

Daily Briefing to Parliamentarians Call Summary: April 2, 2020

From : "Brickles, Spencer (PHAC/ASPC)" <spencer.brickles@canada.ca>

To: "Cluney, Craig (PHAC/ASPC)" <craig.cluney@canada.ca>, "StJames, Louise (PHAC/ASPC)" <louise.stjames@canada.ca>, "Lavoie, Marlene (PHAC/ASPC)" <marlene.lavoie@canada.ca>, "Gargum, Taha (PHAC/ASPC)" <taha.gargum@canada.ca>, "Frost, Evan (PHAC/ASPC)" <evan.frost@canada.ca>, "Osei, Peggy (PHAC/ASPC)" <peggy.osei@canada.ca>, "Novak, Krystal (PHAC/ASPC)" <krystal.novak@canada.ca>, "Beaudoin, John (PHAC/ASPC)" <john.beaudoin@canada.ca>

Cc: "Sammon, Jacob (PHAC/ASPC)" <jacob.sammon@canada.ca>, "Irick, Marina (PHAC/ASPC)" <marina.irick@canada.ca>

Date: Thu, 02 Apr 2020 22:06:36 +0000

Today's briefing to Parliamentarians on COVID-19 was conducted by Rhonda Kropp, along with other officials from TC, IRCC, AAFC, CSC, ISC, CBSA, CRA, ESDC, GAC, ISED, PS. Ms. Kropp began by giving a brief update from the public health perspective. As of noon today there are 10,466 cases in Canada and 111 deaths. In Canada, 260,000 people have been tested.

Final number of call participants: 159
Number of questions unanswered: 10

At the beginning of the call Transport Canada gave a follow-up answer to a question that was unanswered from a previous call.

-
- In regards to screening on measures for domestic flights and flights to northern work camps. In fact domestic checks do cover private or chartered operations for flights with 10 or more passengers. We are in discussion with territories and ISC if smaller flights like taxi flights should do health checks, but commercial domestic flights are indeed covered.
-

Questions asked by Parliamentarians include;

-
- MP Cathy McLeod (CPC; Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo): It seems there was optimism about getting most of the people out of India, but there have been a number of people excluded from the travel agent selection. Are there more planned for flights out of India for Canadians?
 - o GAC: India is on top of the list in terms of number of Canadian citizens seeking repatriation. Went from 5,000 to 6,000 plus. We have 6 flights planned, but we realize this will be insufficient. We are having discussions with Air India and other providers for other flights.
 - MP Mark Dalton (CPC; Pitt Meadows – Maple Ridge): Can someone from Finance answer questions? Are business owners unable to meet lease payments able to get assistance? Are people who have been laid off eligible for maternity leave in the summer? What is the repatriation update with the Philippines and Pakistan?

-
- ISED: Bankruptcy issue is quite complex, we do have office for bankruptcies, but we need to look into the issue more to see how small businesses are affected in this situation. There are different provincial legislation pieces that govern this area too. Will take this question back to the department.
 - ESDC nothing to add.
 - GAC: With regards to the Philippines,, there are 3000 requests to be repatriated and are currently triaging responses to see how many want to return. There continue to be commercial flights out of the Philippines and we're working with them to facilitate additional flights. With Pakistan, we've just operated overnight 2 flights, and are in discussion with airlines for additional flights to repatriate Canadians. For both, we're closely tracking the situations and discussing with commercial airlines to facilitate the greatest number possible of repatriated Canadians.
-
- Senator Kim Pate (ISG): What is the plan to reduce the number of people in federal prisons, given the rising number of COVID cases.
 - CSC: In collaboration with the Parole Board of Canada and Public Safety were looking at a variety of safe release options to release them.
-
- MP Elizabeth May (GPC: Saanich – Gulf Islands): A lot of people are falling into the cracks with the CERB. What's being done to help people currently not being covered by these relief efforts.
 - ESDC: We have been hearing a number of concerns with the CERB. As it stands, certain people are not eligible, but its helpful to hear information like this and to take it into consideration for additional policy measures.
-
- MP Gord Johns (NDP; Courtenay-Alberni): We were clearly told students would qualify for the CERB, but we've learned yesterday that students now don't. This is a huge problem given there's no jobs opening up now, and lots of people are falling through the cracks.
 - ESDC: We are well aware of issue and concerns with the CERB, we're having live and active conversations. The goal is to get money out to as many Canadians as we can as quickly as possible. With students we're looking at different youth programs to get measures for students. Mat leave would be processed as normal.
 - CRA: Nothing to add.
-
- Senator Mary Jane McCallum (ISG): There is an individual who works as a self employed massage therapist and currently does not qualify for EI, but her business is deemed an essential service. She is concerned about coming into contact with infected people and has decided to stop her practice. Will she be able to make a claim for financial support?
 - ESDC: We did include self employed as part of the CERB, but P/Ts ultimately deem what is essential. You do not need to quit to be eligible, but there are too many layers in the question to answer it well enough.
-
- MP Brad Vis (CPC; Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon): Our constituency offices are working night and day to make up for lack of Service Canada operational services. We encourage them to figure out a way to help Canadians better. As well, lots of employees at ESDC have been told to go home to social distance. Can the department inform Parliamentarians that ESDC employees are being redeployed to get to claims, answer phones and help Canadians.
 - ESDC: We're taking a multi pronged approach with this, were looking at telework, redeploying new computers and IT infrastructure. We're looking at critical services and seeing if other employees can be redeployed to the critical services.
 - Ms. Kropp: Comment is well taken, will pass on to Service Canada.
-

-
- MP Kelly McCauley (CPC; Edmonton West): The PM commented about increased risk of Canadians coming back in to the country. Are we doing any extra screening in advance of flights or when they're back in Canada? Will there be quarantine follow ups?

 - o Ms. Kropp: There is an increased risk from international travels, and OICS allow us to enforce mandatory self isolation and quarantine measures. Symptomatic people are banned from public conveyances and could be put into a quarantine facility. Symptomatic people should not be boarding flights, symptomatic people on flights will not be able to get on public transport or domestic flights. We've been proactive with passengers on the Zaandam to determine who's asymptomatic or symptomatic and make sure we have the facilities available to support them and minimize the risk to Canadians.
 - o GAC: Were working with other departments to make sure they're screened as people come in. It's been an excellent cross government effort to minimize risk.
 - o CBSA: We gain more and more experience everyday to identify those who are ill and facilitate people who are asymptomatic.

 - MP Paul Manly (GP; Nanaimo-Ladysmith): Wish to echo CERB comments and how people are falling through the cracks. The local United Way is asking about the wage subsidy. Lots of businesses had previously pledged funding but we expect a lot of these pledges to not come through and are anticipating a drop in income. What's the plans to help frontline non-profits who rely on pledges?

 - o ISED: The wage subsidy does indeed benefit the non-profit sector. That's all I can say about that, and would need to refer to colleagues from Finance for more information.

 - MP Alexandre Boulerice (NDP; Rosemont – La Petite-Patrie): What is being done to urgently help handicapped people and seniors who have lost all income? Can people still receive OSA and CPP?

 - o ESDC: People are eligible for CERB if they have made \$5,000 in the last year and have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. We continue to receive applications for OSA and CPP.

 - MP Mike Lake (CPC; Edmonton-Wetaskiwin): Is there an update on testing progress? This call is the most important part of my day, we would like individual briefings from separate departments at the beginning of the call. The website change is way better, thank you for that. I have a constituent who owns a business who lost all revenue but she wants to keep her 2 employees. The wage subsidy program came, but she was already in the process of applying for work sharing. What happens if work sharing is the better option? Can she transfer programs later?

 - o Ms. Kropp: SAC update from the NML on testing; we've been exponentially improving our testing capacity, and have been dealing with questions over testing consistency. In terms of who was tested, there is a NML testing strategy to determine who should be tested. There was a discussion that there are people who shouldn't get tested and who should ultimately stay home. People who work with vulnerable groups should be tested though, along with other factors such as related to travel. This strategy should drive individual provincial testing strategies. There are NML sites, P/T clinics and even veterinary labs who have refitted to do testing. We have also secured a flow of testing supplies and have domestically produced reagents. There are biotech companies who can also make reagents. We are getting closer and closer with rapid tests. One has been approved in the US, but there are concerns about

preferential contracts for Americans. A Canadian company making rapid tests is in the process of being approved, and they use Canadian inputs. The NML is testing this particular product, which is great for people in the north with logistical issues. FP/T governance body is also developing best practices for testing based on what's been learned thus far. Lots of stuff going on in the testing front.

- ESDC: Hesitant to give advice with the constituent as it depends on particulars. We suggest they follow up with the person dealing with their claim. Details on new wage program have not come out and so its hard to compare right now. We're looking at how these different measures are at play with one another.

-
- MP Dave Epp (CPC; Chatham – Kent – Leamington): With respect to extension of work permits for temporary foreign workers, it was said yesterday workers in-status can go past their current time period. Is there some place to find this In writing? There are lots of people who are interested in seeing this.

-
- IRCC: We would be happy to follow up separately with how to extend the work permits, but its critical to do it before the status expires, as they will benefit from this. If they have a work permit specific to one employer and are looking for another employer, they would need to re-apply. We would be happy to send all relevant information separately.
-

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,

Spencer Brickles
Parliamentary Affairs, Office of Strategic Policy and Planning
Public Health Agency of Canada / Government of Canada
spencer.brickles@canada.ca / Tel: 343-543-3102

Affaires parlementaire, Bureau des politiques et de la planification stratégiques
Agence de la santé publique du Canada / Gouvernement du Canada
spencer.brickles@canada.ca /Tél: 343-543-3102