

Speech from the Throne – COVID-19 Implications

The first foundation of the Government’s four-pronged approach is to fight the pandemic and save lives. The Speech from the Throne vows to do "whatever it takes" to address the challenges and urgency facing Canadians in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below are the commitments and measures directly associated with COVID-19.

Public Health and Protective Measures:

- Use the tools we have until a safe and effective vaccine becomes available, such as testing, treatments and physical distancing measure.
- Build on commitment to wearing masks.
- Continue to work on getting Canadians the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need, including building domestic capacity, while securing supply chains to keep Canadians safe and create jobs.

Testing and Contact Tracing Capacity:

- Support PTs in testing and contact tracing to address fall surge and long wait times to get a test.
- Continue to pursue and eventually deploy “every technology and every option” for faster tests to improve testing capacity.
- Develop a federal “Testing Assistance Response Team” to meet testing needs, including in remote and isolated communities.
- Encourage other PTs to sign on to COVID Alert App. Currently, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan have adopted the app.

Vaccines and Therapeutics:

- Ensure that Canadians will be able to get a vaccine once it is ready.
- Explore the full range of options in negotiating potential vaccine agreements.
- Continue to work with the Vaccine Task Force on vaccine purchasing and roll-out, and the Immunity Task Force to look at how COVID-19 is affecting vulnerable populations.

Financial Support¹ – Businesses and Individuals:

- Support both large and small businesses to adapt for the future, including more digital, creative and climate-friendly options. Continue to support job-creating businesses.
- Extend the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) until next summer by working with businesses and labour to ensure the program meets evolving health and economic needs.
- Expand the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) to help businesses with fixed costs.
- Improve the Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP).

¹ The Government will release an update to Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan. This will outline the Government’s economic and fiscal position, provide fiscal projections, and set out new measures to implement this Throne Speech.

- Introduce further support for industries hardest hit, including travel and tourism, hospitality, and cultural industries such as the performing arts.
- Support Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) recipients through the Employment Insurance system. For those who would not traditionally qualify for EI, the Government will create the transitional Canada Recovery Benefit. The EI system will become the sole delivery mechanism for employment benefits, including for Canadians who did not qualify for EI before the pandemic (e.g., self-employed).

Job Creation:

- Launch a campaign to create over one million jobs, restoring employment to previous levels, and supporting women, racialized Canadians, and young people.
- Scale up the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, to provide more paid work experiences next year for young Canadians.
- Invest in training for workers, including building new skills in growing sectors, helping workers receive education and accreditation, and strengthening workers' futures by connecting them to employers and good job.

Health Care:

- Continue expanding capacity to deliver virtual health care through a flexible system able to reach people at home.
- Continue addressing the opioid epidemic tearing through communities, which is an ongoing and worsening public health crisis.
- Accelerate steps to achieve a national, universal pharmacare program, including supporting Canadians who lost their coverage when they were laid off because of the pandemic.

Long Term Care Facilities:

- Introduce legislation amending the *Criminal Code* to penalize those who neglect seniors under their care.
- Work with PTs to set new, national standards for long-term care.
- Take additional action to help people stay in their homes longer.
- Introduce further targeted measures for personal support workers.

Child Care:

- Make a significant, long-term, sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and childcare system.
- Build on previous investments, learn from the model that already exists in Quebec, and work with all PTs to ensure that high-quality care is accessible to all.
- Subsidize before- and after-school programs for primary school children.

Vulnerable Populations:

- *Women, including women in the workforce, low-income women and women fleeing gender based violence:*

- Create an Action Plan for Women in the Economy to help more women return to the workforce and to ensure a feminist, intersectional response to the pandemic and recovery.
- Accelerate the Women’s Entrepreneurship Strategy.
- Accelerate investments in shelters and transition housing, and continue to advance a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence
- *Canadians with disabilities:*
 - Bring forward a Disability Inclusion Plan, including a Canadian Disability Benefit modelled after the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors; a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities; and a better process to determine eligibility for Government disability programs and benefits.
- *Homeless:*
 - Eliminate chronic homelessness in Canada, including substantial investments in housing for Canadians.
- *Migrant Workers:*
 - Support and protect migrant workers who produce, harvest, and process our food.
- *Racialized Communities:*
 - Continue to support and address systemic racism affecting Indigenous people, and Black and racialized Canadians, particularly as COVID-19 has hit racialized Canadians.
- *Indigenous Populations:*
 - Continue to contain the spread of COVID-19 and keep Indigenous communities safe.
 - Expedite work to co-develop distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation, and a distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy.
 - Continue to close the infrastructure gap in Indigenous communities, working on a distinctions-basis with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation to accelerate the government’s 10-year commitment.
 - Work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners to address food insecurity.

Other Potential Implications:

- *Reconciliation* – Make additional resiliency investments to meet the clean drinking water commitment in First Nations communities. Support additional capacity-building for First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation. Introduce legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples before the end of this year.
- *Broadband* – accelerate the connectivity timelines and ambitions of the Universal Broadband Fund to ensure that all Canadians, no matter where they live, have access to high-speed internet.
- *Regional Airlines* – Work with partners to support regional routes for airlines. It is essential that Canadians have access to reliable and affordable regional air services.
- *Climate Change* – Bring forward a plan to exceed Canada’s 2030 climate goal. The Government will legislate Canada’s goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.