



BLOOMING THROUGH ADVERSITY

A COVID-19 REPORT FOR THE MABR

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the Qualicum, Snaw-naw-as, K'ómox, Snuneymuxw, Tseshah, Hupacasath, and Ditidaht First Nations. This study refers to, and was conducted on their Traditional Territories, and we raise our hands to them.

THIS REPORT WAS prepared by Alisha Feser and Pierce Melnick under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Sylvie Lafrenière, and designed by Claire Stewart of A Human Called Claire: Graphic Design & Illustration. Additional support and guidance was provided by Vancouver Island University's Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI), and the research team on The View from 2117: Human Actions, Consequences, and Perspectives on Mountain Regions project. *Blooming through Adversity: a COVID-19 Report for the MABR* was created as a follow up document to the *MABR in Bloom: A Community Profile*, which was published in the Fall of 2021.


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FINALLY, WE WOULD like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the MABR community members who generously volunteered their time to participate in our survey.



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INTRODUCTION & LEGEND

THIS REPORT WAS conducted as a follow up document to The MABR In Bloom: A Community Profile which was released in the Fall of 2021. While the research team was preparing the community profile, the WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic. We decided it was important to record some of the impacts of the pandemic on the communities within the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region. Data was collected through the same online survey as the community profile, and results related specifically to the community's response to the pandemic are included in this report. We hope the information presented here will provide a snapshot of how the MABR communities fared during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is meant to be a conversation starter to be used to implement a knowledge-driven approach to leadership (Harrow & Jung, 2016).


THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC was disruptive and it impacted everyone in unique ways. During the preparation of this report, the research team heard stories of turmoil and loss, but also of resilience and hopefulness. Overall, survey respondents were able to identify both negative and positive effects to their personal lives and their communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report aims to record and honour their stories, while acknowledging that this was a difficult time for everyone.


*The MABR In Bloom: A
Community Profile.*



LEGEND

Throughout the report, each statistic will have a colored badge next to it. Please refer to this legend in order to discover where the information has come from.

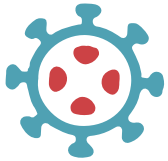
 **Survey** — The community survey data includes responses from 271 MABR residents. Data was collected through a voluntary online survey between October 27, 2020 and November 27, 2020. The data cannot be generalized to the entire population of the MABR. It represents only the opinions of the survey respondents.

 **Other** — Multiple sources were used to complete the Community Profile, such as community organizations, BC parks, personal contacts, etc.

Connection Bubbles — Connection Bubbles will be scattered throughout this document to showcase pre-pandemic numbers and behaviours, taken from *The MABR in Bloom*. This will highlight the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as it was taking place.



TIMELINE & SURVEY CONTEXT



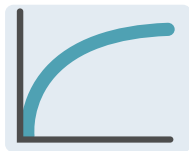
JANUARY 2020

Canada and BC get first COVID-19 cases.

CLOSED

APRIL, MAY, & JUNE 2020

Throughout these months, BC initially “flattens the curve”, and restrictions start to get lifted. Non-urgent surgeries begin again, and establishments such as restaurants, parks, salons, and schools reopen. Non-essential travel throughout BC is once again permitted.



MARCH 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares a pandemic. Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) becomes available for “eligible” applicants to aid workers and businesses. BC declares a provincial state of emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic. All non-urgent surgeries postponed, events with more than 50 people cancelled; bars and nightclubs ordered to close; public schools temporarily closed; and personal service establishments closed. Canada and US border closed for non-essential travel.

DECEMBER 2020

Public health orders are extended. The first COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer-BioNTech is approved for use in Canada and a 64 year old health care worker is the first person in BC to receive it. Dr. Henry announces a one-night ban on liquor sales after 8pm on December 31st, to discourage New Year’s Eve parties. In addition, Island Health declares a COVID-19 outbreak at The Gardens, a Qualicum Beach long-term care home: one staff member tested positive.



OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2020

Dr. Bonnie Henry announces that the province has entered the second wave of the pandemic. Several new health orders are introduced, including mandatory masks for all indoor public spaces.

Our survey is circulating during these months.

FEBRUARY, MARCH, & APRIL 2021

The ban on social gatherings is extended indefinitely. BC also bans indoor dining and closes the gyms. Cases continue breaking daily records. Non-essential travel outside the health authority is banned. The new Delta variant is first detected in BC.



SEPTEMBER 2021

Vaccine Passport is established. Proof of vaccination now required to enter non-essential establishments and events such as restaurants, sporting events, movie theatres, fitness centres, etc.



NOVEMBER 2021

First Omicron case is reported in BC — and when *MABR in Bloom* was completed.



JANUARY 2021

Restrictions on gatherings are extended again, and officials announce BC's full vaccine distribution plan which relies on shipments of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Also, mandatory testing is required for returning travellers into Canada; they must also quarantine in a hotel until they get their result.



JUNE & JULY 2021

BC ban lifted on non-essential travel within the province. Island Health surpasses the 1 million dose mark in COVID-19 immunization campaign.

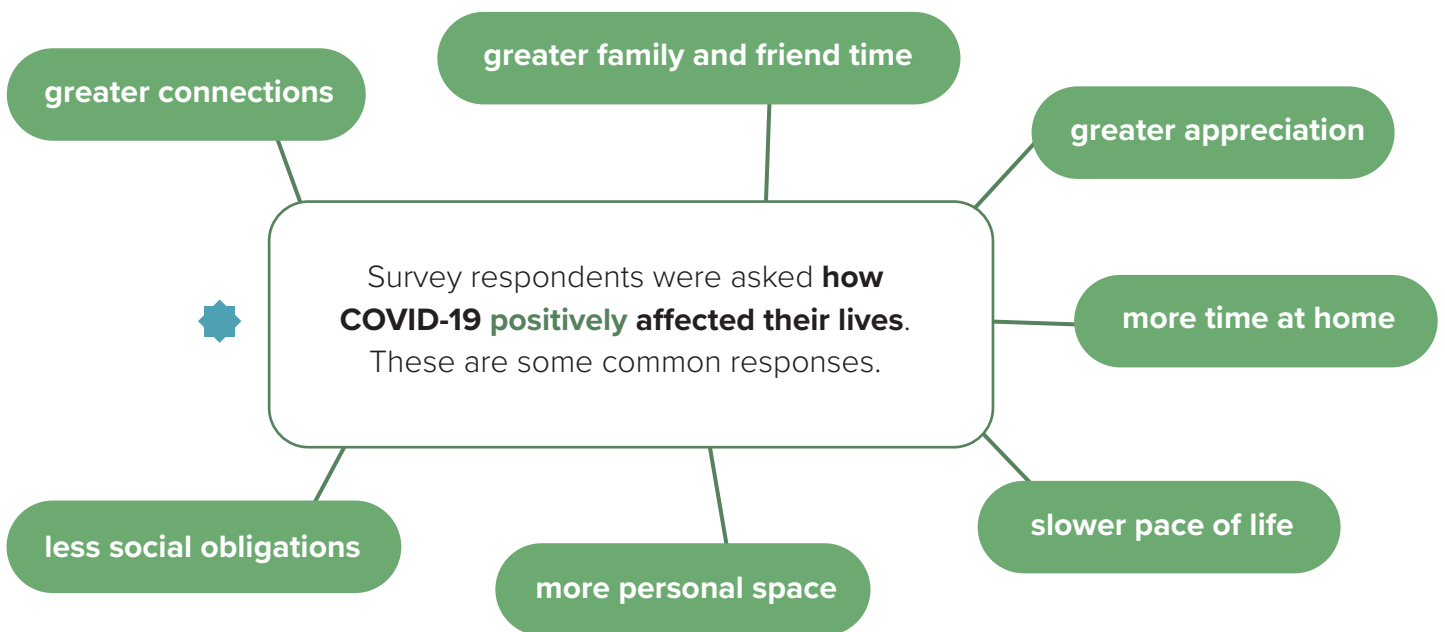
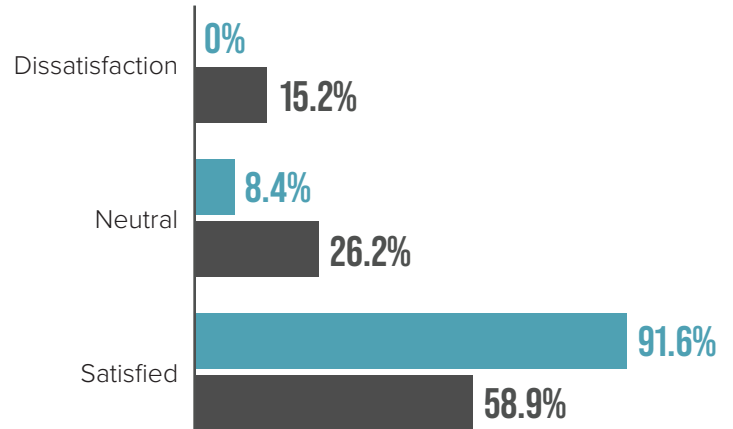
SPRING 2022

Preparation and publication of this report.

MENTAL HEALTH

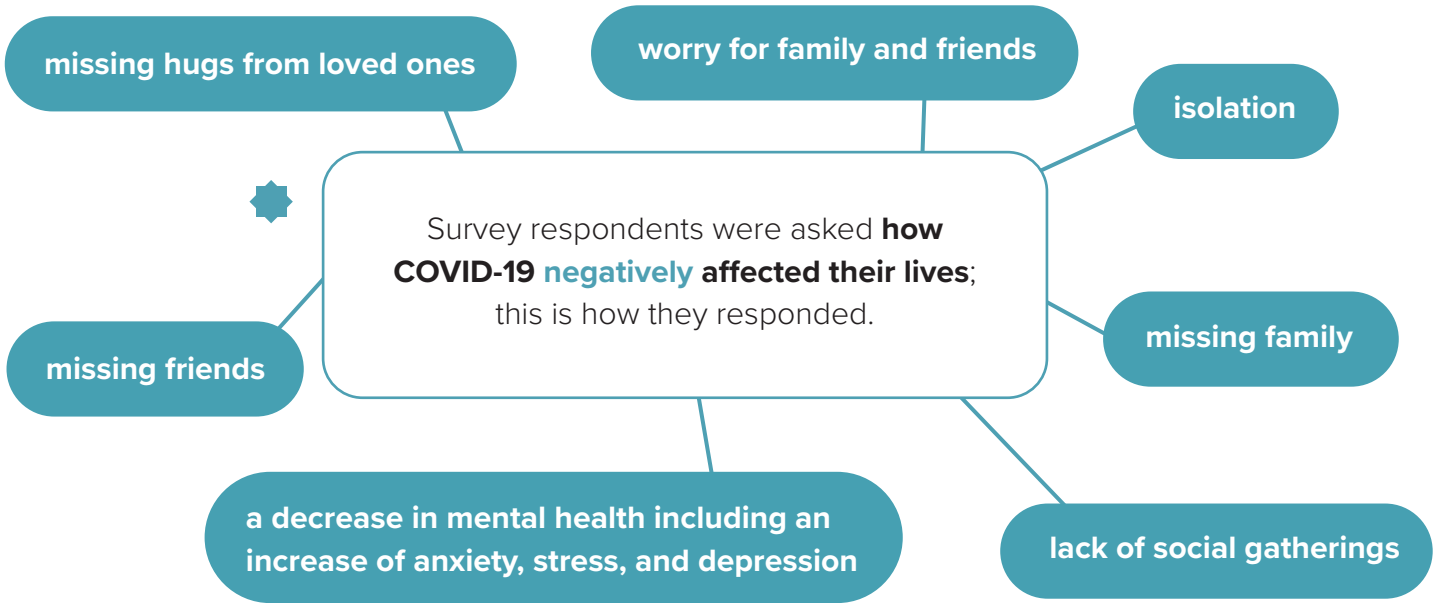
◆ **SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED** that their life satisfaction was greater before the pandemic.

■ Before COVID-19 % ■ During COVID-19 %



“ ...Greater call for self care and mental health awareness...”

“ I have enjoyed watching families coming together riding bikes with their kids, riding the trails and more family activities happening. Before the Pandemic, I worried about the lack of interaction between parents and children. I have always said that the Pandemic has been good in getting families together and enjoying life like they should.”

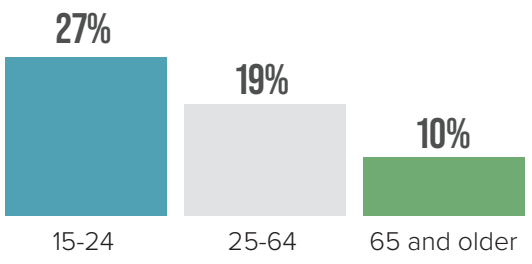


“ I feel a lot more isolated and had a major decline in my mental health.

“ The most difficult thing is watching how the isolation has affected my 86 year old mother. She used to go dancing 3 times a week. Staying home alone is hard for her. There is nothing for seniors to do.

★ **CANADIANS BY AGE** who reported that they suffered from moderate to severe anxiety within the first few months of the pandemic:

(Statistics Canada, 2020)



★ **NANAIMO NEWS BULLETIN**

Advocates say lengthy COVID isolation for seniors in care may do more harm than good: Authorities asked to reconsider guidelines as to when residents must isolate

Headline from Jan 20, 2022

CBC

Seniors suffering from total isolation in B.C. care homes with months-long COVID-19 outbreaks, families say: ‘It feels like they’re in a prison’, says daughter of resident in Abbotsford facility

Headline from Jan 8, 2021

RECREATION & HOBBIES

88% of survey respondents reported taking part in recreational activities **before the COVID-19 pandemic**

SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTED that when the pandemic started, the shutdown of recreational activities and prohibited travel impacted their lives in a negative way.

“ We love to travel and we really missed going on our spring cruise or exploring the Island. We travel frequently to the mainland to visit relatives and friends and we were able to go over quite a bit in the summer so that kind of made up for the non-travel from February to May this year...”

“ We miss the music at the Errington farmers market, swimming at the pool [and] having friends over for supper...”

Before COVID-19,
46% went to concerts and music events

“ I think not being able to play sports or have my children play sports socially has made a big impact.”

SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTED that when the pandemic started, they had more time for home projects, personal hobbies, gardening, which positively impacted their lives. Some also noted that they had more time to enjoy nature.

HERE ARE A few stories that survey respondents shared when asked how COVID-19 positively affected their lives:

“ It has provided me with a long-needed rest. I have enjoyed things I haven't been able to do in forever; like crafting, studying, reading, etc... It has brought me closer to my family and friends all over the world thanks to zoom. It has helped me realize what I want and need from here on out. It has made me ever more thankful to live on this amazing island.”

“ We have ... enjoyed more time together as a family, especially exploring many of the parks and trails in the area. I also took up mountain biking and guitar lessons.”

Before COVID-19,
82% were already utilizing hiking trails within the MABR

“ We have enjoyed more time to do our hobbies and we worked a lot on our garden, put in a vegetable garden, planted shrubs, etc...”

✦ *The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly disrupted many businesses that create and distribute arts and culture or offer recreational activities. Several arts and recreation businesses were identified as non-essential services during various waves of the pandemic and could not operate.*

(Statistics Canada, 2021)

Before COVID-19,
50% had attended an
artistic or cultural event
in the MABR

✦
VICTORIA NEWS

1 in 4 camping reservations cancelled in B.C. amid COVID-19 travel restrictions: More than 6,500 BC Parks campsite reservations for between April 19 and May 25 have been revoked

Headline from May 6, 2021

(This was due to a provincial order limiting travel between health regions)

CHEK NEWS

BC Parks open Monday for overnight camping following COVID-19 closures

The gates to the campground at Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park have been closed since COVID-19 hit in March. But not anymore.

Headline from May 31, 2020

Before COVID-19,
BC parks in the 2018/19
season reported 166,600
people camping at
Englishman River Falls Park,
Little Qualicum Falls Park,
and Rathtrevor Beach Park

EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

◆ **FINANCIAL GAIN, SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY,** working from home, and less commuting were all positive aspects of the pandemic reported by survey respondents. However, some reported that they suffered a change and/or loss in their jobs and incomes. This shows that all people experienced the pandemic in very different ways.

“ ...Our daughter has been out of a job since March and has not been able to find employment here so that’s kind of worrisome.

Before COVID-19, employment rate in the MABR was at 42%

“ It affected my job (private Care Aide), huge cut in hours and also affected half of my family who were either laid off or [their] business closed [their] doors permanently...

“ ...I personally had to leave my job, for many reasons, but one aspect was juggling covid and care for 2 toddlers, and I couldn’t handle the commute ... anymore in light of the uncertainties.

“ Allowed me to stay at home instead of moving away for school allowing me to save some money.

“ It has allowed me to remove my work travel, which was 80% of my time.

Before COVID-19, 60% of the employed labour force in the MABR were spending 15 mins to over an hour commuting to work

“ Got ahead financially and came back to a better paying job.

“ I now work from home 95% of the time and I enjoy the flexibility and the reduced need for a daily commute...

Before COVID-19, of those working, 12% were already working from home

“ Ended up getting promoted at my job and improving my finances dramatically.

“ The only positive that it has made me feel [is] more appreciative of the space [and] the financial security that I have. I’m very lucky that it has not affected me personally very much compared to lots of other people who are suffering.

57% of dual-earner salaried couples in the **top 10% of the earnings distribution**, both spouses held jobs that could in principle be done from home (The Daily, 2021).

11% of dual-earner salaried couples in the **bottom 10% of the earnings distribution**, both spouses held jobs that could in principle be done from home (The Daily, 2021).

CTV NEWS

225 million jobs were lost worldwide in 2020 thanks to the pandemic, report finds

Headline from Jan 25, 2021

JOB VACANCIES HAVE continued to grow in Canada since COVID-19. At the end of 2021, it was reported that job vacancies reached an all time high. The five sectors driving this growth most substantially include health care, construction, accomodation and food, retail trade, and manufacturing (The Daily, 2021).

CERB

OF ALL CANADIAN workers who earned at least \$5,000 in 2019, 35.2% received CERB payments in 2020 (Morissette et al., 2021).

APPLICANTS RECEIVED \$2,000 for an initial four-week period and could reapply for additional periods, eventually extending to 28 weeks, for a maximum benefit of \$14,000. The program covered the period from March 15 to September 26, 2020 (Government of Canada, n.d.).

COVID-19 AND THE LABOUR MARKET

in April 2020

5.5 million Canadians have been impacted by COVID-19 by either job loss or reduced hours

12 million Canadians worked at least half their usual hours in April 2020

Before COVID-19, 20% of the MABR population worked a full year, full time

5 million people worked most of their hours at home

(Statistics Canada, 2020)

Before COVID-19, 15% of men and 22% of women in the MABR received a government transfer

COMMUNITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

★ **ONE OF THE** biggest disappointments survey respondents expressed was the divisiveness the pandemic brought. They reported that in this time we should be coming together and supporting one another but in some cases, the community has been divided.

“ ...it closed down services I needed after I had a stroke.

“ ...Seeing essential workers treated poorly by the public.

“ ... I miss how friendly most people are in the city. People cross the street if they see you walking on the sidewalk instead of saying “hello”...

“ Seeing the mean and selfishness of my community while trying to navigate Covid. Both in my job and as a consumer. It's not ok.

★ **HERE ARE A** few stories that survey respondents shared when asked how COVID-19 positively affected their lives:

“ It has brought our 55+ complex closer together in many ways as those who were able shopped for those who were not, and as we relied on each other to keep our spirits up when family couldn't visit or activities were cancelled. We also started celebrating birthdays outdoors, socially distanced, each bringing our own chair and drink, in order to help the birthday woman or man feel less alone. We have generated a community spirit within our complex that we did not have before.

“ More acquaintances have checked in to see how we are doing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS ★

In 2016, 2240 people in the MABR worked in the healthcare and social assistance industry (second highest industry in the MABR).



Nurses and doctors across Canada were celebrated as heroes through the pandemic.

SOME SURVEY RESPONDENTS acknowledged the support that was shown for health care workers during the first year of the pandemic. Households across British Columbia celebrated health care workers every night at 7pm by banging pots and pans and making loud noises outside of their windows and patio doors. Specifically, one survey respondent noted:

“ [We] gathered at the end of our driveways to bang pots in support of healthcare workers which allowed us to connect with neighbors and offer help and support to each other.



PARKSVILLE QUALICUM BEACH NEWS

Berwick's house rules: Be safe, be kind, and rock out!

Local retirement community gets creative during COVID-19

Berwick Qualicum Beach has been hosting balcony dance parties during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are lots of opportunities to stay engaged and connected.

Headline from July 13, 2020

VANCOUVER SUN

COVID-19: Good deeds are not going unnoticed

Many individuals and businesses in B.C. adopted the motto 'we are all in this together' to heart and offered to help fellow citizens cope and survive during the weeks of mass isolation.

From friends finding creative ways to celebrate each other during birthdays and anniversaries to companies making masks to protect health care workers...

Headline from Dec 31, 2020

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

WHEN SURVEY RESPONDENTS were asked about how their community responded to COVID-19, these are some common themes that were suggested:

1. Mask wearing
2. Overall community response satisfaction
3. Community dissatisfaction (community not doing enough or having a slow response)
4. Community members helping community members
5. Programs and events shut down
6. Pandemic education and awareness

Other themes include social gathering limitations, changes in obtaining health care, support for health care workers, small business support, lack of public washroom access.

Important note: During the time of the survey circulation, masks were not required in businesses and other public spaces. This mandate did not come into play until November 19th, 2020.



AMENITIES, BUSINESS, & SERVICES

✦ **LESS CROWDING** and greater cleanliness in public spaces and businesses were two outcomes since the start of the pandemic that survey respondents appreciated. They also noted that there has been better support for local businesses to succeed.

“ Our business has improved as we are in one of the right industries.

“ More things are available on-line, like live-chats with experts organized by various organizations, like “The Great Courses”, [and] “The Economist”.

“ ElderCollege Saturday speakers series, etc. Telephone appointments with my doctor requires way less time than going and meeting her in her office.

“ I started a farm this year. The pandemic has brought more awareness and appreciation for local food.

“ ...I think that the community has shown support to local small businesses. That is the impression I’m left with after chatting with store owners in Parksville and QB.

✦ **CHANGES IN MEDICAL** services, lack of access to community services and events, and the worry for local businesses were negative outcomes of the pandemic according to survey respondents.



“ Depression at times with lack of facilities open and coffee places shut down.

Before COVID-19, 68% reported going out to their local coffee shops

“ ... I worry about the small shops that can’t operate at full capacity or haven’t opened. The effects of that bothers me as they are mom and pop shops and we need to support them.



✦ In December 2020, hand sanitizer was the type of personal protective equipment (PPE) ranked most essential to business operations in all sectors surveyed.

(Statistics Canada, 2021)

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT themes identified by survey respondents was the implementation of regulations enforced by businesses within the community to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Here are some of the themes outlined by survey respondents:

1. Social distancing/six foot rule
2. Delivery/pick up services
3. Temporary business closures
4. Sanitation stations
5. Patron limitations
6. Shorter/changes in hours of operation
7. Signage

OTHER THEMES INCLUDE installing plexiglass, more extensive cleaning measures, isle arrows, and outdoor patios.

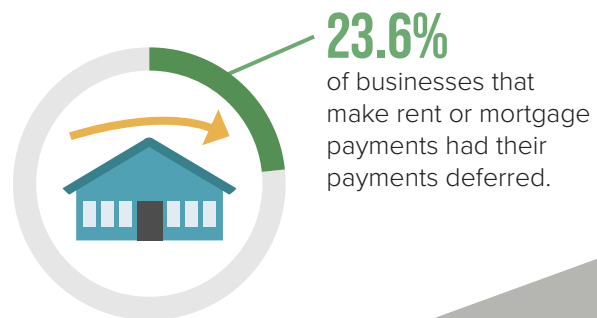
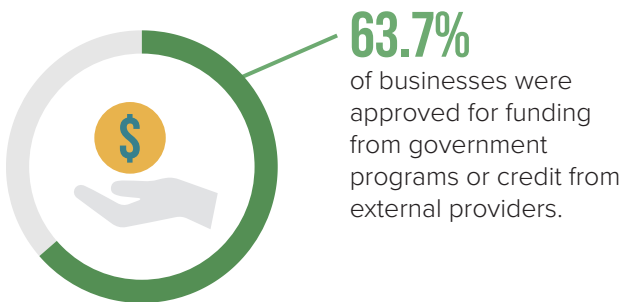
PARKSVILLE QUALICUM BEACH NEWS

COVID-19: SOS suspends most programs, keeps some essential services going: Thrift store and community services building closed until further notice

Headline from Mar 22, 2020

33% of survey respondents reported using non-profit organizations as a recourse, pre-pandemic.

HOW ARE BUSINESSES in Canada getting through the COVID-19 pandemic?



(Statistics Canada, 2020)

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MA  **RRI**



CANADIAN MOUNTAIN NETWORK | RÉSEAU CANADIEN DES MONTAGNES



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



**MOUNT
ARROWSMITH**
BIOSPHERE REGION



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