



MEMO

From: H+K Strategies Ottawa
Date: March 11, 2019
Subject: Prime Minister Trudeau Announces Economic Measures in Response to COVID-19

Overview

This morning, Prime Minister Trudeau was joined by Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos, Finance Minister Bill Morneau, Health Minister Patty Hajdu, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, and Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam to announce the government's comprehensive economic response to COVID-19. This builds on the whole-of-government approach, across all levels of government, that the government has taken to respond to COVID-19 and reduce risks to Canadians.

The government's coordinated response to date has included regular meetings of the intervention's crisis group and daily updates have been provided by the Minister of Health and Chief Public Health Officer; close monitoring of the impact of COVID-19 on the economy by Ministers Navdeep Bains, Mary Ng, and Bill Morneau; Minister Champagne has been working with global partners to tackle the global response; and there have been federal-provincial conference calls.

Program-specific responses to the spread of COVID-19 in Canada have included increased screening measures at airports, increased testing at national laboratories, public education campaigns, and bolstered support for indigenous communities.

To date, 93 cases have been reported to date in Canada. This week saw Canada's first death in relation to COVID-19. While Canada has been fortunate to not see a drastic spike in the number of cases reported, the Prime Minister recognizes that people remain worried about the impacts of COVID-19 on their families, their jobs, and their businesses. That is why the government is stepping up its response.

Comprehensive Economic Package to Address the Impacts of COVID-19

The comprehensive response fund of just over \$1.1 billion to aid in the preparation and mitigation of the virus includes:

- \$50 million for the immediate public health response,
- \$7 million for the repatriation of Canadians,
- \$2 million in initial support to the WHO,
- \$50 million for sustained communications and public education,
- \$275 million for investments in research (including into vaccine development and testing),
- \$500 million to support provinces and territories,
- \$50 million for personal protective equipment (including masks),
- \$50 million for international assistance,
- \$5 million for changes to remove the 1-week waiting period for EI sickness benefits,
- \$12 million in the work sharing program, and
- \$100 million for additional public health response, including funding for Indigenous Services Canada

The announcement was designed to reassure Canadians feel worried about their job because they have to be quarantined, and employers who may feel the need to layoff workers due to COVID-19. Beyond the above funding measures, the Minister of Finance will continue to work through the business credit availability program to protect jobs and be there for businesses.

The announcement further reflects the global approach the government is taking to fight COVID-19 and stop its spread. Learning from the SARS outbreak, additional investments have been made to ensure all healthcare services and workers are prepared for every scenario.

More information on the economic package can be found [here](#).

The news release from the Prime Minister's Office can be found [here](#).



Insights

Throughout the question and answer period, the following insights were gleaned:

On research and vaccines, the government has seen a major response from researchers across the country to generate the research needed to better understand how to contain the illness, develop a vaccine, and treat the disease. This is a Canadian response in terms of research but will contribute to the global response.

On the roll-out of employment insurance changes, the government has not determined criteria for those who will qualify for immediate EI support (they could not confirm that a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 was required to be qualified for the EI changes). The Prime Minister continues to stress that everyone needs to do their part to slow and stop the spread and infection curve of the virus, and that the government trusts Canadians to take the right precautions in making work arrangements.

On COVID-19's impact on the federal budget, it was noted that there will be an impact on budget design, but the decisions made over 5 years have left Canada room to respond to crises like this. The government continues to closely monitor everything happening economically both domestically and internationally, and the Minister has been in daily contact with the banks who have shared they've seen no problems with business credit yet. The Minister is prepared with multiple measures to support businesses and people should the challenges be greater than they are today, which the Minister noted he expects will be the case in certain sectors.

On probable rates of infection in Canada, the government is modelling for a range of scenarios Canada is facing, but the biggest determining factor for the spread of COVID-19 remains the decision-making of Canadians where if they take certain precautions we can better mitigate the impacts. There is ongoing work throughout the public health system to identify every case and their contacts to slow the spread and prevent a rapid rise of cases and epidemic curve. The public health council has been monitoring instances emanating from events such as conferences, etc. where someone was infected. It is important that people who have participated in those conferences self-monitor. The Prime Minister stressed that this remains a serious situation and Canadians must be aware of what they can do to help protect their families and the health of their neighbours.

On tourism, the Prime Minister noted that the factors that impact the government's decisions on limiting arrivals of cruise ships specifically are public health and how the communities will be affected by having those ships at port. The government will have more to say regarding the fast-approaching cruise season in the coming days.