

National Vaccine Mandate: Accommodations for Remote Communities

Purpose:

- Outline the approach to implementing the national vaccine mandate for air travelers, including accommodations for remote communities to realize the health benefits of the vaccine mandate while ensuring essential travel is able to continue.

National Vaccination Mandate for Air Travel

- Effective October 30, all commercial air passengers over the age of 12 departing from Canadian airports, will need to provide proof of vaccination (e.g. as issued by Province / Territory of residence or other health authority) in order to travel by air.
- There will be a short transition period, from October 30 to November 29, where travelers will be able to travel if they can show a valid COVID-19 molecular test taken within 72 hours of travel.
- Medevac flights are excluded from these requirements and there will be a 4 month “grace period” to allow those turning 12 to be vaccinated.
- For those living in remote communities (some of which are not accessible by road), air travel is often the only link to essential services in support of their medical, health, or social well-being. And the travel often involves moving from the remote community to a “gateway” airport to the ultimate, often southern, destination. However, many remote communities have lower vaccination rates for a variety of historical reasons and testing capacity is limited.
- In recognition of their unique needs, the national vaccination mandate for travelers will include specific accommodations for travelers from remote communities, to ensure they will be able to travel to obtain essential services in support of their medical, health, or social well-being, and return safely to their homes. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the health benefits of this national policy are realized.
- The Government of Canada has worked with Provinces, Territories and National Indigenous Organizations to develop these accommodations.
- These accommodations are a first step in the implementation plan and should be seen as an interim measure to ensure that travel to / from remote communities is not disrupted on October 30 and that will allow Governments and stakeholders to learn from the initial implementation and refine the approach as necessary.
- In addition, the Government of Canada will work with local health officials, communities and aviation partners to maximize flexibility, exercise discretion and minimize disruption, when implementing this new mandate on October 30.

Interim Accommodations for Remote Communities

- It is strongly recommended that eligible travelers be vaccinated in order to dramatically reduce the risks of COVID-19.
- However, in recognition of the unique needs of travelers from remote communities the following accommodations will be put in place:
 1. Anyone quarantining under Public Health Authority requirements to travel (e.g. as required by Nunavut) will be exempted from the vaccination and testing requirements.
 2. Travelers flying out of remote communities will not be subject to the vaccination and testing requirements, until testing capacity can be developed locally.
 3. To facilitate onward travel and return travel, testing capacity will be enhanced at “gateway” and southern airports.
- **Quarantine in lieu of Vaccination or a Test**
 - Some Territories (e.g. Nunavut) require a 14 day quarantine prior to travel to the Territory.
 - Those travelers who are subject to these restrictions will be exempted from the requirement to provide proof of vaccination or a valid COVID-19 molecular test.
- **Departing Remote Communities:**
 - Until local testing capacity can be assured, travelers departing from airports serving remote communities will not be required to provide proof of vaccination or a valid COVID-19 molecular test.
 - The Government of Canada will work to deploy high quality rapid COVID molecular tests to build local testing capacity.
 - This accommodation will not apply to onward flights (i.e. from a “gateway” airport to a 3rd destination).
- **Onward and Return Travel**
 - To realize the health benefits of this policy, travelers on flights from “gateway” airports, or on flights to remote airports, will need to provide proof of vaccination or a valid COVID-19 molecular test.
 - Unvaccinated travelers will be encouraged to access, where capacity is available, local molecular COVID testing.
 - However, to ensure all travelers coming from, or transiting to, remote communities have access to molecular testing the Government of Canada will provide Canadian Air Operators that transport travelers to and from Gateway communities, (**Annex A**), with self-administered rapid COVID-19 molecular test kits at no charge.
 - At Gateway airports, airline operators will provide these test kits, along with clear Health Canada approved instructions, to all travelers that are not vaccinated or do not have a valid molecular test result prior to checking in for any flight to remotes communities or to southern destinations.
 - Additional testing kits will be provided to operators at southern airports for travelers beginning their multi-flight transit back to a remote community.
 - A negative test result will allow unvaccinated travelers to continue their travel without need for another test result for 72hrs (e.g., the test result could allow traveler to board multiple flights).

Future Refinements

- Based on continued consultations with stakeholders and lessons learned during the early implementation period, the Government of Canada will continue to work with stakeholders to refine these accommodations.
- The goal will remain ensuring remote communities are able to realize the benefits of this strong COVID-19 mitigation measure immediately while facilitating travel that is essential for these remote communities.
- The Government of Canada will also work to build testing capacity in remote communities through the provision of high quality rapid molecular tests.
- In advance of November 30, the Government of Canada will work with Provinces, Territories and National Indigenous Organizations to refine the approach for the next phase of implementation. Ensuring an approach that achieves the overall health objectives while accommodating the needs and realities of remote communities remains a key priority.

Positive Cases:

- With the implementation of the national vaccination mandate for air travel the transportation system and communities are being made safer.
- However, there could be rare instances when a traveler tests positive while in transit (e.g. at a Gateway Airport).
- Therefore, the Government of Canada is developing robust protocols and guidance to support travelers in these instances.
- Further, there may be rare instances when a COVID-19 patient requires urgent medical travel. Existing protocols will apply.

Guidance:

- The Government of Canada is committed to providing clear guidance on travel requirements that will be in place as of October 30, including the molecular test used; training for operators and demonstrations on how to self-administer the test; and, clear protocols to treat possible positive test results.

Annex A – Gateway Airports

Transport Canada, working with communities and aviation stakeholders, will continue to monitor the list of Gateway airports to ensure Gateways are appropriately identified and provided with testing resources.

Yukon

-Whitehorse

-Timmins

-Toronto (Pearson)

Northwest Territories

-Yellowknife

Manitoba

-Brandon

-Thompson

-Winnipeg

Nunavut

-Iqaluit

Saskatchewan

-Prince Albert

-Regina

-Saskatoon

Newfoundland and Labrador

-Deer Lake

-Gander

-Goose Bay

-St. John's

-Wabush-Labrador

Alberta

-Calgary

-Edmonton

-Fort McMurray

-Grande Prairie

-Lethbridge

-Medicine Hat

-Red Deer

Nova Scotia

-Halifax

Quebec

-Chibougamau

-La Grande Rivière

-Mont Joli

-Montréal

-Québec

-Rouyn-Noranda

-Sept-Îles

-Val d'Or

British Columbia

-Campbell River

-Comox

-Dawson Creek

-Fort St. John

-Kelowna

-Nanaimo

-Prince George

-Prince Rupert

-Quesnel

-Smithers

-Terrace

-Vancouver

-Victoria

-Williams Lake

Ontario

-Hamilton

-Kingston

-London

-North Bay

-Ottawa

-Sault St. Marie

-Sudbury

-Thunder Bay