

Daily Briefing to Parliamentarians Call Summary: March 28, 2020

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Date: Sun, 29 Mar 2020 11:50:30 +0000

Today's briefing to Parliamentarians on COVID-19 was conducted by Cindy Evans, along with other officials from AAFC, CBSA, CSC, CRA, ESDC, GAC, IRCC, ISED, ISC, PS, TC. Ms. Evans began by giving a brief update from the public health perspective. Globally, as of today there 600,000 cases. As of noon today there are 5153 cases in Canada and 55 deaths. In Canada, 184,000 people have been tested.

Final number of call participants: 121

Number of questions unanswered: 6

Questions asked by Parliamentarians include;

- MP Tracy Gray (CPC; Kelowna-Lake Country): Is there a link we can give to people for CERB even if portal isn't active yet? Would like to be able to refer constituents to up-to-date information on the government website immediately after PM announcements are made every morning.
 - o Ms. Evans: GoC is working as quickly as possible as COVID-19 situation evolves. Will take suggestions back to colleagues.
 - o CRA: The portal is open and available right now, just not ready to take in applications. It is the MyCRA Account. Constituents can visit the site and make sure their address and deposit information is correct.
- MP Pierre Poilievre (CPC; Carleton): For EI recipients not affected by COVID-19 but that need EI for traditional reasons, what changes would they experience in applying for and receiving the benefit they would normally get?
 - o ESDC: Applicants for regular EI and sickness benefits will be processed through a more simplified system that will allow us to deal with volume and ensure timely response. Other types of EI benefits, including parental and maternity, will experience no change.
- Senator Kim Pate (ISG): What efforts are being made to engage young people to develop educational tools to get through to those that may be avoiding self distancing?
 - o Ms. Evans: We agree that education and information is an important part of the approach to compliance. For example, we are ensuring travellers have the information that they need at our borders to protect themselves and their

communities. The PHAC website now has more information about cases in Canada, and risk groups. We will continue efforts using multi-modes to get information out.

- MP Rachel Blaney (NDP; North Island-Powell River): Are seniors that have lost their job because of COVID-19, and were receiving partial GIS which won't be increased as the tax filing deadline has been extended, going to be eligible for CERB?
 - o ESDC: We are still finalizing CERB design parameters, however we are looking to cover people that have stopped working as a result of COVID and received at least \$5k income in the last 12 months or in 2019. They will be eligible if they meet criteria, regardless of age, as long as they're over 15.

- MP Laurel Collins (NDP; Victoria): For people who are on disability benefit but are not working, will they be able to access the CERB? Are people who are contractors but have lost some of their employment still eligible? If there is no concrete answer now, when can we expect more details on eligibility?
 - o ESDC: We are working hard to finalize design parameters. As there are a variety of circumstances, it is difficult to say if a particular person will qualify. We hope to make CERB parameters available in coming days.

- Alistair MacGregor (NDP; Cowichan-Malahat-Langford): Can you provide clarity for a constituent who is looking to apply for maternity benefits in 3-4 months, but is worried her job will be shut down soon and won't have enough hours to qualify for maternity benefits? Regarding the City of Vancouver's announcement on safe supply of drugs for drug-users during the COVID-19 crisis, what kind of federal authorization was given and how would we go about seeking the same kind of authorization?
 - o ESDC: The policy for maternity benefits has not changed, the person must have accumulated at least 600 hours of insurable employment during the qualifying period for maternity benefits.
 - o Ms. Evans: Not in position to comment on specific supply site, but can raise in ongoing F/P/T discussions.

- MP Mike Lake (CPC; Edmonton – Wetaskiwin): Is the ultimate goal for testing to test everyone in the country? What are the biggest blockages we need to be aware of?
 - o Ms. Evans: We are prioritizing testing. First responders and HC workers need to be tested quickly. We are not intending to test everyone in Canada. Steps have been taken to increase sites available to do testing and NML is providing ongoing guidance. Canadian testing numbers per capita are strong compared to rest of world.

- Pierre Vanier (Political advisor to MP Luc Thériault, BQ; Montcalm): Are self-employed workers with an incorporated business and who do not receive a salary, but receive dividends, eligible for the CERB?
 - o ESDC: ESDC not available due to technical issues. Will take question back.

- Senator Diane Griffin (CSG): Why aren't ferries included in today's announcement about banning symptomatic people from planes and rail? It is important that essential workers, namely truckers, do not get exposed.
 - o TC: Most people are travelling in personal vehicles in the marine sector, essentially as extension to the highway system. We recently provided a short-term exemption to allow people to stay in their vehicles below decks. Guidance has been shared to properly manage and clean means of conveyance. We deferred the start of cruise ship season until end of June.

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- Senator Wanda Elaine Thomas Bernard (ISG): What commitment is there to ensure equity issues are taken into account when decisions are being made, for example pertaining to prisoners and education?
 - o Ms. Evans: Not in position to speak to provincial approaches to education. At the F/P/T table hosted PHAC, we are collecting information on PH measures taken in each jurisdiction and looking at consistencies.
 - o PS: Will take question about spread of COVID-19 in prisons to CS.

 - MP Michelle Garner (CPC; Calgary Nose Hill): What does the screening look like for airline employees, will there be training, and how will success be tracked?
 - o TC: As of March 30 at noon, operators will be notifying all passengers to check regulations in place for specific provinces and territories to comply with, and also conducting basic health checks based on guidance from PHAC. People will be asked a series of four questions.
 - o Ms. Evans: Success can be tracked through contact tracing and potential exposure and if it was related to travel.

 - MP Mel Arnold (CPC; North Okanagan-Shuswap): A constituent has a son in a correctional facility in US who has been approved for transfer program, is there any process to move this through?
 - o GAC: It would be best to reach out to Consular Operations through Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

 - MP Jag Sahota (CPC; Calgary Skyview): Many snowbird seniors are stuck overseas and have little or no flight options, would an exception be made to the 6 months to ensure they do not lose OAS and GIS payments?
 - o ESDC: ESDC not available due to technical issues.
 - o GAC: Canadian insurance outside area of expertise.
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