

#RestartMB Pandemic Response System: Safely Restoring Services and Activities in Manitoba

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Manitoba Public Health, through the leadership of Dr. Brent Roussin, has indicated that Manitoba is in a place where it can now consider reducing some restrictions and safely restoring services and activities. Manitoba is not in a place to return to normal immediately, but unlike many other provinces, is in a place to consider a path forward to safely restoring services and activities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?					
Statements	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Public Health should use a regional approach to public health orders (so that different regions may have different orders depending on their COVID-19 cases and hospitalization rates).	55%	30%	3%	6%	6%
It is important that Manitoba restore services and re-open businesses safely and gradually to avoid returning to restrictions and asking businesses to close again.	59%	26%	4%	6%	4%
It is important that the health care system is stable and able to meet the demand of the pandemic before restoring services.	55%	25%	7%	8%	5%

The Virus

Around the world there has been a great deal learned about COVID-19 since it was first discovered. We know now that there are many measures that we can take as a society to slow the spread of the virus, which will save lives. Effective vaccines have been developed and distributed, with additional vaccines potentially coming that will ultimately and hopefully soon, end this pandemic.

As the pandemic has developed, science has learned and adapted. That is the nature of science.

What has been consistent, almost from the beginning of the pandemic however, are those categories of activity which we know cause the greatest risk.

These are:

- **Close-contact settings.** Being in close contact with individuals for prolonged periods of time (generally 15 minutes or more) greatly increases your risk of transmitting or receiving the virus if either of the people who are in contact have COVID19.
- **Crowded Places.** Events or activities that involve large numbers of people naturally pose a greater risk for the transmission of the virus and so called “super-spreader” events.
- **Closed Spaces.** Enclosed indoor spaces, particularly where there is poor ventilation, put people at a greater risk for contacting or spreading COVID-19.

Avoiding the virus is critical not only for your own personal health but the health of others. 7% of those who get COVID-19 require hospitalization to recover. While the elderly are the most vulnerable to the virus, those that are hospitalized are of all ages, from infants to seniors.

Avoiding close-contact settings, crowded places and closed spaces remain important steps we can take until the vaccine is widely distributed and the pandemic is over.

Are you personally afraid of contracting COVID-19?	
Yes, very afraid	15%
Somewhat afraid	37%
Not very afraid	25%
No, not afraid at all	22%
Don't know	0%
Total	100%

Are you afraid that someone close to you (friend, parent, grandparent) will contract COVID-19?	
Yes, very afraid	35%
Somewhat afraid	37%
Not very afraid	17%
No, not afraid at all	11%
Don't know	0%
Total	100%

Which of the following statements best reflects your perspective on the COVID-19 vaccines?	
I have already received immunization against COVID-19.	2%
I will sign up for vaccination as soon as I am eligible.	55%
I will get the vaccine, but I'm not in a rush to sign-up.	19%
I'm not sure if I will get the vaccine when it is available.	14%
I will not get vaccinated against COVID-19.	10%
Total	100%

The Manitoba Situation

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a global impact, the affects and waves of the pandemic have struck regions in different ways and at different times.

In November of last year, following Thanksgiving, COVID-19 cases soared in our province and as a result, hospitals in Manitoba began to fill. As hospital numbers increased due to COVID-19 cases, non-emergency surgeries were forced to be cancelled. This strain on the hospital system was projected to increase and worsen. Most tragically, the number of deaths of Manitobans due to COVID-19 began to increase significantly and over 750 Manitobans have succumbed to the virus.

In response, in November the province of Manitoba moved to the Critical level (red) on the Pandemic Response System. Many individual Manitobans and businesses made significant sacrifices during this time. It has been and continues to be among the most challenging times in Manitoba's history.

However, because of the collective will of Manitobans, COVID-19 cases and hospitalization numbers have improved significantly since November of last year. Non-emergency surgeries are again being performed and stability has returned to the health care system. We are all grateful for the incredible work and sacrifice of our front-line healthcare workers for being there for Manitobans at all times, but especially these times.

Given the current state of the pandemic situation in Manitoba, how comfortable would you feel doing each of the following activities?

Statements	Not at all comfortable	Not very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not Applicable
Going to work / the office	8%	10%	21%	49%	12%
Going to restaurants	20%	19%	29%	33%	0%
Going to the movie theatre	36%	21%	19%	19%	5%
Taking public transit	38%	21%	13%	12%	17%
Going to bars, night clubs and pubs	54%	14%	10%	10%	11%
Shopping at a stand-alone store	3%	6%	31%	59%	0%
Sending children to schools and day cares	9%	10%	24%	39%	18%
Going to the gym / yoga centre	24%	15%	21%	31%	10%
Going to the dentist / chiropractor / massage therapist	3%	7%	25%	63%	1%
Shopping at a mall	13%	17%	34%	36%	1%
Attending religious services / funerals / Pow Wows	23%	17%	21%	28%	11%
Travelling outside of Manitoba	33%	20%	22%	24%	2%

What Matters Most to You

There are a number of services and activities that are being considered for changes to current health orders. These changes would be considered incrementally with time between to analyze their impact on COVID-19 cases and hospitalization rates in Manitoba.

As we consider safely restoring services and activities, how important are the following economic and personal services to you?					
Statements	Very important	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Not important	Not at all important
The ability to shop without limiting the products I can buy.	47%	28%	13%	8%	4%
The ability to visit a hair salon or barber.	41%	29%	16%	8%	7%
The ability to visit a health professional such as a podiatrist.	39%	33%	19%	5%	4%
The ability to go to a gym or fitness facility.	25%	17%	23%	15%	20%
The ability to dine in a restaurant.	19%	22%	25%	16%	18%

As we consider safely restoring services and activities, how important are the following faith, ceremony or personal activities to you?					
Statements	Very important	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Not important	Not at all important
The ability to gather together with people from outside my household at my residence.	48%	29%	10%	7%	6%
The ability to attend, in-person, the house of worship of my choice.	19%	10%	21%	13%	37%
The ability to have more people attend a funeral than the current five-person limit.	35%	30%	18%	7%	10%
The ability to have more people attend a wedding than the current five-person limit.	28%	21%	23%	11%	18%
The ability to gather outdoors in groups larger than the current five-person limit.	43%	30%	13%	7%	7%
The ability for children and young people to participate in organized sports and recreation.	35%	26%	19%	10%	11%

Decisions regarding public health orders are often a balancing act between a variety of options that will impact Manitobans differently.

The following questions asked you to rank those things that are the most important to you. Not all activities and services are immediately listed as not all are being considered in the current round of services and activities due to the higher risk of activity.

The results are displayed as an average rank. With an average ranking, the lower the number, the more preferred the option is. For example, if an option shows a value of 2.36, then on average, this option was ranked on 2.36th position. The options for each questions are listed in order from the highest ranked option to the lowest ranked option.

Rank the following options based on your own personal priorities.	
Option	Average Rank
Eliminating the essential item list and allowing all retail stores to open with strict capacity limits.	2.17
Allowing barber shops and hairstylists to open with strict occupancy limits and public health protocols in place.	3.02
The ability to visit health professionals, such as podiatrists.	3.43
Increasing access to recreation opportunities and allowing children and young people to participate in organized sports.	3.82

For this question, **eliminating the essential item list and allowing all retail stores to open with strict capacity limits** is ranked on an average as the most preferred option.

Rank the following options based on your own personal priorities.	
Option	Average Rank
Easing restrictions to allow visitors to private residences.	1.57
Increasing outdoor public gathering limits.	2.37
Increasing indoor public gathering limits.	2.63
The ability to attend, in-person, the house of worship of my choice.	3.43

For this question, **easing restrictions to allow visitors to private residences** is ranked on an average as the most preferred option.

Rank the changes below to private residence visitor restrictions that you would most like to see.	
Option	Average Rank
Expanding exceptions to include immediate family (children, parents, grandparents and siblings), with a limit to avoid large family gatherings.	1.91
Expanding the gathering sizes in homes to a maximum of five (5) people, in addition to household members.	2.06
Exceptions could be expanded to allow a limited number of additional people (e.g. two family members or friends) to regularly visit a household, regardless of size of household.	2.52
Maintain current restrictions that do not permit household visitors, except in specific situations.	3.51

For this question, **expanding exceptions to include immediate family (children, parents, grandparents and siblings), with a limit to avoid large family gatherings** is ranked on an average as the most preferred option.

Beyond Manitoba

What we have learned about COVID-19 over the past year is that we are not yet out of the woods. It requires each of us to remain vigilant and to adhere to the fundamentals that slow the spread of the virus. While there is much justified reason for optimism with the development and distribution of vaccines, their full impact is still months away.

And while the Manitoba situation has improved since November, there are many places in Canada where that is not the case and where record case numbers are being recorded. Restrictions such as curfews have been implemented and extended school closures have been announced in other Canadian provinces.

What is clear is that Manitobans have helped dramatically improve our current situation in the pandemic. And, all of us want life to return to normal. But it is equally clear that we must be cautious, thoughtful and understanding as we restore safe services and activities to our province so as not to lose the gains that we have made. When we restore services, we hope to restore them for good. We should avoid a yo-yo experience, moving in and out of restrictions going forward

How much do you feel other places' handling of COVID-19 impacts your sense of safety?					
Statements	No impact at all on my sense of safety	Little impact on my sense of safety	Moderate impact on my sense of safety	Very large impact on my sense of safety	Don't know
British Columbia	32%	23%	22%	11%	13%
Alberta	27%	19%	25%	18%	11%
Saskatchewan	24%	18%	28%	19%	11%
Ontario	22%	14%	25%	30%	9%
Quebec	31%	18%	18%	21%	12%
Maritimes (NB, NS, NFL, PEI)	47%	23%	10%	5%	14%
Territories (NWT, Yukon, Nunavut)	49%	21%	10%	5%	14%
North Dakota	21%	13%	19%	40%	8%
United States	27%	17%	19%	24%	14%
Other Continents	26%	14%	17%	31%	11%

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?					
Statements	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The 14 day self-isolation restrictions should be in place for travellers from a jurisdiction or region where case numbers are high, and the restrictions should be removed when case numbers in that jurisdiction or region reduce to manageable levels.	48%	27%	7%	8%	10%
The 14 day self-isolation restrictions should be in place when Manitoba identifies, through contact-tracing, a high number of travel-related cases from a particular jurisdiction or region. Travellers from that province or region would need to self-isolate.	61%	22%	6%	4%	7%
Self-isolation restrictions should be mandatory for all those travelling to Manitoba from anywhere in Canada, with exemptions for essential business travel and compassionate reasons.	45%	20%	9%	11%	15%
Self-isolation restrictions should be removed for people arriving in Manitoba from travel anywhere within Canada.	12%	8%	8%	18%	54%
All international travellers to Manitoba, including those from the US, should have to self-isolate for 14 days.	76%	10%	3%	4%	7%