

Framing the pandemic in the political discourse of Justin Trudeau and Donald Trump: A reconnaissance

*Katarzyna (Kasia) Kasztenna
York University, Toronto, Canada*

Abstract: Employing the tools of discourse analysis, this paper seeks to investigate the framing strategies mobilized by Justin Trudeau and Donald Trump in their speeches delivered in response to the announcement of the global pandemic of COVID-19 on March 11, 2020. The author contrasts the frames of war and the frames of rational positivistic reaction to the challenge, exploring lexical choices, topoi, and larger discursive structures such as myths and ideologies to restore the storylines underpinning both texts. The analysis reveals the deeply instilled divergence of the vision of a nation, history, and the role of public institutions in both speeches.

Key words: discourse analysis, framing, COVID-19, Canadian politics, American politics

1 Introduction

On March 11, 2020, director general of World Health Organization Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (2020) announced:

In the past two weeks, the number of cases of COVID-19 outside China has increased 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has tripled. There are now more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries, and 4,291 people have lost their lives. Thousands more are fighting for their lives in hospitals. In the days and weeks ahead, we expect to see the number of cases, the number of deaths, and the number of affected countries climb even higher. WHO has been assessing this outbreak around the clock and we are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction. We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

This paper seeks to investigate framing strategies activated by Justin Trudeau and Donald Trump in the speeches both politicians delivered on March 11, 2020 in response to this unsettling announcement, when we had an opportunity to observe how the same historic moment was captured by two different leaders addressing their constituents in reaction to the same information, in a similar genre, and with a parallel intention of lending a frame to the unfolding events and making sense of them in political discourse. The contrastive analysis presented here takes advantage of these circumstances that amplify differences in the approaches to the crisis manifested in both speeches. As Silverstein (2003) asserts, “Everything depends on talk, talk, talk: from our Constitution to our legislative process to our administrative and legal systems to workings of public-sphere political communication and its feedback in election results” (p. 81). Before having a closer look at the talk about the pandemic in Canada and the United States on March 11, 2020, let us briefly present the general analytical approach employed in this study.

In the numerous studies regarding frames and framing written in the last three decades (Chilton, 2004; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Tannen, 1993) there are various definitions and interpretations of these terms within the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, artificial intelligence, political science, psychology, and linguistics, to name only the most influential ones. Dispersed between these realms of research, different understandings of framing have a few significant characteristics. Two of them should be mentioned in the context of the analysis attempted here. The first is related to the Goffmanesque tradition of understanding a frame. As Goffman (1974) posits: “When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends...to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary”, which is providing meaning to “what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene” (p. 21). Some of these frameworks are orderly and organized in systems of entities, while others offer just “a lore of understanding, an approach, a perspective” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). In this tradition, Tannen (1993) proposed to connect the notion of a frame with the “structures of expectation” (p. 16) that bring organization into knowledge about the world and use this knowledge to forecast interpretations and associations of new information, events, and experiences (Tannen, 1993, p. 16). In the same vein, Chong and Druckman (2007), investigating the problem from the point of view of political science, postulate: “Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (p. 104; see also: Chilton, 2004, p. 51).

The second aspect of framing is anchored in Entman’s (1993) theory, according to which frames are functions of “selection and salience”. “To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described” (p. 52; emphasis in the text). The author claims that frames affect different aspects of the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. The analysis presented here focuses on the texts of Trudeau’s and Trump’s speeches and the ways the speakers supply the recipients with interpretations of the unfolding events. According to Entman, the frames manifest themselves in texts through “presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotypical images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing cluster of facts or judgements [sic]” (p. 52). The author mentions repetitions and placement of pieces of information, as well as evoking cultural symbols, as strategies contributing to information salience. Especially important for the analysis that follows is an acknowledgment that the omissions in the frame, the silences, and the lack of certain aspects of events can be as critical as the inclusion of information (Entman, 1993, p. 54). Frames foreground and amplify some elements of the reality—while concealing others—and consequently, influence the modes of comprehension and orientation to new, especially problematic, events (Benziman, 2020, p. 247; Entman 1993, p. 55).

2 The pandemic in Trump’s discourse

Trump’s speech on March 11, 2020, officially titled *On the Coronavirus Pandemic*, was only the second one that the President delivered from the Oval Office. This, in itself, creates a significant contextualizing frame that determines listeners’ expectations, including the significance of the matter of the address and its stylistic values. It is with these expectations that the introductory remarks of Trump’s coronavirus speech can be viewed.

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001 My fellow Americans, tonight I want to speak with you about our
nation's unprecedented
002 response to the coronavirus outbreak that started in China and is
now spreading
003 throughout the world.

The initial sentence has a profound framing effect. The speech is addressed to “fellow Americans” employing a salutation inherent to the genre of presidential speeches since Roosevelt’s inaugural address in 1933. “Fellowship” invoked in this context implies collective solidarity, national unity, and a sense of equality. This patriotic tone in Trump’s speech is bolstered by the periphrastic phrase used next: “nation’s unprecedented response” (T1-2).¹ The object of this uniqueness is quickly identified as the outbreak of the coronavirus that is associated with China, subtly indexing political connotations that listeners might attribute to Trump’s tariff war and general animosity towards the country expressed on multiple prior occasions (e.g., Frum, 2019). The alarming tone of the opening statement stems from the underscoring of the imminence of the danger and its progressive and global character: the virus “is now spreading throughout the world” (T2). The present continuous verb form indicates its unstoppable march and beckons the negative emotions of fear and being inundated or besieged. It is worth noting that mentioning China as the locale where the virus was initially detected is factually accurate, but already well-known by March 2020. The prominent placement of the name of the country in the opening is motivated by the structure of the argument built by the speaker: it is utilized in the repeated self-praise regarding restrictions on China (T16-17, T23, T93) presented as achievements in the fight against the pandemic and contributes to other structural elements of the frame, which are discussed next.

The uniqueness of the situation, nationalistic and patriotic overtones, a conflation of the virus and a political adversary, as well as a notion of fast-moving danger in conjunction with the context of a speech delivery (the Oval Office address) are exploited to activate the frame of war fully developed in the next lines (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Benziman, 2020). Although Trump announces the intent of “speaking with” the listeners, suggesting a less formal tone, the address instantaneously moves towards the matter at hand by shaping the challenge as an impending threat that needs to be fought.

004 We have been in frequent contact with our allies, and we are
marshaling the full power
005 of the federal government and the private sector to protect the
American people.
006 This is the most aggressive and comprehensive effort to confront
a foreign virus in
007 modern history. I am confident that by counting [sic] and
continuing to take these tough
008 measures, we will significantly reduce the threat to our citizens
[sic] and we will ultimately
009 and expeditiously defeat this virus.

The drums of war are even stronger in the following sentences of the introduction amplified by lexical choices: “allies” and “marshaling the full power” (T6), the “the most aggressive effort” (T8), the need to “protect” (T7) and “confront” (T8) the enemy—a “foreign virus” (T8). The synecdoche applied here (“virus” is a *pars pro toto* of the infection leading to the disease) is

¹ A letter T and a number in brackets refer to the line in the Trump’s speech; Tr and a number, to Trudeau’s address both included in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Bolden text reflects my emphasis.

adorned by the epithet—“foreign”—which has a profound effect: the hyponym² indexes the political context through subtle conventional implicature and scaffolds the war frame. Line 9 builds on the previous ones, summoning the “threat to our citizens” (T10) to enhance the image of the necessary fight which is going to require “tough measures” (T9-10) but will bring final and “expeditious defeat” (T11). This creates a powerful collection of conflict invoking lexical items that radiate their illocutionary force over the more neutral ones, such as adjectives: “full” (T6), “comprehensive” (T8), and “tough” (T9) which in this context contribute to the formation of the militaristic frame. We can observe a similar effect upon the nouns “effort” (T8) and “response” (T1-2) and the adverbs “ultimately” (T10) and “expeditiously” (T11) which are semantically re-valued. We can observe a similar effect in the use of “effort” (“aggressive and comprehensive effort to confront a foreign virus” T8) that gains the value of decisive defence. It is interesting to note the fluctuation of the meaning of the word “response” that can be associated less with actions aiming at medical practices, and more as some form of manifestation of power: “unprecedented response” (T1-2) is influenced by the surrounding combat phraseology. The adverbs “ultimately” (T10) and “expeditiously” (T11) along with the time frame of “modern history” in which the events are placed create a grand plane of historic events that unfold in swift movements that the speaker is commanding. Projecting the current events on the expansive screens of grand narratives of history is exploited on a couple of occasions in the speech. The use of the superlative (“the most aggressive” T8) evokes a feeling of an ultimate confrontation. As Bakhtin (1986) explains, “an utterance is never just a reflection or an expression of something already existing outside of it that is given and final” (pp. 119-120) and linguistic meanings “serve only as initial terms for description” (p. 122) while “the possibilities and perspectives embedded in the word” as the author maintains “are essentially infinite” (p. 120); “the word is a drama ...” (p. 122), hence, the “dialogic” in the sense relations activated by Trump’s utterance unearthed aspects of meanings that contributed to the war frame. The accumulation of periphrastic phrases (T6-11) which avoid referencing concrete actions seem to be employed for framing purposes through the introduction of an argumentative strategy rooted in the topos of threat: “if there are specific dangers and threats, one should do something against them” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 77; see also, Boukala, 2016). To quote Silverstein, in the first five sentences of the speech, Trump is “dressed in metaphorical verbal battle fatigues” (Silverstein, 2003, p. 128) of the war against the virus (which is never referred to as COVID-19 and is ridiculed by the speaker on other occasions) and he maintains this posture throughout the text.

The deftly activated war frame at the outset of the speech has a few powerful implications. First, there is an obvious and easily detectable effort to position the united-in-fellowship nation against the enemy (see Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; van Dijk, 1998)—a personified virus, which, through its “foreignness” itself, inspires both trepidation and a belligerent stance as has been shown. Although, Benziman (2020) posits the virus “cannot be delegitimized” (p. 248) as the enemy in a way that is typical for the rhetoric of conflict, Trump sees the virus as “foreign” and related to China, problematically melding international policy with the medical emergency. Moreover, the speaker politicizes the figure of the enemy further by implicitly adding to the list the European Union, which “failed to take the same precautions [as the US] and restrict travel from China” (T23-24) and as a result “new clusters in the United States were seeded by travelers from Europe” (T24-25). In Trump’s vision, the lack of action against China (mentioned five times in a negative context

² A hyponym is “a word with a more specific meaning than, and therefore implying or able to be replaced by, another term, typically a more general or superordinate one, called the hypernym” (Aarts, 2014)

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during the speech) categorizes the European Union as unfriendly. The especially strong bellicose implicature is attached to Trump's self-congratulation for employing a "lifesaving move with early action on China" (T92-93). A similar scheme is applied to the European Union that is mentioned four times (T22, 25, 29, 33) in the context of restrictions in travel and commerce described as pandemic-averting accomplishments. The complicated figure of the enemy helps the speaker to mitigate face-threatening acts. This strategy is analyzed by Chilton (2004), who points out that a politician who tries to avoid negative-face risks attempts "to minimise the danger to the freedom and security" (p. 40) employing euphemisms, referring to threats "obliquely" (p. 41) or eschewing "threatening referents" (p. 40) altogether. According to the author, "euphemism has the cognitive effect of conceptually 'blurring' or 'defocusing' unwanted referents, be they objects or actions" (p. 46).

028 To keep new cases from entering our shores, we will be suspending
all travel from

029 Europe to the United States for the next 30 days.

"Cases" metonymically signify infected people, stripped from human features that would inspire—in a different framing—the reflex of help and compassion, but in Trump's speech can be seen as enemies. The phrase "entering shores" foregrounds the image of an invasion of the country (in the—paradoxical—personification of the "cases"). In the frame of war established rhetorically at the outset of the speech, the figure of enemy has been implicitly inserted through the palimpsest of negative notions clothed in periphrases, metonymies, and personifications, presumably, to build patriotic effervescence and encourage the public to rally behind the speaker. This strategy demonstrably flouts Grice's Maxim of Quantity (Grice, 1989, pp. 26-27). "Foreign virus" replaces COVID-19 and "cases ... entering our shores" from Europe substitute information about sick people requiring help. The speaker obscures the construction of the figure of enemy vital for the war frame by triggering a set of implicatures grounded in the rhetorical devices described here. Relying on the listeners' inferred interpretation of the text and avoiding commitment to direct naming an enemy or specifying it, Trump nevertheless manages to erect a semantic structure of an adversary which supports his framing of the events.

The other implication of the activation of the frame of war is the presence of "allies" mentioned in an expected argumentative move ("we have been in frequent contact with our allies" T6): in order to counter the inundating enemy, it is necessary to mount a coalition of defenders. Trump refrains, however, from providing any specifics, leaving listeners to their own devices in interpretation: does the speaker mean other nations (only the UK is mentioned in T34), medical institutions, or rather international organizations such as the WHO? The ambiguity seems intentional in the section of the text that depicts the United States as an exceptional and, by extension, lonely entity in history of struggles against adversities, as is analyzed next.

The frame of war includes a historic perspective that places a particular event within a larger context. Trump utilizes what Reisigl and Wodak (2001) call the topos of history, mobilizing a specific type of argumentation: "because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation (allegedly) comparable with the historical example referred to" (p. 80). As the authors point out, this often leads to trivialisation of the problem at hand. Trump evokes a set of strong historic connotations in the listeners' minds that include the events that legitimized other "my fellow Americans" speeches in the past. This is bolstered by the next histrionic lines:

012 **From the beginning of time**, nations and people have faced
 unforeseen challenges,
 013 including large-scale and very dangerous health threats. This is
 the way it **always** was and
 014 **always** will be. It only matters how you respond, and we are
 responding with great speed
 015 and professionalism.

The indexical expressions of time in which the pandemic and the response to it are located is gradually expanding from “tonight” (T1), “now” (T2), “today” (T4) to “modern history” (T9), “beginning of time” (T12) to “always” (T14). The “cosmic” perspective which is activated here places the pandemic fight in the macro-scale of world history, lending the events an aura of magnitude and extraordinary significance. What is presented here is some fatalistic vision of history in which nothing changes (“This is the way it always was and always will be” T13-14). At the same time, the pandemic is placed amongst the most tragic events in the past and demonized as an inescapable fate over which there is no control. The temporal deixis mobilized here positions the speaker as distant and removed from the situation: a relatively disengaged observer of tragic but repetitive events taking a rather philosophical view of unfolding situation and stripping it to some degree from its *hic et nunc* particularity. Rather than a participant of the events, the speaker assumes the perspective of the one who looks, from a distance, at the unfolding tapestry of history. At the same time this rhetoric has a feeble religious or biblical undertone that Trump exploits further in the coda of his speech.

“Unforeseen” (T12), “large-scale” (T13) and “very dangerous health threats” (T13) belong to the same periphrastic rhetoric of the topos of history. The phrase “It only matters how we respond” (T14) in the frame of war can be viewed as an appeal to mobilization and activism belonging to the metanarrative of America as always victorious in the battle. Consequently, the rhetorical manipulations create affordances for contradictory feelings: fear of historic trials and resignation in the face of the fate that always brings “unforeseen challenges” (T12) upon the nation, but also fervor of “the fight against the virus” (T92).

The war framing is the most visible in the closing part of the address:

096 If we are vigilant – and we can reduce the chance of infection,
 which we will – we will
 097 significantly impede the transmission of the virus. The virus will
 not have a chance
 098 against us.

The speaker offers another personification of the virus in the implied combat and the rhetoric of invincibility (T96-98) paired this time with an appeal to the positive-face of the self-group (see Chilton, 2004). Trumps construes an image of American superiority (Feinstein, 2020; Bar-Tal et al., 2009) by operationalizing the superlatives and rhetorical devices of exaggeration to capitalize on national pride (see Feinstein, 2020, p. 439). Here are a few examples (see also T19, 61):

016 Our team is **the best anywhere** in the world.
 072 ... **the greatest** economy **anywhere in the world by far**.
 073 Our banks and financial institutions are fully capitalized and
incredibly strong. Our
 074 unemployment is at a **historic low**. This **vast economic prosperity**
 gives us flexibility,

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099 **No nation** is more prepared or more resilient than the United
States. We have **the best**
100 **economy, the most advanced** health care, and **the most talented**
doctors, scientists and
101 researchers anywhere in the world

Adverbs such as “always”, “anywhere in the world”, “ever before”, “any” co-construct the chiliastic, sui generis religious trace of the final struggle, with the United States in a decisively superior, exceptional, and solitary position secured by the best people, economy, and advancements in the health care. Frequent hyperboles such as “incredibly strong” (T73) or “horrible infections” (T19) intensify the emotional appeal of the text and contribute to painting an image of the biblical David battling an ominous adversity (see also T42, T31). The idea of an eternal fight with evil forces and American exceptionalism can be interpreted as anchored in the ideologies of Christian nationalism including the conviction shared by, as Whitehead & Perry (2020) note, almost 60 percent of Americans, who believe that the success of their country is a part of God’s plan (p. 6). In the Christian perspective, our struggles on Earth are part of the human condition plagued by the original sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden which brought consequences for countless offspring. Hence, no toils or battles are surprising, nor unexpected in their perpetual repetition. Manipulating these ideological tokens, even if in a rather implicit manner, contributes to construing the speaker’s desired frame. It supplies “the unifying myths, traditions, narratives, and value systems” (Whitehead & Perry, 2020, p. 151), which can be exploited for different political ends. Although it is not an exclusive interpretation of Trump’s discursive moves, the contextual aura of the speaker’s political posture seemingly justifies the interpretation presented here.

Also worth noting is the play on pronouns in Trump’s speech: “I” appears throughout the text (T1, T6, T26-27, T39-41), underscoring his position as a leader and as the solitary representative of power, epitomized in the statement: “I will never hesitate to take any necessary steps to protect the lives, health, and safety of the American people. I will always put the well being of America first” (T94-95). The allusion to the political slogan “America first”, indexing nationalism and protectionism, secures the frame of war in the coda of the speech in its most aggressive form. The speaking subject builds here a self-aggrandizing image of a protector, fiercely nationalistic, and heroic, while at the same time, it imposes the roles of fighters, victims, or helpless recipients of protection upon those who listen.

The first-person plural pronoun “we” is also prominently used as a deictic expression of the nation (e.g., T96-98) in contrast to the more frequent “we” of the government or officials (never specified) employed earlier in the speech (e.g., “we instituted sweeping travel restrictions on China” T16-17). “We”—the American people—is utilized a dozen times in the closing part of the speech (T92-109) in the pastoral and idealized “togetherness” following an implied victory—imagery integral to the war frame (Benziman, 2020, p. 248):

099 We are all in this together. We must put politics aside, stop the
partisanship and unify
100 together as one nation and one family.
106 Acting with **compassion**
107 and **love**, we will heal the sick, care for those in need, help our
fellow citizens and
108 emerge from this challenge stronger and more **unified** than ever
before.

Trump circles back here to the opening of the address, evoking once again a faint tinge of the religious undertone in the vision of the resurrection of the nation after the battle: united, full of love and compassion—ideals manifestly rejected in the other parts of the speech. “We are all in this together” (T102) has the appearance of a slogan amplified by the next sentences that revive both patriotic notions (“one nation” T103 and “fellow citizens” T107) and warmth of familial connections (T106-107) hardly associated with the speaker, who did not acknowledge those who had already suffered and died of COVID-19 in the US by the time when the speech was delivered. Exaggerating comparisons, such as “stronger and more unified than ever before” (T108), sound bombastic and false, considering the external context of the divided American political scene (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Klein, 2020; McKay, 2021).

The frame of war is used in times of adverse events since it justifies the necessary sacrifices that are a consequence of a crisis (Benziman, 2020). Trump’s speech is no different and lays out the pandemic-related restrictions: limits on nonessential travel (T53), “school closures, social distancing and reducing large gatherings” (T56-57), suspending visits in nursing homes (T53-54), and working from home (T65-66). There is an expectation of cooperation, which is integral to the frame explicitly expressed in T63: “Each of us has a role to play in defeating this virus”. The first-person plural inclusive pronoun appears here as a strategy to avoid negative-face risk when asking for sacrifices (Chilton, 2004, p.40).

The description of help for the nation is delivered in a series of promises with the dominant “I” as a subject of clauses (see T79, 84, 86, 90) allowing the speaker to build the politically desired association between himself and the planned relief. A corollary of this is that there are few reassurances of a systemic plan coordinating federal and state undertakings. Although the speaker emphasizes his own role in delivering the relief, it appears that local communities are burdened with many responsibilities (T59, 55). Simultaneously, the private sector actors seem to be granted an important role. The plan of the fight remains to a large extent aspirational: comprising, in terms of speech acts, promises (e.g., T67, 68, 70, 79, 82, 88) with a prominent accumulation of verbs in future and present continuous tenses.

The frame that Trump constructs in the speech is unstable due to the multitude of contradictions that resurface as the argument unfolds. The main one, instilling listeners’ mistrust and undermining their confidence in the truthfulness of the speaker, is grounded in the statements below with two examples of a very prominent epizeuxis:³

048 The vast majority of Americans: The risk is very, very low. Young
and healthy people
049 can expect to recover fully and quickly if they should get the
virus. The highest risk is for
050 elderly population with underlying health conditions. The elderly
population must be
051 very, very careful.

These assertions and the rest of the speech diverge in the dramatic way: why would the President speak from the Oval Office, take “emergency actions” (T67), mention “horrible infection” (T20) etc. if the “risk is very, very low” for “the vast majority of Americans” (T48)? The frame of war seems to be wholly unnecessary and futile if there is no danger for the nation that has just been (rhetorically) summoned to the battle. It can be speculated that the reasons for the speaker’s decision to underscore the insignificance of the risks associated with the pandemic must be

³ Epizeuxis refers to the “emphatic repetition of a word with no other words between” (Lanham, 1991, p. 71).

anchored in the political calculation: preserving order, avoiding panic, or dismissing accusations of governmental indolence. Significant for the listener is, however, the fact that the realization of this intra-textual contradiction undermines confidence in the truthfulness of Trump’s other assertions rendering an effort to build a desired war frame infelicitous since as Chilton (2004) notes, the “fundamental expectation of cooperative truthfulness” (p. 34) is a precondition of communication. These incongruencies constitute internal centrifugal forces of the speech, not only dismantling the frame, but also weakening listeners’ cooperation both as participants in the speaking event and as citizens.

Another contradiction that disintegrates the war framing is the petition for unity, as manifested in the assertion “We are all in this together” (T102). This is incongruent with the emphasized international divisions and those within the nation: mostly between vulnerable elderly and healthy and young, visible in the unbridled use of so called gerontonyms—a form of “somatisation” which “construct[s] social actors by synecdochisingly picking out a part or characteristic of their body” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 53), in case of gerontonyms, old age. We could also question the logic of imposing travel and commerce restrictions on some countries if the virus “is now spreading throughout the world” (T2-3) demonstrating another similar internal contradiction.

Why did Trump’s writers select the frame of war to make sense of the new challenge posed by the pandemic? Kornprobst (2019) claims that “In order for a message to resonate with an audience, the clues that communicators select and combine need to be taken out of repertoire that is widely shared by the audience” (p. 62). The author considers it “cultural congruence” (p. 62). The analysis of the “cultural congruence” of the speech in focus allows the reconstruction of the speaker’s vision of his interlocutors. Trump’s discourse on the pandemic on March 11, 2020 construes an image of listeners as combative, motivated by fear and animosity to others, fiercely proud of the superior position, while susceptible to a vaguely religious vision of the history. It would need to be investigated separately whether these assumptions are valid and facilitating a felicitous communicative interaction.

Let us withhold the evaluative remarks regarding the choice of meaning making strategy selected by the US president to the moment when it is possible and instructive to compare it with an alternative—a speech presented by Justin Trudeau on the same occasion.

3 The pandemic in Trudeau’s discourse

Justin Trudeau’s speech in response to the WHO announcement delivered on the same day offers an elucidating alternative of framing the pandemic, which is analyzed next. To use Goffman’s distinctions from his seminal *Framing Analysis* (1974), the Canadian Prime Minister builds the frame of rational and responsive governing as a general approach or perspective, rather than a neatly organized “system of entities” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Let us have a closer look at the details.

- 01 Hello everyone.
- 02 Thank you all for joining us.
- 03 Over the past few weeks, we’ve seen COVID-19 spread around the globe.
- 04 Here in Canada, 93 cases have been reported and on Monday, one person died.
- 05 Before we go any further, I want to extend my sincere condolences to their family and friends.

06 Our thoughts are with them as they navigate through this difficult time.

The first sentences of the Trudeau’s opening gambit are not only relatively casual, friendly, polite, and unassuming, but also manifest an approach to the crisis (a term never used by either of the speakers) very different from Trump’s. Instead of “fellow” compatriots, Trudeau addresses “everyone” utilizing a relatively neutral “hello” rather than other options, such as “Good morning” or “Good afternoon” and the obviously more informal “Hi”. Corpus studies of present-day American English (Jucker, 2017) confirm “hello” is the most popular salutation, hence it is the most expected (assuming that a similar tendency is observable in the Canadian English). Such highly formulaic greetings are considered to be bereft of propositional content, as Jucker points out, but the author suggests the exchanges of which they are a part might lend them some propositional value. The communicational nexus of Trudeau’s greeting is constituted by elements of high inclusion and low specificity (“everyone”), high frequency and formulaicness (“Hello”), and a polite and fitting expression of gratitude (Schwartz, 2020; Searle, 1979), which again emphasizes inclusiveness (“Thank you all”). Additionally, it downplays the formality of the occasion by the use of the expression “joining us”—not only underscoring a sense of group connectiveness but also—and probably more significantly—endowing recipients with some agency acknowledging their decision to tune in. By contrast, Trump proceeded from a short and formal greeting to the phrase “I want to speak with you” (T1) foregrounding his own agency and designating a more passive role to the listeners as recipients of presented interpretation of the situation. Although both speakers instill a sense of connectiveness, the locus of agency is placed differently and adumbrates a different dynamic of communication which can be perceived as more participatory in the Canadian case.

There are three maneuvers that Trudeau employs in the introduction to establish the frame of meaning making in his address: one relates to the terminological choices, the other to the display of empathy, and the third to the emphasis of a rational approach to the new situation. The speaker uses the scientific name of the virus—a terminological novelty at the time, rejected entirely by Trump in favour of “foreign virus” (an emotionally charged epithet) or “horrible infection” (a dysphemism, the opposite of euphemism; see Crespo-Fernández, 2018). Trudeau chose a different rhetorical path. The Prime Minister repeats the term COVID-19 six times in the speech, installing it in the listeners’ perception as an official, adequate way of referring to the culprit and refraining from dysphemisms which might contribute to listeners’ anxiety by construing the virus as unknown, incalculable, and untamed. Naming the new challenge seems to be the first step that the speaker takes to diminish the impact of the virus. Such a simple move is significant, since it frames the situation in a quite different manner than the frame of war: as a problem that can be approached in a sui generis “positivistic” and rational manner including respect for science and common-sense practicality. The acknowledgment of the sick people—with a precise number—as well as the first victim, constitutes another meaningful element. The sombre, serious, and rational stance that Trudeau takes while facing the pandemic is enveloped in simply expressed (non-denominational) empathy (“sincere condolences” Tr5, “our thoughts are with them” Tr6). The phrase “navigate through the difficult time” evokes nautical notions of rational steering and a modicum of control over the difficulty. Also noteworthy are the absences: the speaker evades referential ambiguity and dramatizing rhetorical devices throughout the text in favour of plain and unadorned expressions.

07 From the start, we have taken a whole-of-government approach to limit the spread of COVID-19

08 and keep Canadians safe.

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- 09 We are working very closely with our municipal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to
10 mitigate the risks to the population.
11 Members of the Incident Response Group are meeting regularly to report on the situation.

The frame that Trudeau activates involves an element of cooperation of the governmental players in team efforts. The deictic expressions: “closely”, “regularly” and “from the start”, as well as the predicates in the present continuous tense, emphasize coordination and promptness of *hic et nunc* actions. Their collective character is highlighted by the steady usage of the inclusive first-person plural subject “we” as the speech is delivered with a group of ministers standing behind the speaker and often with the body language confirming his utterances. This creates a significant contextualizing cue (Gumperz, 1992, p. 42) for Trudeau’s discourse. The speaker reserves “I” only for expressions of empathy, as we have seen in Tr6 where he switched from a plural subject to the singular “I” mid-sentence. There is no focus on the cause of the pandemic in the opening of the speech, but orientation toward the future. “COVID-19” appears once again surrounded by verbs “limit” (Tr7) and “mitigate” (Tr10)—both expressing the measured optimism accompanying the planned efforts. Trudeau seems to employ here the “topos of burden” according to which if a country “is burden by a specific problem, one should act in order to diminish these burdens” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p.78). It is reflected in the syntactical structure with the infinitive of purpose that dominates the speech: “to limit the spread” (Tr7), “[to] keep Canadians safe” (Tr8), “to mitigate the risk” (Tr10), “to report on the situation” (Tr11). This concentration of verb phrases accentuates control over the situation, a rational orientation towards it, and determination to achieve clearly stated goals. The same structure is repeated multiple times throughout the speech (e.g., Tr20, 33-34, 56). It culminates in an assertion: “We have responsibility to make sure Canada is ready for all scenarios and we take this responsibility extremely seriously” (Tr31-32) with relatively rare hyperbolizing adverb “extremely”. The argument made by the speaker here is clear: its proposition comprises the deontic presumption (see Chilton, 2004, p.65) of the fundamental responsibility of the government for handling the challenge. Logically, this declaration is followed by the description of the plan of spending of one billion dollars in a variety of investments to “address the impacts of COVID-19 on our country and to keep Canadians safe” (Tr34; note the repetition of Tr8). The unambiguous attitude of a responsible and responsive approach is visible in the next section of the speech (Tr12-17) comprising a list of members of the cabinet who will remain major actors in the unfolding crisis in charge of different aspects of the crisis within the “Incident Response Group” (Tr11).

Trudeau predictably constructs his speech around displaying what has been done and what is planned. Unlike his American counterpart, Trudeau separates the talk about civilian obligations (not addressed in this speech) and the talk about governmental help. Similarly to Trump’s address, promises are the dominant speech acts filling this part of the speech. The speaker acknowledges almost all of the aspects of the pandemic, making sure that there is at least a promise of help: masks and face shields (Tr41), education (Tr42), research on medical countermeasures (Tr44-45), employment insurance (Tr48-49), etc. This monotonous list is rhetorically unattractive but arouses the sense of trust in an omnipresent government which extends a helping hand. The plain language of promises utilized here has a soothing effect, balancing the cautious recognition of the peril visible in the introduction (Tr3), then in euphemistic and metonymical statement: “an uptick in the total number of cases” (Tr18), and in a more straightforward assertion: “the reality is that the number of people affected by the virus around the globe is climbing” (Tr24-25). Noteworthy is the

appearance of “cases” that—as in Trump’s speech—lose their human faces and are rhetorically reduced to items in the statistical context, consequently becoming less emotionally taxing for the listeners. Trudeau’s framing strategy incorporates these elements despite the negative-face risks. As Chilton (2004) elucidates, for politicians, talking about adverse elements of reality (such as raising taxes or unemployment figures) is a face-threatening act since it functions as “requesting sacrifices, issuing bad news, giving warnings” (p. 40), and hence endangers “the positive need to be accepted as an insider and to establish “common ground”” (p. 40).

The nation’s self-image built in the text corresponds with the frame of rational stance vis-à-vis the challenge. The avoidance of boasting in favour of a realistic acknowledgment of assets as a strategy of addressing the positive face frequently manifested in the speech instills a sense of confidence and trust:

26 Canada has been **fortunate** so far.

64 With a strong balance sheet and a **resilient** economy - Canada is **well positioned** to deal with

65 these challenges.

84 Canada **is among the best prepared** countries in the world to respond to the situation we’re facing.

The frame that Trudeau applies includes some elements that could be marked as signifying a cogent approach to the challenge, but also some judiciously dosed hortatory components; both delivered in the subdued manner of a lower stylistic register to enhance trustworthiness.

Trudeau expresses solidarity with those who experience difficulties in various forms and sympathizes with the regular citizen:

63 I know this is adding to people’s anxieties.

27 I know that people across the country are worried.

28 Worried about their health, worried about their aging parents, worried about the kind of

29 impact this virus could have on their job, on their business.

The speaker does not hesitate to switch a register and use first-person singular assertions of full comprehension of the situation that his listeners are experiencing to instill a sense of connection, and simultaneously to index the lack of social distance (Chilton, 2004, p. 56). This strategy also helps secure listeners’ cooperation. In the anadiplosis⁴ used in Tr27-28, Trudeau resolutely rationalizes listeners’ fears by giving them full presence in his speech. The “aging parents” (Tr28) mentioned here is a much softer alternative to Trump’s divisive phraseology (see T49-52 where safe young and healthy are juxtaposed with elderly who “must be very careful”) addressing a similar problem. With great vigour, Trudeau tries to convey this posture of proximity in a series of compact assertions aspiring to the role of slogans (or at least media-friendly soundbites):

39 We will make sure you have **everything** you need.

He then addresses all the workers in the same hyperbolic style:

53 **No one** should have to worry about their job if they have to be quarantined.

54 **No employer** should feel like they have to lay off a worker because of the virus.

⁴ Anadiplosis refers to the repetition of the last word of the sentence (see also Dupriez, 1991).

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55 **We can support you and we will.**

And finally, everyone:

38 Our government is **here for you**

66 Canadians can **count on us** to provide them with the right kind of support as the situation

67 progresses.

79 We **get it**. And **we're on it**.

The syllogism applied here includes the implied premise (enthymeme) that it is the state's responsibility to help, hence the government is taking action. Line 79 is exemplary of the informal register, not refraining from colloquialisms, employed here to meet the listeners of all walks of life in their pandemic misery—another effective strategy to minimize the distance between politicians and their constituents. The indexical “it”, although euphemistic, seems to encompass all possible support, mirroring Tr39 and Tr 53-54 where the anaphoric “no” in the consecutive litotes⁵ rhetorically amplify a similar sentiment. The expression “our government is here for you” (Tr38) comprises a desirable spatial and social deixis, instilling a sense of imminence of governmental help. As Jong (2017) notes, a time of crisis calls for a compassionate leader who bears the pain of the people, and this very image is invoked here. Trudeau's speech exhibits such presumptions, which the closing argument fully confirms:

80 We're working with our international partners to contain the virus.
We're applying the

81 lessons we learned during the SARS outbreak. We're making sure our health care systems

82 are resilient.

83 We are pulling out all the stops to make sure Canadians stay safe, healthy, and supported.

The use of the parallel syntax with the predicates expressed in the present continuous tense with an anaphora of “we” (the response team) in the subject position constitute a rhetorical concoction conveying immediacy and collective control over the situation exerted by governmental actors. As does his American counterpart, Trudeau activates the topos of history, however in a distinctly different manner: reminding listeners about the SARS outbreak as a particular and painful moment of the past that has resulted in presently useful experience. The rhetorical and argumentative finale of a cascading crescendo constructed in this segment is the statement: “We are pulling all the stops to make sure Canadians stay safe, healthy, and supported” (Tr83) with the past participle not entirely parallel with the other two adjectives, but extremely important because of the message it delivers: the speaker promises the support for all circumstances. The use of the everyday locution “pull out all the stops” enhances an overall intention to convey solidarity. “We will get through what comes next together” (Tr85)—a coda of the speech—offers the listener yet another reassurance bolstered by “we”, indexing here the nation, and finally positioned “together” lending it emphasis and prominence.

4 Concluding remarks

Silverstein (2003) claims that “discourse is always being evaluated as description for how it achieves a kind of cumulative coherence as information” (p. 8). Let us then look at the “cumulative coherence” of the speeches delivered at the same moment in history but embodying two different visions of the reaction to the pandemic, framing the challenge in diverging rhetorical

⁵ Litotes refers to an understatement expressing affirmative by negative (see Dupriez, 1991).

storylines (Montiel et al., 2021) to make meaning of the challenge. The frames of war and conflict imposed on the pandemic by Trump stage the reality as the drama of battles, enemies, victories, and casualties—normalizing heroism and extraordinary measures, while diminishing everyday efforts and cooperation. These images, although well-established in the collective cognition and instantly recognizable as a result, inspire fear, anxiety, and fighting fervor that can instantiate itself in both heroic and despicable acts. Trump’s speech aims at the high emotions of historic battles, while Trudeau’s uses a positivistic frame of the collective, rational, and controlled effort in solidarity with the people of the land. Its plainness and degree of banality lowers negative emotions, assuages fears, and imparts a sense of safety. Where Trump is militant and bombastic in creating a vision of the invincible nation, Trudeau is neutral and rational. The mystified “foreign” virus that “enters the shores” of the country or is “seeded” by unwelcomed visitors can be contrasted with the scientifically recognized entity that has to be dealt with. A strong individualistic leader who is “instructing” different agencies diametrically opposes a member of a team that coordinates various activities of the government. The compassion detectable in Trudeau’s speech is not matched by the emotions inspired by the frames of war: neither by the nationalistic fervor, which is almost completely absent from the Canadian rhetoric, nor by a feeling of anxiety related to a conflict. The comparison with Trudeau’s speech fleshes out the gaping void of empathy in Trump’s address, in which the pain, discomfort, death and suffering of Americans was never acknowledged. The frame of war implies strength and callousness. As Silverstein (2003) indicates, “language used in the expository mode creates argument and in its most successful form becomes the instrument of reason and rationality” (p. 130). Trudeau’s speech remains within the confines of rationality both expressed and implied, while Trump’s address is imbued with contradictions and confusion undermining the inferred goal of inspiring cooperation, confidence, and obedience in the listeners.

According to Feinstein’s (2020) interpretation of Burke’s (1991) identity theory of emotions, during the disruptive events that affect a nation, “the emotional reaction is determined by the individual’s assessment of whether the nation’s actions align with the idealized image of the nation” (Feinstein, 2020, p. 425-426). Both speakers seemingly aimed at eliciting positive emotions from the listeners, framing the crisis in congruence with the self-image of their respective nations. Although considering the number of variables, it would be premature to even speculate whether and how frames activated in the political discourse had an impact on the experience of the pandemic in both countries, uncovered here are patterns of meaning making that might illuminate important distinctions in orientation to the challenges of the last two years. It cannot be ignored, after all, that framing the pandemic as a war did not seem to unify Americans around their President, while functional governance earned the Canadian Prime Minister another term in office.

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Appendix A: Trump’s speech

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-speech.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ITrpsxvSwc>

March 11, 2020

001 My fellow Americans, tonight I want to speak with you about our nation’s
unprecedented

002 response to the coronavirus outbreak that started in China and is now
spreading

003 throughout the world.

004 Today, the World Health Organization officially announced that this is a
global

005 pandemic.

006 We have been in frequent contact with our allies, and we are marshaling the
full power

007 of the federal government and the private sector to protect the American
people.

008 This is the most aggressive and comprehensive effort to confront a foreign
virus in

009 modern history. I am confident that by counting and continuing to take these
tough

010 measures, we will significantly reduce the threat to our citizens and we
will ultimately

011 and expeditiously defeat this virus.

012 From the beginning of time, nations and people have faced unforeseen
challenges,

013 including large-scale and very dangerous health threats. This is the way it
always was and

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014 always will be. It only matters how you respond, and we are responding with
great speed
015 and professionalism.
016 Our team is the best anywhere in the world. At the very start of the
outbreak, we
017 instituted sweeping travel restrictions on China and put in place the first
federal
018 mandated quarantine in over 50 years. We declared a public health emergency
and issued
019 the highest level of travel warning on other countries as the virus spread
its horrible
020 infection.
021 And taking early intense action, we have seen dramatically fewer cases of
the virus in the
022 United States than are now present in Europe.
023 The European Union failed to take the same precautions and restrict travel
from Chin
024 and other hot spots. As a result, a large number of new clusters in the
United States were
025 seeded by travelers from Europe.
026 After consulting with our top government health professionals, I have
decided to take
027 several strong but necessary actions to protect the health and well being
of all Americans.
028 To keep new cases from entering our shores, we will be suspending all travel
from
029 Europe to the United States for the next 30 days. The new rules will go
into effect Friday
030 at midnight. These restrictions will be adjusted subject to conditions on
the ground.
031 There will be exemptions for Americans who have undergone appropriate
screenings, and
032 these prohibitions will not only apply to the tremendous amount of trade
and cargo, but
033 various other things as we get approval. Anything coming from Europe to the
United
034 States is what we are discussing. These restrictions will also not apply to
the United
035 Kingdom.
036 At the same time, we are monitoring the situation in China and in South
Korea. And, as
037 their situation improves, we will re-evaluate the restrictions and warnings
that are
038 currently in place for a possible early opening.
039 Earlier this week, I met with the leaders of health insurance industry who
have agreed to
040 waive all co-payments for coronavirus treatments, extend insurance coverage
to these
041 treatments, and to prevent surprise medical billing.
042 We are cutting massive amounts of red tape to make antiviral therapies
available in

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043 record time. These treatments will significantly reduce the impact and reach
of the virus.

044 Additionally, last week, I signed into law an \$8.3 billion funding bill to
help C.D.C. and

045 other government agencies fight the virus and support vaccines, treatments
and

046 distribution of medical supplies. Testing and testing capabilities are
expanding rapidly,

047 day by day. We are moving very quickly.

048 The vast majority of Americans: The risk is very, very low. Young and
healthy people

049 can expect to recover fully and quickly if they should get the virus. The
highest risk is for

050 elderly population with underlying health conditions. The elderly population
must b

051 very, very careful.

052 In particular, we are strongly advising that nursing homes for the elderly
suspend all

053 medically unnecessary visits. In general, older Americans should also avoid
nonessential

054 travel in crowded areas.

055 My administration is coordinating directly with communities with the largest
outbreaks,

056 and we have issued guidance on school closures, social distancing and
reducing large

057 gatherings.

058 Smart action today will prevent the spread of the virus tomorrow.

059 Every community faces different risks and it is critical for you to follow
the guidelines of

060 your local officials who are working closely with our federal health experts
– and they

061 are the best.

062 For all Americans, it is essential that everyone take extra precautions and
practice good

063 hygiene. Each of us has a role to play in defeating this virus. Wash your
hands, clean

064 often-used surfaces, cover your face and mouth if you sneeze or cough, and
most of all, if

065 you are sick or not feeling well, stay home.

066 To ensure that working Americans impacted by the virus can stay home without
fear of

067 financial hardship, I will soon be taking emergency action, which is
unprecedented, to

068 provide financial relief. This will be targeted for workers who are ill,
quarantined, or

069 caring for others due to coronavirus.

070 I will be asking Congress to take legislative action to extend this relief.

071 Because of the economic policies that we have put into place over the last
three years, we

072 have the greatest economy anywhere in the world, by far.

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073 Our banks and financial institutions are fully capitalized and incredibly strong. Our
074 unemployment is at a historic low. This vast economic prosperity gives us flexibility,
075 reserves, and resources to handle any threat that comes our way.
076 This is not a financial crisis, this is just a temporary moment of time that we will
077 overcome together as a nation and as a world.
078 However, to provide extra support for American workers, families, and businesses,
079 tonight I am announcing the following additional actions: I am instructing the Small
080 Business Administration to exercise available authority to provide capital and liquidity to
081 firms affected by the coronavirus.
082 Effective immediately, the S.B.A. will begin providing economic loans in affected states
083 and territories. These low-interest loans will help small businesses overcome temporary
084 economic disruptions caused by the virus. To this end, I am asking Congress to increase
085 funding for this program by an additional \$50 billion.
086 Using emergency authority, I will be instructing the Treasury Department to defer tax
087 payments, without interest or penalties, for certain individuals and businesses negatively
088 impacted. This action will provide more than \$200 billion of additional liquidity to the
089 economy.
090 Finally, I am calling on Congress to provide Americans with immediate payroll tax relief.
091 Hopefully they will consider this very strongly.
092 We are at a critical time in the fight against the virus. We made a lifesaving move with
093 early action on China. Now we must take the same action with Europe. We will not
094 delay. I will never hesitate to take any necessary steps to protect the lives, health, and
095 safety of the American people. I will always put the well being of America first.
096 If we are vigilant – and we can reduce the chance of infection, which we will – we will
097 significantly impede the transmission of the virus. The virus will not have a chance
098 against us.
099 No nation is more prepared or more resilient than the United States. We have the best
100 economy, the most advanced health care, and the most talented doctors, scientists and
101 researchers anywhere in the world.
102 We are all in this together. We must put politics aside, stop the partisanship and unify

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103 together as one nation and one family.
104 As history has proven time and time again, Americans always rise to the
105 challenge and overcome adversity.
106 Our future remains brighter than anyone can imagine. Acting with compassion
107 and love, we will heal the sick, care for those in need, help our fellow
citizens and
108 emerge from this challenge stronger and more unified than ever before.
109 God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you.

Appendix B: Trudeau's speech

<https://pm.gc.ca/en/videos/2020/03/11/prime-ministers-remarks-canadas-response-covid-19>

March 11, 2020, Ottawa, Ontario

01 Hello everyone.
02 Thank you all for joining us.
03 Over the past few weeks, we've seen COVID-19 spread around the globe.
04 Here in Canada, 93 cases have been reported and on Monday, one person died.
05 Before we go any further, I want to extend my sincere condolences to their
family and friends.
06 Our thoughts are with them as they navigate through this difficult time.
07 From the start, we have taken a whole-of-government approach to limit the
spread of COVID-19
08 and keep Canadians safe.
09 We are working very closely with our municipal, provincial, and territorial
counterparts to
10 mitigate the risks to the population.
11 Members of the Incident Response Group are meeting regularly to report on
the situation.
12 Minister Hajdu and Dr. Tam are keeping Canadians up to date on the latest
developments and
13 are issuing recommendations daily.
14 Ministers Bains, Joly, Morneau, and Ng are closely monitoring the current
and potential impacts
15 of the virus on various sectors of our economy.
16 And Minister Champagne is working with our international partners and the
World Health
17 Organization to contain the virus globally.
18 As we saw an uptick in the total number of cases around the globe, we took
additional steps.
19 Last week, we announced a special committee, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister
Freeland,
20 to manage the federal response to the outbreak.
21 We've also put in place screening measures at airports. We've increased
testing at the
22 National Microbiology Laboratory. We've invested in research. We've bolstered
support for
23 health services in Indigenous communities.
24 But the reality is that the number of people affected by the virus around
the globe keeps
25 climbing.

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26 Canada has been fortunate so far. We have not seen a drastic spike in the
number of cases
27 reported, but I know that people across the country are worried.
28 Worried about their health, worried about their aging parents, worried about
the kind of
29 impact this virus could have on their job, on their business.
30 Since Day 1, our government has been following the situation very closely.
31 We have a responsibility to make sure Canada is ready for all scenarios and
we take that
32 responsibility extremely seriously.
33 That's why today, we're announcing a comprehensive package to address the
impacts of
34 COVID-19 on our country and to keep Canadians safe.
35 Our government will be creating a \$1 billion COVID-19 Response Fund, which
will provide
36 money to the provinces and territories to deal with preparation for, and
mitigation of, the
37 virus.
38 I want all premiers and all Canadians to know: Our government is here for
you.
39 We will make sure you have everything you need.
40 The fund will provide \$200 million to support the ongoing federal response
to the virus
41 including more money for things like surgical masks and face shields,
increased capacity for
42 services to Indigenous peoples and other federal health care responsibilities,
and for
43 continued public education efforts to Canadians.
44 It will also invest \$275 million in additional funding for research on
medical
45 countermeasures, including vaccine development and support for clinical
trials.
46 On the economic front, our government understands the disruptive impact the
virus is having
47 on businesses and workers.
48 That's why we will waive the mandatory one-week waiting period for Employment
49 Insurance to kick in.
50 We're also introducing, among other things, special measures under the Work-
Sharing
51 program to help employers who fall on hard times due to COVID-19.
52 Let me be clear.
53 No one should have to worry about their job if they have to be quarantined.
54 No employer should feel like they have to lay off a worker because of the
virus.
55 We can support you and we will.
56 Today's announcement is significant, but we are already preparing to do more
if need be.
57 Should businesses face a cash crunch in the short term, they can easily
access credit to bridge
58 to better times.

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59 We will work with our financial Crown corporations through the Business
Credit Availability
60 Program to protect jobs and to be there for businesses.
61 As we saw over the past few days, the outbreak is having an impact on the
global economy.
62 It's affecting supply chains, commodity prices, our oil and gas sector,
tourism, and more.
63 I know this is adding to people's anxieties.
64 With a strong balance sheet and a resilient economy - Canada is well
positioned to deal with
65 these challenges.
66 Canadians can count on us to provide them with the right kind of support as
the situation
67 progresses.
68 Right now, countries with fragile health care systems are more at risk of
seeing the virus
69 spread.
70 That is why our government will also allocate \$50 million to help countries
that are
71 especially vulnerable.
72 To address COVID-19, Canada is looking at the current situation from a global
perspective.
73 First, we are making additional investments to ensure that our health care
system and health
74 care professionals are ready for all eventualities.
75 Next, we are working with our international partners to ensure they have the
resources they
76 need to prevent the virus from spreading in their countries and around the
world.
77 I know that people are worried about what they're seeing on the nightly news
and what it
78 means for their community.
79 We get it. And we're on it.
80 We're working with our international partners to contain the virus. We're
applying the
81 lessons we learned during the SARS outbreak. We're making sure our health
care systems
82 are resilient.
83 We are pulling out all the stops to make sure Canadians stay safe, healthy,
and supported.
84 Canada is among the best prepared countries in the world to respond to the
situation we're facing.
85 We will get through what comes next together.
86 Once again, thank you for being here today.
87 I will now take your questions.