

## Daily Briefing to Parliamentarians Call Summary: March 26, 2020

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Hi all,

Today's briefing to Parliamentarians on COVID-19 was conducted by Rhonda Kropp, along with other officials from GAC, PS, CRA, AAFC, CBSA, SC, ISED, PSPC and ESDC. Ms. Kropp began by giving a brief update from the public health perspective. Globally, there are 475,000 cases as of today. As of today there are over 3400 cases in Canada and 85 deaths. About 125,000 people have been tested. There have been large increases in several provinces over several days. In Quebec, the ability of hospital labs to confirm cases have contributed to larger increase of reported cases. About 158,000 tests have been conducted in Canada. It has been reported that 6% of cases have required hospitalization, 2% of cases are critical and 1% are fatal. There has been a great mix of travel related cases, as well as community spread, such as in Newfoundland where the number of cases has doubled due to a single funeral.

Final number of call participants: 187

Number of questions unanswered: 14

Questions asked by Parliamentarians include;

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- Senator Paula Simons (ISG): Brooks and High River Alberta have plants that provide the majority of Canada's beef. There has been a huge increase in demand for beef, is there a way to get more support from the CFIA to extend their hours of work and secure the capacity of the supply chain.
    - o AAFC: CFIA is looking at all different options, as well as looking at working with provinces and coordinating with the sector for increased capacity. If you can forward the request on to the department, we can ensure that issue is looked at.
  - MP David Sweet (CPC; Flamborough - Glanbrook): There are varying descriptions of isolation and quarantine. What is the government's definition of self-isolation, and can people self-isolating go for walks
    - o Ms. Kropp: The most recent OiC requires mandatory isolation. Those people cannot move on public transit and must stay in a residence. This involves very strict
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isolation, no walks or groceries as the risk of spreading the disease is high. Self isolation refers to asymptomatic people. They have to follow all PHAC guidance such as social distancing. They are advised to stay at home if possible, and these people can go outside if they wish to go for a walk and get groceries. You will see different recommendations across jurisdictions.

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- MP Cathy McLeod (CPC; Kamloops – Thompson – Cariboo): In terms of the quarantine process, if an international traveler comes in and is asymptomatic, can they still get on another domestic flight? What's being done for safety in that circumstance?
    - o Ms. Kropp: Those international travellers will be screened, asymptomatic people and symptomatic people will get different sets of guidance. Symptomatic people will be given transport by the federal government if they have no private means of travel. For those who are asymptomatic, they are allowed to take a connecting flight, as the risk of transmission is far lower for an asymptomatic person versus symptomatic. These people still are required to self-isolate and social distance.
  - MP Tamara Jansen (CPC; Cloverdale—Langley City) Will there be a specific government program for farmers who are being affected by COVID-19 so they won't get bankrupt?
    - o AAFC: We are very aware of the difficulties going on. There is something that does need to be done differently, there is additional credit through Farm Credit Canada, but we are looking at other options.
    - o ESDC: TFW will be allowed into Canada, working closely with the sector, but we are working to make sure they self isolate. More details coming in soon.
  - MP Alexandre Boulerice (NDP; Rosemont – La Petite-Patrie): How can people access these new government programs without internet access?
    - o CRA: People are able to register over the phone for the new programs.
  - MP Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni): What's happening with the money being allocated to address the homeless issue. Will fishers be deemed an essential service to solidify food security in their communities?
    - o ESDC: We will be able to speak more on the Reaching Home Initiative very soon.
    - o Public Safety: We are looking to provide guidance on all critical infrastructure areas. Our guidance for essential services will include fisheries, but ultimately these lists are up to the provinces.
  - MP Nelly Shin (CPC; Port Moody – Coquitlam): There is a constituent who is ready to produce surgical masks, but is having trouble getting machinery shipped to Canada. Is there a way to expedite this?
    - o ISED: We have been overwhelmed by offers from industry, were trying to contact thousands of companies. Several requests in regards to mass manufacturing. We are working with GAC to see if we can free up goods which are stuck abroad. We will look into this situation and make sure the offer is pulled to the front.
    - o PSPC: We know there are export challenges, working with GAC to try and expedite this. We would be more than happy to work with colleagues to assist where we can.
  - MP Laurel Collins (NDP; Victoria): How can people verify that they have been impacted by COVID before applying for the new economic benefits. What's the eligibility and process?
    - o ESDC: The process is going to be as simple as possible, no evidence is needed beyond a SIN and confirming that they have been affected negatively. Still building the application for April. Must be a resident of Canada, over 15, must've made 5,000 in the last year via income or maternity/paternity leave. Can't have income in the next 14 weeks, and must have a SIN.

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- MP Kelly McCauley (CPC; Edmonton West): Can there be serious consideration of extending these calls? This is the only way for opposition MPs to gain information. Can we get notes or an FAQ for all these so we don't repeat questions? Why are there still a massive amount of incoming international flights, despite international travel bans?
    - o Ms. Kropp: There are a lot of people returning from March Break, or had previous troubles getting home. Can't speak to individual situations.
    - o CBSA: We are looking at international flights coming in, there has been a significant decrease of foreign nationals, and the number of Canadians per flight has been changing greatly in the last few weeks. Rapid decrease of foreign nationals. There has also been a massive decrease at our land borders, but we still have snow birds coming back. Down 75% from last year. Decreasing day by day.
    - o Ms. Kropp: Happy to hear these are useful calls. I can commit to taking suggestions and to discuss with other colleagues.
  - MP Mike Lake (CPC; Edmonton – Wetaskiwin): What is the current inventory of test kits that have been used. What is the minimum amount of time from swab to result to receive a test result back.
    - o Ms. Kropp: We have been able ramp up and increase testing. We have 33 lab testing facilities across the country now doing results. Minimum time is not provide-able, but certain things affect the amount of testing being done. The sheer shock on system. Often tests need to be shipped to labs which could be far. We are doing our best to procure a point of care test which would rapidly decrease test times. These concerns are faced by all countries.
  - Senator Peter Boehm (ISG): We are seeing a spike of Canadians returning, but also a significant amount of Canadian non-residents. It's not clear how long they will be staying, but these numbers will influence government decision making and data collection. How will this data be differentiated by stats can? Are Canadian non-residents being tracked?
    - o CBSA: When Canadians or PRs return, we don't track if they live outside Canada. We identify by right to return. We don't track if they will be back for a short amount of time. We don't have a good answer if we are tracking these figures or identifying this for Stats Canada.
  - MP Robert Kitchen (CPC; Souris – Moose Mountain): Do people who need to connect to another part of the country must quarantine in the area they arrive in even if they are asymptomatic or symptomatic. Can you define what the prognosis of what "recovered" is and if a recovered person can travel or move around the country.
    - o Ms. Kropp: Symptomatic people cannot board public conveyance, asymptomatic people can. They will be asked to self isolate, but they can connect to different flights. Defining a recovered person means they've received two negative tests, as science evolves this may change. Recovering individuals are not required to be in isolation, but are encouraged to social distance.
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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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