

FW: ** FOR DMs AWARENESS ** TRANSCRIPT: Minister Anand provides COVID-19 vaccine update

From: Nathalie Nye </o=pwgsc-tpsgc/ou=exchange administrative group (fydibohf23spdlt)/cn=recipients/cn=adc3c11ae6f148cb944e96c3a399ac44-nathalie nye">
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Date: Wed, 23 Sep 2020 18:27:08 +0000

My apologies! Carole had already tracked down the Power and Politics transcript. Pls see below.

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From: Carole Charette
Sent: September 23, 2020 12:58 PM
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Cc: Jody Wood
Subject: ** FOR DMs AWARENESS ** TRANSCRIPT: Minister Anand provides COVID-19 vaccine update

Nathalie,

As requested earlier today, please find below the transcript from MAA interview with Power & Politics held yesterday.

Flagging that the date seems to be wrong - should be September 22nd?

Please advise if additional information be required.
Thank you.

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Program:	Power & Politics with Vassy Kapelos (Hour 1)	DATE:	2020-Sep-23 5:01PM	Time:	5:00PM - 6:00PM
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HEADLINE: Minister Anand provides COVID-19 vaccine update

**VASSY
KAPELOS
(REPORTER):** The federal government announced its fifth vaccine agreement. Canada will buy up to 72 million doses of a vaccine candidate made by Sanofi, that's a French pharmaceutical company. That means Canada has committed more than a billion dollars to buy at least 154 million doses of vaccines from multiple companies. Anita Anand is the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. She joins us from Oakville, Ontario. Hi Minister Anand, pleasure to welcome you back to the program.

**ANITA ANAND
(PUBLIC
SERVICES AND
PROCUREMENT
MINISTER):** Thanks so much for having me, Vassy.

KAPELOS: Before I get to some questions on procurement and testing, I wanted to ask you about the Prime Minister's address tomorrow night. His office has just announced it'll happen at 6:30 eastern and he will quote "be addressing Canadians directly on the urgency of fighting COVID-19 as we face down the prospect of a second wave of the virus." What does the Prime Minister plan on telling Canadians that his public health officials or premiers haven't already?

ANAND: Well, thanks for the question. Throughout this pandemic, we have seen our Prime Minister speak directly to Canadians about the pandemic and the public health measures that we all need to be taking, and I suspect that our Prime Minister will continue to do that tomorrow evening. Regarding particulars, I'm not quite sure but I know that he is, without question, committed to working collaboratively with the provinces and territories to make sure that we as a collective group can make sure that we come through this pandemic together.

KAPELOS: I'm just wondering -- your government will deliver its throne speech though. We're anticipating it could go something -- somewhere in the neighbourhood of an hour tomorrow afternoon. Why is it necessary on top of that to do an address?

ANAND:	Again, I haven't spoken with the Prime Minister about this move to speak directly to Canadians but it is entirely consistent with what we as a government and he as a Prime Minister seeks to do throughout this pandemic which is to support Canadians, to be here for the Canadians, and that's why we saw him speaking to Canadians each and every day in the early days of this pandemic. So, it comes as no surprise to me that there will be an address directly from the Prime Minister tomorrow evening and I'm very much looking forward to it, Vassy.
KAPELOS:	There are going to be, I think, charges of partisanship here perhaps or political opportunism given, as I mentioned, that the throne speech will already have happened during the day and both the opposition leaders for the Conservatives and the Bloc Quebecois have COVID -- aren't able to be in the House to respond. I don't even know how a response for them to such an address would work technically because they have COVID. What is your response to any charge of political opportunism here?
ANAND:	Listen, as Minister of Public Services and Procurement, I can tell you that, on a very personal level, ensuring that we have the supplies necessary and the vaccines available for Canadians is not a politically motivated move or decision, and I suspect that is exactly the same tone that the Prime Minister will take tomorrow evening. We are motivated by one thing and one thing alone and that is to ensure that we are supporting Canadians from coast to coast to coast throughout this pandemic. That's why we have come forward with supports like the CERB, like the 19 billion dollar Safe Restart Agreement, like the two billion dollars on top of that for provinces and territories, and then in my own domain, ensuring that we have PPE in place for this country and for front-line health care workers. At the current time, we have over two billion articles of PPE ready for distribution to the provinces and territories because why, Vassy? Because that's what we need to do as a government in power.
KAPELOS:	Yeah, I'm certainly not attempting to take away from your government's accomplishments and what you've done during this pandemic. I think there are, though, valid questions when you have all afternoon to lay out your agenda and opposition leaders aren't really able to adequately respond. Plus, you've got a Governor General facing a lot of controversy who would be the face of that throne speech. There are some valid questions about why the Prime Minister then, you know, feels it's necessary to spend however long it is addressing Canadians.
ANAND:	Well, I welcome those questions and I'm sure he does also. The most important thing we have to remember and you in the press have been doing a very good job of making sure that all voices are heard and I suspect that you will continue to do that as we analyze this speech from the throne tomorrow and the Prime Minister's speech tomorrow night.
KAPELOS:	Minister, is Cabinet -- you know, I noticed the second part of what the Prime Minister's Office said about the speech was as we face down the prospect of a second wave of the virus, and certainly, seeing the modelling numbers today, I know a lot of Canadians are concerned about that second wave and if it possibly is going to be worse than the first wave. Is Cabinet considering something in the lead up, let's say, to that address that would include invoking the Emergencies Act?
ANAND:	Well, it's very interesting, Vassy. You know as well as I do that I wouldn't be able to reveal Cabinet confidences but I will say that what's very important is that we will continue to be working collaboratively, cooperatively with the provinces and territories as we have throughout this entire pandemic to ensure that we are not divided, we are united in fighting

COVID-19. That's the goal and that's what will get us through this pandemic.

KAPELOS: Should Canadians interpret that as your government would rather work with the provinces? That you're not considering, for example, invoking the Emergencies Act at this time?

ANAND: I think Canadians should remember the most important thing that we have done through this pandemic is to work together to fight a very, very, very difficult situation facing our country and we will continue to be cooperative, to be collaborative, to speak across party lines in order to get the job done.

KAPELOS: Respectfully though, that doesn't directly answer the question. You're not considering that right now? I'm only asking because the numbers are looking the way they are right now, right? Especially in certain provinces.

ANAND: Vassy, I also saw the numbers this morning, as I was at that press conference, and I will say that our government continues to follow the science, continues to recommend social distancing, wearing of masks, and washing of hands, and in addition, and this is what I thought we were going to be speaking about today, vaccine procurement and the procurement of PPE and other supplies which is directly in my area of work and what I spend every single day and night on.

KAPELOS: Okay, let's talk about procurement, and I actually wanted to ask you about the procurement of those rapid tests because part of what we've seen in response to the numbers today is, for example, here in Ottawa, the local Public Health officer has decided -- sort of enacted an order that if you have any symptoms or signs of COVID-19, until you can produce a negative test result, you have to self-isolate for 14 days, so testing is a big part of this conversation. I know that you've seen questions from various provinces and I know that the Health Minister has made it clear and yourself and other ministers that you're waiting on Health -- like Health Canada has to approve these tests. I'm wondering, from a procurement perspective, once that happens, if it does, are there any agreements in place to have those tests available should they be approved?

ANAND: Without question, we have been proactive in terms of building relationships with suppliers and putting in place preliminary contracts so that we will have access to rapid test kits. Our approach in procurement has been to diversify our supply chains to make sure that we have access to traditional testing, supplies such as swabs and reagent, as well as to the point of care testing as well, and so for example, the contract that we have in place with Spartan is (inaudible) that test (inaudible) have the approval of Health Canada, the regulator, and we will ensure that before it is distributed to Canadians that that approval has been obtained.

KAPELOS: Do you have any update on where things stand with Spartan? I'm so sorry, you were cutting in -- a little bit in and out on that last answer. I know that we follow -- we've had the CEO of Spartan on a few times. I know they had re-submitted it for approval to Health Canada and that's the last I had heard. Do you have any update on that?

ANAND: The update is that Spartan is still working on ensuring that it can meet Health Canada approval and that is something we're watching very carefully. There's no question that innovative testing could be a very important key to building the bridge to the other side and that's why we are following that closely as well as other types of innovative testing that I'm sure we are all familiar with.

KAPELOS:	Realistically, do you think any of that might be available prior to this second wave? And I know it's going to depend on where you live, the trajectory of that curve, but we had Dr. Naylor, for example, on the show last week who talked about the sooner, the better and I know that, again, you're waiting for that approval from Health Canada and you want to make sure the tests are accurate but do you have any sense of a timeline?
ANAND:	Listen, Vassy, we are working in an uncertain and innovative environment and what that means is that delivery dates that we have in our contracts are ones that we are watching very closely but we need to make sure that the science is there. That has been the approach of our government from day one and in order to ensure that the science is supporting the technology, we need the intervention of Health Canada approval and so once we have that approval, we will be in an even stronger position to build back better and build back to the other side.
KAPELOS:	But at this point, there's really no sense of when that might come.
ANAND:	There are multiple developers producing multiple different types of innovative tests from serology tests to antigen tests to the rapid test kits that Spartan is producing, and so the approvals are going to come incrementally and I am sure that Health Canada is working as quickly as possible but remember, one of the things that Canada does really well is to balance the need for accurate science with the need for accurate testing and we will make sure that Canadians are using accurate tests in order to ensure that contact tracing is secure, in order to ensure that the extent to which people are interacting with others is done on a more safe basis.
KAPELOS:	Is Canada a laggard on that? You know members of the opposition have charged that, right? That this is taking too long compared to the United States, that -- even Dr. Naylor was not necessarily criticizing Health Canada at all, saying that usually there -- you know, there are charges of politicization of, for example, the FDA in the United States but, you know, could -- there might be some room for expediting the process given the significance that rapid testing could play.
ANAND:	Listen, I'm the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. It would not be my first move to proclaim that Health Canada is not doing its job. From what I can see, throughout the pandemic, Health Canada has indeed been doing its job and I am one person who takes comfort in the fact that we will be careful in the approvals that we grant prior to allowing the mass distribution of rapid test kits. Of course, I want it, as a process, to be expedient but again, prudence above all else is very important. Otherwise, we're going to have false negatives and false positives and I think that could be even more detrimental to a broad-based building back better.
KAPELOS:	In the same vein, Minister, sort of, I wanted to ask you about vaccines because I know that is the substance of the big announcement that you made today. The government has allocated one billion dollars for the five agreements that you have in place. A similar sort of question that I think is on the minds of Canadians, if ultimately any of these vaccines prove successful, how confident are you that they -- that Canadians will have access sooner rather than later once that happens?
ANAND:	So, let me tell you what the process is from a procurement standpoint. We are negotiating agreements on a bilateral basis with multiple vaccine suppliers to make sure that we have access to multiple types of vaccines, protein subunit, MRNA, and viral vector vaccines for example, and once we have in place those agreements, we need to ensure that their clinical

trials occur and are successful and that Health Canada regulatory approval has been gained. Only then would vaccines be distributed to the Canadian public and in order for them to be distributed, we as a federal government will work with the provinces and territories in a method of distribution and this project and approach will be led on our end by our Minister of Health, and so from a procurement standpoint, my role is to make sure we have the agreements in place. We have five agreements in place right now, we will have access to up to 260 million doses of vaccines for Canadians and that's what I, as Minister, will continue to work on for Canadians, for the benefit of this country in moving over to the other side of this pandemic.

KAPELOS: Alright, Minister. I'll leave it there. Thanks very much for your time this evening.

ANAND: Thank you so much, Vassy. Take care.

KAPELOS: You too. That's Anita Anand, she's the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. She was in Oakville, Ontario.

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