



SHOULD CANADA GO FOR ZERO?

The TANZAC Model For Aggressive Suppression of COVID-19

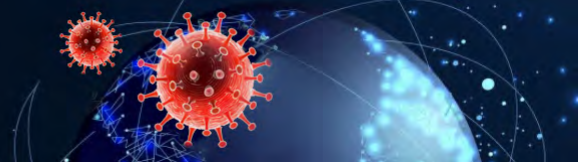
A Global Canada Thought-Starter

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**GLOBAL
CANADA**





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COVID strategies are in trouble in many countries. Western Europe faces a daunting second wave while the U.S. never got through its first. Here in Canada, Quebec and Ontario have imposed tough new restrictions as daily cases exceeded April's peak.

At the same time, several democracies have pioneered a different approach. They have successfully reached zero local transmission of COVID-19 and prevented or eliminated imported infections—allowing their societies to reopen and their economies to recover.

We can call this the TANZAC (Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, Atlantic Canada) Model. The traditional suppression model tried to flatten the curve to an acceptable number of cases then relieve the pressure while periodically addressing new outbreaks: what some refer to as the “hammer and dance”.¹ The TANZAC Model adopts more a “hammer and tap” approach—what the Australian government refers to as “aggressive suppression”. It involves maintaining ongoing pressure after the initial hard push until local transmission of COVID is entirely wiped out.

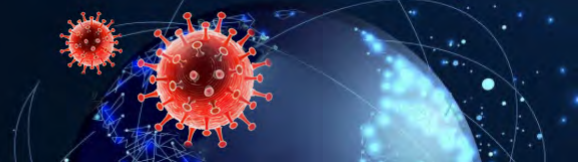
The results are impressive. On October 3, COVID cases across all TANZAC jurisdictions (population 57 M) totalled 12. Canada (population 38 M) had 1,797.² All TANZAC economies (except oil-price hit Newfoundland) project better 2020 economic performance than Canada's.³ Social restrictions in Taiwan, New Zealand, and most of Australia are less onerous than Canada's. In the Atlantic Canada bubble, students at St. Francis Xavier University attend most classes in person. As of October 13, only 3 New Brunswick schools had COVID cases, as compared with almost 1000 in neighboring Quebec.⁴

The TANZAC Model is an emergent strategy—not necessarily anticipated or intended but arising from actual experience.

Taiwan put in place border controls at the end of January. Through quick, effective use of masks and other targeted interventions, Taiwan achieved zero community transmission of COVID by May without going into lockdown. Taiwan demonstrated that a liberal democracy can eliminate COVID and prevent sustained re-infection.

New Zealand implemented an aggressive elimination strategy, going over 100 days without local transmission. Facing a major outbreak on August 11, it reacted swiftly and decisively. Within 3 weeks, it was able to reduce its policy response stringency below Canada's.⁵ New Zealand demonstrated that major new outbreaks can be successfully eliminated by liberal democracies.

Australia's ongoing policy was actually control, not elimination. However, by the end of April, it had reduced daily cases from a peak of over 450 to less than 20, with zero local transmission in 6 out of 8 states. Responding to this reality, it updated its strategic goal to “no community transmission of COVID-19.”⁶



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Australia contained a major outbreak at the state level this summer. Victoria State had over 600 daily cases. The rest of Australia, with 75% of the population, never exceeded 30, averaging less than one 1 case per million inhabitants.⁷ Canada's best COVID performance, in early August of 7.4 cases per million, was seven times higher.⁸

Australia demonstrated, against expectations, that zero transmission can be achieved at a state level within a large federation and that outbreaks can be contained at a sub-nationally.

Like Australia's zero transmission policy, the Atlantic Canada bubble arose from learned experience rather than pre-set notions. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador each eliminated local transmissions before forming a larger bubble in July to assist mobility and preserve hard-won gains. Atlantic Canada maintained close to zero local transmissions with less than one case per million inhabitants for over 3 months. Even with a recent flare-up of cases in New Brunswick, which is being aggressively addressed, Atlantic Canada's infection rate remains more than 10 times lower than the rest of Canada's.⁹ Atlantic Canada demonstrated that zero transmission through aggressive suppression can be achieved and sustained at a provincial level in our own country.

By Christmas or early 2021, could the last two letters of TANZAC refer to “And Canada”?

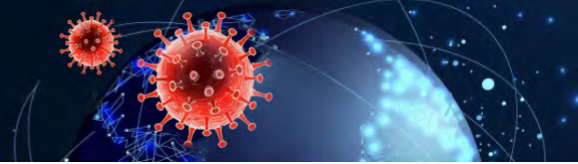
TANZAC Model democracies have key common qualities: controllable borders with effective screening of entrants; an engaged citizenry; excellent testing and contact tracing; smart use of technology; quick, decisive reaction to outbreaks; and (in the case of Australia and Atlantic Canada) a federal system that allows gains to be captured and breakouts to be contained at a subnational level. Perhaps the most essential quality is a clear political commitment to sustain necessary policies until COVID transmission is zero.

Could the TANZAC Model be applied across Canada? We have the key qualities, including controllable borders. While Taiwan, New Zealand and Australia are islands, Canada is surrounded by sea or ice on 3 sides. We have only one neighbor, with an agreed closed border. We are as well positioned as anyone to succeed.

As parts of Canada head back into confinement, it is worth quoting Australia's prestigious Grattan Institute: “Opening up too early, while coronavirus is still in the community, runs the risk of future outbreaks, reimposed lockdowns, renewed economic disruption, and more deaths. Having come this far, we should finish the job.”¹⁰

Is eliminating local transmission of COVID across Canada a sure thing? No: nothing is with COVID. Is it possible? Probably. Is it worth debating as an alternative to further rounds of COVID suppression? Absolutely.

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- ¹ <https://medium.com/@tomaspueyo/coronavirus-the-hammer-and-the-dance-be9337092b56>
- ² <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-cases#global-comparison-where-are-confirmed-cases-increasing-most-rapidly> for Taiwan, national COVID updates for Australia and New Zealand.
- ³ For Canada and provinces: <https://royal-bank-of-canada-2124.docs.contently.com/v/provincial-economies-diverse-yet-together-in-experiencing-historic-recession-report> ; For intl comparisons: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>
- ⁴ <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/list-quebec-reports-1-640-covid-19-cases-across-635-schools-1.5105612>
- ⁵ As measured by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Stringency Index. On a scale of 0-100 (100 being most strict), New Zealand dropped to 35 by September 1, compared to 64 for Canada. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/oxford-covid-19-government-response-tracker>
- ⁶ <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-strategic-direction>
- ⁷ <https://www.covid19data.com.au>
- ⁸ <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/coronavirustracker/>
- ⁹ <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/coronavirustracker/>
- ¹⁰ <https://grattan.edu.au/report/how-australia-can-get-to-zero-covid-19-cases/>

