



Building a More Resilient Community: The Sobeys School of Business COVID-19 Pandemic Response

September 2021



**Sobeys School
of Business**

Saint Marys University

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Identification Symbols

Watch for these symbols throughout the report



WEBINAR



RESEARCH
STUDY



PROGRAM
OFFERING



EVENT



ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University is a national leader in community-focused business education. Building foundations for an equitable, prosperous, and progressive community is at the heart of what we do and constitutes a key pillar of our strategic plan. Our success is inextricably linked with the success of our students, stakeholders, and broader communities.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted our community in dramatic and unforeseen ways. As the adverse effects of this pandemic have swept through society, the Sobey School has been providing insights and thought leadership through our expert professors, research centres, industry partners and alumni.

As the economy begins to recover and businesses reassess managing their everyday activities and re-engagement with their customers, unexpected challenges will continue to emerge. The Sobey School of Business seeks to contribute to a strong and inclusive recovery by providing thought leadership on pressing issues to help businesses and communities recover from the global pandemic.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Engage faculty, community, and industry leaders on important issues and problems arising from Atlantic region's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Lead the economic recovery discourse on issues affecting our local businesses and broader communities in the post-pandemic landscape.
- Advocate for positive change and be a partner in the shared post-pandemic recovery that includes all facets of our community.
- Be a change maker in preparing the next generation of workforce for the post-pandemic economic dynamism.
- Provide resources and be a support system through the flux of disruptive changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY THEMES

- Recovering Through Innovation
- Revitalizing Our Community
- Rising from COVID-19 in Vulnerable Sectors
- Upskilling and Reskilling in the Post-Pandemic Workforce
- Working Towards a More Inclusive Recovery



Our university prides itself on staying connected to and engaged with our community. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our entire university community has stepped up to provide support. Faculty and students donated PPE and mobilized our research to find solutions to new, pressing problems. Our Entrepreneurship Centre stepped up to help businesses struggling to find a way forward. Alumni, donors, faculty and staff provided financial support to students. Our willingness to engage is part of who we are.

Saint Mary's University and our renowned Sobey School of Business have impressive business and economic expertise. Together with expertise across the university in areas such as organizational psychology, health and safety culture, data analytics, and more, we were able to connect with the government, industry, and the community partners. Our goal is to produce actionable recommendations to revitalize our economy.

The Sobey School of Business is home to Canada Research Chairs, leading business-focused research institutes and internationally recognized and published faculty. We want to ensure this expertise is available to our community and region. It will create the conditions to generate new ideas and have them interact across sectors and communities.

The ideas created by bringing together different actors and individuals from across the region will ensure we come out of this crisis stronger. This approach will ensure we can gain new insights to build a more prosperous society – one where that prosperity is shared more widely. Saint Mary's University and the Sobey School of Business are central to our shared recovery and advancing the future for Atlantic Canadians.

Robert Summerby-Murray
President and Vice-Chancellor
Saint Mary's University



At the Sobey School of Business, we believe it is our role to ensure our research and pedagogy create meaningful impact in the world – at local, regional, national and global levels. Our mission, as outlined in Elevating Impact, the Sobey School's Strategic Plan, is to prepare citizens of the world to lead entrepreneurial, sustainable businesses and communities, through the creation and mobilization of scholarship.

Perhaps no other crisis in our lifetimes has had such far-reaching effects on the world as the COVID-19 pandemic. In the midst of unprecedented change and instability, it was essential for the Sobey School of Business to step up and support our local businesses by sharing the deep expertise contained in our community.

Through the Community Revitalization & Prosperity Network, Saint Mary's University Entrepreneurship Centre, David Sobey Centre for Innovation in Retailing and Services and many other initiatives, we created opportunities for real-world impact through thought leadership, knowledge mobilization, expert coaching and more. We offered free webinar series, partnered with business leaders and engaged in research focused on helping lift Canadians out of the difficult circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The items contained in this report represent a snapshot of the work that has been done at the Sobey School of Business to tackle the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic so far.

While we are proud of what our expert faculty, research centres, industry partners, alumni and students have accomplished over the course of the pandemic, we acknowledge that the crisis is ongoing, and much work remains to be done. We will continue to be of service, working to share thought leadership and innovative research that can have a meaningful and positive impact and build a more resilient and inclusive community in the post-pandemic reality.

Harjeet S. Bhabra
Dean
Sobey School of Business

Mohammad Rahaman
Associate Dean, Strategic Partnership & Community Engagement
Sobey School of Business

Recovering Through Innovation

The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic require new and innovative solutions. From artificial intelligence and machine learning to big data analytics and online pedagogy, faculty at the Sobey School of Business explore groundbreaking research and technology to ensure our community remains resilient and prosperous in the post-pandemic reality. While we cannot predict the scope of changes that will remain after the COVID-19 pandemic, Sobey School faculty and partners are actively working to advance innovative solutions that will drive a successful recovery.



Artificial Intelligence for Business Recovery

Dr. Matthew Boland looked at the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in business, and the possibilities for helping businesses recover in a stronger position after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Dr. Boland, companies can use AI to predict outcomes with better accuracy, thereby leading to better budgeting and more intelligent business decisions, both of which will be essential to resilient businesses in the post-pandemic reality.

Revitalizing SMEs Through Business Intelligence and Big Data Analytics

Dr. Hai Wang explored ideas on how can small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can use big data despite their limited resources. By looking at various challenges and associated IT solutions for big data for SMEs, and also looking at guidelines for strategic use of data and technologies. Business intelligence and big data analytics can revitalize SMEs during the global pandemic, provided the strategic use of big data is sustainable and aligns with the business strategies of the organization.



Integrating Consumer Behaviour into Pandemic Marketing Strategies

Dr. Ethan Pancer shared how organizations can integrate consumer behaviour into their marketing strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses must be conscious of the “next normal” in consumer behaviour and consider important factors like uncertainty and resource scarcity. Businesses must also consider the quantum leap in the adoption of digital and how it has affected consumer behaviour. Online shopping, working from home, play and entertainment, communication and information, travel and mobility, health and well-being and learning have all been affected by the pandemic.



Innovation Through Disruption with Design Thinking

Adriana Dolnyckyj EMBA'02 and Pamela Scott Crace explored design thinking and how organizations can innovate through disruption. Design thinking is a human-centered and collaborative approach to problem-solving that is creative, iterative, and practical. Design thinking is a methodology, tools and activities, and mindset that can help businesses with managing pandemic vulnerabilities and changes.

Machine Learning for Social and Health Policy

As a part of the Nova Scotia COVID-19 Research Coalition, **Dr. Yigit Aydede** and his team developed and trained a nonparametric algorithm that captures the time-varying effects of mobility restrictions on the spread of COVID-19. The study seeks to understand the environmental factors at play in local transmission rates of COVID-19 using data about the positivity rates and mobility changes in Montreal, Toronto, and New York City. The project's methodological framework is the first that can be easily applied to understand the local differences in the efficacy of mobility-related public health policies in fighting COVID-19 transmission.



Revitalizing Our Community

How can we ensure our community emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic revitalized and ready to tackle the challenges of the future? From ensuring the continued success of Canadians' retirement savings strategies, to supporting non-profit and community organizations that will help us navigate the future, Sobey School of Business faculty and partners continue to work to ensure a revitalized community will be possible in a post-pandemic reality.



COVID-19 and the Pivot to Teaching Accounting Online: Professors' Perspectives

Dr. Daphne Rixon, along with co-author Pauline Downer of Memorial University of Newfoundland, is working to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching accounting online. The research looks at previous online teaching experience, university online teaching history and technical support on how accounting professors viewed the three predominant teaching approaches adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic: synchronous, asynchronous or hybrid.

Retirement Savings During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to high volatility in the financial markets and income losses for many Canadian families, which can in turn have an impact on the retirement savings of Canadian households. **Dr. Ashraf Al Zaman** provided a perspective on how the savings prospects and investment opportunities may evolve in the post-pandemic period. The impact will vary depending on the demographic and socioeconomic attributes of Canadians, the savings vehicles they use, and government policies.

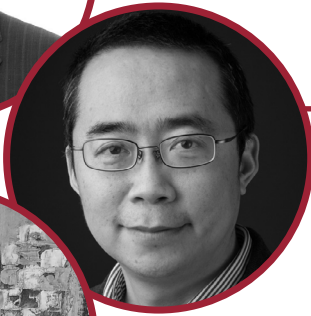


Managing Your Money and Mental Health During a Crisis and Beyond

Robert Hunt BComm'86, Managing Partner and Licensed Insolvency Trustee at Grant Thornton Limited, teamed up with consumer advocate and personal finance educator Kelley Keehn and Dr. Patrick J. McGrath, a clinical psychologist and co-founder of Strongest Families Institute. They looked at the intersection of financial and mental health and the heightened physiological impact from the pandemic due to increases in stress and uncertainty. Their discussion helped provide strategies to manage personal finances and mental health during COVID-19 and beyond.

Unleash Your Money Power

Wendy Brookhouse BComm'91 EMBA'02 and **Adriana Dolnyckyj EMBA'02** dove into the psychological side of money management, including how emotion and willpower affect approaches to money during the COVID-19 pandemic. They recommended three steps to money management during the pandemic: 1) looking at how your brain works, how you were brought up and the pressures you face; 2) start talking about money; 3) start planning, make goals easy and specific, and focus on why it is important.



A Fresh Start or a Dead End - Demystifying Canada's Insolvency Regime

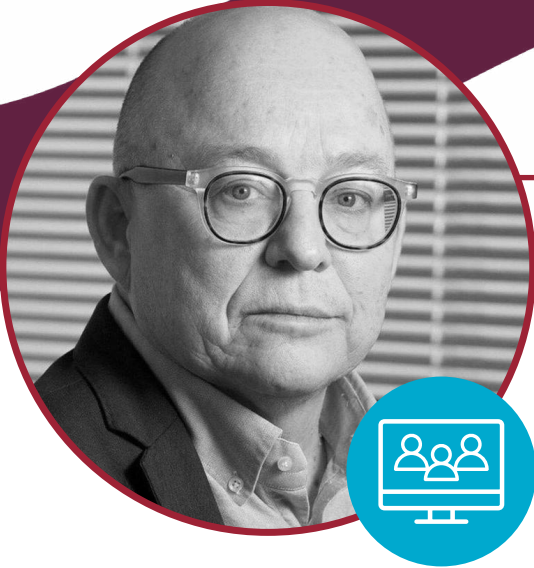
The speed and severity of the economic downturn induced by the COVID-19 global pandemic and the ensuing extraordinary uncertainty have raised the spectre of consumer and business insolvencies in the post-pandemic Canadian economic landscape. **Robert Hunt BComm'86**, **Dr. Michael Zhang** and **Dr. Mohammad Rahaman** debated key questions paramount to Canadian consumers, businesses, and policy makers during this COVID-19 global pandemic.

Non-Profit Governance During COVID-19

Non-profit organizations face unique challenges, including smaller and aging labour forces, lower than average pay and uneven funding. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, leading many non-profits to seek difficult advice and pose tough questions to their Boards. **Dr. Patricia Bradshaw**, **Dr. Rahman Khokhar** and **Dr. Margaret McKee** explored these challenges and provided thought leadership to non-profits. They also recommended Boards pursue opportunities to examine their strategic plans and risk management policies.



Navigating the Uncharted: Impact Investing and the Three R's (Response, Recovery and Resilience)



Terry Cooke, CEO of Hamilton Community Foundation, and Dr. Mohammad Rahaman discussed impact investing for community foundations. Investments have a key role to play alongside grants and community leadership priorities. During the extraordinarily challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic, community foundations should make investments that have social and environmental impact and be catalysts for change. Community foundations should also invest in impact without sacrificing investment returns, using evidence-based decision-making. Impact investing takes time, resources and effort to accelerate the overall success of the foundation.

ESG and the Role of Institutional Investors

Catherine McCall, Executive Director of the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance and Dr. Mohammad Rahaman explored institutional investing and environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors. ESG considers the impact of both material environmental and social governance factors on a company, and the impact that the company has on those factors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased flow in ESG investments, and those investment have often performed better than their peers. The awareness of long-term sustainability risks has increased with COVID-19 and is positive catalyst for ESG investing.



Marketing Through Adversity

Leadership expert **Eleanor Beaton** and **Wendy Brookhouse BComm'91 EMBA'02** showed how businesses can market through adversity and emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. The adversity marketing framework includes leadership messaging (specific, relevant and loyalty-building, selling with story blueprint), creating unforgettable content that established your credibility, an omnipresence plan (leveraging the right partnerships and social platforms), and conversion events to stimulate immediate sales.



Rising from COVID-19 in Vulnerable Sectors

While all sectors have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, sectors like retail, travel and hospitality were more vulnerable than others to the effects of lockdowns and other restrictions. Retail and wholesale trade account for 12 percent of the Canadian GDP, and the retail sector employs 2.2 million people. It is essential that these sectors play a vital role in Canada's future recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Sobey School of Business faculty and research centres are working to ensure these sectors will rise again.

Research on Consumption in a Crisis

The **David Sobey Centre** launched a research study to understand changes to Canadian consumers' consumption habits during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study surveyed over 3,000 Canadians over the span of a year to assess behavioural changes, and the underlying attitudes that impact future intentions related to consumption and loyalties. There were changes to how people shopped, how often they shopped and what they purchased. The major shift to online shopping is likely to continue and consumers will focus more on personal experiences, rather than owning material possessions.

Consumers want retailers to earn their trust and retailers must understand shifting consumer attitudes and respond accordingly.



Retailer Surveys and Interviews

The **David Sobey Centre for Innovation in Retailing and Services** surveyed employees in Canada and U.S. to understand their pandemic issues, perceptions and how they are being treated by retailers. Interviews were conducted with over 30 CEOs and executives from large multinational organizations to smaller regional retailers, to gather information on how companies were adjusting to the new regulations and how they were adapting business processes to changing consumer shopping habits. Successful retailers had common traits: strong core values that acted as a guiding light through the pandemic; investment in getting to know their customers and what they wanted; rapid innovation; placing employees above short-term financial metrics; and strategic thinking, with a vision for longer-term opportunities in the market.

Work-from-Home Research

Three retailers participated in a work-from-home research project with the **David Sobey Centre**. Administrative staff, managers and senior executives who worked from home were surveyed about job satisfaction and engagement, communication with their team and supervisor, work-life-balance, innovation and creativity, stress, mental health and more. The study found interesting differences in the experiences of managers/supervisors and staff.

The participating companies plan to use the insights from this research to inform their decisions about how they structure their workplace in future.





RISE Again Retail

The **David Sobey Centre's** RISE Again Retail program was designed to help Canadian retail executives navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and enable retail companies to take advantage of the opportunities ahead. The program was facilitated by a mix of faculty and expert retail consultants and executives, including Sarah Jordan, CEO, Mastermind Toys. A second series was tailored to support small retailers in Nova Scotia during the pandemic and was sponsored by Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), which funded the registration fee for 200 local businesses. This support came in the form of student consultants and was managed by the Saint Mary's University Entrepreneurship Centre (SMUEC). SMUEC worked one-on-one with businesses on social media marketing analyses and other retail improvement initiatives, providing coaching and support to help them implement the new skills that they learned.

Community Roundtable: Coping with COVID-19

The Community Revitalization & Prosperity Network hosted a community roundtable on September 9, 2020, with business leaders from Supplement King to discuss retail business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key takeaways from this event included the need for head offices to support store owners and provide resources to help navigate retail during the pandemic. Supplement King shared their experience with continuity planning, opening conversations related to leaner business models, and managing vendor relationships.



Remaking Retail – Distinguished Retailer Speaker Series 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically accelerated retail disruption. According to retail analysts, this massive shift is here to stay as retailers are now blurring the lines between digital and physical. To discuss this changing landscape and how to stand out by "choosing remarkable", the **David Sobey Centre** hosted two outstanding retail experts in Jeff Leger, President of Shoppers Drug Mart, and Steve Dennis, Senior Forbes Contributor, Best Selling Author, Consultant and one of the top 5 Retail Influencers in the industry.



4th Annual National Retail Innovation Awards

The **David Sobey Centre** adjusted its Retail Innovation Award categories to recognize Canadian retailers who displayed resilience, creativity, and innovation in successfully adapting to the trying times in one form or another.

Community Service Innovation: Vessi Footwear, for their innovative and exemplary display of social responsibility.

Retail Business Model Innovation: DUER, for pivoting in new directions and implementing new revenue sources or business models in response to many of the challenges and restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Retail Technology Innovation: KNIX, for implementing technologies in innovative ways to connect with and sell to their customers.

A rapidly changing workforce requires innovative solutions. Sobey School researchers and partners are focused on ensuring Canadian employers and workers are prepared to tackle the challenges of a post-pandemic business world.

Upskilling and Reskilling the Post-Pandemic Workforce

Machine Learning and the Post-Pandemic Labour Force



Three million Canadians lost jobs from February to April 2020. **Dr. Yigit Aydede** used machine learning to examine the post-pandemic labour market. COVID-19 might prompt firms to accelerate automation to reduce the need to hire. The loss of "just-in-time" employment has resulted from issues in hiring practices including the cost of training, lack of motivation and employment regulations. Average weekly hours of work declined from 37.2 in February 2020 to 36.1 in April 2020, but rebounded in May and June of 2020. During this period, The Bank of Canada tried to keep interest rates low, as well there did not appear to be a rise in real wages, which are two factors that could also affect job loss.



How AI & Robotics Are Reshaping the World of Work

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated many changes to the world of work that were already in motion due to technological developments. **Dr. Wendy Carroll** examined the ways we already use artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics. With the integration of AI and Robotics, job prediction models suggest that skills with relative low level of change are skills like social intelligence, caring, training and influencing others. Whereas skills that are predicted high-level of change are tasks and skill like data entry, information exchange and processing and cognitive routing. In a post-pandemic world, it will be important that we learn to work with AI and robotics, focus on the "head and heart skills" and continuously educate and learn.



"The recent COVID-19 pandemic reminded us of the unprecedented global connectivity and interdependence between countries. We also witnessed the fragility of the global systems in terms of global value chains, production and distribution of products that were essential during this health and social crises. In my research I discuss the need to engage in a call for action to design and engage in active initiatives for science, technology and innovation. These initiatives need to address sectors that are vital and strategic to the survival and sovereignty of countries, including, health, education, food and energy."

Claudia De Fuentes, PhD
Associate Professor, Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University

Read Dr. De Fuentes's research:

"COVID-19: A wake up call for research and industrial capacity-building"

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

"The pandemic will not invalidate business and management degrees, to the contrary"

Canadian Science Policy Centre

Entrepreneurial Mindset Success Certificate – COVID-19 Career Resiliency Edition



The Entrepreneurial Mindset Success Certificate was originally piloted in **SMUEC's** RBC Talent Hub program, helping undergrads increase their knowledge and skills. Building on the success of the certificate, and through the support of The Province of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education, SMUEC adapted the training and created the COVID-19 Career Resiliency Edition. The new certificate supported community members who found themselves unemployed or unable to find employment due to COVID-19. It provides relevant skills training and exposure to entrepreneurship, helping individuals feel prepared to reenter a new and changed job market, return to work, or start their own business. SMUEC invited employment experts from across Atlantic Canada to mentor the participants and deliver the workshops. SMUEC then pivoted the program again, and through support from Service Canada, offered a tailored version to participants living with a disability.

Faculty in Residence



The Faculty in Residence program, a collaborative pilot project of **SMUEC** and the **Community Revitalization & Prosperity Network**, launched in October 2020. The program mobilizes the business expertise that exists within the Sobey School to help budding entrepreneurs and local business owners improve their operations, strategies, and services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. During their term, faculty meet with clients and coach them through an issue that they're facing. **Dr. Matthew Boland**, **Dr. Claudia De Fuentes** and **Dr. Ethan Pancer** have taken part in the Faculty in Residence program and have each offered one-on-one sessions to student and community entrepreneurs.

COVID Relief Coaching Program



SMUEC offered free coaching and consulting services to any small- and medium-sized businesses in Atlantic Canada immediately upon lockdown in March 2020. Since then, SMUEC has worked with many businesses to help identify strategies to pivot to a virtual environment. This included marketing support, cash flow management, awareness and interpretation of government support programs, Human Resources strategies and any other issues that were pressing.



As the COVID crisis hit, credit unions and banks had to shift the entirety of their business online. In so doing, both types of financial institutions turned to their websites as their primary means of communications. **Dr. Daphne Rixon** and co-author Marc-Andre Pigeon research whether we can identify any systematic differences in communications output across organizational type. Their hypothesis is that credit unions communicate differently than banks, in a way that can plausibly be ascribed to their cooperative structure and adherence to cooperative principles.



Digital Quarantine: Does Social Distancing Lead to Virtual Distancing?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health officials actively promoted messaging on quarantine, isolation, and social distancing to reduce viral transmission and keep people safe. **Dr. Ethan Pancer** and **Dr. Matthew Boland** examined the possibility of spillover effects that isolation-oriented interventions may have in a non-physical domain, specifically digital behaviors. While users indeed spend more time online during the pandemic, the research suggests that this may also manifest as a meaningful change in digital behaviours. The study documents an unintended consequence of isolation rhetoric in health promotion and, by identifying changes to our digital behaviors, suggests ways to develop interventions to bolster social connectedness and collective mental health.



"It was a great experience working with Dr. Matthew Boland! To get access and help from someone with his academic background was a breath of fresh air for us. Usually, the help I've been able to get came from other entrepreneurs or consultants, but rarely from someone with his perspective and experience.

We were able to conduct some research and use data to really inform decisions and ultimately help my business grow."

— Nevell Provo, President/CEO Smooth Meal Prep

(Photo by Meghan Tansey Whitton)



Working Towards a More Inclusive Recovery



Celebrating 25 Years of Black Business Leadership

The Sobey School of Business Community Revitalization & Prosperity Network launched a conversation series with the Nova Scotia-based **Black Business Initiative (BBI)**, the longest serving Black business development initiative in Canada. Black Business Initiatives: 25 Years & Beyond featured BBI CEO Dr. Rustum Southwell, Cynthia Dorrington, President of Vale & Associates Human Resource Management and Consulting Inc. and **Dr. Harvi Millar**, Professor of Operations Management at the Sobey School of Business. The panellists spoke to Dr. Harjeet Bhabra, Dean of the Sobey School, about the history of Black-owned businesses in Nova Scotia and the work that remains to be done to remove barriers to success, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on African Nova Scotian Businesses

Dr. Harvi Millar worked with the Black Business Initiative to study the impact of COVID-19 on African Nova Scotian businesses, finding that businesses faced: significant loss of revenues; temporary and permanent closures; layoffs; low cash on hand; supplier delays; reduced operating capacity; and possible permanent shrinkage in their customer bases. To help African Nova Scotian businesses recover, there is a need for a comprehensive Black Entrepreneurship Sector Strategy built on at least 7 pillars: 1) access to capital; 2) business networking; 3) access to markets; 4) business training and coaching; 5) racial equity and justice; 6) resources and supports; and 7) a focus on the intersectionality of race, gender and disability.



The Effect of COVID-19 on Economic and Social Well-Being of Newcomers to Nova Scotia



In collaboration with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), the **Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity (ARGEIAD)** conducted a survey of newcomers who had arrived in Canada since 2018 and were living in Nova Scotia. The survey seeks to understand their well-being and access to integration services before and after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in March 2020. The main conclusion of this evaluation is that the pandemic had a negative effect on several aspects of the respondents' lives, including long-term plans.



Federal and Provincial Political Debates



In the leadup to the 2021 Nova Scotia general election and the 2021 Canadian federal election, the **Community Revitalization & Prosperity Network** hosted two live-streamed economic recovery dialogues featuring local political candidates. The debates allowed students to submit questions and hear how political parties plan to tackle the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other critical issues. Questions in the provincial debate focused on responses to the pandemic and how candidates planned to ensure an inclusive economic recovery, access to education and access to affordable housing. In the federal debate, the most pressing issues identified were climate change, housing affordability, Canada's global engagement, immigration, Indigenous reconciliation and post-COVID recovery. The provincial debate was presented in partnership with the Saint Mary's University Students' Association (SMUSA). Following the success of this event, the federal debate was presented with SMUSA, Dalhousie University and the Dalhousie Student Union.



COVID Relief Grant and Student Internship

With COVID-19's large fiscal impact on local small businesses, the **David Sobey Centre** and eBay Canada partnered to support a Nova Scotian retailer through the pandemic. The \$5,000 grant and 10-week paid student internship was created specifically to help a business improve their functions and capabilities to adapt to the COVID world. The winning applicant was selected based on need, thoughtfulness, impact and creativity behind how they planned to use the grant to improve and adapt their business.

Wage Subsidy Programming



Through their Options Youth and Access-Ability programs, **SMUEC** worked with their funder, Service Canada, to increase wage subsidy coverage during COVID-19. This enabled SMUEC to offer increased support to employers, ensuring employers were able to continue offering work placements to participants during this challenging time, allowing participants to apply their skills to help these small and medium sized businesses grow.



Symposium on Diversity & Inclusion in Retail

As Canada's largest employer sector, retailers are responsible for playing a significant role in ensuring inclusion, equity and belonging in the workplace for Canadians. This will remain true in a post-pandemic reality. In a timely effort to support an important global issue, the **David Sobey Centre** hosted a Symposium on Diversity and Inclusion in Retail to offer a platform for academics, thought leaders and retailers including Lululemon, McDonald's Canada, Sobeys Inc. to share their studies and best practices on the topic and open the conversation with the audience.

Mental Health and COVID-19: Bridging the Gap



Dr. Daphne Rixon and co-author Hiedi Weigand of Dalhousie University examined gaps in the mental health system from the time of onset of a mental health crisis to the time of an appointment with a psychologist or psychiatrist. Using theories of collaborative policy-making, their research seeks to identify the needs of the community and how to develop a collaborative peer-led bridging framework for mental health support; to examine in greater detail the kinds of legal, technical, and political obstacles to collaboration between stakeholders' organizations; and to develop a framework that can seed knowledge mobilization to assist other provinces to adopt a bridging framework.

Enactus Saint Mary's University

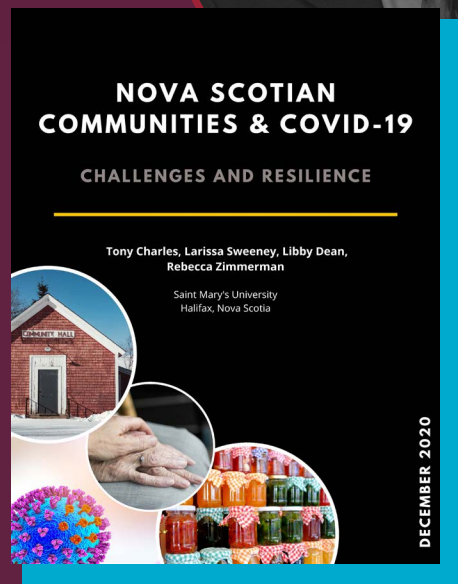


Square Roots is a social enterprise that has two main goals: to solve food access challenges and to reduce food waste. Square Roots operates in nine locations across Nova Scotia, selling 10lb seconds produce bundles at very affordable prices. Most seconds produce gets disposed of by farmers because they're unable to sell it to grocery stores, due to their odd shape, overly small or overly large size. Normally, Square Roots' bundles are sold using a social pricing model to meet the needs of various income levels. However, after COVID-19 swept across the province, Square Roots shifted their model into a donation model, where people who were in need could sign up for a free bundle, no questions asked. Over the pandemic, they distributed over 175,000 lbs of produce to those in need.



COVID-19 has affected communities around the world. Nova Scotian Communities & COVID-19 documents some of the impacts in Nova Scotia, through a range of community voices. The report was created by **Dr. Tony Charles**, along with Larissa Sweeney, Libby Dean and Rebecca Zimmerman. Social and economic impacts of COVID-19 included effects on employment, schooling, childcare, health and well-being, social activities, access to facilities and procuring food.

Despite these impacts, Nova Scotia's communities have strengths that are second to none, and community spirit that helps them meet adversity. Community responses to impacts of the pandemic came in many creative ways, as people worked together to make a difference. This report highlights examples of community resilience through local responses in communities across the province.





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