

**TRANSCRIPTION/TRANSCRIPTION
BRIEFING/MISE À JOUR**

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LOCATION/ENDROIT: Teleconference

PRINCIPALS/PRINCIPAUX: Cindy Evans, Public Health Agency of Canada, Covid 19 Emergency Manager

SUBJECT/SUJET: The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) holds a daily COVID-19 technical briefing for Parliamentarians.

Moderator: Good afternoon and welcome to the technical briefing to Parliamentarians on the government's response to Covid 19. Joining us today are the following departments and agencies: Employment and Social Development Canada, Global Affairs Canada, Canada Border Services Agency, Agriculture and AgriFood Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada, Public Safety, Service Canada and Transport Canada.

Bonjour et bienvenue à la séance d'information technique aux Parlementaires sur la réponse du gouvernement à propos du Covid 19. Les ministères et organismes suivants se joignent à nous aujourd'hui : Emplois et Développement Social Canada, Agence des services frontaliers Canada, Agriculture et agroalimentaire Canada, Agence du Revenu du Canada, Affaires Mondiales, Innovation, Science et Développement Économique, Sécurité Publique, Service Canada et Transport Canada.

Please note callers will be permitted one question. We ask that you keep the question to 60 seconds as there are many callers on the line who wish to have a chance to ask their question. Veuillez noter que vous pouvez poser une question à la fois. Nous vous demandons de limiter la question à environ 60 secondes car il y a de nombreux appelants sur la ligne qui souhaitent avoir la possibilité de poser leurs questions.

Please identify yourself and inform us which riding you represent. Veuillez s'il vous plait vous identifier et nous informer de la circonscription que vous représentez. I would like to turn the meeting over to Ms. Cindy Evans, the Public Health Agency of Canada's Covid 19 emergency manager.

J'aimerais maintenant céder la parole à Mme Cindy Evans, la gestionnaire des urgences Covid 19 de l'Agence de Santé Publique du Canada. À vous la parole Madame Evans.

Cindy Evans: Merci beaucoup. Bon après-midi tout le monde. Good afternoon and to set our context I'll give an update on the international and the domestic situations. As Dr. Tam announced today globally there are over 700,000

cases. In Canada there are 5,866 cases, 63 deaths and 205,000 people have been tested.

Tel qu'annoncé par Dr. Tam aujourd'hui à l'échelle mondiale il y a plus de 700,000 cas. Au Canada il y a 5,866, 63 décès et 205,000 personnes ont été testées. With that let's open it up for our first question.

Operator: We will now take questions from the telephone lines. Nous allons maintenant passer à la période des questions. If you have a question and you're using a speaker phone please lift your handset before making a selection. Si vous utilisez un téléphone mains libres s'il vous plait soulevez le combiné avant d'effectuer votre sélection.

If you have a question, please press *1 on your telephone keypad. Si vous voulez poser une question s'il vous plait appuyez *1 de votre téléphone à clavier. If at any time you wish to cancel your question you may press #. Vous pouvez à tout moment annuler votre question en appuyant sur #. Please press *1 at this time if you have a question. S'il vous plait appuyez *1 maintenant pour poser une question. Our first question, notre première question, est de Michael Barrett. Please go ahead.

Michael Barrett: Thanks very much. My name is Michael Barrett. I'm the member for Leeds Grenville Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. My question is with respect to the enforcement of the Quarantine Act. My constituency includes two land border crossings and a section of the 401 and we have a lot of snowbirds who have returned and are returning to this area.

These folks don't have permanent addresses in Canada but return to seasonal addresses at camps (inaudible). Local residents are concerned that these campgrounds are opening up this week to welcome back these snowbirds who are to be quarantined.

The question they have is how is the Quarantine Act enforced practically on the ground and what does that enforcement look like. If someone is to violate it, how is that reported? If there is a repeat offence how is the local jurisdiction to manage that? If you could provide some information I'd appreciate it.

Cindy Evans: Thank you for your question. First I would like to say we do have processes in place at all points of entry in Canada. That includes land, airports and water. One of the important aspects of the work we do at borders is educational.

It's to make sure everyone is aware of what they are responsible for, to give very clear instructions on those returning travelers on the order that's in place for them for mandatory self-isolation including things like going straight home, don't stop, stay inside, you're not out and about exercising, monitor your symptoms, given in appropriate language.

We have increased our communication with respect to snowbirds coming back. I think people need to consider international travel. We don't always think of the US in the same way we think about traveling around the world. We have been re-emphasizing messages for the snowbirds. As well, your jurisdiction has raised concerns with us about asking Canadians not to flood to cottage country and that impacts on remote areas anywhere where we think there may be increase. Just the health pressures would be different in those areas.

To talk about how the quarantine will be enforced, we do collect information from people as they're returning to Canada and we have in our work with the RCMP and with Public Safety initiated a compliance and enforcement approach which aligns with having a graduated approach.

We always start with information and education and we have found and there is history of Canadians taking the right measures when they understand the rationale for them. That's an important part of us giving education. There are follow up calls made to people that are to be quarantined in their homes. There are fines and penalties that can be put in place. There is a compliance enforcement strategy in place. Thanks for that. We'll take the next question.

Operator: The next question is from Cathy McLeod. Please go ahead.

Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Cathy McLeod, Kamloops Thompson Cariboo in British Columbia. I'm just wondering from Global Affairs if we can have an update in terms of both India and Peru.

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to my colleague at Global Affairs.

Heather Jeffrey: Hi there. It's Heather Jeffrey from Global Affairs. On Peru we've already completed 3 flights now out of Peru and we have 3 more being scheduled for this week including with additional connections out of Cusco. We already were able to evacuate 300 Canadians out of Cusco but the remaining will be processed in this week's flights including connections with Iquitos as well and some of the other outlying areas.

We believe with the capacity we've put in place this whole roster of Canadians that we're aware of in Peru will be able to be repatriated. Again the ROCA, registry of Canadians abroad service is how the messaging for those flights will be communicated. That should be happening overnight tonight, tomorrow.

In terms of India we've been working very hard on negotiations with the Indian government to get the right permissions to have flights that leave through the lockdown that they've put in place domestically. We're very I think close to announcing the flights that would take place under that. We hope to do so in the immediate future. I can't

give you an exact timeline but we are working very hard on it and we have a very viable solution.

Cindy Evans: We'll take the next question please.

Operator: The next question is from Nelly Shin. Please go ahead.

Nelly Shin: Thank you so much for all your hard work and for these daily calls. They certainly are helpful. My question is concerning with the social isolation our case workers are working from home. I know that CRA requires a response to them to be sent by fax and not all my staff members will be able to access fax machines. Will CRA be allowing us to submit these response forms to them by email given the special circumstances we're in right now?

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to my colleague at CRA.

Unidentified Male, CRA: (Unintelligible) speaking. I'm sorry I didn't quite catch what elements are being faxed to the agency.

Nelly Shin: When we do case work and we have to file the information to your office –

Unidentified Male, CRA: Oh, from your constituency. I don't know the answer to that. I will look into it and try to provide information back through this channel.

Operator: The next question is from Rachel Blaney. Please go ahead.

Rachel Blaney: This is Rachel Blaney. I'm the Member of Parliament for North Island Powell River. My question is on the announcement made today around funding going to seniors. I'm a little concerned because I know the mechanism they were talking about using is a program where seniors help seniors.

The New Horizons funding, that's the mechanism, that's the methodology. I represent a rural and remote community so two questions on this. Is this going to be a program where seniors are helping seniors? I don't quite understand that when we're trying to protect people as they age from this. The second one is it's going to United Way. Is it going to get to other organizations in smaller centres that don't have access to United Way?

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to my colleague at ESDC.

Chris at ESDC: Thanks for the question. I can say that normally this program is about seniors very much involved in the delivery of this and the projects as well so it is seniors helping seniors as well. I'm not sure at this time if the United Way

will be further redistributing the funds. I will look into that and see. It's a very new announcement and I'm not up to speed on whether or not they would further distribute those funds.

Operator: The next question is from Paul Manly. Please go ahead.

Paul Manly: I've got – I'm from Nanaimo Ladysmith. I've got a question about people who are on disability who have part time jobs, that get laid off and then they apply for EI and they're cut off their PWD so their payments are clawed back, every penny they earn on EI is clawed back by the province.

I wondered if we can get something going with the province so that these people can get some help because these extra earnings are often what gives them the ability to survive. I'm also wondering if we're going to see some other funding for seniors because they're also dealing with a crash in the stock market, loss in dividend payments and I think they could help with a big boost in OAS.

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to my colleague at ESDC.

Chris at ESDC: Thanks for the question. Two parts there, the first announcement was announced for seniors today. I know we're looking at all our programs and how we can help respond. I can't say anything else what is coming down the pipe anything for seniors.

With regards to disability we are looking at that and how different measures might impact different populations. This is what I can say at this time given Minister Qualtrough's portfolio and strong desire to help persons with disabilities I would suspect we'd be looking at that population through this time as well.

Operator: As a reminder, please *1 if you have a question. De nouveau n'hésitez pas à appuyer *1 pour toute question. The next question is from Gord Johns. Please go ahead.

Gord Johns: Thank you. My question is seeking clarification on the roll out of the emergency benefit. I've got lots of people that are small business owners that are deemed as essential services like vacation providers that have closed their doors at the request of their local communities for example in tourism based communities. They're being told by government officials they won't qualify because they're deemed essential services. I just need clarification on that.

Again we're hearing from different Members of Parliament on the government side saying there's funding rolling out on the homelessness funding. We're not seeing that in our communities and wondering if that can get sent to all MP's, the information around that and certainly needing funding for food banks. Our food banks the shelves are running dry and donations are literally drying right up. I'm wondering if there's any

update on that.

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to ESDC.

Chris at ESDC: Thanks for the question. I will try to provide a better answer on the homelessness one. I'm not too sure. I do know that funding has started to roll out. I think what it is there is sometimes the focus is on delivery on some of these instances and less on the communication side.

With regards to the new benefit, in the coming days we'll be providing more information on the new benefit. As you know it's to help workers in Canada who have been impacted by the Covid 19. All I can say there is we're working very diligently and urgently to be able to provide answers and get these questions and answers out so that people will know how to benefit from this and questions like that.

Operator: The next question is from Mike Lake. Please go ahead.

Hon. Mike Lake: Thank you very much to everybody for being part of this. That goes for my colleagues as well from all Parties who are asking some great questions and obviously a lot for us all to learn. To stick with the testing side but branch into technology development, I'm sure we've all had different ideas on things that might or might not work, most of us not being scientists or researchers.

For me it's thinking about whether testing could evolve to the point where you would have a pregnancy type test or something like that people could take, whether there might be a surface type test like when you go through the airport and someone runs that swab through your stuff to see if there's bomb making materials or something like that.

We all have these ideas. I think we're limited on our ability to bubble them up and ask those types of questions. I see Dyson has come out with a new ventilator design and I'm sure there's great technology for PPE. How do we – do we have a framework as a government to bring together the best ideas, almost like an incubator system of sorts maybe through Zoom where we could get innovators within our own ridings.

I think in my riding about oil and gas companies who probably could morph into developing PPE for example if they knew what they were looking for. This is a bit different than the buy and sell site and those kinds of things because to take part in that you have to know what it is you're able to produce and how that might fit in.

I'm talking about the ability to brainstorm and bring the best ideas from Canada together. I look at the potential of what we're going through as the equivalent of the moon landing and all of the different innovations that came out of that moon landing. How can Canadian innovators take part in this process in a way that's going to impact us right now in tackling the problem in front of us but also allow us to lead the way in the

future?

Cindy Evans: Thanks very much for that question. I'll turn to my colleague at ISED. Just to let you know we are having at the Public Health Agency of Canada we are working with our colleagues at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the scientists at our national microbial lab are actively engaged in terms of testing capabilities, how to bolster what we have now, how to move into other modes.

Certainly others have raised the questions that you have about will we find ourselves moving into what we would refer to as a point of care testing ability. The buy and sell site that we've seen lots of offers come up.

And the creative ways of manufacturers retooling some of their operations to support Canadians at this time has been quite beneficial. Just examples that come to mind for me are distilleries helping to make hand sanitizers or hockey visor manufacturers retooling and making face masks for our hospitals and primary care workers. We're seeing some great creativity and ingenuity in Canada. Maybe with that I'll turn to my colleague at ISED to see if there's anything else they could add on this question.

Patrick at ISED: Thank you. It's Patrick (inaudible) from ISED. I think there's been a great deal of interest coming from manufacturers and technology providers to the government's call to arms, call to action on Covid 19 on the industrial side.

We've seen some of the biggest manufacturers in this country step forward to bring forward ideas and offer up solutions and suggestions as well as collaborating partner with other companies to identify new technologies, new ways of doing things. There are a number of processes in place and going on right now that are doing – bringing the best minds together.

There's the (inaudible) challenge on ventilators as an example, the NRC through the industrial research assistance program and innovative solutions Canada here at ISED are working together on a Covid 19 challenges procurement program where we're looking at various areas to bring together ideas and companies and support companies who have those really smart and new ideas.

There are a number of programs as well previously announced by the government to support large scale research as well. Two of those for instance Medicogo on the vaccine side and (inaudible) on the therapeutics, lots of innovation going on within Canadian industry.

Certainly those who have new ideas they're asked to bring that forward to the department. We're very interested in having conversations especially if they can target the areas most needed on the PPE side and then on the vaccines and therapeutics side as well.

Operator: The next question is from a non-identified participant. Please state your name and proceed with your question. Your line is open, please go ahead. Make sure your line is unmuted please. Hearing no response I will move on to the next question. The next question is from Marty Deacon, please go ahead.

Senator Deacon: Thank you and thank you first. We have many Canadians returning on cruise ships by being supported and on two recent Air Canada flights, one from Peru, one from San Diego just returned home. Air Canada passengers were permitted to use the sound system to thank the government of Canada, specifically Global Affairs. So thank you for your continued work by the hour to get thousands of our Canadians still yet to come home, home. Thank you for that.

My question is two parts, focusing on capacity and realistic long term assistance ability. Some Ministers and departments have been immersed in Covid 19 since late January. All have been immersed in the past 15, 16, 17 days in what appears to be 24/7. The leadership particularly given the pace of change and the expected action can take on the persona for being super human.

How can Canadians be assured that our precious and dedicated leaders are looking after themselves and their departments in the short and long haul. Certainly it's okay to be vulnerable and realistic to Canadians while we all try to support and respond to the issues. That's the first part.

The second part is looking at many Canadian businesses and individuals as mentioned earlier are being creative and innovative in their response to Covid 19 and the needed manufactured materials.

How can we as part of (inaudible) as MPs and Senators rethink our work, industrialize our staff, our resources to assist those departments that are overwhelmed with the volume and expectations? These are thoughts and questions that may or may not be able to be answered this evening but I'd like to put them forward. Thank you.

Cindy Evans: Thanks for your question. Maybe with the second one you asked in terms of how you can rethink your own work I'm not well placed to answer that for you. I think certainly the communities, speaking with communities and within jurisdictions, partnership across sectors, I think there are certainly areas you could look at but a bit out of my wheelhouse to address.

With respect to your first question, certainly the sustainability and the mental health of the staff that we have working on this crisis has been top of mind. We are practicing social distancing in the same way that we ask all Canadians so for many of the – I'll just speak for the Public Health Agency – many of the staff don't come to the office at all.

They're supporting their effort virtually. Staff that do have to come in are social isolating. We'll even do teleconferences within our own building. You will also see at the higher level discussions that we have with our senior leaders similarly we are thinking about

taking the steps we need to do to protect ourselves.

We do look to making sure people – doubling people up, working in shifts to make sure we can sustain this. I think as we've heard from our Chief Public Health Officer this is not going to be a two week piece of work for us. We need to be situating ourselves ready for the long haul. I very much appreciate your question and certainly I know that staff would appreciate to know that Parliamentarians are concerned for them. Next question.

Operator: Once again please press *1 if you have a question.
De nouveau n'hésitez pas à appuyer *1 pour toute question. The next question is from Todd Doherty. Please go ahead.

Todd Doherty: Good afternoon everyone. I first want to say thanks to all of you on the phone and to my Parliamentarian colleagues across the way. I hope you all are safe and healthy. With respect to India, we know that the situation is growing tenuous. Every day violence is – under this lockdown it's getting pretty wild there.

My concern that I'm hearing from the constituents we have there with relation to trying to get into Delhi from those outlying areas 8, 9, 10 hours away it is going to be – they're very worried about even going outside of their place of residence right now just to try to get some food as Canadians or not from India.

I know this is probably even impacting our consular team there, just how wild it's getting in India. What steps or measures are being done so that those in the outlying areas are able to catch the flights if they're going to be into Delhi, the repatriation flights? The same goes for in Peru as well. What measures are we taking to make sure those that are under strict lockdown measures are able to get to the areas where the flights are flying out of?

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to my colleague at GAC.

Heather Jeffrey: Very good question. This is something we see in a lot of lockdown situations. We have a number of tools and part of the reason why the logistics for these efforts take a while to put into place is working through these details with local authorities, not just at the federal level but also at the municipal level or state government level to make sure we have the right permissions and facilitation papers.

We've mapped out where the Canadians are that have registered with us that have indicated a wish to be repatriated, where they're located. We've identified sort of areas of focus. We will be working to find different ways. It's going to differ based on the area in which they find themselves to concentrate those populations in either Delhi or Mumbai for repatriation.

In some cases we'll be using bus transportation. In other cases we'll be issuing facilitation letters. In other cases we might be looking at domestic flights to consolidate

people. There's a wide variety of approaches but indeed it isn't necessarily even a consistent approach across the country.

What works in Delhi might not work in Punjab and so there's a lot of very detailed consular effort behind the scenes to put in place these arrangements. We have a lot of different techniques and it will be tailored to each group and where they find themselves and how they need to connect up with repatriation options. We're very conscious of the challenges and we'll be working through it on a case by case basis.

Operator: The next question is from Heather McPherson.
Please go ahead.

Heather McPherson: Can you hear me? Okay, thank you. Thank you very much for everyone for your questions and for the great answers we've had so far and for everyone who's working so hard on a Sunday to get through this pandemic.

I have a question on how we are working with the postal workers across the country. I wanted to understand what's being to make sure particularly postal workers who are working in the sorting facilities have the protective equipment they need to do their job.

We know they are a back door, that things are coming in, that they are working quite directly with items of mail, packages and then shipping those out across the country. I have heard from the Edmonton sorting plant that there is not protective implements put in place. I just want to know when that might be expected to happen.

Cindy Evans: Thank you for your question. I don't believe I have a colleague on the line that can speak specifically to postal workers. I will say there is information on the Covid 19 website that talks about that Canadians should not be concerned about packages that are coming.

We're not seeing the movement of the virus on hard surfaces. In other areas where we have people directly interacting with pieces of paper handed by a client, we do have people wearing gloves but I'm sorry I can't speak specifically to the measures for postal workers. We'll take the next question please.

Operator: The next question is from Randall Garrison, please go ahead.

Randall Garrison: Hi Randall Garrison, Esquimault Saanich Sooke. I have one suggestion quickly and that is at the beginning after the health update maybe we could have a chance for officials to answer some of the questions from the previous days before we go to new questions. My question has to do with the fact I have a federal correctional facility in my riding as well as provincial facilities.

I'm disappointed that we haven't heard anything about measures to reduce the prison population to allow more physical distancing in prison and to make prisons a little more

safe for those who are in them and those who work in them. Thank you.

Cindy Evans: I'll turn to my colleague at Public Safety to see if there's anything they can add to this question.

Craig, Public Safety: It's Craig (inaudible) here. I'm sorry I don't have anything to add. Much as yesterday I have not been able to make contact yet to connect. I'm responsible more for the operational side but we will try to get somebody from Correctional Services Canada onto the call tomorrow perhaps to answer this question directly.

Cindy Evans: Thank you Craig. We're going to take one more question.

Operator: Please press *1 if you have a question. N'hésitez pas à appuyer *1 pour une question. The next question is from a participant. Please state your full name and proceed with your question.

Ziad Aboultaif: Ziad Aboultaif, Edmonton Manning. The question is I do have a constituent in Florida. They want to drive back home to Edmonton. The question is they're telling me there's some news. They're getting some feedback that the borders could be difficult to cross this way.

They're planning to do that crossing maybe in a week from now or so. Will you be able to tell me I can assure them they can cross this way? They're healthy. They've been isolating themselves for almost a month. I would like to know if I can advise them otherwise.

Cindy Evans: Thank you for your question. We have put in place an emergency order under the Quarantine Act whereby any travelers returning to Canada are required to mandatory self-isolate, so a mandatory quarantine. Regardless of the mode of transportation, whether it's air travel or through land borders, there will be a requirement for your constituents to mandatory self-isolate when they come back.

There's nothing more specific I could say about the borders today in terms of the difficulty in crossing. There may be delays because we are taking the time to educate and provide materials and instructions to people. I can't speak to what would be the case a week from now.

Certainly there's been ongoing collaboration with our US counterparts where both countries are in agreement that non-essential travel across the border in either direction is not helpful for our management of this Covid 19 pandemic. If your constituents are coming home to their residence they would be subject to the orders in place at that time. Thank you for your question.

At this point we are going to close it off to questions. I'd like to thank everyone very

much for your ongoing questions. It is really helpful. The questions you raise help us to understand what is information that also other Canadians would be interested to have. With that I'll thank you and we will close the call.

Operator: Thank you, merci. The conference has now ended. Please disconnect your lines at this time. We thank you for your participation. La conférence est maintenant terminée. Veuillez s'il vous plait raccrocher votre ligne et merci à tous les participants qui se sont joints.