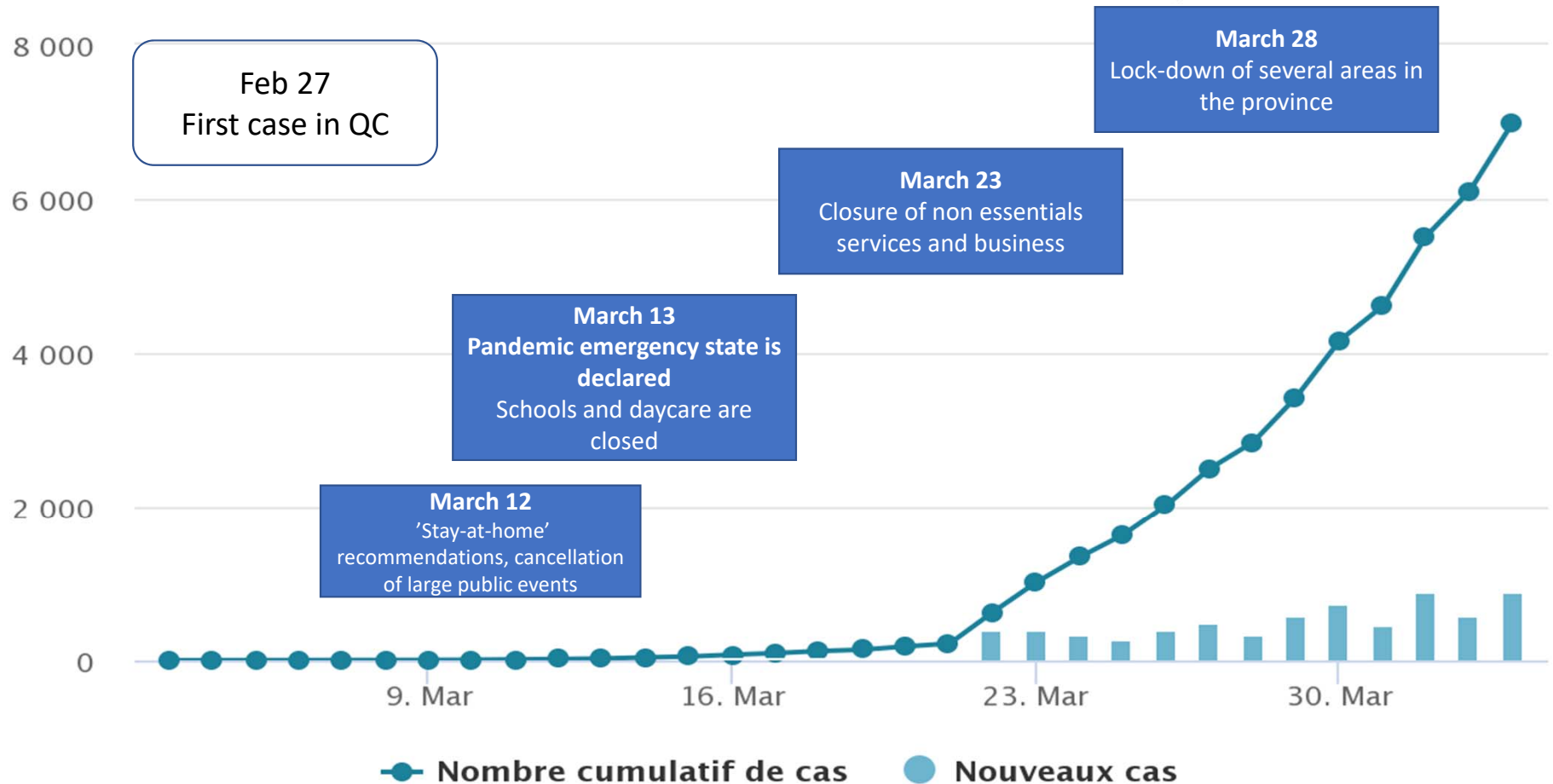


# Challenges and current experience in informing infodemic management

Eve Dubé

Institut national de santé publique du Québec  
Centre de recherche du CHU de Québec – Université Laval  
April 7, 2020

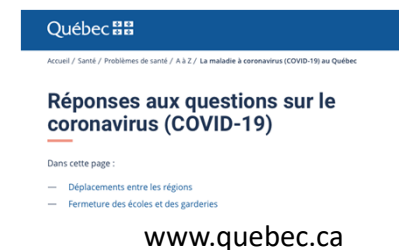
## Évolution quotidienne des nouveaux cas et du nombre cumulatif de cas liés à la COVID-19 au Québec



Source: <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/covid-19/donnees>

# Managing Infodemic – What is working well

- Collaboration between public health scientists and government to inform interventions
  - Active surveillance of COVID-19
  - Guidelines for emerging concerns & questions
  - Regular surveys to monitor the public attitudes
- **Clear and transparent** communication by authorities
  - Daily press conference
  - Telephone line dedicated to COVID-19
  - FAQs and responses on the government Webpage
- Positive coverage by the press – no politization



# Statistics on social distancing behaviors in Quebec by Google

## Retail & recreation

**-70%** compared to baseline



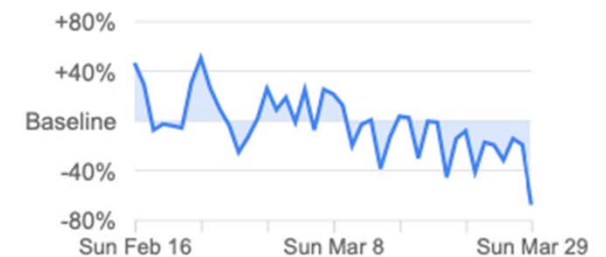
## Grocery & pharmacy

**-44%** compared to baseline



## Parks

**-68%** compared to baseline



## Transit stations

**-75%** compared to baseline



## Workplace

**-45%** compared to baseline



## Residential

**+15%** compared to baseline



[https://www.gstatic.com/covid19/mobility/2020-03-29\\_CA\\_Mobility\\_Report\\_en.pdf](https://www.gstatic.com/covid19/mobility/2020-03-29_CA_Mobility_Report_en.pdf)

# Managing Infodemic Challenges

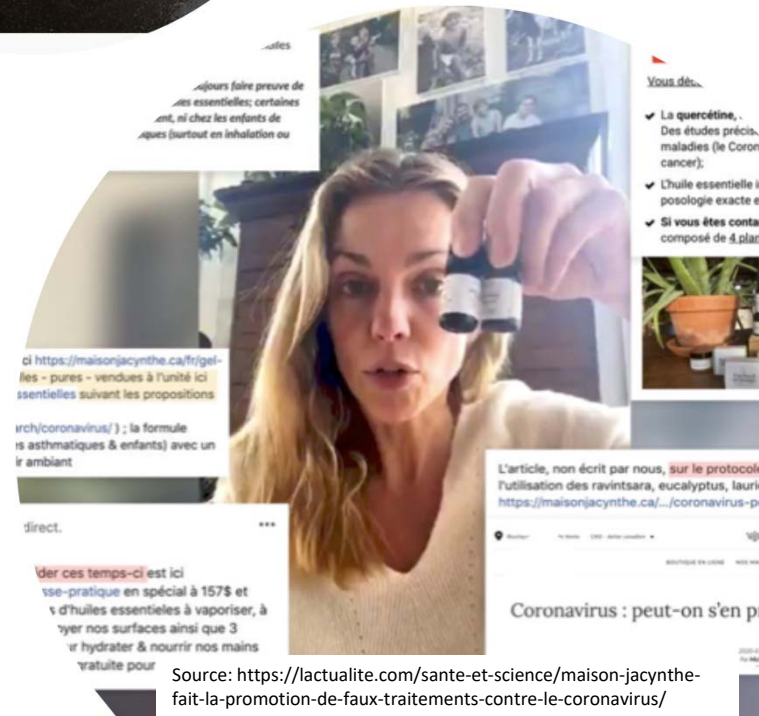
- Unprecedented increase in fake news
  - Decrease in gas price, shortage of food and other products
  - False treatments, diagnosis, prevention approaches

Impossible to debunk on a one-on-one basis

- Conspiracy theories
  - The virus was created in a lab, pandemic is a plot against Trump or conspiracy by medical elites to sell vaccines
    - Alexis Cossette-Trudel in QC, five-fold increase in views
  - Removal of posts by social media reinforce credibility (*big government*)



Source:  
<https://www.lapresse.ca/societe/2020/03/20/01-5265703-rire-ou-ne-pas-rire-de-la-situation.php>



# Managing Infodemic Challenges

- Info 24/7 along with multiple well-intended communication interventions from different groups and organizations → confusion and ambiguity
  - e.g., should we wear a mask or not?; can COVID be transmitted by dogs and cats?; are pregnant women at increase risk? ...
- Differences in measures adopted in neighboring provinces and in the US

## COVID-19: Bars, clubs, gyms and other public spaces closed until further notice in Quebec



Provincial government takes drastic measures following increase in confirmed cases

Jonathan Montpetit · CBC News · Posted: Mar 15, 2020 9:08 AM ET | Last Updated: March 15



Un restaurant rue Saint-Laurent fermé à cause du coronavirus.

Photo: Josie Desmarais/Métro

## Meanwhile in Florida...



College students crowded the beaches of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on March 11. Some students who traveled to spring break destinations are now testing positive for the coronavirus. Saul Martinez for The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/us/coronavirus-texas-austin-spring-break-cabo.html>





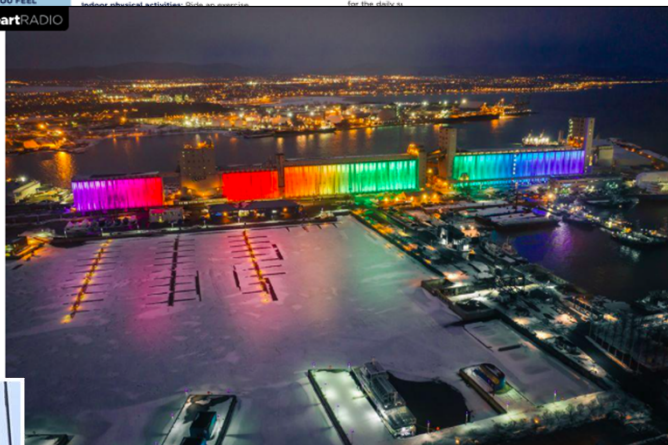
# Managing Infodemic Challenges

## Maintaining momentum

- Anxiety and psychological distress
- Informing the hard to reach (e.g., marginalized / vulnerable groups, youngers, newcomers)

## Communicating uncertainties and changing guidelines

- Preparing for the next phase, removal of some social distancing measures, but not back to 'business as usual'



<https://www.acadienouvelle.com/actualites/2020/03/20/un-rayon-de-soleil-dans-une-periode-difficile/>

