



**December 2, 2021**

## **Variant Requires Safe and Practical Solutions**

ATAC strongly encourages the Government of Canada to follow a science and data-driven approach in dealing with the COVID-19 Omicron variant and not a knee-jerk political populist approach. The logical and safe approach proposed by the subject matter experts within the International Civil Aviation Council (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) is fully supported by ATAC and is elaborated upon in their following statements:

**ICAO Bulletin:** In line with the latest recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), ICAO issued a new global bulletin on December 1st urging a more measured and evidence-based approach to countries' national air transport restrictions due to the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant. Until more detailed assessments are available, the UN aviation agency is encouraging countries to continue combatting the spread of COVID-19, and specifically the Omicron variant, using the recommendations and guidance contained in the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force's (CART) Take-off Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis, in addition to the third edition of ICAO's Manual on COVID-19 Cross-Border Risk Management. The new bulletin was issued under the authority of ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar, who commented that "It's critical that we continue to respond to this disease and its variants on the basis of the best available science and evidence."

**Statement from Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General:**

"Governments are responding to the risks of the new coronavirus variant in emergency mode causing fear among the traveling public. As quickly as possible we must use the experience of the last two years to move to a coordinated data-driven approach that finds safe alternatives to border closures and quarantine. Travel restrictions are not a long-term solution to control COVID variants."

In addition to adopting actions that are based on data-driven evidence, in order to address the ongoing practical travel concerns, ATAC strongly recommends that alternatives, ignored up until now, such as rapid antigen testing which is acceptable in the US and many other jurisdictions with its associated accessibility and cost effectiveness, must be seriously considered and adopted in Canada. This would provide an equivalent level of testing and better cater to the airport infrastructure inability to deal with current testing requirements.

ATAC looks to the government to find **safe AND practical** solutions to this issue as absolutely quick as possible.