

Daily Briefing to Parliamentarians Call Summary: April 4, 2020

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Today's briefing to Parliamentarians on COVID-19 was conducted by Rhonda Kropp, along with other officials from SC, CRA, CBSA, ESDC, GAC, ISED, TC, CSC. Ms. Kropp began by giving a brief update from the public health perspective. As of noon today there are 12,924 cases in Canada and 214 deaths. In Canada, 309,000 people have been tested. 4% of tests have been positive and 95% have been negative. We have been working extensively with the provinces and territories to expand our testing capacity.

Number of call participants: 90

Number of questions unanswered: 0

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

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- GAC: In regards to numbers on repatriation, as of today, we have helped 9,805 Canadians return on 55 flights. By the end of the week, we estimate 11,039 Canadians will be returned on 69 flights. Today we have flights coming in from Algeria, Peru, Trinidad, Delhi and more cruise ships are heading in to port. GAC would be happy to provide a weekly update or twice weekly on these calls to give repatriation updates.
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Questions asked by Parliamentarians include;

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- Senator Mary Jane McCallum (ISG): The government previously announced OAS increases and CPP changes that will come into effect by July, will these new changes be made retroactive to January and made eligible for those 65 and older?
 - o ESDC: *A number of groups have been hit hard and we recognize that seniors are particularly vulnerable. We are looking at different policy response measures in how to best support certain groups, but we can't give any details yet.*
 - MP Nelly Shin (CPC; Port Moody-Coquitlam): After speaking with different ethnic media outlets, their advertising sales are down significantly. As they are important resources for minority communities, will there be any support for them from the government?

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- *Ms. Kropp: Can't speak to advertisements, but PHAC has put out most of its products in multiple languages in order to meet Canadians linguistic diversity. We have an advertisement by Dr. Tam that's on television now. We have done our best to ensure that our material comes out in multiple languages.*
 - *SC: In addition to this, we've done active outreach with different community groups, such as ethnic language minorities, in order to deliver services more effectively.*
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- MP Mark Dalton (CPC; Pitt Meadows – Maple Ridge): We're starting to see a backlog of CRA cases, when will the MP line for CRA open up again?
 - *CRA: We note that there is a desire to have the line reopened, but we are prioritizing a number of calls and the volume is exceptionally high. There is no clear timeline on when we will revert to all previous service options.*
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- MP Elizabeth May (GPC; Saanich – Gulf Islands): Were seeing COVID-related scams that are targeting seniors, what's being done on that? Will there be loosened rules on drawing money from RRSPs?
 - *Ms. Kropp: We will for sure flag these scams to our comms department, who have been actively working to counteract them.*
 - *ESDC: We're looking at how we can best support seniors through ESDCs tools, including through the CERB.*
 - *CRA: Regulations on RRSPs is not within CRA's purview to change.*
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- MP Wayne Easter (LPC; Malpeque): Are Churches eligible for the Wage Subsidy for their Ministers? Are laid off Ministers eligible for the CERB?
 - *ESDC: The policy parameters on the wage subsidy are still being developed, non-profits are eligible. Failing that, they can still apply for the CERB. Can't speak much to the Wage Subsidy right now as the details are being developed.*
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- MP Randall Garrison (NDP; Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke): Will the spouses of Canadian citizens be allowed on flights from India and Pakistan, irrespective of their status in Canada?
 - *GAC: Family members will be allowed to accompany Canadian citizens if they are permanent residents of Canada themselves. We would need to defer to IRCC for more specifics on this question but they usually need some kind of visa status.*
 - *CBSA: If they have the appropriate documents they'd be admissible, but this is an IRCC issue.*
 - *Ms. Kropp: We will make sure IRCC gets the question.*
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- MP Damian Kurek (CPC; Battle River – Crowfoot): There is a troubling level of inconsistencies between the PM's messages, ministerial messages and messages being given on this call. I encourage consistency across government to limit frustrations. In regards to people who lost vast majority of income, but are technically not eligible for the CERB, will the rules be expanded to cover these people?
 - *ESDC: We've heard from numerous sources of different circumstances that are happening for people. As of right now you have to meet the specific criteria, but we continue to examine different options and parameters for the policy. No details yet but the issue is active.*
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- Pierre Vanier (Political advisor to MP Luc Thériault, BQ; Montcalm, **HESA Member**): Are there more details on available on the CERB? When will flights of Temporary Foreign Workers arrive in Canada?
 - *ESDC: This is a very active file, nothing new to add, but people will be eligible if they meet the existing criteria.*
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- *Ms. Kropp: No one from IRCC here.*
 - *ESDC: GAC can confirm details of flights.*
 - *GAC: Sadly there is no information right now, but we will take this back.*
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- MP Laurel Collins (Victoria): How will enforcement of the Quarantine Act work in coordination with local police? Will today's \$10m announced for women's shelter be in addition to the previously announced \$50m?
 - *Ms. Kropp: In regards to the QA orders enforcement, it involves working with CBSA, RCMP and local police forces. We're still working out details but the intention would be that checks would be done in multiple ways, but local police would be involved with this, based on information given by CBSA, while PHAC maintains a central list.*
 - *ESDC: It was further details on a previous announcement for the women's shelter funding.*
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- MP Mike Lake (CPC; Edmonton-Wetaskiwin): Regarding support networks for private daycare providers, many have lost significant children and revenue but not all, will they qualify for CERB. If a provider has health concerns and closes, will they qualify? If a provider doesn't feel comfortable with watching children would they qualify?
 - *ESDC: Answer to first would be no she wouldn't qualify as they still have income even though it's reduced. You cannot quit a job to be eligible for the CERB. These are particular circumstances, it depends on the P/T you reside in as far as having a business open. We're encouraging people who don't qualify for CERB to look at the existing programs we have right now.*
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- MP Faycal El-Khoury (LPC; Laval-Les Iles): Regarding the behaviour of Canadian banks, some people are still paying 8% interest on loans and mortgages, despite the Bank of Canada lowering the prime rate. Can the Government pressure the banks to lower their interest rates?
 - *Ms. Kropp: We will follow up with Finance on this question.*
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- MP Cathy McLeod (CPC; Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo): To SC, we appreciate that the model changed in terms of health services delivery, but we were told there would be accommodations made for people who need help in person. Will there be model changes for a more personal touch for phone lines? Will SC staff be reallocated to help with CERB?
 - *SC: We are aware of challenges Canadians are having in terms of access to information and services. The need to close offices has put strain on ability to serve Canadians, hence why we've given the chance to have our providers call Canadians back. We continue to look at different measures to help. We're looking at reallocating employees and have been hiring new staff. We've reallocated 3000 staff from non critical to critical services. Have taken note of the question.*
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- MP Earl Dreeshan (CPC; Red Deer – Mountain View): 47 people have been released from the remand centres in the riding, and is putting pressure on the RCMP to deal with these people who are causing havoc. The big fear is that RCMP will be reallocated from facilities here that are lacking staff, but the community needs to be protected. Can Public Safety look at some options to protect these communities?
 - *Ms. Kropp: Will pass on to Public Safety.*
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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.

Best,

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