

Justin Trudeau's government is preparing to boost child care and develop a national drug plan ^[1]

Author: MacCharles, Tonda

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EXCERPTS

OTTAWA—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is warning against complacency in the face of an uptick in COVID-19 cases in Canada and says his government's focus during a cabinet retreat that started Monday is on ongoing pandemic response.

As he entered two days of meetings with ministers, some of whom are attending virtually, Trudeau said, "Unfortunately, the numbers are beginning to climb with the restart of schools, and with the reopening of the economy, we have to remain extremely vigilant."

An average of 633 cases are now being reported daily across Canada, chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam said in a statement Sunday.

That is more than 20 per cent higher than last week, she said, indicating COVID-19 is making a "slow and steady increase nationally."

Outbreaks are reported in more settings, including private social gatherings and celebrations, community settings and indoor events along with new clusters in educational settings as schools and universities have reopened.

Tam said it's not unexpected to see new cases, and while outbreaks have diminished in long-term-care homes, she is watching for community spread into those settings.

"Another important reason to keep the infection rate low in the community is to prevent spread into these and other public settings that could necessitate targeted restrictions to control transmission where the virus is surging."

Responding to a massive demonstration by antimask protestors in Montreal on the weekend, Trudeau said while most Canadians are following the public health advice, "it's what every single one of us can do and must do that will control the spread of this virus.

"The last thing that anyone wants is to go into lockdown this fall similar to this spring."

Melanie Joly, regional economic development minister, was blunter: "The pandemic is not over just because we're fed up," she told reporters.

Those who object to wearing masks and demonstrated in Montreal are a minority, she said, and the public health advice remains clear: "You have to wear a mask.

"The health of the economy is linked to the health of Canadians," she said. "One goes with the other."

Joly added the cabinet retreat will dig into understanding how the pandemic and the economic fallout has hit specific sectors and regions.

As of Sunday, Canada's total COVID-19 case count was 136,659, with 9,171 deaths. There are 7,057 currently infected patients.

No new cases had been reported in three provinces in the previous 24 hours, and no new deaths in six provinces or territories.

The age 20-29 cohort now represent the biggest number of confirmed cases, surpassing those over 80 years old.

Trudeau said the government will continue to focus on individual supports as it looks forward to planning for a recovery.

"Obviously COVID has exposed weaknesses in our country where vulnerable people are continuing to slip through the cracks. We will have conversations about next steps as well, but our focus is very much on what we need to do to control COVID-19," he said.

Trudeau's team is finalizing a throne speech for the Sept. 23 resumption of Parliament, which will be put to a confidence vote in the Commons. To date, he has not personally spoken to the opposition leaders about what they want to see in that speech.

"We have been engaging with opposition parties throughout this COVID crisis, listening to their priorities," he said. "They've made public their reflections around what they'd like to see going forward. We've been engaging them on multiple levels."

But NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh has not spoken to Trudeau since August, said NDP spokesperson Melanie Paradis, and there have been no

formal or informal consultations on the throne speech. The notion that Trudeau is listening to Singh's public comments "doesn't really replace an actual conversation with the leader," she said.

Trudeau pointed to the work his government has done with premiers. "I think it's important for Canadians to see there are different orders of government working together."

Worldwide, more than 29 million people have contracted COVID-19, with 7.2 million active cases. To date, there have been 929,185 deaths. The U.S. has recorded the highest number of cases, at 6.7 million and nearly 200,000 deaths. It is followed by India, Brazil and Russia.

Canada currently ranks 26th in number of cases globally.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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