

Daily Briefing to Parliamentarians Call Summary: March 21, 2020

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Hi all,

Today's briefing to Parliamentarians on COVID-19 was conducted by Dr. Njoo, along with other officials from GAC, PS, CBSA, and ISC. Dr. Njoo began by giving a brief update from the public health perspective. Globally, as of today there are 304,000 cases 13,000 deaths. In Canada there are 1231 cases and 18 deaths with 83,000 tests having been conducted. There are 10,000 tests a day being conducted in Canada.

Final number of call participants: 148

Number of questions unanswered: 4

Questions asked by Parliamentarians include;

- MP Michael Barrett (CPC; Leeds – Grenville – Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes): People on the ground in Peru have received no direction from GAC, and are looking for direction or information on what to do to get out of the country. What is the plan?
 - o *GAC: Flights to Peru will be arranged, and we understand moving around in Peru is difficult. We will be pushing updates through the registered Canadians abroad list. New information coming soon.*
- MP Mark Dalton (CPC; Pitt Meadows – Maple Ridge): Frontline General Practitioners in BC with family practices have had no direction on conducting their practices or how to get adequate supplies and be safe. Mayors are confused as to what exact social distancing measures municipalities should be enacting. How is the government ensuring that Canadians are being repatriated out of Haiti.
 - o *Dr. Njoo: Direction on supplies and practice is a provincial authority, would speak to BC Public Health authorities.*
 - o *GAC: MP should send direct request to GAC via the Parliamentary Secretary and the department will investigate the matter.*
- Senator Paula Simons (ISG): Nurses are refusing to do COVID tests without N-95 masks, federal regulations say regular masks are fine, What kind are masking procedures are optimal for testing/dealing with covid patients
 - o *Dr. Njoo: There is a need to operationalize and adapt practices based on local cases. After reviewing evidence around the world, the main mode of transmission is*

through droplets. Different types of PPE are required for different situations, it depends on the type on the interaction. Triage nurses might need different masks as compared to OR nurses. Provinces must recommend specific measures given their understanding. What's part of the issue is that healthcare workers might not have full information and are also scared, but they have to be able to perform their duties in safe way. Speak to AB Public Health officials.

- MP Todd Doherty (CPC; Cariboo – Prince George): Are foreign students able to apply for EI and assistance? Senator Beyak wants to know whether GAC can help get her children, who were abducted to Lebanon, out of the country and its precarious health situation. A constituent flew to Pearson and saw no screening measures, why is that so? Will non-citizen spouses of Canadians be allowed into the country?
 - *Dr. Njoo: Must take up EI measures to ESDC.*
 - *GAC: Can't get into details on that case due to privacy concerns, but will follow up with the case officers on those concerns*
 - *CBSA: There is very likely a public perception issue in terms of screening. People may think they will be screened by temperature checks on arrival. However, officers will be asked a question at the first kiosk about their health. Officers will distribute public health pamphlets to take, and are they are then told to self-isolate for 14 days. There are a number of exemptions for those people who cannot come back to Canada, the British spouse should be able to return.*
- Mary Jane McCallum (ISG): There are communities in Saskatchewan who are transporting people to hospital via bus and car, and are running out of supplies. What are the guidelines to sanitizing vehicle upholstery.
 - *There is a benefit program available to provide support for those who need health and infection control supplies. We recommend private transportation, there should be no large busses in use. Will ensure the regional office in Saskatchewan will get in touch with private transit companies to help.*
 - *Dr. Njoo: Check with local authorities on standards on how to disinfect.*
- MP Mike Lake (CPC; Edmonton – Wetaskiwin): The WHO is talking about relentless testing and tracing. What is our capacity to test right now. How many number of testing kits are there nationwide. How likely are we to increase capacity in the next few weeks. Is there tech being developed to shorten the time it takes to get tested and to get a test result back.
 - *Dr. Njoo: There are more challenges in other countries who cannot do adequate testing, WHO messaging emphasises access to testing in those areas most likely. We have tested 85,000 people so far. Overall we are doing well in terms of contact tracing. 80% of cases are travel related. That will go down, but we are enacting social distancing measures and travel bans. We are seeing community clusters in small areas of the country. There is a need to focus on high risk individuals first for tests, all others are being asked to self monitor for the time being. The AB self assessment tool is very useful. Look to AB on further guidelines for testing. We are working on much more advanced tests for COVID.*
- Dave Epp (CPC; Chatham – Kent – Leamington): What is the timing of when Temporary Foreign Workers can begin to flow through. Will there be repatriation of Canadians in Guatemala?
 - *GAC: GAC is triaging countries in the world with no flights out. Guatemala is being watched, and we are working with local authorities to see what is possible.*

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- *Dr. Njoo: IRCC would be best equipped to answer on TFW. The program will still go, but they will need to go through a 14 day isolation period.*
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- MP Carol Hughes (NDP; Algoma – Manitoulin – Kapuskasing): Is there a schedule for repatriation? Is there a place to go for more info? Are foreign students able to apply for EI and assistance? Why are there no measures in mining work camps to prevent spread? The business community is struggling, is there work being done to provide relief on loans?
 - *Dr. Njoo: No one from ESDC to answer questions on students or businesses measures.*
 - *GAC: We understand there's a lot of need for flights. We will provide a list of flights to countries that we are working on, but being too detailed and proactive will lead to non-Canadians looking to get on those flights. We are working on a solution.*
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- Senator Dennis Patterson (ISG): Can there be clarity from ISC on how funds being allocated to the Inuit will be flowing to Nunavut. Will ISC be coordinating with the Nunavut government who has authority on the ground.
 - *ISC: We have a strong relationship with Nunavut and we are working with them. We have launched a specific advisory committee on northern communities, where they will advise medical officers of health. In terms of money, the Minister has engaged with leadership and will be working collaboratively to see where the funding can go to, we will make sure funding goes to community in effective ways*
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- MP Jeremy Patzer (CPC; Cypress Hills – Grasslands): Are we processing "newbie" Temporary Foreign Workers?
 - *Deferred to IRCC.*
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- MP Paul Manly (GPC; Nanaimo – Ladysmith): This riding has one of highest seniors. The hospital there has 12 ventilators for 400,000 people who go there annually. Young people don't understand social distancing, and there is a need for establishing a national lockdown to make sure people stay at home
 - *Dr. Njoo: Issue of ventilators, most of the cases (80) are mild and able to recover at home. 20 need are, and only about 1-2 need ventilator support in a ICU. We need to protect vulnerable pops like citizens. Lots of planning going on, hospitals are preparing by freeing up beds and canceling elective surgery. Need coordination with FPTs to buy 500 more ventilators for surge capacity, and establish system to transport resources and personnel. Civil libs, at the this point everyone has a role in trying to social distance to flatten the curve. Hopefully a lock down is a last resort, but certainly strict options are on the table.*
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- MP Nelly Shin (CPC; Port Moody – Coquitlam): Are there plans to repatriate Canadians in India at this stage. Follow up, can you clarify what emergency benefits exist for those struggling in the entertainment industry.
 - *GAC: Working with government there to facilitate flights to India, and are optimistic that people will be able to be repatriated.*
 - *Dr. Njoo: Deferred to ESDC.*
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- MP Kelly McCauley (CPC; Edmonton West): On Tuesday it was said there is enough ventilators, but now are buying more and you're saying that there is not much need for them, can you clarify this? Can we have someone create a summary of these Q and A calls for MPs.
 - *Dr. Njoo: The ventilator issue is complicated, as very small amount of cases need them. Social distancing measures are trying to distribute the number of cases over a greater period of time, giving us more control of the outbreak. We can't tell yet on the exact need for ventilators as we wait to see how effective social distancing*
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measures are. If 1000 people get symptoms and require hospitalization over one week, it's a very different situation than 1000 people being hospitalized over a month. We must flatten the curve. We will look into providing a summaries.

Please note that this report is a working draft and is for internal PHAC use only. If you have any questions/comments, please let me know.

Best,

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