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Supreme Court asked to rule on whether Trump can be prosecuted

The US Supreme Court has been asked to rule on whether former President Donald Trump can be prosecuted for an alleged plot to overturn the 2020 election results.

Special counsel Jack Smith wants the top court to rule quickly on Mr Trump's claim of presidential immunity.

The request comes after Mr Trump sought a delay in his trial while an appeals court decides the matter.

The case is currently scheduled to begin on 4 March in Washington DC.

Mr Smith wrote in his petition to the Supreme Court on Monday: "This case presents a fundamental question at the heart of our democracy: whether a former President is absolutely immune from federal prosecution for crimes committed while in office or is constitutionally protected from federal prosecution when he has been impeached but not convicted before the criminal proceedings begin."

With this move, Mr Smith is attempting to accelerate the time it takes for the US court system to review the former president's appeals process that can sometimes last for months or even years.

In a brief order, the Supreme Court said it would quickly review Mr Smith's request and asked Mr Trump's legal team to file a response by 20 December.

The justices did not however indicate how they would rule on the request.

Ahead of the order, the Trump campaign accused Mr Smith of trying "a Hail Mary by raising to the Supreme Court and attempting to bypass the appellate process".



"There is absolutely no reason to rush this sham to trial except to injure President Trump and tens of millions of his supporters," a spokesperson said.

Prosecutors rarely seek the top court's intervention before a lower appeals court rules on a matter - and Mr Smith's request reflects the urgency of his case.

If Mr Trump's appeal delays the trial beyond the November 2024 election, it raises the possibility that the former president could return to the White House before his case is fully resolved.

That would lead to a new round of legal complications.

"It is of imperative public importance that respondent's claim of immunity be resolved by this court and that respondent's trial proceed as promptly as possible if his claim of immunity is rejected," Mr Smith writes.

With only five weeks to go before voting begins in the 2024 Republican primary, Mr Trump is currently polling well ahead of his rivals for the party's nomination.

But he is also facing multiple legal cases, including a second one brought by Mr Smith which accuses him of mishandling classified material after he left office.

If Mr Trump wins back the White House, he would likely be able to pardon himself in the two cases brought by the special counsel and could force the two state criminal cases against him to be put on hold.

His indictment in Washington charges him with four felony counts, including conspiracy to defraud the US government.

The ex-president's lawyers have argued that alleged efforts to overturn his defeat by Joe Biden in the 2020 election fell within his duties as president.

US District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is presiding over Mr Trump's trial, rejected that argument in a ruling earlier this month.

"Whatever immunities a sitting president may enjoy, the United States has only one chief executive at a time," Judge Chutkan wrote.

She added that Mr Trump's presidency "did not bestow on him the divine right of kings to evade the criminal accountability that governs his fellow citizens".

Also this month, a federal appeals court ruled that the former president can be sued in civil court for his role in allegedly inciting the riot on Capitol Hill in January 2021.

Applications for seniors aged 87 and over will open later this month before eligibility expands in new year.

The federal government unveiled its new dental-care plan on Monday - a \$13-billion insurance program that will start covering routine dentistry costs next year for people who meet a certain income threshold.

Ottawa will cover kids under 18 and some seniors first before expanding the program to all eligible low- and middle-income Canadians in 2025.

Applications for seniors aged 87 and over will open later this month. Other age groups will be able to apply in the new year.

The staggered application process is designed to make the rollout as smooth as possible. The government says it expects millions of people to avail themselves of this new component of Canada's social safety net.

Coverage will be phased in over time, but some eligible participants will start to receive benefits as early as May 2024. Costs incurred before the relevant start date will not be covered.

This insurance-based program replaces the interim program that has been sending cheques directly to families with kids under 12 for the last year.

To be eligible for the program, a person must have a household income below \$90,000 and no access to an existing private insurance plan. The person must also have filed a tax return so the government can verify income.

The plan is most generous for families that have household incomes below \$70,000. They face no co-pays to a participating dentist, hygienist or dentist, and Ottawa will pick up the tab for covered services like cleaning, polishing, examinations, X-rays, fillings, root canal treatments and complete and partial removable dentures.

Ottawa launches \$13B dental-care program with kids and seniors first up for coverage

Families with incomes between \$70,000 and \$79,999 will face a 40 per cent co-pay, and for those in the \$80,000 to \$89,999 income bracket, the co-pay jumps to 60 per cent. The federal plan will cover the rest of the costs incurred.

Health Minister Mark Holland described the government's plan as "transformative" because it will provide coverage to the nearly nine million Canadians who do not already have access to dental insurance.

"We know we can have the best health system in the world and today is a monumental step in that direction," Holland said.

"It's going to make life better for eligible Canadian residents who won't have to choose between paying their bills and getting the help they absolutely need," he said.

Citizen Services Minister Terry Beech said Canadians do not need to do anything at this stage - the federal government will reach out to eligible people by mail to invite them to apply for the benefit when it's their turn.

The first letters will go out to invite seniors 70 and up to apply for their share.

Here's when seniors can expect to receive their letters:

- Seniors aged 87 and above starting in December 2023
- Seniors aged 77 to 86 starting in January 2024
- Seniors aged 72 to 76 starting in February 2024
- Seniors aged 70 to 71 starting in March 2024



Then, in May 2024, the application process will switch from the telephone to online as people aged 65 and older become eligible to apply.

People with valid disability tax credit certificates and children under 18 will be able to apply starting in June 2024.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh claimed the government is only pressing ahead with this program now because his party "forced" Ottawa to enact it as a condition of the confidence-and-supply agreement that could keep the Liberals in power until 2025.

"People are living with pain, federal people are worried about the cost if they do have to go to the dentist. We've been fighting to make sure people get coverage while out-of-touch Liberals and cutting-back Conservatives don't want to deliver help to people. We've forced this government to take action," he said at a press conference in Toronto.

The Liberal Party's 2021 election platform made no mention of a dental care program.

"We used our power in this minority government to give people help," Singh added. "(Conservative Leader) Pierre Poilievre, despite having taxpayer-funded dental care for most of his adult life, voted against kids getting dental care. Conservatives have made it clear what their priorities are - cutting and gutting."

Filling gaps in system

In a background briefing with reporters, senior public servants responsible for the program stressed that this federal initiative is meant to "fill the gaps" in the system and not replace existing provincial and territorial programs that already cover some oral health services. But the federal government has received no assurances from the premiers that they will keep their programs operational once the national program rolls out.

"What questions do you have about the new dental-care plan? We want to hear from you. Send an email to ask@ccca.ca."

Holland said conversations are ongoing with other levels of government. "I think they understand this isn't an opportunity to shove off

costs," he said.

There's also a risk of some employers scrapping the dental plans they offer their workers and pushing people onto this new federal plan.

A decision to dismantle those plans would push up the price tag of the dental care plan - in its current form, it is slated to cost the federal treasury about \$4.4 billion a year.

Dedicated call centre for queries

The program will be administered by insurance giant Sun Life and dentists, dental hygienists and denturists will directly submit claims to that company for reimbursement. If there's a co-pay, insured people will pay that cost out of pocket to the provider.

While the program will be run by a third party, the government said people can still work with Service Canada agents to deal with any issues that arise, including eligibility or coverage disputes. There will be a dedicated call centre to deal with dental services.

The government is hopeful that oral health professionals will enrol in the program and accept the Canadian dental-care insurance plan assignment.

Officials said the government will launch an education campaign to brief dentists, dental hygienists and denturists and the organizations that represent them in the new year on how they can sign up to provide coverage.

There will be a set "fee schedule" for services - but the costs reimbursed by Ottawa will vary from province to province.

The government said the fees paid are "relatively generous compared to other public plans across the country," which should provide an incentive for providers to participate.

Holland acknowledged that the government "still has work to do" to guarantee the country's dentists will provide services to publicly insured clients.

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Nearly half of Canadians think carbon tax is ineffective at fighting climate change: Nanos

A new survey has found that Canadians are feeling slightly more confident in the carbon tax's effectiveness at combatting climate change than they were a few months ago-but uncertainty is still high.

Nanos Research surveyed more than 1,000 Canadians between Nov. 30 and Dec. 2 to gain a picture of their current views on the carbon tax.

Nearly half of Canadians surveyed, the poll found, still believe the carbon tax is ineffective at combatting climate change, but this number has gone down since July, while the percentage of those who say it is effective has gone up in the same time period.

Around 46 per cent said the carbon tax was ineffective at combatting climate change, compared to the 53 per cent who selected that response in a July poll.

The percentage who said they believed it was effective at combatting climate change has also increased slightly since the summer, with 21 per cent of respondents in this new survey stating that the carbon tax is effective, a six per cent increase from July.

The survey, which was commissioned by CTV News, was conducted over telephone and online and consisted of a nationally representative group of Canadians.

It is the latest in a series of Nanos surveys, which have been tracking the changing perception of the carbon tax over the years.

The carbon tax, which places a price on each tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions with the aim of cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions, has long played a key role in the federal government's platform. But the recent decision to carve out a temporary exemption for those using heating oil for their homes-a decision which largely benefits those living in Atlantic Canada-has opened up increased scrutiny around the policy as a whole.

The federal government has stuck by the policy, even in the face of a filibuster spurred by the Conservatives, which finally ended Friday (opens in a new tab) after nearly 30 hours of non-stop voting.

"No, we're not axing the tax,"



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told CTV News mid-Friday morning in reference to a chant Conservative MPs has been rallying behind.

Protecting the environment in the long term and addressing the pressing climate crisis is still a priority for Canadians over short-term cost-cutting measures in regards to the carbon tax, but the divide is getting closer, survey results suggest.

Around 52 per cent of those surveyed in this new poll preferred long-term environmental protection, while 40 per cent preferred keeping costs down first. In Nov. 2018, according to Nanos, their polling found that 67 per cent of Canadians surveyed were thinking of the environment first.

Canadians aged 55 and older were more likely to want to protect the environment over receiving short-term savings than those aged 18-34. Women were more likely to say the environment was their priority (54.5 per cent) over cost cutting (35 per cent), compared to men. Half of men chose long-term environmental protection, while 45.9 per cent chose cost cutting.

Quebec residents were the most likely to say long-term environmental protection was their priority when asked about a carbon tax, with 59 per cent saying it was more important to them than keeping costs down.

Residents from the Prairies were least likely to prioritize environmental protection, at 40.8 per cent-a statistic that could be connected to the fact that those in the Prairies were also the least likely to believe the carbon tax was effective.

QUEBEC MOST CONFIDENT IN CARBON TAX

EFFECTIVENESS, PRAIRIES MOST SCEPTICAL

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the carbon tax at combatting climate change on a scale from one to 10, with 0-3 being "not effective," 4-6 being "average," and 7-10 being "effective."

Residents in Quebec gave the carbon tax the highest average score, at 4.4, out of 10. Those living in the Prairies scored the carbon tax the lowest, with the carbon tax receiving a score of 2.6 out of 10 among this group.

The federal carbon tax doesn't apply in Quebec, due to the province's existing cap-and-trade system, which was established in 2013.

Ontario residents scored the carbon tax 3.8 out of 10 on average, while residents from the Atlantic provinces and B.C. gave it an average score of 3.5 and 3.4 out of 10 respectively.

Half of Canadians surveyed said that a carbon tax would make them more likely to use more energy efficient, environmentally friendly alternatives to fossil fuels, with one in 10 Canadians saying they were more likely to use green-friendly alternatives.

This is a drop in numbers since Oct. 2018, according to Nanos, when 66 per cent of Canadians said a carbon tax would make them more likely to use green alternatives.

The number of Canadians who said the carbon tax was effective or ineffective at encouraging people to use less fuel remained relatively consistent with past surveys in these new results, according to the Nanos report.

Around 61 per cent of those surveyed found the carbon tax at least

somewhat ineffective at encouraging people to use less fuel, while 36 per cent believe it is at least somewhat effective at doing so.

Similarly to the provincial breakdown in the overall score of the carbon tax's effectiveness, residents of Quebec were the most likely to say the carbon tax was at least somewhat effective in encouraging less fuel use, at 38.7 per cent, while residents of the Prairies were the least likely, at 28.7 per cent.

Studies centred around other countries (opens in a new tab) that have adopted carbon taxes have found them to be effective at reducing emissions, with that effectiveness ranging depending on the program and country, and British Columbia's carbon tax, first implemented in 2008, has been found to have decreased greenhouse gas emissions by 5.15 per cent since the data has been scarce on what impact Canada's federal carbon tax has had on its overall emissions.

On Thursday, the government finally announced its framework to cap oil and gas sector emissions at 35 to 38 per cent below 2019 levels by 2050 through a national cap-and-trade system that will take effect in 2026.

The government has been criticized for the delay; the framework comes two years after the Liberals first announced they planned to implement an emissions cap, and the draft regulations won't be released until next spring.

METHODOLOGY

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land-and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 10,669 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between November 30th and December 2nd, 2023 as part of an omnibus survey. Participants were randomly recruited by telephone using live agents and administered a survey online. The sample included both land-and cell-lines across Canada. The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada.

Individuals randomly called using random digit dialling with a maximum of five call backs.

The margin of error for this survey is +3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

This study was commissioned by CTV News and the research was conducted by Nanos Research.

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