the incident commander of the Northwest Incident Command Centre, a group of northern Saskatchewan First Nations, Métis and municipal leaders working to address the oilsands-linked outbreak in their region.

"Alberta didn't contain it."

In an emailed statement, Alberta Health spokesperson Tom McMillan said the province is not aware of any deaths that have been directly linked to Kearl Lake. (Cases such as the two elders who died in northern Saskatchewan aren't considered direct links, as they didn't contract the virus at Kearl Lake.) McMillan also did not directly respond to questions about why Alberta hasn't restricted fly-in, fly-out work during the pandemic.

"We are monitoring the situation in work camps closely to limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of everyone involved," he said.

Imperial Oil spokesperson Lisa Schmidt said the company has implemented new safety protocols and is working to support workers who have fallen ill. It started preparing for this outcome in mid-March and has tested all Kearl Lake employees, she said.

Outbreaks linked to the Kearl Lake project in northern Alberta have killed two Indigenous elders in northern Saskatchewan, and infected a B.C. long-term care home. Critics say the government should have restricted fly-in work weeks ago. #ableg

"We are following and have been implementing all guidance from public health authorities and instructing our workforce to follow all of the guidance of their local health authorities," she said in an email.

Oilsands camps at heightened risk of spreading COVID-19

Even as much of Canada's economy has ground to a halt, several provinces have deemed oil and gas work an essential service. The workforce at several oilsands sites is reduced, however, as companies cut production in response to plummeting crude prices.

Roughly 15 oilsands operations use fly-in, fly-out workers, according to a 2018 report from the Oil Sands Community Alliance.

These 'rotational' staff will often work at their job site for an extended number of days and then fly home between shifts — for example, two weeks on, one week off. Some companies have private aerodromes to bring workers to the site, where they're often fed and housed in remote camps that can hold thousands of people.

Some critics have raised concerns about whether a fly-in workforce could spread COVID-19. In response, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has noted that oilsands operations, many of which rely on rotational workers, can't simply be shut down as that process can damage their equipment.

The close quarters at oilsands camps make it easy for COVID-19 to spread, said Dr. Ameeta Singh, an infectious disease specialist and clinical professor at the University of Alberta. But it's doubly tricky because workers at the camps are coming and going.

"I think what's a little bit unique to the oilsands situation is that people are moving in and out," Dr. Singh said.

"Every time there's movement like that, people are at risk of acquiring the infection and therefore potentially passing it on."

As COVID-19 began escalating in Canada in mid-March, companies that operate oilsands camps — including Civeo, which services Kearl Lake — began implementing new safety measures in hopes of blocking the spread of the virus. But COVID-19 got in anyway.

McGowan wrote to the Alberta government on April 16, after the first cases at Kearl Lake had been announced, asking for the province to intervene and restrict movement to and from fly-in sites.

"We were concerned that the work camps would become almost cruise ships," he said, referring to the vessels that became floating COVID-19 incubators during the early stages of the pandemic.

In a follow-up phone call, McGowan said the province said they were putting safety protocols in place. But Alberta didn't restrict the use of fly-in workers.

'They're oilsands-caused'

A week after the first case at Kearl Lake was publicly announced, B.C. provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry warned the oilsands outbreak had crossed the Alberta border. Some Kearl Lake workers passed the virus on to family members, including one person who was working in a long-term care home.

That transmission caused an outbreak at the home. B.C.'s Ministry of Health has not identified the facility, but told National Observer the cases there were not fatal and the outbreak at the long-term care facility is now over.

On April 17, the Alberta government said it gave contact information for infected people to provinces dealing with Kearl Lake infections.

But B.C. struggled to track down everyone in the province who had been at Kearl Lake, and Dr. Henry issued public pleas for those who worked at the site to self-isolate for 14 days.

"It has been a challenging process, as we don't all have contact information for everyone," Dr. Henry said on April 28.

At least 16 COVID-19 cases in B.C. were linked to Kearl Lake, not including close contacts of workers who were carrying the virus.

Meanwhile, northwestern Saskatchewan has also become a COVID-19 hotspot after a Kearl Lake worker carried the virus home. Three cases in the area have been directly linked to the oilsands, the Saskatchewan Health Authority said.

In addition to the two elders who died, a third is in the ICU, Laliberte said. Non-essential travel in the region is now restricted.

The Dene village of La Loche, a community of 2,800 people located a six-hour drive north of Saskatoon, declared an outbreak on April 17. In the winter, an ice road connects La Loche to the oilsands, where many residents work.

The far north of the province, a region which includes La Loche and several other Indigenous communities, had reported more than 200 cases Monday. About 150 were active, making up the bulk of Saskatchewan's remaining cases.

"As far as I know, they're oilsands-caused," Laliberte said.

Fighting the virus in northwestern Saskatchewan has been difficult and costly, Laliberte said. It was hard to get access to personal protective equipment, and many people need extra help, as they live in crowded conditions that make it difficult to self-isolate at home.

Remote First Nations are also already at higher risk from COVID-19 due to lack of access to health care and systemic inequities.

“We’re innocent,” Laliberte said. “No one asked for the virus and no one asked to spread it... Can we send the bill to Alberta?”

James Winkel, a spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, said the province now has officials on the ground for “aggressive” contact tracing in a bid to slow the spread of the virus.

“Our results are paying off,” Winkel said in an email. “We’re seeing a lowering trend in the number of positive cases in La Loche, but at the same time expect some cases to arise as a result of the more aggressive testing underway in this area of the province.”

Saskatchewan has issued a “precautionary advisory” asking people returning from northern Alberta to self-isolate for 14 days. B.C. has ordered workers returning home from Kearl to self-isolate, as have Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, which have reported one Kearl Lake-related case each.

Dr. Singh said based on case numbers alone, it appears that asking workers to self-isolate once they’re home isn’t working on its own. But the entire country is facing an unprecedented situation where people are having to balance economic concerns with health-related ones, and there are no one-size-fits-all answers, she added.

“Given that transmission has already been documented (from the oilsands), the question is what is the next level of measures that need to be taken,” she said. “We have to reassess on a daily basis, it seems.” “It’s an issue of political will”

Of the 106 COVID-19 cases linked to Kearl Lake, 74 have since recovered. The Alberta government has also created a set of protocols to halt the spread of the virus in camps, including screening of workers, disinfection practices and changes that allow physical distancing.

When a worker tests positive, anyone on or offsite who may have been infected must immediately self-isolate for 14 days.

“The fact that the number of cases at Kearl are comparatively low after almost a month suggests control measures have been quite effective,” said McMillan, the Alberta Health spokesperson. The B.C. Ministry of Health said its officials had not drawn any conclusions about whether the Kearl Lake cases appear to be levelling off.

McGowan said the Kearl Lake outbreak has been managed better than Alberta’s other high-profile industrial COVID-19 hotspot, a [Cargill meat plant](#) south of Calgary that has the largest outbreak in Canada. But it still could have been handled better, he added.

“Here in Alberta, our province’s response to COVID-19 has been a story of success in the public and a failure in workplaces,” he said. “Infections never remain in the workplace, they’re also carried out into the community. So in that way, by failing to deal with workplace infections and outbreaks, our provincial government has essentially been undermining their attempts to stop the spread in the community.”

The Oil Sands Community Alliance, a division of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers lobby group, says that fly-in workers are crucial in the oilsands. Some sites would be a 90-minute or even three-hour drive from Fort McMurray, and it would be impractical for them to commute by car every day.

McGowan said he doesn’t buy that workers from other provinces are necessary. There are plenty of out-of-work tradespeople in Alberta, he said, and limiting fly-in work could prevent infections from spreading outside the province.

“It’s an issue of political will and misplaced priorities,” he added.

"This needs to be driven home more, especially now as our province and other provinces consider reopening and sending people back to work."

Meanwhile, two other oilsands operators have reported COVID-19 cases. Those aren't considered 'outbreaks' as Alberta Health Services has not found evidence the virus was transmitted at the sites. Four cases were reported at a camp at Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.'s Horizon site, which uses rotational workers, while two were reported at Syncrude, which doesn't have fly-in, fly-out staff.

**Kashechewan spared from spring flooding, but now has to keep COVID-19 away**  
**About half of the community of 2,000 moved out to tents in the bush to avoid possible flooding**  
**CBC News - May 13, 2020**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/kashechewan-flooding-danger-over-1.5566517>

About 1,100 people in Kashechewan have spent the past few weeks, wondering and worrying if floodwaters would come into their homes.

For the past decade, the entire First Nation is evacuated to hotel rooms in Timmins and elsewhere to avoid possible spring flooding, but that was ruled out as too risky this year with COVID-19 spreading in cities to the south.

About 900 people were moved out into tents in the wilderness to wait out the spring break-up, but the rest stayed put.

Kashechewan Chief Leo Friday, who is also the community's Anglican priest, told everyone to pray for a good break-up.

"They were just hoping for the best and a smooth break-up and that's what they've been thinking maybe. And some of them were worried, but it came out okay after all," he says.

Cold weather slowed down the break-up of ice on the Albany River, which is still frozen at Kashechewan, and the spring melt is expected to flow gradually out to James Bay and not into the low lying community.

Friday says in this spring's "double whammy" he was always more worried about COVID-19.

"I was worried that my people would be flown out. That was the only thing I was worried about. I wasn't really worried about the flood, because we always managed in the old days," he says.

And like the old days, dozens spent the past few weeks out on the land, hunting geese, a Cree tradition that few in Kashechewan have taken part in recently because of the annual evacuations.

"Lot of people did what they need to do in their traditional territory. I hear they did a lot of training with their young people. And those are things that we've missed out the last many years when we're evacuated from the community," Friday says.

"This is a chance to go back to it and a lot of people are happy to see this is happening and hopefully we can have more of this next year."

Friday is critical of the federal government for their slow response to his community's predicament this spring, but is thankful that they've come through with \$4.8 million for camping supplies and the costly airlifts in and out of remote sites.

The campers will start flying back to Kashechewan on Wednesday, but Friday is already worrying about convincing his people to stay home after that.

He is warning them not to travel outside of the community, which could possibly bring COVID-19 to the remote region that has yet to have a confirmed case.

"I think they will put a lot of pressure on us," Friday says.

"It's up to the people. We have to somehow control the virus from coming into the community and the only way we can do it is to stay home."

