

PM speaking notes for the June 8th COVID-19 update

8 June 2020

Good morning, everybody.

I want to begin this morning by reflecting on the reports and videos that have continued to surface in the last few days, of violence against Black Canadians and Indigenous people.

And I want to talk about what this means for our path forward as a country.

[Pause]

On Friday, I went to a rally on Parliament Hill to show my support and listen to what community leaders and Black Canadians are calling for.

- I hear you, and I see you -
- As you call out systemic discrimination, racism, and unconscious bias
- As you call for action
- And as you call for it now

[Pause]

Our communities are experiencing inequality and racism right now, including in the context of the pandemic.

We only need to look at a map of COVID-19 cases in Toronto and Montreal to see that Black Canadians are being hardest hit by COVID-19.

[Pause]

I am here to listen to the demands of Black Canadians.

I hear you calling out the systemic discrimination, the racism,
the unconscious prejudices that persist in our society.

And I am ready for action.

[Pause]

The reality is that many people in this country simply do not feel protected by the police.

In fact, they're afraid of them.

That alone would be bad enough.

But systemic discrimination and racism in Canada goes much further than just policing.

It's about poverty and mental health.

It's about the fact that people are all too often treated like criminals instead of receiving the support they need.

We, as governments, need to work together.

We, as leaders, need to recognize that these problems are tied to economic inequality and the racialization of poverty.

And we need bold measures to address this.

[Pause]

Our government promised to address systemic racism and injustice.

We knew this work had to be informed by the lived experiences of racialized communities and Indigenous peoples.

So we listened.

And we worked together to change things.

We invested in mental health resources and youth programs for Black Canadians.

We worked to close the gaps in services for Indigenous communities.

We funded Statistics Canada so they could create a Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistic hub.

And this work culminated in the release of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy for 2019-2022, and the creation of an anti-racism secretariat.

Just last fall, we appointed a minister to focus specifically on diversity and inclusion.

[Pause]

Together, we have made progress.

Progress that has meant support for groups like the Black Health Alliance, and new schools for Indigenous kids.

But I hear you when you say it isn't enough.

I hear you when you say it doesn't solve systemic racism.

And I agree.

[Pause]

With the many disturbing reports of violence against Black Canadians and Indigenous people, we know that we need to do much more.

And we need to do it now.

I had a discussion with Cabinet on Friday, that will continue later today.

I also spoke with Commissioner Lucki of the RCMP this morning.

The Commissioner assured me that she will use all available tools to take quick, solid action.

On our call, one of the things we discussed was the adoption of body cameras.

I am committing to raise this with provinces this week, so we can move on it as quickly as possible.

[Pause]

Minister Blair has also reaffirmed to me his commitment to improve Indigenous policing.

And later today, I have a stock-take on reconciliation to discuss our work with Indigenous communities.

[Pause]

I'm committing to you that this work will continue to accelerate the pace of change.

Because you deserve real commitments, as quickly as possible, that address the root causes of these problems.

[Pause]

Things must change.

But repairing centuries of injustice, exclusion and violence does not happen overnight.

We need to work together and we need to work hard.

Today, I pledge to continue leading the charge.

And our government will work as hard and as quickly as possible to build a fairer, better country with you.

[Pause]

There's no doubt that the last few months have been harder than anyone could have expected.

This pandemic has meant different challenges for everyone.

But no matter who you are, and no matter what you're dealing with, a little bit of help can make all the difference.

Maybe your employer has been able to keep you on the payroll because of the wage subsidy, a program that's supporting 2.5 million jobs.

Perhaps you got some extra help through the Canada Child Benefit, or you'll receive more money with the top-up to your Old Age Security.

Or you might even be one of the 500,000 young people who has accessed the student benefit, helping you pay for next year's tuition.

Over the past few months, we have worked hard to help people get through this crisis.

And the programs we have launched and the investments we have made are making a real difference.

I am thinking, for example, of a story that Anthony Housefather told me about the Montreal company Franklin Empire, in his riding, which makes electrical products.

This family business has been in existence for four generations and employs more than 500 people in Quebec and Ontario.

Business was going well, but when the pandemic arrived, they had to close their workshops and assembly lines.

They wanted to keep their employees, but they could not do it alone.

That is where the Emergency Wage Subsidy came in.

They were able to hire back all their employees, and, with our support, pay them their full salaries.

We are talking about 500 individuals and families receiving their paycheques as usual, despite the pandemic.

This is just one example, but it shows why programs like the Emergency Wage Subsidy are so important.

But we know we still have work to do. [Pause]

On Friday, I announced that the federal government would contribute \$14 billion toward a safe restart agreement with the provinces and territories, for the things that all Canadians need as we get our country back up and running.

Right now, we're working with the Premiers on what this restart could look like in the coming months.

And as we do that, we're staying focused on people's new realities.

If you work in a hospital, or a business that's reopening, you'll need PPE to stay safe.

If you're back on the job, you might need transit, childcare, or the option to take time off if you're ill.

If you're a senior, or are at higher risk from COVID-19, you may need some extra support.

These are the things that Canadians are thinking about.

So it's what we're thinking about, too.

[Pause]

The provinces and territories are all facing different realities at this time and we need to take that into account when considering next steps.

But no matter where you live, we are working with your Premier to reach a recovery agreement that will allow us to work together to ensure your health and safety.

[Pause]

In addition to working together on this agreement, the premiers and I have also discussed Canadians who are separated from their loved ones because of border closures.

Of course we want families to be together, but the safety of Canadians remains our priority.

A limited exemption will therefore be introduced that will allow citizens' or permanent residents' immediate family members to enter Canada, primarily spouses, children, and parents of minor children.

But let me be clear.

Anyone coming into Canada will have to completely self-isolate for 14 days.

I know that Minister Mendicino will have more to say about this later today.

[Pause]

This is an incredibly difficult time to be apart from a spouse, a child, or Mom or Dad

We hear that.

That's why we are bringing in a limited exemption to allow immediate family members of citizens or permanent residents to come to Canada.

I want to be clear, though.

Anyone entering the country will be required to quarantine for 14 days.

And if you don't follow these rules, you could face serious penalties.

I know that Minister Mendicino will have more to say about all of this later today.

[Pause]

I know that after this very eventful spring, many people are hoping for an easier summer.

Things are starting to improve for everyone.

But we know we still have work to do.

And Canadians can count on our support in the months and weeks ahead.

Thank you.