

Daily Briefing to Parliamentarians Call Summary: March 29, 2020

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Today's briefing to Parliamentarians on COVID-19 was conducted by Cindy Evans, along with other officials from AAFC, CBSA, CRA, ESDC, GAC, ISED, PS, SC, TC. Ms. Evans began by giving a brief update from the public health perspective. Globally, as of today there over 700,000 cases. As of noon today there are 5866 cases in Canada and 63 deaths. In Canada, 205,000 people have been tested.

Final number of call participants: 112

Number of questions unanswered: 1

Questions asked by Parliamentarians include;

- MP Michael Barrett (CPC; Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes): How is the quarantine act practically enforced on campgrounds, where snowbirds with seasonal addresses are returning? How is a violation reported and how is the local jurisdiction to manage repeat offenses?
 - o Ms. Evans: There are processes in place at all points of entry, particularly education on mandatory self-isolation. We have increased communication to snowbirds coming back and are asking Canadians not to flock to cottage country and remote areas. We are working with RCMP and Public Safety, and have initiated a graduated compliance approach starting with education, to follow-up calls, to penalties and fines.
- MP Cathy McLeod (CPC; Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo): Can GAC provide an update on India and Peru?
 - o GAC: We have completed 3 flights from Peru and 3 more are scheduled for this week. We believe that with the capacity we've put in place, all Canadians we are aware of will be repatriated. We have been working hard on negotiations with India and hope to announce more details in immediate future.
- MP Nelly Shin (CPC; Port-Moody-Coquitlam): Can constituency casework that is typically submitted to CRA by fax be submitted by email, given that many people are working from home?
 - o CRA: Will look into this and try to provide information back through this channel.
- MP Rachel Blaney (NDP; North Island-Powell River): Is the funding announced for seniors today going to a program where seniors will be helping seniors, even though we are trying to

protect seniors? Will the funding going to the United Way reach smaller centres that don't have access to the United Way?

- ESDC: Normally, this program involves seniors helping seniors. At this time, unsure if the United Way will be further distributing funds. Will look into this.

- MP Paul Manly (GP; Nanaimo-Ladysmith): Is there a way for the province and federal government to support people that are on disability, lose their part-time jobs, apply for EI and then are cut off their PWD? Are we going to see other funding for seniors?

- ESDC: We announced funding for seniors today and can't speak to anything else coming down the pipe for seniors. We are looking at how different measures might impact different populations for disability.

- MP Gord Johns (NDP; Courtenay-Alberni): Is it accurate that some small business workers won't qualify for CERB as they are deemed essential services? Can information on the funding being rolled out on homelessness and for food banks be sent to all MPs?

- ESDC: In the coming days, we will be providing more information on CERB. Regarding the homelessness funding, the focus is often more on delivery than communication. Will try to bring back more information.

- MP Mike Lake (CPC; Edmonton-Wetaskiwin): Could testing evolve to the point where it can be done at-home or is surface based? Do we have a governmental framework or incubator to bring together innovators to brainstorm technological solutions?

- Ms. Evans: We are working with colleagues at CIHR and NML scientists, whom are actively engaged in testing capabilities and how to move to other modes. We are seeing great creativity and ingenuity as Canadian manufacturers retool their operations for other products, for example distilleries making hand-sanitizers.
- ISD: There has been a great deal of interest in the government's call to action on COVID-19. There are a number processes in place to bring the best minds together, as well as programs to support large-scale research. People with new ideas are encouraged to bring them forward, particularly on high-need areas such as PPEs and vaccines.

- Senator Marty Deacon (ISG): How can Canadians be assured that Canadian leaders are looking after themselves? How can MPs and Senators re-think our work and best utilize our staff to assist departments that are overwhelmed?

- Ms. Evans: Sustainability and the mental health of staff working on the crisis has been top of mind. Workers are practising social distancing. At PHAC, many staff are supporting efforts virtually, self-distancing is taking place in the office, senior leaders are thinking about steps to protect ourselves, and we are doubling people up and working in shifts. In terms of re-thinking your own work, not well-placed to answer this but you can certainly can speak with communities and jurisdictions.

- MP Todd Dougherty (CPC; Cariboo-Prince George): Hearing from constituents in India, there are concerns about getting to Delhi from outlying areas for repatriation flights. What steps are being taken to support them?

- GAC: We are working through details at all levels to ensure we have the right permissions and facilitation papers. We have mapped out locations of Canadians that wish to be repatriated and identified areas of focus. There are lots of detailed consular efforts behind the scenes and we are working through on a case by case basis.

- MP Heather McPhearson (NDP; Edmonton Strathcona): What is being done to ensure that postal workers have the protective equipment to do their job?

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- Ms. Evans: Colleague not available on the call to speak to postal workers specifically. There is information on the COVID-19 website about packaging and Canadians should not be concerned as we are not seeing the virus transmitted.
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- MP Randall Garrison (NDP; Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke): Can we allocate time at the beginning of these calls for officials to answer unanswered questions from the previous days? Are there any updates on physical distancing and measures for the prisons, both for those that live and work in them?
 - PS: Will try to get someone from CS on the call to answer this question.
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- MP Ziad Aboultaif (CPC; Edmonton Manning): Will a constituent wishing to drive home across the border have difficulty crossing, if they plan to do so in a week's time?
 - Ms. Evans: There may be delays at the border as we are taking time to educate and provide materials and instructions to people. Cannot provide more specific information about the borders today or a week from now. US and Canada agree that non-essential travel across the border in either direction is not helpful for the management of COVID-19. Constituents coming home to their residence will be subject to orders in place at that time.
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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."

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