

PM speaking notes for the Friday press conference before Thanksgiving
9 October 2020

Good morning, everybody.

I'm happy to be joined today by Deputy Prime Minister Freeland and Minister Hajdu, and by Minister Bibeau and Minister Leblanc, virtually.

Dr. Tam and Dr. Njoo are also here to present updated COVID-19 public health models.

We have lots to talk about today, so let's get right into it.

We are at a tipping point in this pandemic.

Not only is the second wave underway, yesterday we hit the highest daily recorded cases, well above what we saw this spring.

I know this is discouraging, especially going into Thanksgiving weekend.

But remember this: when things were at their bleakest during the first wave, Canadians pulled together and flattened the curve.

Every time you wear a mask, every time you stay home when going out is unnecessary, every time you help a friend download the COVID Alert app, you are part of the solution.

We have flattened the curve before.

We can do it again.

And now, we have even more tools to help us.

[Pause]

On Tuesday, Minister Anand and Minister Hajdu announced that the government had signed an agreement with Abbott Rapid Diagnostics for up to 20.5 million rapid tests.

The COVID Alert app is up and running in 8 out of 10 provinces, now including PEI, and has been downloaded more than 4 million times.

The more people use the app, the more powerful this tool will become.

It's another way for each of us to do our part to protect our loved ones, our neighbours, and our fellow Canadians.

[Pause]

Increases in new cases are putting enormous pressure on hospitals and healthcare workers, who are increasingly overwhelmed.

Together, we managed to flatten the curve in the spring and we can do it again.

Especially now that we have even more tools at our disposal.

On Tuesday, Minister Anand and Minister Hajdu announced an agreement that will allow us to procure up to 20.5 million rapid screening tests.

In addition, 8 out of 10 provinces, including Quebec and Prince Edward Island, now subscribe to the COVID Alert app, which has been downloaded more than 4 million times across the country.

The more people who use it, the more effective the tool will be.

It is a way for all of us to protect our loved ones, our neighbours, and our front-line workers.

I therefore encourage you to download the app for free right now.

[Pause]

Our top priority is keeping Canadians safe as we support people through this storm.

This morning, we received the news that 378,000 jobs were added to the economy in September, as the unemployment rate continues to go down.

This is good news for a lot of people, but we also know that there's still more work to be done.

Earlier this week, Canadians could begin accessing the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit and the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit - for people who are not covered at work if they get COVID-19 or if a family member gets sick.

Next week, applications will also open for the Canada Recovery Benefit, which is replacing the CERB for those who can't access EI.

At the same time, we're also looking at how else we can support businesses, as we outlined in the Throne Speech.

Today we are announcing new support for Canadian businesses so they can keep workers on the job and get through the coming months.

Deputy Prime Minister Freeland will provide more details, but here's the bottom line.

Even if businesses have now re-opened, most are not back to full capacity while others are facing the uncertainty of a second wave.

Our goal is to support Canadian employers and help businesses bridge to better times.

That's why we are updating support for commercial rent and mortgage payments with the new Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy.

This will provide support to businesses directly, not through landlords.

For businesses who have seen a revenue drop, the new rent subsidy can support up to 65% of eligible expenses, and up to 90% for businesses temporarily shut down by a mandatory public health order.

At the same time, we are extending the wage subsidy - at a rate of up to 65% of eligible wages to December - and expanding the Canada Emergency Business Account for those small businesses that need it, including with an additional \$10,000 forgivable loan.

We'll also work to target financial support directly to businesses that have temporarily shut as a result of local public health decisions.

We know this second wave will be even harder for those who get hit.

That's why our response has to be targeted and effective.

Small and large businesses create jobs, drive our economy, and make our communities stronger.

Our government will continue to do whatever it takes to support them.

[Pause]

As was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, our government will continue to support businesses that are experiencing difficulties during the crisis.

This morning we learned that 378,000 jobs were added to the economy in September and that the unemployment rate continues to fall.

That is good news, but there is still work to do.

Although businesses are open again, most are not yet operating at full capacity and others are concerned about the uncertainty caused by the second wave.

That is why we are adjusting commercial rent assistance by creating the new Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy.

This support will go directly to companies that have lost revenue as a result of the crisis.

The grant will be up to 65% of eligible expenses, and 90% for companies which have to be temporarily closed down as a result of decisions by local public health authorities.

We are also extending the wage subsidy of up to 65% of eligible wages until December, and the Canada Emergency Business Account, among other things, by adding \$10,000 in forgivable loans for small businesses that need them.

We are also providing targeted financial support to help businesses that have to close their doors temporarily to fight outbreaks.

We know that the second wave will be even more difficult for those affected. Our response must be targeted and effective.

[Pause]

For many, Thanksgiving is a time to share a good meal with family and friends.

While this tradition has been broken this year, we must not forget that there are also Canadians experiencing serious food insecurity.

This sad reality has been magnified by the pandemic.

In April, we announced \$100 million to improve access to food for Canadians who are most in need.

Today, I am announcing that we will provide an additional \$100 million to national, regional and local organizations that help the hungry.

This amount will be provided through the Government of Canada's Emergency Food Security Fund, and Minister Bibeau will be able to provide more details in a few moments.

This morning I went to the grocery store to buy food for a food bank and was reminded of a few tips for those who want to donate:

- Prioritize non-perishable foods such as canned goods.
- Food that can be prepared by microwave is easier to access for people who do not have an oven.
- And remember to make healthy choices.

Our government will continue to support Canadians during this crisis, especially those who are most vulnerable and hardest hit.

[Pause]

In April, we invested \$100 million in emergency funding to help food banks and community organizations with their vital work.

Today, I can announce that we're putting another \$100 million towards supporting food banks, local food security organizations, Indigenous groups serving vulnerable people and communities, and partners for Northern communities.

Last night I had a call with Food Banks Canada, and got to hear from volunteers and staff right across the country.

They do remarkable work supporting vulnerable Canadians every day, and that will include this Thanksgiving weekend.

[Pause]

No one should be left behind, no matter where they live.

In July, when we finalized the Safe Restart Agreement, the federal government and the First Ministers recognized that smaller jurisdictions face distinct challenges and circumstances.

Today, I can announce that additional top-up funds of over \$37 million will be included in the first payments to the territories under this Agreement.

A supplemental \$41.4 million will also go towards air carriers to ensure essential air services to remote communities in the North.

Minister Leblanc will have more details in a few minutes.

But I want to especially thank MPs Larry Bagnell and Micheal McLeod, and our Minister of Northern Affairs Dan Vandal, for their leadership and their important work on Northern issues.

[Pause]

I know that the long weekend is coming up and many are disappointed that they cannot get together.

Thanksgiving as we know it may be different, but if we commit—together—to making every possible effort to stop the spread of the virus over the next few weeks, we might get together again at Christmas, in person, with our loved ones.

Every time you wear a mask, stay home when you do not need to go out or tell a friend to download the COVID Alert app, you are part of the solution.

[Pause]

Our Thanksgiving traditions may be temporarily changed by this pandemic, but our resilience and our determination remain strong.

What we do now will shape the numbers we see in two weeks and set us on the right track for family gatherings at Christmas.

So let's work together, and let's flatten that curve.

Thank you.

I'll now hand it over to Deputy Prime Minister Freeland.