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Some real robust numbers in Canada and again, that's likely a result of investors edging back into the market towards the hardest hit sectors.

— CANDICE BANGSUND, PORTFOLIO MANAGER FOR FIRA CAPITAL, PAGE FP4

CLASSIFIED FP12
DIVERSIONS FP16
REMEMBERING A16
WEATHER FP16

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AS PANDEMIC UNFOLDED, OTTAWA SENT 16 TONNES OF MASKS, GEAR TO CHINA



Passengers at a subway station in Shanghai after the city's emergency alert level for the new coronavirus was downgraded on March 23. AILY SONG/REUTERS

COMMENT

The stories behind shortage

Laura Tennant

Back in January, I purchased a small supply of N95 masks to protect myself and my family, after hearing about the lockdown in Wuhan, China, and doing some research on what was then being called the novel coronavirus. Today, I'm seeing vitriol directed at members of the public who own these masks and wear them in public. Individuals are being told that their actions have led to a shortage of supplies for health-care workers. But what people fail to understand is that consumers did not create the health-care worker mask shortage — governments did.

If individuals could reason from the limited data they had access to in late January that they should purchase a mask, governments should have come to the same conclusion and taken action to secure a supply of personal protective equipment for health-care workers.

The U.S. surgeon general tweeted on Feb. 29: "Serious-ly please — STOP BUYING MASKS!" This message was shortsighted, and directed at the wrong people.

See TENNANT on A13

INSIDE

'CAPTAIN POSITIVE' BEAT CANCER. NOW HE'S FIGHTING COVID-19.

Page A3

BUSINESSES MAKE MASS PLEA FOR MORE HELP.

Page A5

Some patients not told for days they have virus

'We don't know where delays are. We don't know how long delays are.'

Richard Warnica

On Sunday night, Jemy Joseph, an emergency medicine physician in Toronto, received a frantic phone call from a colleague. He had a patient, he told her, who had tested positive for COVID-19 days ago but hadn't been informed. Joseph's colleague was worried. He needed to know how many other patients, from one of the large COVID testing centres in the Toronto area, were in a similar boat. Could she help?

So for the next several hours, Joseph and four of her colleagues, all doctors, worked the phones. They each had a list of patients with positive test results. They called them one-by-one to make sure they knew. "Some of them did get phone calls from public health already, so, 'fay,'" Joseph said. But several hadn't. Joseph herself reached three patients who had not been informed of their results, including one whose test had come back positive four days earlier.

See TESTING on A6

COMMENT

Chinese guilt in a time of war

Terry Glavin

It's a terribly imperfect metaphor, and it's already something of a cliché, but fair enough, too. The global struggle with the disaster of the coronavirus that first emerged last December in the Chinese city of Wuhan is, without question, something very much like war. And almost everybody who's saying so is relying on pretty well the same formulation.

U.S. President Donald Trump has lately fashioned himself as a "wartime president," determined to defeat a "horrible, invisible enemy." French President Emmanuel Macron: "We are at war. The enemy is invisible and it requires our general mobiliza-

tion." Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis: "We are at war with an enemy that is invisible, but not invincible." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: "This is a battle for public health... We are at war with an invisible enemy."

So yes, fair enough. But we should be very careful that we don't allow the confines of approval terminology and the banalities of official diction to leave us unmoved from the objective realities of the crisis we've all found ourselves stumbling through. Because that's how colossal stupid public policy mistakes get made. It's also how the powerful get away with occluding the truth and telling outright lies.

See GLAVIN on A12

Ottawa to pay jobless \$2,000 a month

Christopher Nardi

OTTAWA • The federal government is hiking its direct aid to Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic to \$52 billion, mostly by sending \$2,000 every month to those affected by the novel coronavirus. But some worry the system won't be able to keep up with demand.

Wednesday, Finance Minister Bill Morneau announced that he was repackaging two aid measures announced last week — the Emergency Care Benefit and the Emergency Support Benefit — into one, simpler program: the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

Administered by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the new measure will send \$2,000 monthly for up to four months straight into the bank accounts of Canadians affected by COVID-19.

"The CERB would cover

Canadians who have lost their job, are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19, as well as working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children who are sick or at home because of school and daycare closures," the Department of Finance said.

With this new benefit, the cost of direct COVID-19 aid has nearly doubled, going from an estimated \$27 billion last week to \$52 billion now. The measure was approved by Parliament on Wednesday as part of a larger emergency aid package.

To access the CERB, a website will be launched in April. The government then estimates it will take 10 days for approved applicants to start receiving their money. That means the first cheques most likely won't be sent until mid-April.

See CHEQUES on A4



ADRIAN WYLD / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Government House Leader Pablo Rodriguez rises in the Commons during a special sitting of Parliament.

Inside the battle for \$52B COVID-19 package

Ryan Tumilty

OTTAWA • Government House Leader Pablo Rodriguez betrayed little of what was going on in the back rooms when he strode into the House of Commons at noon Tuesday and asked for proceedings to be suspended.

What was supposed to be a relatively quick debate and vote on a series of sweeping

financial measures — more than \$27 billion — to keep the Canadian economy on life support and respond to COVID-19 was knocked off course.

Opposition parties balked as the Liberals tried to give themselves far-reaching financial authority to tax, spend and borrow as much as they wanted to deal with the crisis all the way until 2022.

See NEGOTIATIONS on A4