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Health Canada removes graphene masks from market

Agency issues advisory warning Canadians not to use masks containing graphene over potential health risks.

THUNDER BAY - Health Canada has issued an advisory warning Canadians not to use face masks containing graphene, citing potential health risks.

"The agency has directed distributors, importers, and manufacturers to stop selling the products pending a "thorough scientific assessment."

Individuals are advised to immediately stop using masks labelled to contain graphene or biomass graphene, consult a health provider if they have used the masks and experienced any concerns such as shortness of breath, and report any adverse events to Health Canada.

Roughly 4.6 million graphene-coated masks were distributed to schools by the Quebec government, several from a Quebec company that manufactured in China, multiple media outlets have reported. It's unclear how widely such masks have been used in other areas of the country.

The potential health risks associated with the masks remain uncertain, the agency noted in its advisory. The material is a carbon allotrope reported to have antiviral and antibacterial properties, Health Canada said.

"Health Canada's preliminary assessment of available research



identified that inhaled graphene particles had some potential to cause early lung toxicity in animals," it said. "However, the potential for people to inhale graphene particles from their masks and the related health risks are not yet known, and may vary based on mask design."

Health Canada has requested data from manufacturers to assess potential health risks, it said.

That includes local company ZEN Graphene Solutions, which has supplied graphene-based coating for masks and filters made by Collingwood-based Timberla.

A surgical mask using the graphene coating has not yet gone to market, but could potentially have begun distribution this month.

Reached Sunday, ZEN CEO Greg

Feston said the masks had undergone rigorous safety testing, including on lab animals, and passed Health Canada testing requirements as a Class I medical device.

Feston welcomed the investigation and expressed confidence the masks his company contributes material to would be found to be safe.

Health Canada issued its advisory after becoming aware that masks containing graphene had been sold "with COVID-19 claims" and used by adults and children in schools and daycares, it said. They may also have been distributed in health care settings.

Any face masks containing graphene will remain off the market until Health Canada has completed a more thorough assessment, it said.

When people picture red-hot real estate markets, they most likely think of soaring prices for the condos dotting Vancouver's skyline. They might also conjure up the bidding wars for massive mega-condos in and around Toronto.

But they're likely not thinking about properties like Barb Armstrong's quiet bungalow in picturesque Perth Ont., about an hour southwest of Ottawa.

Even so, Armstrong's four bedrooms, three-bath home was swept up into a bidding war worthy of any big city this month. It sold for \$150,000 over her asking price of \$239,900 - and the offer didn't come with any conditions.

"It was quite a shock to see that that amount of money was coming our way for sure," she said. "I was over our expectation and we were really blown away."

Armstrong and her husband were late warm on selling at first, but a local friend explained how hot the real estate market had become, with families from Ottawa and even as far away as Toronto down to Perth by its comparative affordability and beautiful life.

"We thought, 'Well, jeez, maybe we should go for it now,'" Armstrong said. The couple listed their home in mid-March. Thirty-five viewings later, they had 11 offers on the table. She says she feels like they won the lottery.

Half a country away, on Vancouver Island, Lars Reese-Hanson isn't surprised to hear about buyers taking their best shot at getting into the market, however they can. He sold his 68-year-old single family home in the Comox Valley last fall, and planned to buy elsewhere in B.C. this spring.

He's looking to downsize into something newer with less maintenance as he heads into retirement but he can't find anything that fits the bill, even though he's

It's not just Toronto and Vancouver - Canada's housing bubble has gone national

causing a wide net and is willing to compromise.

"Most of the places that I requested to view an old home actually gets a fix on the door," he said.

Reese-Hanson recently listed up four newly listed homes to see that he thought had potential. Just as he hopped in the car to drive down the highway to see them, his realtor called to say they were already gone.

Recent high prices
 Canada's housing market is indeed flush with cash at the moment, with the national average selling price hitting an all-time high of \$678,091 in February. That's up more than 25 per cent from the same month last year, pre-pandemic.

Against all odds, the pandemic seems to have prompted a flurry of buying by Canadians spending more than ever before.

While there's a perception that high prices are mostly a problem in big cities like Toronto and Vancouver, sales are booming just about everywhere, with hotly offers becoming the norm.

Paul Martin, president of the Rideau St Lawrence Real Estate Board that covers Perth, Ont., where the Armstrongs live, says "The market just took off," but says:

"We've seen our property prices jump close to 50 per cent in the area," he said.

About a third of the new buyers are from Toronto, he says, despite the region being about three hours from the city. About half are from Ottawa, which is closer but still up to an hour



away.

One of the area's major draws is extra space as more people ponder permanently working from home.

Undesired the frenzy are record low interest rates, which are lower than they've ever been, built on the back of Canada's central bank slashing its leading rate to practically zero to stimulate the economy out of COVID-19.

Pandemic-era combined pre-existing problems
 Economist Mike Moffatt, senior director at the Smart Prosperity Institute, an Ottawa-based think-tank, says low mortgage rates are key to what's happening, but they're not the only factor.

If it were just cheap lending, markets should be heating up fairly evenly across the country, that they're not. Some smaller towns an hour or more outside the orbit of large urban centres are facing better in real estate than some big cities.

Though he lives in Ottawa, Moffatt

he says affordability issues were a problem there even before the pandemic because of supply and demand issues. The area's population was increasing largely from new immigrants and foreign students, and now pandemic-era low rates have spurred people to move home.

"Costage country places in southwestern Ontario - Woodstock, Ingersoll, Tillburg - those are the places seeing the big price increases," he said.

The numbers back that up. According to data from the Canadian Real Estate Association, prices in Owen Sound are up by 29 per cent in the year up to February 2021. They're up 39 per cent in Tillburg, by 36 per cent in Woodstock, and by 26 per cent in Guelph. All those markets have fared better than the Greater Toronto Area, where CREA's House Price Index has risen by about 14 per cent in the same time frame.

"It's baffled by that the coupling of

white-collar professionals who have a lot of money right now and globally low interest rates."

Buyers in small towns are finding themselves priced out of their own markets because local salaries can't compete with the buying power of out-of-towners.

"We're going to have a lot of both political and economic problems if we price an entire generation of young families free from ever owning a home," Moffatt said.

Back in B.C., the frenzy is so great that some people are resorting to buying without ever setting foot in their new homes. That's what happened to Ian Jackson and his wife Sibylle Tinsell. They recently sold their home in Vancouver and were looking to downsize somewhere farther west.

The couple settled on the tiny community of Powell River, B.C., about 100 kilometres up the coast. They have friends in the area so it was always a long-term plan, but their home sale sped up their timeline.

There were five houses available when they started looking, and what was there was hard to see given pandemic restrictions. "We couldn't get up there in time to even see the place," Jackson said in an interview.

So they did what millions of Canadians did while shopping for consumer goods this year - they shopped online and kept the best.

Their realtor was able to give them a walkthrough of the interior and exterior via video, and they liked what they saw enough to put down an offer.

Though they're excited for this new chapter, it "all feels very awkward," Jackson said.

"It feels really strange. And we look at each other at dinner times just about every night and say, 'Did we do the right thing? ... Did we get ripped off? Or is this going to work out?'"

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Ontario imposes provincewide 'emergency brake' as 3rd wave of COVID-19 hits hard

The Ontario government is imposing a provincewide "emergency brake" starting Saturday, but stepped short of a stay-at-home order, despite modelling showing such a measure could significantly curb the surge in COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations.

The measures come into effect as of 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, the province said in a news release, and will be in place for at least four weeks.

"We are facing a serious situation and drastic measures are required to contain the rapid spread of the virus, especially the new variants of concern," Premier Doug Ford said in a statement.

"I know pulling the emergency brake will be difficult on many people across the province, but we must try and prevent more people from getting infected and overwhelming our hospitals. Our vaccine rollout is steadily increasing, and I encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated. That is our best



Ontario Premier Doug Ford at a news conference on Saturday.

protection against this deadly virus."

The Ministry of Health reported another 2,557 confirmed cases of the illness this morning, which is the most on a single day since Jan. 22.

Restrictions will include:

- Prohibiting indoor organized public events and social gatherings, and limiting the capacity for outdoor gatherings to five-person maximum - except for gatherings with members of the same household, or gatherings of members of one household and one other person who lives close.

- Limiting on-person

- shopping: a 50 per cent capacity limit for supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers' markets, other stores that primarily sell food and pharmacies; and a 25 per cent limit for all other retail including big box stores.

- Non-essential services.

- No indoor and outdoor dining. Take out, delivery and drive-thru options are allowed.

- Prohibiting the use of facilities for indoor or outdoor sports and recreational fitness, with very limited exceptions.

- The closure of day camps.

Limiting capacity at weddings, funerals, and religious services to 15 per cent occupancy per room indoors, and to the number of people who can maintain two metres of physical distance outdoors. This does not include social gatherings associated with these services such as receptions, which are not permitted indoors and are limited to five people outdoors.

In hotspot regions like Toronto, the new measures are very similar to restrictions that are already in place.

At a news conference Thursday afternoon, Health Minister Christine Elliott said that the province did not issue a stay-at-home order like the one from the start of the year, because officials saw that it had "no discernible effect on children and adults."

Elliott added that with the warm weather coming, officials don't want to prohibit Ontarians from enjoying the outdoors. However, previous stay-at-home orders did not produce people fraying outdoors.

When asked why the province started to ease measures just a few short weeks ago before shutting things back down again, Ford said it was due to a "combination of things," such as local officials pushing for things to reopen, and an inconsistent supply of vaccines.

Ward 3: Cedar Creek Drive (between Raminghbrock Drive and Leiston Drive)

Ward 11: Old Derry Road (between Second Line West and Gooderham Lines (bothways))

Before the cameras are moved, residents will see advance notice signs installed in their areas.

The location of the ASE cameras is not a secret. We want to make sure that residents know about this program because our goal is speed compliance - not to issue charges," said Chief Wright, Commissioner of Transportation and Works. "Speed limits are not guidelines - they are the law - and when residents drive the speed limit, our streets are much safer for everyone."

As the program moves forward, residents may track the locations of the cameras on the City's dedicated website: www.mississauga.ca/ase

The City will monitor the success of phase one to help plan future phases of the program. Staff will assess the feasibility of increasing the number of cameras and the possibility of implementing cameras on different types of roadways that are designated community safety zones.

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Coronavirus: What's happening in Canada and around the world on Monday

New COVID-19 restrictions will go into effect in Quebec Monday evening as the province tries to deal with rising COVID-19 case numbers involving more contagious variants.

The provincial government said the curfew will move from 9:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. ET Monday evening in the regional municipalities of Beauport-Sherbrooke, Les Trois-Rivières, Nouvelle-Beauce and Roberval.

Non-essential businesses will have to close starting Monday evening, as will restaurant dining rooms. Schools will also have to close for in-person learning. The measures will be in place until at least April 12, the province said.

The Quebec government imposed the same restrictions on three other cities last week, including Quebec City and Gatineau.

Quebec reported 1,252 new cases of COVID-19 and 49 additional deaths on Monday. According to a provincial dashboard, hospitalizations stood at 503, with 123 in intensive care.

The expanded restrictions in parts of Quebec come as several provinces face mounting COVID-19 case numbers and increasing hospitalizations, prompting concern about strain on health-care systems.

Ontario on Monday reported figures covering two days, for a total of 5,579 new cases of COVID-19 and 22 additional deaths.

According to figures released Monday, hospitalizations in Ontario stood at 942, with 494 people in ICU from COVID-related critical illness. Of those in ICU, 469 were still testing positive for COVID-19, the province said.

Some health experts in the province are urging a change in vaccination priorities, from older Canadians to essential workers.

In Toronto, Mayor John Tory said the city is working on a plan to vaccinate high-risk people at their firework sites.

What else is happening across Canada

As of 1:40 p.m. ET on Monday, Canada had reported 1,011,373 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 61,035 additional deaths. A deaths toll stood at 23,896.

In Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia reported 10 new cases of COVID-19 on Monday.

In New Brunswick, health officials reported 30 new cases of COVID-19 on Monday. Fourteen patients are hospitalized with the disease,

including eight in intensive care, the province said.

The update came a day after health officials said a hospital in northwestern New Brunswick is nearing its capacity for acute care patients, according to a statement released by the Vitalité Health Network over the weekend.

The evolution of the variant and its atypical behaviours are creating problems that exceed the pandemic projections that had been made for that region," the statement from the organization's president and CEO Dr. France Desrochers said. "The Edmundston Regional Hospital will soon reach its maximum capacity in terms of patients requiring acute care."

Desrochers, who joined the efforts of front-line workers and health-care staff, noted that the transfer of patients to other facilities "is imminent."

Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador had not yet reported updated figures Monday.

Across the North, there were no new cases reported in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories or Yukon on Sunday.

In the Prairie provinces, Manitoba reported 135 new cases Monday, with an additional two deaths.

In Saskatchewan, health officials reported 221 new cases of COVID-19 and three additional deaths. Hospitalizations stood at 194, with 44 people in intensive care due to COVID-19, the highest figure recorded in the province.

In Alberta, a preliminary estimate of new case tallies reported Sunday stood at 195, the province's top doctor said in a tweet. Dr. Deena Hinshaw said hospitalizations remained stable, noting that health officials would provide an update on Monday.

British Columbia will provide updated case numbers later Monday. Business-sponsoring staff patients at risk by remaining open in defiance of COVID-19 rules will face consequences, the province's public

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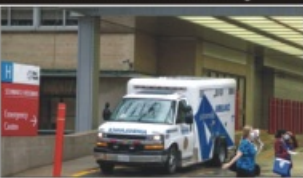
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Ambulance in Quebec, Monday evening.

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lockdown by another week Monday after an alarming spike in coronavirus infections continued to surge and started to overwhelm many hospitals in the capital and outlying regions.

President Rodrigo Duterte placed Metropolitan Manila and four outlying provinces, a region of more than 25 million people, under lockdown last week as daily infections breached 10,000. Korean Catholic leaders shifted Holy Week and Easter events online after all public gatherings, including in places of worship, were suspended.

Bangladesh began enforcing a week-long nationwide lockdown Monday, shutting shopping malls and transportation in an effort to stop a surge in coronavirus infections and deaths.

The decision came after health authorities said that they were being overwhelmed by pressure in intensive care units in recent weeks because of severe infections. This is the second time the South Asian nation has enforced a virus lockdown after the first in March.

India has reported its biggest single-day spike in confirmed coronavirus cases since the pandemic began, and officials in the hard-hit state have to Mumbai are working to the closure of some businesses and places of worship in a bid to slow the spread.

The Health Ministry on Monday reported 103,558 new COVID-19 infections in the last 24 hours, topping the previous peak of 97,894 daily cases recorded in late September. Fatalities rose by 478, raising the country's death toll to 165,101.

India now has a seven-day rolling average of more than 72,000 cases per day and infections in the country are being reported faster than anywhere else in the world.

In the Middle East, Iran's capital is once again facing the highest level of restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus as the country struggles with a new surge in daily deaths. State media said the measures on Monday is the third time Tehran has faced a so-called code red since the pandemic began. A code red involves a ban on any travel by general cars to and from cities and limits working hours of many businesses and efforts to prevent the spread of the virus.

About 50 cities and towns are in code red, with only 25 in code blue, or "safe" status, out of the country's total of more than 800 cities and towns. The rest are in orange and yellow status, which involve fewer restrictions.

The Philippine government extended a

lockdown by another week Monday after an alarming spike in coronavirus infections continued to surge and started to overwhelm many hospitals in the capital and outlying regions.

President Rodrigo Duterte placed Metropolitan Manila and four outlying provinces, a region of more than 25 million people, under lockdown last week as daily infections breached 10,000. Korean Catholic leaders shifted Holy Week and Easter events online after all public gatherings, including in places of worship, were suspended.

Bangladesh began enforcing a week-long nationwide lockdown Monday, shutting shopping malls and transportation in an effort to stop a surge in coronavirus infections and deaths.

The decision came after health authorities said that they were being overwhelmed by pressure in intensive care units in recent weeks because of severe infections. This is the second time the South Asian nation has enforced a virus lockdown after the first in March.

India has reported its biggest single-day spike in confirmed coronavirus cases since the pandemic began, and officials in the hard-hit state have to Mumbai are working to the closure of some businesses and places of worship in a bid to slow the spread.

The Health Ministry on Monday reported 103,558 new COVID-19 infections in the last 24 hours, topping the previous peak of 97,894 daily cases recorded in late September. Fatalities rose by 478, raising the country's death toll to 165,101.

India now has a seven-day rolling average of more than 72,000 cases per day and infections in the country are being reported faster than anywhere else in the world.

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Wild video shows large group set fire to road before stunt driving on Toronto street

TORONTO — Video has emerged showing the wild moments a large group of people gathered in the middle of a Toronto street, setting the road on fire while doing doughnuts in the intersection.

Toronto police said they were called to the McNiell Avenue and Plover Court area in North York around 2:30 a.m. after receiving reports people were stunt driving, discharging fireworks and participating in other prohibited activities.

In one part of the video, which was posted online, a person can be seen pouring a flammable substance on the road, creating a massive fire.

A car can then be seen doing doughnuts in the middle of the flaming ring.

The video then cuts to when police arrive on the scene.

According to police, officers were met with hostility when they arrived and said that "members of the group jumped on a scout car causing



extensive damage."

Police said when the group was dispersed they then made their way to other areas of the city and engaged in similar activities.

At least one person was charged with stunt driving and failing to remain at the scene of a collision, police said.

Mayor John Tory said such gatherings threaten the work many have done in containing the virus, leading to continued lockdown and postponement of life returning to normal.

"If people decide to go against the public health guidelines and break the rules, they should be prepared to face the consequences. The police officers who arrived on scene last night were confronted with hostility which is also unacceptable. Those responsible should face the full weight of the legal consequences," Tory said in an email statement to CTV Toronto.

"I am urging people to please follow the public health guidelines which have been created to protect residents and help us get through this pandemic."

Man dead, another injured after shooting in Toronto's west end

Toronto police say one man is dead and another is injured after a shooting in the city's west end Saturday evening.

Police said they were called to the area of Tallon Road and Tremont Drive, in the area of Royal York Road and Lawrence Avenue West, at 5:38 p.m.

"When officers arrived on scene, they located two male victims, both suffering from gunshot wounds," Insp. Jibrail Masah said in a news release Saturday.

"Officers and paramedics both initiated first aid. Officers then assisted with an emergency run to the hospital. At the hospital, officers were notified that one victim, his injuries were less serious, non-life-threatening."

Masah said the second victim's injuries were very severe and he was pronounced dead.

In a news release issued Sunday afternoon, police identified the man who died as 21-year-old Toronto resident Habi Abdihi Hassan, the city's 17th homicide victim of 2021.

The news release also provided



additional insight into what transpired.

Police said the two victims were travelling north on Scarlett Road around 5:30 p.m. when another car drove up beside them and the people inside began shooting, striking the victims' vehicles several times.

The victims then drove to the Tallon Road and Tremont Drive area, where 911 was called and they were found by responding officers, police said.

Masah said the man who suffered non-life-threatening injuries was in his late 40s to late 50s.

Twenty-one-year-old Habi Abdihi Hassan, Haddow / Toronto

Canada's economy grew 0.7% in January

Statistics Canada says the economy grew 0.7 per cent in January.

The increase in real gross domestic product compared with a gain of 0.1 per cent in December.

The growth also topped the agency's preliminary estimate for the month of 0.5 per cent.

It was the ninth consecutive monthly increase since the plunge in the economy last year at the start of the recession in March and April.

However, Statistics Canada noted that total economic activity was still about three per cent below the February level last year, before the pandemic began.

The agency's preliminary estimate for February this year shows growth of 0.5 per cent for the month.

For January, manufacturing, construction and real estate all contributed to economic growth.

The manufacturing sector expanded 1.9 per cent in January, offsetting a 1.9 per cent contraction in December.

The gains in GDP is impressive considering that an early estimate pegged the increase at 0.5 per cent, said Douglas Porter, an economist at the Bank of Montreal.

He said many forecasts issued a few months ago called for a decline in first-quarter GDP, but the latest estimate from BMO Economics predicts an increase of 0.5 per cent.

"The economy held up much better than expected through the second wave (of pandemic) restrictions through the winter," Porter said in a statement.

Wholesale trade was up 3.9 per cent in January, following a 1.5 per cent contraction in December.

"A big rebound in wholesale trade more than offset the drop in retail activity, in part due to a shift to online spending," Porter said.

The hardest hit brick-and-mortar retailers included clothing and clothing accessories stores - down 17 per cent - and sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores - down 14.1 per cent.

However, general merchandise stores grew 3.3 per cent, while building material and garden supply dealers saw a gain of 3.6 per cent because of home improvement projects.

Canadians warming to prisoner swap with China, split on balancing budget: Nanos survey

TORONTO — New polling data from Nanos Research, commissioned by CTV News, reveals Canadian thoughts on the upcoming federal budget, carbon pricing and the idea of retaining Meng Wanzhou to China in exchange for the freedom of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

On the latter point, Nanos found that far more Canadians are in favour of the prisoner swap than they were when the idea was floated last June.

At that time, 16 per cent of surveyed Canadians told Nanos that they supported the swap, with another 19 per cent saying they were somewhat supportive, versus 16 per cent somewhat opposed and 40 per cent opposed.

The latest survey, which took place between March 27 and March 30, reveals that 15 per cent of those surveyed are now in favour of the trade - more than double the figure from nine months earlier - while 23 per cent say they are somewhat in support. Twelve per cent of respondents said they somewhat oppose the idea, while 23 per cent opposed it.

Kovrig and Spavor have been in custody in China since December 2018. They were arrested days after Canadian authorities apprehended Meng, the chief financial officer of communications giant Huawei, and their arrests have largely been viewed in the West as retaliation for the detention of Meng.

Kovrig and Spavor were charged last year with offenses relating to spying and selling state secrets. Their court proceedings began last month.

Meng was arrested at the behest of the United States, which accuses her of fraud related to alleged Iranian business dealings. An extradition hearing in her case is ongoing.

Nanos found that support for a prisoner exchange was lowest in British Columbia, where Meng is under house arrest. Just over 30 per cent of respondents in that province reported some level of support for the idea. Support was highest in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, at 66 per cent and 63.6 per cent respectively.

Women were also more likely than men to support a swap.

CARBON PRICING AND VOTERS' SUPPORT

The poll also found that Canadians are more likely to vote for than



against any political party that supporting agriculture.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled last month that the federal government does have the jurisdiction to impose a carbon-pricing system on the provinces.

Overall, Nanos found, 36 per cent of those surveyed said they would vote for a federal candidate whose party supports putting a price on carbon, versus 24 per cent who said they would vote against a candidate whose party backs pricing carbon.

Another 22 per cent of respondents said a candidate's stance on the issue would not affect their federal vote.

There was a clear geographic divide here as well, with respondents in B.C. being the most supportive and respondents in the Prairies the least supportive. In B.C., 42.7 per cent of those surveyed said they would vote for a candidate from a party that backs carbon pricing, versus 25.9 per cent who said they would vote against such a candidate. In the Prairies, those numbers were 21.1 per cent and 44.3 per cent, respectively.

Men were much more likely than women to say they would vote against a candidate whose party supports carbon pricing - 29.9 per cent versus 19.1 per cent.

BALANCE THE BUDGET? Asked about whether it is more important to them that their government be "raising a budget deficit to invest in programs for Canadians or balancing the budget to ease the tax burden on Canadians," there was an even split, with 46 per cent of respondents answering each way.

That has changed from when the same question was asked in March 2019. At that time, 55 per cent of respondents said they prioritized balancing the budget and 45 per cent

said they would prefer deficit spending.

Answers to this question were evenly split in Quebec and within the margin of error in Ontario.

Respondents in Atlantic Canada said by a slim margin that they preferred deficit spending. The gaps were once again much larger in the West - 54.8 per cent of B.C. respondents said they preferred deficit spending, compared to 39 per cent who said they preferred a balanced budget, while a balanced budget received 52.9 per cent support in the Prairies, versus 37.7 per cent support for deficit spending.

Six provinces have released their 2021 budgets thus far. All of them are projecting deficits for this year, largely because of pandemic-related spending measures. The federal budget will be delivered April 19.

Forty per cent of respondents said the federal Liberal government has incurred too much debt fighting the pandemic, versus 30 per cent who said it was the right amount and seven per cent who said it was not enough.

METHODOLOGY Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-line) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,007 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between March 27 and March 30 as part of a non-biased survey.

Participants were randomly recruited by telephone using live agents and administered a survey online. The sample included both land- and cell-line numbers across Canada.

The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada.

Individuals were randomly called using random digit dialling with a minimum of five callbacks.

Peel Region schools ordered to switch to remote-only instruction as of 6th April

Schools in Peel Region will switch to remote-only instruction as of 6th April.

Peel Region's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Lawrence Loh has used his discretionary powers under Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act to issue an order requiring the closure of all schools in Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga for in-person learning as of April 6.

The order will remain in effect for at least two weeks, meaning schools will not be able to reopen until April 19 at the earliest.

The move comes just days after Education Minister Stephen Lecce told reporters that the Ford government had no plans to close schools amid ongoing COVID-19 case numbers and would instead have students return to "elevated" infection prevention and control measures and asymptomatic testing following the delayed March break, now scheduled for next week.

"This closure is a necessary step to protect staff and students in Peel Region," Loh said in a press release issued on Monday afternoon. "With increasing case counts and the presence of variants of concern, we need to keep chains of transmission and keep our schools safe. I know this will be challenging for parents to navigate and we appreciate all the sacrifices parents continue to make as we continue to fight COVID-19 in our community."

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