

Prime Minister's remarks on testing, contact tracing, and the sharing of data to fight COVID-19

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Hello everyone.

This morning, we awoke to terrible news coming out of Pakistan.

A Pakistan International Airlines plane carrying over a hundred passengers crashed in a residential neighbourhood in Karachi.

My heart goes out to all the victims and their families.

Our thoughts are with Pakistan today.

We're starting a bit earlier this morning because we have a Cabinet meeting early this afternoon, so thank you all for joining us now.

Last night, the premiers and I held our tenth weekly call since the beginning of the crisis.

And we talked about what's been on everyone's mind lately: how we can safely reopen the economy.

Over the past few months, Canadians have been doing a great job of staying at home, maintaining physical distancing, and listening to public health advice.

And that means that we can restart some activities.

But we're not out of the woods yet.

COVID-19 remains a serious health threat.

We have to proceed with caution and keep listening to science, or we risk losing the progress we've made.

So today, I want to outline what we know needs to happen to successfully reopen the economy and adjust to our new normal.

First, we need to continue scaling up our testing capacity, so we can quickly identify

new cases and isolate them.

We're working with provinces and territories to expand testing by procuring things like reagents and swabs.

While some provinces have the capacity to meet their current needs, we're collaborating to ramp up testing, so we can protect Canadians and effectively manage future outbreaks.

Second, we need to accelerate our ability to do contact tracing.

After we've confirmed and isolated new cases, we have to get in touch with everyone who may have been exposed to the virus, and make sure they take measures to quarantine and monitor themselves for symptoms or get tested.

While provinces and territories are managing testing and contact tracing differently, our government has trained federal employees who can make 3,600 contact tracing calls a day, seven days a week.

Statistics Canada also has an additional 1,700 interviewers ready to go, who can make up to 20,000 calls a day.

These federal resources are available to assist provinces and territories with any surges or backlogs or challenges they have in contact tracing.

We're already helping to make calls in Ontario and stand ready to help anywhere else.

Third, we have to ensure that data collected across jurisdictions is shared between provinces and territories.

This will help us track the spread of the virus, adapt our response accordingly, and save lives.

Now, Canada is a vast country and some regions have been hit harder than others by the pandemic.

That's why plans to relax restrictions vary from one jurisdiction to another.

But in order for people to move around freely, and start getting back to normal life, we have to improve our ability to quickly pinpoint the virus and isolate it.

All premiers recognize how important this is and I want to thank them for their engagement in this issue.

Since the beginning of this crisis, all jurisdictions have been working toward one

common goal: protecting Canadians.

The next phase of our collaborative efforts is on testing, contact tracing, and data collection, and I have told the premiers that the federal government is here to support, facilitate, and fund this important work.

Taking strong, collaborative action to expand testing and contact tracing is important for both Canadians and businesses to have confidence that we're on the right foot.

They need to know that we have a coordinated approach to gradually reopen that is rooted in science, evidence, and the ability to rapidly detect and control any future outbreaks.

Over the past few months, we've set up a number of programs to help everyone – from students to parents to seniors – get through this crisis.

If you need support, but you're not quite sure where to start, we now have a new online tool to help you.

Just go to canada.ca/coronavirusbenefits. You'll find a list of a few simple questions, and the tool will generate an array of programs for which you may be eligible.

I want to close today by addressing the significant increase in acts of racism against Asian Canadians.

Over the past few weeks and months, businesses, buildings, and statues have been vandalized.

People have been verbally abused and physically attacked.

It's unacceptable.

Hate, violence, and discrimination have no place in Canada.

This is not who we are as Canadians.

I want to thank those who have stood up against violence, and exposed what is happening in our communities.

We need to speak out against racism wherever it is found, so we can stop it.

To Asian Canadians across the country, know that we all stand with you.

We will not let hate divide us.

Thank you, everyone.