

CAFII ALERTS WEEKLY DIGEST: May 21 TO May 28, 2021

May 28, 2021

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CAFII MEMBER AND/OR PARENT COMPANY-SPECIFIC NEWS

Earnings Bonanza Continues At Big Banks As RBC, TD And CIBC Profits Up By More Than 100%

By Pete Evans, CBC News, May 27, 2021

[Earnings bonanza continues at big banks as RBC, TD and CIBC profits up by more than 100% \(msn.com\)](#)

Three of Canada's biggest banks saw their profits either more than double or more than quadruple last quarter, a sign that the worst of the economic toll of the pandemic may be in the rear-view mirror as the country's biggest lenders are back to raking in the cash.

Canada's biggest bank, The Royal Bank of Canada, posted a profit of \$4 billion for the three-month period up until the end of April. That's up from \$1.5 billion in profits for the same time last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning.

The second-biggest bank, TD Bank, was only slightly behind with a profit of \$3.7 billion for the quarter, up 144 per cent from last year.

CIBC followed suit with an even bigger jump in percentage terms, posting a quarterly profit of \$1.6 billion — more than four times what it made in the same time last year.

Bank of Montreal was the first major bank to report quarterly earnings on Wednesday, May 26, announcing that its profits almost doubled to just over \$1.3 billion. The last of the big banks, Scotiabank, will report on Monday, May 31, and analysts are expecting a similarly large jump.

The banks are somewhat of a canary in Canada's economic coal mine in that if the consumers and businesses they lend money to are having problems paying their bills, those woes will show up on the banks' books. But this week's profit bonanza suggests that in the aggregate at least, consumers and businesses are not exactly struggling.

Part of the massive spike in profits can be attributed to the banks being able to draw down some of the money they set aside to cover loans they worried might go bad. Known as loan-loss provisions, the banks squirreled away billions of dollars worth of cash on their balance sheets in case they had to write off loans that they feared would default because of the pandemic.

But for the most part, that hasn't happened. Official data show that in the year up to March 31, 2021, just over 2,500 Canadian companies went insolvent. That's down 30 per cent from just over 3,500 that did so the year prior, when there wasn't a pandemic.

Consumer insolvencies follow a similar trajectory, down by 37 per cent compared to before the pandemic.

That suggests that by and large Canadians are managing to stay on top of their debt, which is allowing the banks to move some of that cash they had set aside from being a liability over to the asset side of the ledger.

Royal Bank had loan-loss provisions of \$2.1 billion this time last year. They're now down to just \$260 million. TD, meanwhile, had \$3.2 billion worth of provisions a year ago. This quarter, that figure actually became a net positive, with a recovery of \$377 million worth of such loans.

At CIBC, loan-loss provisions plunged by 98 per cent, from \$1.4 billion last year to just \$32 million now.

Customers Call Out Banks For Increasing Fees During Pandemic While Profits Are Up

By Erica Johnson, CBC Go Public, May 24, 2021

[Customers call out banks for increasing fees during pandemic while profits are up \(msn.com\)](#)

Audrey Williams was more than a little miffed to learn that fees at TD Bank are going up on June 1.

"I looked at [the letter] and thought, 'This is ridiculous,'" Williams told Go Public, standing outside her TD branch in Scarborough, Ont. "And then a couple of days later, I looked at it and got angry all over again."

What really ticked her off was when she learned her long-time financial institution has continued to rake in billions in profit during the pandemic.

"So what is this about?" she asked. "This is just about trying to get people when they're already down. Kicking them one more time, harder."

Williams and other customers with TD, CIBC, Bank of Montreal and Scotiabank have recently contacted Go Public about fees that increased, or are about to, for a range of accounts, products and services. They all question the timing.

The banks tell Go Public that the increases were made after careful consideration and that other options are available to customers.

But a banking critic says the banks are jacking up fees because no one is stopping them.

"Prime Minister Trudeau said a year ago that the banks should be doing more to help Canadians — and gouging them is not helping them," said Duff Conacher, co-founder of Democracy Watch, a citizen group calling for government accountability and corporate responsibility. "It's about time he and the finance minister stepped in."

Williams says TD's changes to its "preferred chequing" accounts — the type she's held for more than 25 years — are "exorbitant and totally unfair." The bank is raising the minimum balance required for avoiding fees from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

"In an environment where people have lost their jobs, they're on furlough, they're trying to get CERB payments, who's going to be able to keep \$5,000 in their bank account to not get service fees?" she asked.

On top of that, for customers who don't maintain the new, higher balance, TD is raising transaction fees on those accounts — from \$1.25 to \$1.95.

That higher fee will kick in for every transaction, including when customers use their debit card; this after, Williams points out, Canadians were urged to avoid cash transactions in a bid to curb the coronavirus.

TD is also increasing fees for things like overdraft protection on some chequing accounts and wire payments.

"It's a whole shopping cart of money grabs," said Williams. "Just increase to increase to increase. And the only people who're going to suffer are people who need overdraft because their CERB doesn't cover their pay or their rent and their heating and their food."

Other frustrated TD customers reached out to Go Public, too.

"It seems corporately immoral ... given the economic ramifications of the pandemic," wrote one customer who said he is on fixed income disability benefit.

"People are struggling," wrote another. "I'm just shocked."

In a statement to Go Public, spokesperson Fiona Hirst said TD understands that fee changes can be a "delicate issue."

"We encourage customers with concerns or questions to talk to us about ... the options we have available," Hirst said

'Beyond Comprehension'

Hikes in bank fees don't happen every year and when they do, they're never popular. Add in a pandemic and that discontent seems to grow.

Various increases have also recently kicked in at BMO and Scotiabank, and are coming for some CIBC customers July 1.

Robert Gerl, a firefighter from Oakville, Ont., complained to CIBC.

"I just thought, especially now, the gall of it," he said. "It's beyond comprehension."

A spokesperson for CIBC said in a statement that the bank's fees "are among the lowest of the major Canadian banks" and that someone from CIBC has contacted Gerl to discuss ways to help him avoid fees.

Raising fees during a pandemic prompted economist and longtime BMO customer Kisan Gunjal to fire off a letter to the bank's ombudsman.

"This is really not the right time for the banks to raise any kind of fees," said Gunjal, from his home in Milton, Ont. "We have to insert the ethics part."

In a statement to Go Public a BMO spokesperson said the bank periodically reviews its plans "and any changes are made after careful consideration."

Billions In Profits

The fee increases come after each of the big five banks reported billions in profit for this year's first quarter, profits that were higher than the same period last year for all five and which exceeded analysts' expectations. All of the big five continued to make billions in profits in 2020, but their reported net incomes were down from 2019, before the pandemic, for all but TD.

It all fuels the need for more oversight, according to Conacher, the banking critic. His organization has collected almost 80,000 signatures on a petition urging Ottawa to make the banks do more to help Canadians during the pandemic.

First quarter profits at Canada's 5 biggest banks

"Banking is ... as essential as heating and electricity in terms of living in today's society," he said. "And the government should be regulating like it's an essential service. Which means ensure they serve everyone fairly ... and that gouging is prohibited."

He points out that even though Canada's big banks are much smaller than many banks in other countries, four still ranked among the top 50 most profitable in the world in 2020.

Conacher is calling on Ottawa to change the Bank Act, to require independent audits of every division of the banks to determine their profit margins. "And if it's more than a reasonable profit margin of 10 to 15 per cent, then the banks should be forced to lower their fees and interest rates to a reasonable level," he says.

Democracy Watch has called on the government to more closely monitor the banks' profits before, but hasn't seen any action.

"The banks can look back and see that finance minister after finance minister has protected the gouging ... that banks do to millions of Canadians," he said. "I'm just guessing that they think current Finance Minister [Chrystia] Freeland and Prime Minister Trudeau will continue to do the same — roll over and do nothing."

Changing the act could take years. In the meantime, the finance minister could speak to the banks, says Ken Whitehurst, executive director of the Consumers Council of Canada.

"The minister might wave her stick in the form of leading a national conversation ... and see if the banks would choose to ease up," he said.

Go Public asked the ministry what it's prepared to do about fee increases.

A spokesperson for the finance minister said she couldn't provide a response. Instead, the ministry sent a statement outlining several initiatives Ottawa has put in place to support Canadians during the pandemic, such as the CERB program and expanded Employment Insurance.

Williams says she thinks the time has come for government to talk to the banks about their rising fees.

"Someone needs to look at what they're doing and put them in check," she said. "I'm shocked and I'm saddened that they care so little for their customers. That we are just piles of money to them."

She has one week to figure out what to do, before TD's higher fees take effect.

CIBC Retools Mortgage Business In Search Of A Sweet Spot After Years Of Ups And Downs

By James Bradshaw, The Globe and Mail, May 21, 2021

Last year, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce had a "retention issue." The bank was losing too many customers when it came time to renew their mortgages. As retail banking head Laura Dottori-Attanasio looked for answers, one problem stood out: the fax machines. Thirty days before renewal deadlines, the bank was sending letters "in ugly, old typeset" to customers, offering similarly "ugly posted rates" that were much higher than the bank's best offer, she said. The letters invited clients to send a fax or visit a branch to renew. "Now, just think about that for a moment right? We're in 2020," Ms. Dottori-Attanasio said. "That's a letter that pretty much says, 'Why are you dealing with our bank?'" Cutting references to faxing from correspondence and reaching out to clients more often are just two ways the bank has removed "pain points" that turned off customers. They are part of a concerted effort to revive the bank's residential mortgage business after it fell behind competing banks. And they are emblematic of the kind of unforced errors that kept CIBC's mortgage portfolio in a state of flux for years.

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DIVERSITY/INCLUSION/FIGHTING SYSTEMIC RACISM NEWS

Black Entrepreneurs In Canada Facing Systemic Racism And Other Barriers To Success, New Study Finds

By Elena De Luigi, The Globe and Mail, May 26, 2021

Black entrepreneurs in Canada say they face systemic racism and widespread barriers to growing their businesses, including accessing capital, building supportive networks and skills development, according to a new survey published Wednesday. Of the 342 Black entrepreneurs who participated in the study, 76 per cent said their race made it more difficult to succeed as a business owner. Almost half said they believed a supplier or vendor had refused to do business with them because of their race, and 45 per cent said they felt they had been denied funding from a financial institution because they are Black. The study, conducted by Abacus Data, was commissioned by Senator Colin Deacon and the African Canadian Senate Group.

Read Story (Subscription Required): https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-black-entrepreneurs-in-canada-facing-systemic-racism-and-other/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Evening%20Update&utm_content=2021-5-26_16&utm_term=Evening%20Update:%20Belarus%e2%80%99s%20Lukashenko%20refuses%20to%20back%20down%20over%20forcing%20jetliner%20to%20land%20in%20Minsk;%20accuses%20West%20of%20waging%20%e2%80%98hybrid%20war%e2%80%99&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Equity, Diversity And Inclusion Strategies That Actually Work

By Lara Zink and Katie Squires-Thompson, Special To The Globe and Mail, May 23, 2021

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-strategies-that-actually-work/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Top%20Business%20Headlines&utm_content=2021-5-25_17&utm_term=Equity,%20diversity%20and%20inclusion%20strategies%20that%20actually%20work&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Many approaches to addressing gender parity in the work force have focused on getting more women into the talent pipeline, especially in senior or leadership roles where women are often missing. While there seems to be no shortage of programs and initiatives that aim to support the advancement of women, gender parity remains out of reach.

Dismantling The 'Women-Centric' Approach

In the past decade, companies have invested significant money, time and resources on developing the pipeline of women. Despite the abundance of support programs aimed at elevating the recruitment, professional development and retention of female employees, it's not the thought that counts. The pipeline is not the problem, and this "fix the women" approach is ineffective at best and regressive at worst.

Programs and initiatives aimed at "developing female talent" are an obvious example of good intentions gone askew. This framing implies that women are inherently inadequate and that, in order to advance, they'll require more support and development opportunities, and must work harder than men do. It also implies women will need priority treatment when it comes to accessing opportunities to succeed.

Ultimately, this framework reinforces the status quo of whiteness and masculine behaviour by asking women to adopt traditionally male behaviours (such as male styles of leadership) in order to advance, succeed and fit in, thus promoting homogeneity over diversity. Meanwhile, employees within the majority group are led to assume their firm is taking sufficient action with regards to diversity. This approach fails to acknowledge and call out the systemic barriers that put women and other non-dominant groups at a significant disadvantage.

Fix The System, Not The Individuals

So if the traditional strategies don't move the needle on equity, diversity and inclusion, what does? The short answer is: fix the system, not the individuals. Companies need to explicitly acknowledge the systemic barriers that put women and minority groups at a disadvantage, and commit to upending them. One of the best ways to do this is by debasing and standardizing processes. Workplaces can start to dismantle systemic barriers by committing to the following:

Ensure Pay Equity

Conducting regular pay equity audits can help to ensure equitable pay across race and gender. Moreover, it is necessary that a specific key performance indicator is established to measure progress and pay equity audits are conducted by a pay equity compliance officer. Additionally, workplaces must standardize the bonus process to abide by measurable accomplishments rather than subjective evaluations. Compensation transparency is critical for employees to understand the built-in framework for pay equity.

Feedback And Reviews

It is imperative that employees are given clear, pre-determined and quantifiable criteria for evaluation based on a results-oriented system, and that managers are properly trained to deliver objective feedback free of biased language.

Promotions And Hiring

Workplaces need to implement a results-oriented and output-based evaluation system. For recruitment, this can look like pre-set, standard interview questions that are asked of every candidate, and the utilization of a quantitative scoring system to evaluate candidates. Consistency is key; managers must be trained to ensure that gender-neutral language is used throughout the hiring process, and that diversity requirements are established and met by both recruiting teams and candidates before moving forward in an interview process.

Allocation Of Opportunities

Opportunities can support and accelerate an employee's career growth and professional development in the form of networking and relationship-building, enhanced visibility, high-profile projects and invitations to executive meetings, to name a few. But not all opportunities are created equal, and it's imperative that opportunities are allocated in a way that ensures fairness, equality and inclusivity. Managers must be trained to understand how both informal and formal opportunities can be designated equally among employees, and ensure they divide their own time equally among those employees to build relationships with everyone. A strategic approach to target under-represented employees can help to equalize opportunities, and can include showcasing employee work, as well as having employees cross-train with other managers and attend high-profile meetings.

Equal Flexibility

Workplaces must ensure that flexible work options, such as the option to work remotely, are offered to and used by everyone in order to be a sustainable and inclusive solution to achieving gender equity. While flexibility has allowed women to juggle care-giving responsibilities, it can hinder their ability to compete with professionals who don't utilize adjusted accommodations. We have largely ignored the exceptional cost that women who are primary care-givers bear in order to participate in the work force. Flexible accommodations will only result in gender equity when all genders use them, and it's imperative that we work to design a landscape that affords flexibility and fairness to all, equally.

By taking the burden off the under-represented and moving it on to those in power, we'll be able to see meaningful changes and support the development of a true meritocracy.

From Abroad, Canada Looks Like A Country Drowning In Its Own Self-Pity

By Gourav Jaswal, *Special to National Post, May 26, 2021*

[Gourav Jaswal: From abroad, Canada looks like a country drowning in its own self-pity \(msn.com\)](#)

MIRAMAR BEACH, INDIA — I've spent my entire life living beyond a 10,000-kilometre radius of Canada, so you'll have to forgive me if I never cared too much about what you people were up to. But a couple of years ago, my sons started school in Canada and I began to ping Google News Canada (and read the National Post) as avidly as I consumed the media in Goa, the sleepy, tropical beach-side state where I live in India. And what I've been reading about Canada has seemed puzzling, to say the least, and often outright absurd.

The most recent item that caught my attention was last week, when the mayor of Vancouver apologized for the brief hand-cuffing of a Black retired B.C Supreme Court justice, due to a case of mistaken identity.

Apologizing for a mistake is wonderful. But declaring without investigation that it's clearly the result of "systemic racism" is strange. And then adding the astonishing statement that, "As someone who continues to benefit from colonialism, I recognize my privilege," boggles the mind.

Canada itself was created out of a colonization of the land. But did Canada ever colonize any country in the world? Nope. And unless I missed a news flash, there is currently no country in the world that's colonized by another, much less Canada (despite what I hear some Quebecois say).

Even if the English team beats India in cricket (which happens very rarely, huh!), none of the half a billion Indian fans whine that it is because the English "continue to benefit from colonialism," despite our 200-year history of subjugation.

Yet Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart "continues to benefit from colonialism"? This is a man who came from a family that lost their home and went bankrupt, yet still managed to get a degree at Acadia University. He moved from Nova Scotia to British Columbia in 1989 with only \$100 in his pocket and worked his way up to become an academic, a member of Parliament and then mayor of one of Canada's largest cities. He appears to have done this through hard work and determination, not by exploiting colonialism or Canada's Indigenous peoples.

Does he even know how he benefits from colonialism? And if so, why doesn't he stop?

I was astonished when, a few years ago, a delightfully warm-hearted woman I've known since she was a teenager — and who immigrated to Canada in her 30s — started complaining about racism in Canada. It was especially perplexing given the fact that she stood for election and is currently an elected representative in a provincial government.

Think about this: she's become a political and social leader in a country she moved to as an adult, had no ethnic connection to, did not belong to the majority religion and did not even have English as her first language growing up.

I'd like to underline that there is absolutely no chance — none whatsoever — that I could get elected in the legislature of the state where I live in India, because my family is originally from a different state.

Reflect on this: no one has any chance of getting elected (which is why no one in the past 20 years has) in my state if she's from another state in the same country; yet this woman — who lived a majority of her life in India — thinks Canada is racist?

I've been increasingly worried that Canadian culture has become a petri dish for such thinking, ever since my sons started school there.

I checked the holiday calendar issued by the Peel District School Board in Ontario and noticed that a remarkable number of days were marked with esoteric religious holidays. The Ninth Day of Ridvan of the Baha'i faith is listed, as is Farvadegan of Zoroastrianism.

Since there are only about 100,000 adherents of Zoroastrianism in the world (of which 70,000 are in India) I'm unsure how many have found their way to Canada. But I can't imagine there's too many of them in Peel Region. Why do Canadians accept that a public school board in a secular country that's 65 per cent Christian should be commemorating holidays of religions that hardly anyone in the country adheres to?

I didn't plan on sending my sons to Canada for school, as I am very proud of the richness of the 2,000-year-old Indian civilization, including its languages, history, culture, literature and cuisine. But since that's the way the dominoes of fate fell, I became keen in anticipation of what they would learn in Canada.

I'd hoped they would imbibe the rugged sportiness, the quiet sense of civic pride and social service, as well as the cheery optimism that Canadians were rightfully renowned for. All of which I'd seen and loved in Kevin Hawryluk, a Vancouver native who'd helped me kick-off one of my first start-ups.

In short, I was looking forward to my sons becoming more Canadian in Canada. But every week seems to bring a new episode in the unending TV series that should be called "Canada's Got Stupid!" Now I worry that they are distanced from all that is wonderful in India, and instead are immersed in the worst of Canada.

Gourav Jaswal is an entrepreneur and founder of venture studio Prototyze, which has catalyzed many profitable companies in technology and communications.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE, RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY NEWS

U.S. To Re-Open Border With Canada On June 22

Unilateral move by the U.S. government

By Pat Grubb, AllPoint Bulletin, The Community Newspaper of Point Roberts, Washington, May 25, 2021

<https://www.allpointbulletin.com/stories/us-border-to-re-open-june-22,16610?fbclid=IwAR1Sk66iTczQSSHUOcXIyd5DtaFSnnHDbVcbOL90ply4wNJyKDUMxl7Mfto>

While there has been no official word, a highly placed source in the Blaine, Washington port of entry told local immigration attorney Len Saunders on May 25 that the U.S. intends to unilaterally open the land border without restrictions between the U.S. and Canada on June 22. Another ranking CBP officer also confirmed the news independently. It appears to be common scuttlebutt among regular line officers both in the CBP and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). The current border closure order was extended on May 20 until June 21.

The border was closed to non-essential traffic on March 20, 2020. At the same time, the U.S. also suspended biometrics processing at e-SAFE ports of entry for non-essential travel and has extended the suspension each month in co-ordination with the border closure. Biometric processing requires individuals who are submitting electronic immigration files to go to designated ports of entry for photographs and fingerprints. On Tuesday, May 25, local immigration attorneys were notified that biometric processing had resumed, effective immediately.

Saunders declined to identify his first source publicly but said, “he has been highly reliable in the past and is in a position to know.” Saunders said the second source is equally reliable. There have been inchoate rumours circulating the last few days in government circles regarding upcoming changes to border restrictions but nothing definite.

If accurate, the U.S. move will place significant pressure on Canada to consider relaxing border restrictions at a time when provincial governments are still locking down their residents. Travel from one part of B.C. to another is still prohibited as is inter-provincial movement. Still, with Canadians eager to return to travel to their cabins in the U.S. or to vacation destinations, the Canadian government will be hard-pressed to deal with returning residents who don't want to undergo 14-day quarantines as currently required. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had recently said the border would not be opened until 75 percent of Canadians had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Absent a similar move from the Canadian government, the U.S. decision will not affect the ability of Point Roberts residents to access the mainland for non-essential purposes. It will, however, allow Canadians who own cabins in Birch Bay, Point Roberts and other areas to enter the U.S. to access them. As well, once they are here, they will be able to take advantage of COVID-19 vaccinations available through the various service providers.

At time of deadline, calls seeking information from CBP, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and U.S. federal politicians had not been returned.

The U.S. Border To Canada Could Re-Open On June 22: Reports

By Global News, May 26, 2021

[The U.S. border to Canada could re-open on June 22: reports \(msn.com\)](#)

The Canada U.S. border has been shut down for more than a year amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but according to a well-known immigration lawyer, that might be about to change.

Len Saunders, based in Blaine, Washington, said high-level meetings were held in Washington D.C. on Tuesday and officials from the Peace Arch port of entry were involved.

"And what I was told is that instructions came out of headquarters that the border will be fully re-opening, the U.S. border on June 22, in just over three weeks," Saunders told Global News on Wednesday.

This would apply to just the U.S. side of the border, not the Canadian side.

Global News has reached out to both U.S. and Canadian border officials.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said previously he will not re-open the border until Canada's population is at least 75 per cent vaccinated.

Right now, about half of the Canadian population has received at least one dose of a vaccine with 20,328,984 doses of the approved COVID-19 vaccines having now been administered.

Even if the U.S. border is opened on June 22, anyone travelling to Canada or back to Canada would still have to quarantine.

"It's not going to have your average traveller coming over the border, the day-trippers," Saunders said, "but I think what it's going to do is put a lot of pressure on the Canadian government to come up with a plan to open up, at least partially, the Canadian border. Especially when you have the Americans making this decision to open up the border themselves with no restrictions."

The joint restrictions have been in place since March 2020 and were mutually agreed upon by both countries. The ban has been rolled over several times since.

However, the border remains open for essential travel throughout the COVID pandemic in a bid to avoid disrupting the flow of food, medical supplies and other crucial goods between the two countries.

"Who knows what's going to happen but at least one side is going to fully re-open so it's a step in the right direction," Saunders added.

Trudeau announced last week that the Canadian border will remain closed until June 21.

White House Dismisses Report That U.S. Wants Border With Canada Re-Opened Next Month

By James McCarten, The Canadian Press, May 27, 2021

[White House dismisses report that U.S. wants border with Canada re-opened next month \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com)

The United States has made no decisions about when or how to re-open the border with Canada, the White House said Thursday in response to reports suggesting American patience with the closure has run its course.

Press secretary Jen Psaki said she was not aware that any decisions had been made about the border beyond last week's news that the restrictions, which have been in place since March 2020, would be extended to June 21.

A media report Wednesday out of Point Roberts, Washington, a border community hit hard by the restrictions, cited anonymous sources with U.S. Customs and Border Protection as saying the closure would end by June 22.

"It was just extended for about a month, I think, so that's around that timeline," Psaki told a media briefing.

"I don't think a decision has been made, that I'm aware of, about what would happen after that."

Officials in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office did not explicitly confirm or deny the report, pointing instead to his insistence that it would take 75 per cent of Canadians getting vaccinated before restrictions can be lifted.

"Conversations are ongoing constantly with the U.S. administration because there is much eagerness to get back to normal on all sides," Trudeau said Thursday.

Step 1, he said, is to get the outbreak down to a stage where minor flare-ups can be effectively managed and snuffed out without risk of spreading more broadly. Step 2 would be that vaccination threshold.

"Getting the vaccination numbers up above 75 per cent across the country is going to allow for a much better posture on re-opening, including around what we do with the U.S. border and international borders."

Thanks in large part to the fact that COVID-19 ran so rampant through the U.S. throughout 2020, Canadians have been far less eager to ease the border restrictions than their American counterparts, polls have suggested.

But the robust rollout of vaccines has made some lawmakers in the U.S. impatient.

Canada is now outpacing the U.S. in terms of people who have received at least one dose — 53.5 per cent and 49.3 per cent, at last count — while some 40 per cent of Americans are fully vaccinated, compared with less than five per cent of Canadians.

"I think it is time for us to develop a plan," Vermont Governor Phil Scott said on Thursday, May 27 during a panel discussion hosted by the Conseil du patronat du Québec, the province's largest employers' group.

Scott said the U.S. could be doing more to help Canadians get their hands on second doses of the vaccine, and expressed support for the idea of requiring travellers to show some sort of proof of vaccination in order to cross the border.

"There's got to be a way to do this, and I think maybe some sort of a (vaccine) passport, at least during the transition, might be helpful."

New York Representative Brian Higgins, one of the loudest U.S. voices to date on re-opening the border, has been urging the two sides to come up with a plan — including allowing Canadians to travel to the U.S. in order to get a second dose.

Higgins wrote to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo last week urging him to allow Canadians to take advantage of vaccination appointments that are going unfilled in the state in order to expedite lifting the border restrictions.

"If there is excess supply of the vaccine, we should do everything in our power to see that those doses do not go to waste," Higgins wrote.

"The stakes of this pandemic are too high to do anything less."

Trudeau Gets Leeway From Voters On Slower U.S. Border Re-Opening

Nearly half Canadians say border should remain closed until at least September

By Shelly Hagan, Bloomberg News, May 26, 2021

<https://financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/trudeau-gets-leeway-from-voters-on-slower-u-s-border-re-opening>

Justin Trudeau is beginning to sketch out a plan to re-open the U.S. border, but Canadians don't appear keen to rush it. And when travel does resume, they overwhelmingly agree proof of vaccination should be mandatory.

Nearly half of respondents in an Angus Reid Institute poll released on Wednesday, May 26 said the world's longest undefended frontier should remain closed until at least September. More than three quarters said they would support a vaccine passport.

Canada's border with the U.S. has been closed to most non-essential traffic for more than a year to limit the spread of COVID-19. But with the Liberal government's vaccine campaign accelerating, Trudeau is facing calls from business groups and the main opposition Conservatives for a concrete re-opening plan.

Since the prime minister is weighing whether to trigger an election in a bid to win back his parliamentary majority, the politics of the timeline are key. "Past Conservative voters are far more likely to advocate an 'open it up sooner' stance than past Liberal or New Democratic Party voters," Shachi Kurl, executive director of the Vancouver-based polling firm, said by email.

"But, regardless of how you vote, people want to travel again. If you are one of millions of Canadians who work in the hospitality or tourism sector, you want to get back to work and see visitors return," she said.

Last week, Trudeau's government announced another month-long extension of border restrictions until June 21. Only 23 per cent of respondents in the Angus Reid poll said they would like it to have re-opened already. That suggests Canadians are still concerned about the path of COVID-19 and its variants as the country's vaccine campaign gathers momentum after a slow start plagued by delivery delays and confusion. The prime minister, in a press briefing on Tuesday, May 25 said that over the Victoria Day long weekend Canada passed 50 per cent in terms of proportion of its population that's received a first dose. And the three largest provinces — Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia — have announced phased re-opening plans.

"There are lots of reasons to be hopeful but that doesn't mean we can let our guard down yet," Trudeau told reporters in Ottawa.

Earlier this month, he began to set the stage for looser public-health restrictions but warned there was much to be done before a "two-dose fall" in which Canadians could enjoy a more substantial return to normal after a gruelling pandemic.

"Ultimately, the freedoms of a 'one-dose summer' may prove inadequate to a pandemic fatigued country, and that may well extend to border re-opening timelines as well," Kurl said. "The next month will be telling."

U.S.-Style Attack Ads Aim To Pressure Trudeau On Re-Opening Border

By Richard Madan and Ben Cousins, CTV News, May 27, 2021

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/u-s-style-attack-ads-aim-to-pressure-trudeau-on-re-opening-border-1.5446215>

One concerned citizen is using American-style political attack ads to pressure Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Joe Biden to re-open the border to fully vaccinated Americans.

The ad has already aired in several U.S. border markets, including the Niagara region, Buffalo, Detroit and Washington State, but is set to air in the Toronto and Ottawa markets next week.

“President Biden, Prime Minister Trudeau, my fiancée and I are separated by your closed border,” a woman says in the commercial. “It’s just policy to you, but it’s a prison to us.”

In total, the ad has run 153 times in specific border areas in the U.S. at a cost of US\$2,700, primarily funded through a GoFundMe that has raised more than \$16,000 as of Thursday evening.

John Adams, the man primarily responsible for the ads, lives in Florida and has a second home on Vancouver Island, which he hasn’t been able to visit since September 2019.

“I decided the government is just kicking the can down the road,” Adams told CTV News. “I’ve done these kinds of things before, I said: ‘I’m going to stop them from kicking the can down the road. I’m going to give them something that they’re going to have to deal with.’”

“I decided I’m going to throw a bobcat in the middle of the sleeping politicians and boom came my ads.”

Adams was primarily focused on helping people who had been denied access to their properties in Canada, but quickly found out about people whose families are separated by the border.

“I hadn’t even zoned in on separated families and loved ones until I started getting calls,” he said. “I actually changed my ad from version one to version two, to include that segment in there.”

Jaslyn Declercq from Ontario donated to the fundraising campaign out of frustration about not being able to see her partner, who lives in Ohio.

“There’s a lot I can deal with, but the hurt on my kids is a breaking point,” she said.

The Canada-U.S. border has been closed since March 2020 and is currently in place until June 21, though it could be extended further.

On Thursday, the White House said the U.S. has not made any decisions on about when or how it would re-open the border, rebuking a report that suggested the border closure would end on June 22.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s office told The Canadian Press on Thursday that 75 per cent of Canadians would have to be vaccinated before restrictions can be lifted.

According to CTVNews.ca’s vaccine tracker, 54 per cent of Canadians have received at least one dose of the vaccine, while 49 per cent of Americans have received one dose.

Trudeau himself told reporters on Thursday that dialogue between Canada and the U.S. continues and both sides want the border re-opened.

“Conversations are ongoing constantly with the U.S. administration because there is much eagerness to get back to normal on all sides,” Trudeau said Thursday.

Last week, U.S. Senate Majority Leader and New York Senator Chuck Schumer made a push for Canada to re-open the U.S. border, with a four-point plan that included boosting support for border officers and improving clarity for those who have been impacted by the closure.

“At the beginning -- and in the height -- of the pandemic it was understandable for such drastic measures to be taken, we know much more about the virus than we knew in March of last year and are making strong gains against it,” Schumer said in a statement last week. “Since vaccination rates have risen, overall infection rates are steadily falling, and New York is re-opening today, based on the data, it is time to take the first steps towards re-opening the northern border to non-essential travel.”

While Americans appear eager to a return to normal life, the same cannot be said for Canadians. A survey from earlier this week showed that 52 per cent of Canadians are somewhat anxious about a return to pre-pandemic life.

Fingers Crossed: Are Border Changes Coming Soon?

By Travel Industry Today, May 24, 2021

<https://travelindustrytoday.com/fingers-crossed-are-border-changes-coming-soon/>

With cases declining and vaccinations rising (more than half the population has now been inoculated, a milestone achieved on the weekend), Canada’s chief public health officer says Canada seems to be on a “good trajectory” in combatting COVID-19 and that changes to some border policies are “coming soon.”

Dr. Theresa’s Tam says federal health officials are re-evaluating what has to happen before Canada can allow fully vaccinated people to enter the country or entirely re-open the border to international travellers. She was among federal officials from Health Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency appearing at an emergency meeting of the House of Commons health committee on Friday, May 21, which focused heavily on when the 14-month-long border closure will finally come to an end.

Tam said it’s not just about deciding what fully immunized people can do, it’s also about Canada’s own pandemic situation, including vaccine coverage at home, case rates and hospital capacity, and the fact there is no standard yet for proving that you are, in fact, fully vaccinated.

“We’re very actively examining the policies related to vaccinated travellers or fully vaccinated travel,” she said at the three-hour long committee hearing, adding, “I do think that Canada is probably on a good trajectory in terms of its epidemiology and our own vaccination coverage and so I do think that between now and moving toward the fall, we would expect some shifts in that policy.”

She said Canada may, however, continue to require travellers to get tested “given the potential for variants that may have escaped vaccines.”

Canada imposed border restrictions in March 2020, and last week measures to keep the US-Canada border closed to non-essential traffic were extended until at least June 21.

Travel volumes at land and border crossings have been a mere fraction of normal. Last summer, travel was down more than 90% compared to the year before. Since January 1 of this year, about 3.9 million people arrived in Canada by land or air, compared to 94 million people during the same period of 2019.

Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski, whose Thunder Bay-Rainy River riding in northwestern Ontario runs along the United States border, said there are thousands of businesses that rely on American tourists in the summer.

“If there are no American tourists this year, they’re going to go bankrupt, and a lot of people will lose their livelihood,” he said. “I think it’s a reasonable question: when can we expect to hear when fully vaccinated people, especially Americans, will be allowed into Canada?”

Tam said it was a reasonable question, and that some changes to policies are coming soon.

More than one-third of the US population is now fully vaccinated, and within that country, officials have given fully vaccinated people permission to travel without quarantining.

Canada hasn’t yet lifted restrictions for anyone regardless of vaccination status, and Powlowski said it’s time to do so.

The European Union moved last week to allow fully vaccinated tourists to travel there.

Alberta Conservative MP John Barlow asked for data showing the impact quarantine hotels are having in Canada, which officials could not provide, leaving Barlow frustrated.

“You have no data that tells me that it curbs the spread of the virus any more than quarantining at home, and there’s no plan to end the hotel quarantine,” he said. “So, is this just a means to deter travel?”

Iain Stewart, the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada, said PHAC is monitoring infection rates of travellers quite closely. He said the hotel quarantine policy – which the federal government calls “government-approved accommodations” – is not just meant to be a deterrent.

He said the policy is actually there to prevent people arriving in Canada on a plane and then getting on a domestic flight, carrying COVID-19 with them.

“I also mentioned earlier that the number of people arriving at airports is substantially higher and (they are) more likely to be infected than at the land border,” said Stewart. “And those are the motivating factors behind the government-approved accommodations.”

Federal Advisory Panel Recommends End To Hotel Quarantine In Canada

By Sarah Turnbull, CTVNews.ca Producer, May 27, 2021

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/federal-advisory-panel-recommends-end-to-hotel-quarantine-in-canada-1.5445641>

A federal advisory panel that provides advice to the government on COVID-19 testing and screening is recommending an end to the mandatory hotel quarantine required of international travellers entering Canada.

The panel states that, instead, travellers must present a suitable quarantine plan and failing approval, they be required to adhere to stay at a designated government facility.

Of the many issues they list as problematic with the current model is the fact that some travellers are choosing to pay the fine of up to \$3,000 without presenting a legitimate quarantine alternative, as well as the administrative burden associated with managing the hotel quarantine program. They also highlight the inconsistencies between the land- and air-border measures, prompting some travellers to land at U.S. airports and cross into Canada by car to avoid the hotel stay.

The hotel quarantine rules came into effect in February as a means to discourage international, non-essential jet setting. The announcement received criticism when the government noted that travellers would have to foot the bill for their up to 72-hour stay, while they wait for the results of their PCR test.

The panel also views this as problematic.

“Travellers face an added cost (up to \$2,000 CAD per person), time commitment and a burden to book government-authorized accommodation,” the report reads.

It adds that the required 72-hour stay “is inconsistent with the incubation period of SARS-CoV-2.”

As it stands today, to enter into Canada, passengers must also show a negative PCR test within 72 hours before their departure flight to Canada. After their hotel stay, they are required to carry out the remainder of their quarantine at home and take an additional test eight days later.

Among other recommendations, the panel suggests the continued screening of COVID-19 and its variants upon arrival and that all positive results be communicated to local public health authorities. It also states that the government not impose country-specific testing or quarantine measures at this time, “except under unique circumstances.”

“The global nature of travel and human mobility means that country-specific travel restrictions are likely to be of limited value. This is partially because travellers are able to circumvent such restrictions. As well, by the time such restrictions are implemented, the relevant variant will likely have already spread to other countries,” the report reads.

It also makes note of the considerations involved with some sort of vaccine certificate or passport, stating a system to validate proof of vaccination should be made available as soon as possible.

The federal health and transport ministers have said they are working in collaboration with their international counterparts on a “common set of principles” with regards to vaccine documentation and will unveil a plan shortly.

The panel lays out proposed guidelines for those unvaccinated and non-exempt, those with one shot of a two-dose vaccine and non-exempt, and those vaccinated and non-exempt.

For unvaccinated travellers it recommends the usual 72 hour pre-departure test, arrival test, approved quarantine plan, and a day seven follow-up test.

For partially vaccinated, it recommends that travellers provide “acceptable” proof of vaccination, as defined by the government, with the stipulation that those “outside the maximum recommended 2-dose interval period are considered unvaccinated.” All other steps remain the same as those applied to unvaccinated travellers except quarantine is required only until confirmation of a negative PCR test, with no follow-up at the seven day mark.

For the fully vaccinated, it recommends that travellers provide “acceptable” proof of vaccination, as defined by the government and the removal of the pre-departure test requirement. It proposes a PCR test upon arrival only for surveillance purposes. No quarantine is required unless the on-arrival test returns positive.

In the implementation of this, the panel says airlines and airports must use streams to separate the different groups.

Health Minister Patty Hajdu and Public Safety Minister Bill Blair said they welcomed the findings of the report on Thursday but noted data shows Canada’s strict border measures are working.

“There has been a 96 per cent reduction in air traffic and 90 per cent reduction in non-commercial land traffic into Canada compared to pre-pandemic volumes. Compliance rates are more than 99 per cent and average positivity rates since the start of arrival testing in February 2021 for those arriving by land (0.3 per cent) and air (1.7 per cent) remain very low,” the release reads.

“The Government of Canada will continue to monitor and review all available data and scientific evidence to inform future border and travel measures, and will be prudent in its approach, keeping the health and safety of Canadians top of mind. The Government of Canada will also consider the Panel's recommendations to determine how testing and quarantine strategies should evolve to address vaccination status.”

The National Airlines Council of Canada which represents Canada’s largest carriers weighed in, stating they “strongly support” the recommendations and urged the government to use the report as the foundation of a re-opening strategy for travel and tourism.

What Canada, And Canadians, Need To Do To Safely Re-Open The U.S. Border

By The Globe and Mail Editorial Board, May 21, 2021

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-what-canada-and-canadians-need-to-do-to-safely-re-open-the-us-border/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Globe%20Opinion&utm_content=2021-5-21_17&utm_term=&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

As provinces lay out their benchmarks for re-opening – Ontario is going slow; Quebec wants to allow 2,500 people to watch a Stanley Cup game; Manitoba is in such a bad situation that it is imposing new restrictions – the next item on the agenda is the border.

When can it re-open? To whom? And under what conditions?

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the sort-of closing of the U.S.-Canada border was one of the jolts that registered the severity of the crisis. It was announced as an agreement to “temporarily restrict all non-essential travel.” While the two countries have started talking about how to ease the vise, the closure will last until at least June 21.

Canada’s borders have been an endless source of pandemic consternation. The rules against non-essential travel eviscerated the tourism sector, yet for 14 months large numbers of people have continued to arrive from the United States and elsewhere, many exploiting the multitude of loopholes in the Liberal government’s hotel quarantine rules, themselves only brought in half-heartedly, in response to public pressure.

At the same time, Ottawa has insisted on imposing quarantine on fully vaccinated travellers, and on Thursday said it would do the same with Canadians who, for the sake of getting vaccinated, step even one metre across the U.S. border.

So when it comes to border enforcement, there’s been much to decry. But as rates of vaccination shoot higher, and as infection rates (hopefully) continue to fall, Canada has to start considering when to roll back travel restrictions, and how to do so without introducing variants or sparking new chains of infections.

On Wednesday, the European Union laid out its framework. The 27 EU states will re-open their borders as soon as next week to visitors from countries with very low virus counts, and other travellers who are fully vaccinated. The fully vaccinated will not have to quarantine.

Individual European states may impose tighter restrictions, and the EU further stands ready to pull an emergency brake on travel from any place with a sudden outbreak. Europe is also working to create a “digital green certificate” – a vaccine passport.

For most Canadians, quarantine-free travel to Europe this summer is unlikely, because although the percentage who have received a first shot is rising rapidly – on that score, Canada is set to overtake the U.S. on Friday – it could be several months before all those people get their second jabs.

Canadian and American officials have started talks to figure out what the arrangements should be for screening people who cross the world's longest international border.

A key question is whether the fully vaccinated should be allowed to bypass quarantine obligations. Knowledge of the virus is evolving but, from what is known so far, allowing the fully vaccinated to travel, without the need to spend two weeks in isolation, makes sense.

Under such a rule, Canada-U.S. travel flow would, at first, be mostly one way – owing to the much larger number of two-shot Americans. But over the summer, more and more Canadians would qualify as they got their second jabs.

As Yukon's top doctor noted earlier this month, when he announced quarantine-free travel to and from the territory for fully vaccinated Canadians starting May 25, the approach could serve as a powerful incentive. You can be a tourist if you get your shots – but if you don't, you can't.

Some worry that vaccine passports, or any requirement to prove vaccination in order to travel, is an invasion of privacy. The debate often blurs the line between requiring them domestically – such as to attend a concert – versus at a border.

Keep in mind that Canada already has long-standing proof-of-vaccine rules in place for some other areas. For example, to attend school in Ontario, parents must generally prove that their children have been vaccinated against such diseases as polio and measles. Immigrants applying for permanent residency, along with some visitors, temporary workers and foreign students, must undergo a complete medical assessment before being allowed into Canada.

In the long run, proof of vaccination for travellers will hopefully become unnecessary, thanks to the pandemic being stamped out. But that's a question for 2022 and beyond. As a bridge between now and then, and to allow travel to safely restart, Canada needs to be able to verify the vaccination status of anyone crossing the border.

B.C. Outlines Plan To End COVID-19 Restrictions; Eyes September Return To Normal

By Dirk Meissner, *The Canadian Press*, May 25, 2021

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/b-c-outlines-plan-to-end-COVID-19-restrictions-eyes-september-return-to-normal/ar-AAKnuti?ocid=msedgdhp>

British Columbia is planning for a return to normal life after Labour Day as part of its four-step COVID-19 re-opening plan.

The plan started on Tuesday, May 25 with the easing of restrictions that affected gatherings, sports events and dining, both indoors and outdoors.

Premier John Horgan said B.C.'s strong immunization rate allows the province to slowly bring people back together, with September 7 a target date for the final phase of the plan to be implemented.

That means the earliest the public health emergency and provincial state of emergency could be lifted would be July 1.

"It's an exciting day for all of us," said Horgan. "We've made extraordinary sacrifices as a province and a people over the past 15 months."

Changes in restrictions will depend on the number of people being vaccinated in the province and as that number rises, more limits will be removed, Horgan said.

Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry said the restrictions that were lifted on Tuesday, May 25 include allowing indoor and outdoor dining for up to six people, indoor gatherings with five personal visitors, and in-person faith-based gatherings, at reduced capacity.

Henry said the province will continue to monitor case counts and the condition of the virus.

"We'll be staying flexible because we know this virus still has some tricks up its sleeve," she said.

The earliest travel restrictions could be lifted is June 15, with recreational travel permitted only within residents' regions.

On Monday, health officials reported 293 new cases of COVID-19, the lowest daily count since late October. Twelve more people died over the three-day reporting period, bringing the number of fatalities since the start of the pandemic to 1,679.

B.C. imposed restrictions at the end of March on indoor restaurant dining and group fitness, while reversing a plan to allow indoor faith services as COVID-19 case numbers soared to new highs.

COVID-19 case counts increased rapidly as variants of the virus began to dominate. Infection rates peaked in early April, while hospital admissions increased and intensive care units filled with patients.

The number of hospitalizations prompted the government to cancel non-urgent surgeries in the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal health regions.

The restrictions were supposed to last until April 19 but were extended as more restrictions on travel were introduced.

Travel is limited within three regions, which are areas covered by the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal health authorities; the Northern and Interior health authorities; and Vancouver Island. Residents are asked to stay in their regions or risk a \$575 fine if they don't have a valid reason for travel.

Why Is Ontario's COVID-19 Re-Opening Plan Timeline Slower Than Other Provinces?

By Kamil Karamali, Global News, May 26, 2021

[Why is Ontario's COVID-19 re-opening plan timeline slower than other provinces? \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/why-is-ontario-s-covid-19-re-opening-plan-timeline-slower-than-other-provinces/)

Several provinces have released COVID-19 economic re-opening plans, but Ontario's timeline appears to lag noticeably behind others even though certain provinces had higher cases per capita during the third wave.

"I think there is a paralysis, a fear of making mistakes based on the past," political commentator Sarbjit Kaur told Global News.

Calgary-based political strategist Zain Velji said Ontario Premier Doug Ford "probably paid a greater political consequence" in the second and third waves compared to Alberta Premier Jason Kenney.

"You can either go for the win, like Jason Kenney, and say, 'We're the first to open in the country, I want that branding, I want that label...' versus not going for the loss, and that's what looks like Ford is doing right now," he said.

"He just doesn't want to score another own-goal, no unforced errors."

Alberta's recently-released re-opening plan targets a June 1 date for the province to hit its first phase of loosening restrictions, which includes the opening of hair salons, outdoor dining and permits outdoor social gatherings of up to 10 people.

Its second stage is targeted for mid-June and consists of indoor dining, the opening of indoor gyms and fitness, movie theatres and sports arenas. The third stage would see the elimination of all public health restrictions as early as July.

"When you look at the jump between stage two and three, that is what really triggers me," Velji said.

"If you look at the timing of stage three, it's not a coincidence. What's the biggest thing that happens in early July? The Calgary Stampede, and when you look at the Calgary Stampede and the triggering of summer season, you can really see this as something Kenney may have reverse-engineered."

In contrast, at around the same time in July, Ontario would likely only just begin allowing indoor gatherings for the first time with a max of five people.

The province would also start opening personal care services, like hair and nail salons, and allow non-essential retail to open up to a 25 per cent capacity.

"The government is probably trying hard to get it right this time," said Kaur.

"However, it's either too slow or too fast — it seems like this is now the instance where they really look at the science table and the advice of experts and be guided by that so that we can have an opening that is safe."

Ontario also has three-week intervals between stages based on hitting certain vaccination thresholds whereas Alberta has two-week breaks dependent on surpassing vaccination and hospitalization targets.

Alberta had the highest number of new COVID-19 cases per capita in the country in early May.

B.C.'s re-opening plan has also been called ambitious. With limited indoor gatherings and fitness classes already being allowed, capacities could increase by mid-June at the earliest.

Quebec's timeline for loosening restrictions begins Friday with the lifting of a curfew and allowing outdoor gatherings — but also allows gyms and indoor dining to re-open a few days later on May 31.

Dr. Peter Juni of Ontario's COVID-19 Science Advisory Table believes Ontario's slower re-opening is the right approach.

"We need to tread extremely, extremely carefully with loosening restrictions on indoor space, that's still premature," said Juni.

"We still have the challenge of variants that are partially escaping vaccines ahead of us."

He adds the only element he would change from the Ford government's re-opening timeline is to allow more outdoor activities.

"[Alberta] is a bit too ambitious," said Juni.

"If I were the province, I would probably just stick to just opening outdoor spaces in the beginning of June."

Meanwhile, the Ontario Ministry of Health has doubled down on the province's re-opening plan. A spokesperson for Health Minister Christine Elliott said officials have consulted with the province's chief medical officer of health in creating the re-opening plan.

"As last week's modelling shows, waiting to the middle of June to re-open will likely bring cases down to a very low level and a consistent downward trend throughout the summer," Hilkené said.

"If we see a rapid improvement in key health indicators, the province can consider entering Step 1 earlier. However, based on current trends, the government expects to enter Step 1 of the roadmap the week of June 14."

Canadians Could Travel Safely Within The Country This Summer, But With Conditions: Experts

By Katie Dangerfield, Global News, May 27, 2021

[Canadians could travel safely within the country this summer, but with conditions: experts \(msn.com\)](#)

As provinces start rolling out their re-opening plans amid the COVID-19 pandemic, experts are encouraging Canadians to get vaccinated and stay vigilant with public health measures if they want to travel across the country.

If they don't, interprovincial travel may spark a fourth wave, according to Raywat Deonandan, epidemiologist and associate professor at the University of Ottawa.

"Opening up to travel outside the province is interesting because vaccination is not a bulletproof vest," Raywat Deonandan, epidemiologist and associate professor at the University of Ottawa, said.

"We've got a really good shot at crushing this thing once and for all. But there is a small risk of a fourth wave if we screw it up, especially with the variants circulating."

He said the key for Canadians to travel safely this summer is to make sure that people are vaccinated, infection rates are declining and more deadly variants are not entering the country.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously said COVID-19 restrictions need to stay in place until at least 75 per cent of the population has been vaccinated with at least one dose and 25 per cent with a second dose.

Currently, Canada has vaccinated around 53 per cent of the population with at least one dose, according to COVID-19 Tracker Canada.

Vaccination rates differ depending on the region. For example, Ontario has vaccinated around 54 per cent of its population with at least one dose, Alberta around 50 per cent and Manitoba around 48 per cent.

Every province also has different re-opening plans. Some, such as British Columbia and Ontario, have imposed restrictions within and between provinces for non-essential travel. While others, such as Saskatchewan, Quebec and Alberta, don't have any travel restrictions in place.

This week, B.C. announced a plan to lift travel restrictions during its Step 2 and 3 re-opening plan.

Step 2 means provincial travel restrictions are lifted. The earliest date for this is June 15, or when at least 65 per cent of the adult population are vaccinated with at least one dose.

And Step 3 means "Canada-wide recreation travel" is allowed. This could land on July 1, or when at least 70 per cent of the adult population is vaccinated with one dose, along with low case counts and declining COVID-19 hospitalizations.

On Thursday, Prince Edward Island set a date for ending pandemic-related travel restrictions for the rest of the country. Health officials said the province will re-open to Atlantic Canadian travellers on June 27 and to some Canadian travellers on August 8.

Ontario has not announced when it is lifting its travel ban, but according to the province's website, the stay-at-home order remains in place until at least June 2.

Deonandan applauded provinces such as Ontario for not yet announcing how they plan to ease travel restrictions, arguing the responsible thing to do is to "take the temperature of the situation" first and then lift travel restrictions when it's safe to do so.

"If we've learned anything this past year, it's 'not to rush things,'" he said.

Although land travel between provinces is banned in certain regions, Canadians can still hop on a plane and fly from Vancouver to Charlottetown, which can spread the virus.

Between May 12 and May 26, 79 domestic flights have been flagged by the Canadian government for possible exposure to COVID-19.

But Deonandan believes domestic flights are still safer than international ones -- as the latter is how COVID-19 variants enter the country.

Deonandan worries that giving Canadians the green light to travel throughout the country amid a pandemic may help spread the virus, even if people are vaccinated.

"By saying you're free to travel the country because you're vaccinated, you're assuming that the disease is not prevalent anywhere in the country. I don't think that is a fair assumption," he said.

Travelling to a region that has a low infection rate may be OK, but he said it's a huge problem when you travel to a region with high numbers, and "assume the vaccine will protect you."

"Vaccination will not protect you if the prevalence is high in a region," he warned, especially if you only have one dose.

For example, Alberta's recently-released re-opening plan targets the elimination of all public health restrictions as early as July for Stage 3 (when 70 per cent of eligible Albertans have received at least one dose of vaccine).

This aligns with the Calgary Stampede (July 9-18), an event that draws in tourists from across Canada.

Brian Conway, medical director of the Vancouver Infectious Diseases Centre, said it could be safe to travel to Alberta for the Stampede providing four conditions are met: COVID-19 case count is down, there is an absence of hot spots, variants are not spreading in the community, and people are vaccinated with at least one dose (but two would be better, he said.)

"If all these things happen, interprovincial travel should be safe over the summer."

He argued that in order for an event such as the Calgary Stampede to be safe to travel to, Canada should vaccinate 75 to 80 per cent of people with at least one dose, and at least 25 per cent with two doses.

"But COVID-19 is still around, so we have to be careful," he added. "If new variants enter that are more contagious and are even resistant to vaccines, that could slow us down."

Conway said it is still important that Canadians practice safe public health measures, such as mask-wearing and gathering in small groups, even when vaccinated.

"I think these are good guidelines for travel," he said.

Despite vaccination efforts ramping up across the country, a recent poll by Ipsos shows that only a small percentage of Canadians plan on travelling outside their province this summer.

According to the poll, 26 per cent of Canadians say they plan on travelling around the country. And young people aged 18-34 (38 per cent) are more likely than older Canadians, aged 55-plus, (18 per cent) to agree with this.

Regionally, those living in Alberta (43 per cent), Saskatchewan (40 per cent) and Manitoba (40 per cent) are more likely to agree than Quebec (26 per cent), Ontario (22 per cent) and B.C. (21 per cent), that they plan on travelling outside of their province this summer.

Economic Boost Coming In The Back Half Of 2021: CIBC

The bank beat analysts' expectations by earning \$1.65 billion in Q2

by Tara Deschamps, The Canadian Press, May 27, 2021

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/industry-news/economic-boost-coming-in-the-back-half-of-2021-cibc/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=nl&utm_content=investmentexecutive&utm_campaign=INT-EN-All-afternoon

The chief executive of Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) is expecting the country to soon experience an economic boost as more people become fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

"Our neighbours to the south...are enjoying an economic boost that we have yet to fully experience here in Canada," Victor Dodig told analysts on a Thursday, May 27 call.

"That's a tailwind we can look forward to in the second half of this year."

If effective mass vaccination programs continue over the spring and summer, Dodig predicts a global rebound will also materialize in the latter half of the year with real GDP forecasts jumping by 5.7% domestically and 6.6% in the U.S.

Dodig's remarks came as CIBC beat expectations and more than tripled its second-quarter profit compared with a year ago, when the pandemic was beginning.

CIBC earned \$1.65 billion or \$3.55 per diluted share in its second quarter, up from a profit of \$392 million or 83 cents per share a year ago.

Canada's vaccination rates have climbed as vaccine supply has improved and politicians and public health officials have unveiled re-opening plans for several provinces.

"While we're not on the other side of this pandemic yet, there's every reason to be optimistic," Dodig said.

When businesses are allowed to open their doors and welcome customers, Dodig believes it will have a big impact on the money many Canadians have managed to save while working from home and having fewer activities to spend on.

He predicted the country will see heightened credit card activity as stay-at-home orders are lifted.

While Laura Dottori-Attanasio, who leads CIBC's personal and business banking, said purchase volumes are already edging towards pre-pandemic levels, she cautioned that spending on big-ticket items, transportation, travel and restaurants is still low.

"I do think it will take time for that part of the business to come back...so it does feel more like a 2022 event," she said.

CIBC's profit for the quarter ended April 30 came as its provisions for credit losses, the money set aside for bad loans, fell to \$32 million compared with \$1.41 billion in the same quarter last year at the onset of the pandemic.

Total revenue grew to \$4.93 billion from \$4.58 billion in the same quarter last year.

On an adjusted basis, CIBC earned nearly \$1.67 billion or \$3.59 per diluted share in its latest quarter, up from an adjusted profit of \$441 million or 94 cents per diluted share a year earlier.

Analysts on average had expected an adjusted profit of \$3.01 per share, according to financial data firm Refinitiv.

The bank also noted that it achieved gender parity on its board during the quarter, and for the first time in the company's 154-year history had a woman in the chair position, Kate Stevenson.

If Canada Were Texas, We'd Be Trusted With Our Freedom Instead Of In Lockdown

By Sabrina Maddeaux, *National Post*, May 25, 2021

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/other/sabrina-maddeaux-if-canada-were-texas-we-d-be-trusted-with-our-freedom-instead-of-in-lockdown/ar-AAKnHRH?ocid=msedgdhp>

Social media tells a tale of two Western worlds: the “haves” and the “have nots.” In the first category are places such as America and the United Kingdom, where people enjoy freedoms such as dinners with friends, live music, and hugging family members. Canada, on the other hand, is a have-not, where freedom takes a backseat to whatever’s easiest, cheapest, and sounds good in a live press conference.

Many Canadians, stuck at home with deteriorating mental health, social networks, and business prospects, see friends, family, and co-workers abroad regaining a semblance of normality and think, “why not us?” It’s a good question, and one that demands real answers in a liberal democracy.

Over the last year, Canadians were right to question politicians when they ignored the science on mask-wearing, border controls, and lockdowns. Governments consistently made bad choices because they didn’t want to make difficult ones. Now, as we near re-opening, the pattern holds — except the calculus has flipped. Beleaguered by months of getting it wrong, Canadian politicians are afraid to get it right.

In the face of changing circumstances and new evidence, Canada should move more aggressively to restore personal liberties and re-open most businesses, particularly hard-hit small ones. At the same time, governments must turn their attention to the sectors clearly responsible for most spread: warehouses, factories, and schools. Politicians are loath to address these areas for reasons related to economics, lobbyists, and popular opinion, but, if they do, there’s no reason we can’t re-open this summer.

The U.K. continues to open at a steady clip, and plans to lift all restrictions by June 21 when 30 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated. Texas fully re-opened in March and, despite much doom-saying, kept case counts under control. A new National Bureau of Economic Research working paper found exactly zero evidence that Texas’ re-opening affected COVID case rates. Meanwhile, Federal Minister of Health Patty Hajdu says Canadians may be able to enjoy “more activities indoors with people from outside our household” once a full 75 per cent of Canadians are vaccinated this fall.

A key takeaway from the new Texas study is lifting restrictions didn’t have a big impact on social mobility, likely because “the types of individuals who were affected by the policy” were “those least likely to affect the trajectory of COVID-19 growth.” Basically, people inclined to protect themselves have learned how to do so, and will continue to do so with or without government intervention. While Canadian governments love to lean on paternalistic policies, it’s time to trust the people. Rather than take away choices, they should actively empower people to make good ones.

There are two easy ways to do this: asymptomatic tests and widespread rapid tests. While Canada procured millions of rapid tests, outside of Nova Scotia, they've been rarer than a Maple Leafs championship win. That is to say, basically nonexistent. Sure, some are available at select pharmacies for \$40 a pop, but rapid tests aren't effective on a societal scale as special occasion favours.

They're best used for mass testing drives such as those seen in the U.K. where residents are given two free tests per week. Even Texas, though less widely reported in favour of more clickbait-y headlines about open bars, launched a program to give rapid tests to small businesses and the state offers widespread free curbside rapid testing to non-symptomatic individuals. While free asymptomatic PCR tests were available in Canada last summer, most provinces inexplicably stopped robust asymptomatic testing once it became too popular. As for rapid tests? Most politicians would rather not talk about those.

If you can empower most people to make good choices, you can then focus on protecting those who have fewer choices. These are largely essential workers in factories and warehouses, which even with iffy transparency standards, are clearly responsible for most workplace outbreaks and a large portion of community spread. Government focus should be on stemming the COVID tide here, not in backyards and small patios.

We also need to talk about the children. Schools as the "first to open and last to close" is a nice slogan and sounds noble in theory, but unfortunately the virus doesn't much care whether it's infecting people in an Amazon warehouse or a kindergarten class. Schools are important, but their risks must be dealt with.

You may remember Texas' terrible fall surge. It turns out schools played a big role in that. Last week, the National Bureau of Economic Research released a study that found COVID cases "gradually but substantially accelerated" after students returned to in-person learning in Texas last September. Spread from schools represented 12 per cent of the state's total cases during the eight weeks after re-opening and 17 per cent of deaths. This was with a mask mandate and social distancing guidelines in Texas schools at the time.

What's different now? In addition to other factors such as vaccine uptake and natural immunity, many Texas students are still learning from home. In some districts, 70 per cent of kids continue to attend school virtually.

Signals from all over the world point to schools as a problem no one has effectively addressed. Just last week, Singapore, once heralded as a COVID success story, closed schools again, citing how new variants affect younger children. Meanwhile, a bout of controversy erupted in the U.K. as Downing Street tried to block data on new variant spread in schools from public release.

Unfortunately, Canada doesn't really know how schools affect spread because we all but gave up on contact tracing and there's been no significant period where schools have been open or closed independently of stay-at-home orders and small business shutdowns. We've also done very limited testing on students.

While the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) initially said schools weren't widely responsible for spread, in late April they changed their tune, saying more transmissible variants and evolving transmission patterns mean "the difficult societal decision of closing schools will be a key public health question for multiple countries in the months ahead." They advocate for better ventilation, increased asymptomatic testing, and even a reconsideration of age priorities for vaccines. On Friday, the CDC released a new report stressing the role of aerosol spread in schools, meaning masks aren't enough. We need widespread testing and better ventilation.

Individual liberty is central to any democracy. While compromises were gladly made by most Canadians to combat COVID, politicians must aim to restore freedoms to gather, move freely, and make a living quickly as possible by aggressively targeting the areas that drive spread. What were once reasonable limits no longer look so reasonable in the light of even a one-dose summer. In the months ahead, freedom shouldn't be something Canadians can only watch on social media.

The Easing Of COVID-19 Public Health Measures Can't Be A Free-For-All

Opinion By Andre Picard, The Globe and Mail, May 25, 2021

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-easing-of-public-health-measures-cant-be-a-free-for-all/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Evening%20Update&utm_content=2021-5-25_16&utm_term=Evening%20Update:%20Trudeau%20calls%20brazen%20arrest%20of%20Belarussian%20journalist%20%E2%80%98completely%20unacceptable%E2%80%99&utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

"Hope is here."

Quebec Premier François Legault was downright giddy as he unveiled the province's "deconfinement" plan last week. (Fourteen months into the pandemic, the past four-plus under curfew, the French word "déconfinement" seems much more apropos than the blander English descriptor "re-opening.")

A few days later, Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced a similar plan, but in a more sober, smile-free manner. In Ontario, it really is a re-opening, because there never was a confinement.

"We all want to open up a lot sooner. But we can't. We have to be cautious," was the most enthusiasm Mr. Ford could muster.

Other than tone, the roadmaps back to normality are similar in Canada's two biggest provinces, with gradual and prudent easing of restrictions on outdoor activities in coming days, allowing things such as outdoor dining and in-person gatherings in mid-June, then a one-dose summer of camps and backyard BBQs, culminating with the potential for easing masking and physical distancing rules in August.

More importantly, both are tying the untethering of the public to vaccination – specifically getting at least 75 per cent of the adult population vaccinated with at least one dose before the end of August.

We need to reward people for months and months of sacrifice, and vaccination is the golden (or at least gold-plated) ticket.

What both these plans say, in broad strokes, is that the more and faster people get a COVID-19 vaccine, the more freedom and fun they can have.

The big difference between the provinces is that Quebec is using a clear timetable, while Ontario is using a metric; in the former, restrictions will be eased on specific dates, while in the latter, the easing will only happen if a set percentage of the population is vaccinated.

Quebec's approach has the advantage of being much more clear. Locked-down residents of Montreal, for example, can lick their lips in anticipation of curfew being lifted on May 28 and even the prospect of fans attending a Canadiens-Leafs hockey game live on May 29.

Ontario will lift its less-strict stay-at-home order on June 2, but will only allow outdoor dining and the re-opening of stores when at least 60 per cent of the adult population has had one dose of vaccine. (It's 58.5 per cent now, so June 14 is the target.) Then the timing of the gradual, three-step re-opening gets more vague.

Mr. Legault told Quebecers that "summer rhymes with party" (and it does in French), but stressed that the summer gatherings need to be small and restrained.

That, of course, is the big unknown. When people get a taste of post-COVID life, will they be able to restrain themselves?

You can bet there will soon be photos and videos in the news of some small-scale debauchery, likely groups of young people dancing and partying.

We can take comfort in knowing that these little bursts of over-enthusiasm don't much matter, especially if they take place outdoors.

A greater worry is if the mainstream mindset becomes that "it's over," and people return to home visits, office work and gatherings incautiously.

A fourth wave is not out of the question. In fact, it's likely if we make the mistake of abandoning public-health measures rather than easing out of them.

Vaccination is important, but it's not magic.

Both the Quebec and Ontario strategies are based on having 75 per cent of the population get one dose of vaccine. But that's an arbitrary number. It's certainly not a guarantee of much vaunted "herd immunity," even if that is achievable.

As we put our faith in vaccination to bring down infections and deaths, we also have to recognize that testing and contact tracing became all the more important.

In recent weeks, testing numbers have plummeted. Contact tracing – tracking the contacts of those who test positive for COVID-19 – was part of our daily vernacular early in the pandemic, but it's almost been forgotten.

The only way to avoid a resurgence of cases is to stop the virus circulating in the community: test, trace, isolate aggressively.

The missing piece of the deconfinement plans in both provinces was a commitment to slam the door shut if case numbers do jump again. Yet, if there is an over-arching lesson of the pandemic, it's that: to counter the spread of a wily virus, you have to shut down swiftly and re-open slowly.

Yes, hope is here.

But if we want to remain hopeful, and on track to post-COVID freedom, we have to be willing and ready to adjust our metrics and timetables, and curb our enthusiasm.

Too Early To Set A Date On Loosening Travel Restrictions: Canada's Transport Minister

By Christopher Reynolds, The Canadian Press, May 20, 2021

[Too early to set a date on loosening travel restrictions: Canada's transport minister \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/health/Too-early-to-set-a-date-on-loosening-travel-restrictions:Canada-s-transport-minister)

Transport Minister Omar Alghabra says he cannot yet commit to a date — or COVID-19 vaccination rate benchmarks — for when so-called vaccine passports will allow Canada to ease travel restrictions.

Speaking at a virtual news conference on Thursday, May 20, Alghabra said decisions around hotel quarantines for air passengers and the eventual re-opening of the border will hinge on expert advice and unspecified criteria tied to the pandemic.

"These decisions will depend on public health, will depend on data and evidence. At this moment, I can't give you a specific date," he told reporters.

"We're going to have all of these measures and all of these thresholds outlined in detail when we feel it's time to do so."

The travel and aviation sectors will take off again "when it's safe," he added.

Alghabra has stressed the need for a "common platform" to identify travellers' vaccination status, saying on Thursday, May 20 that he is working with G7 countries and the European Union to integrate vaccine certification into international travel in the months ahead.

The EU agreed on Wednesday, May 19 to a plan that would allow fully vaccinated travellers to visit the 27-nation bloc, as well as relax restrictions for all travel from some other countries that are deemed COVID-19-safe. A date remains to be set, however.

The move prompted Canada's largest airlines to renew their call for a clear plan from Ottawa on resuming international travel.

Mike McNaney, who heads the National Airlines Council of Canada, lauded the EU for its "science-based approach" and demanded a similar blueprint from Ottawa, saying on Wednesday, May 19 that the federal government should state when it will adjust travel restrictions for inoculated visitors.

Like EU nations, Canada has struggled to prop up an aviation and tourism sector battered by measures that include travel advisories and a 14-month border shutdown.

Fewer than 29,000 travellers arrived in Canada by plane the week of April 26 to May 2, in contrast to the 688,000 passengers who streamed in during a comparable time period two years earlier, according to the Canada Border Services Agency. The difference amounts to a 96 per cent drop in air travellers.

Numerous jurisdictions have tied re-opening plans to vaccination benchmarks, though travel components of those plans can remain elusive.

Across the border, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced a regime last month that links the rollback of coronavirus rules to the state's vaccination rate. The phased plan will scrap indoor capacity limits at restaurants after 65 per cent of the population is vaccinated and lift the face-mask order at 70 per cent.

In Germany, the health minister has said the country aims to unveil a digital immunity certificate before July. The certificate would be stored in an app and, the government hopes, be made compatible with the EU's vaccine certification platform, still under development.

Alghabra stressed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's talking point of a "one-dose summer" and "two-dose fall," which is when the transport minister "can see restarting ... some of the activities."

"We could get ahead of ourselves. We don't want to do that. But I want you to know that that work is being done right now," he said of benchmarks and border restrictions.

"As we've seen from COVID, things change very quickly ... We're still grappling with the third wave."

'Vaccine Passports' Not A Free Pass To Travel Abroad Easily: Singapore

By Rei Kurohi, Singapore Straits Times, May 18, 2021

https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/vaccine-passports-not-a-free-pass-to-travel-abroad-easily-ong-ye-kung?fbclid=IwAR2s_0eZOFMIEHREKgw6jZXEoTGhCeN3jUq5tyRJwApPxrYpASzWwf37Wko

Having proof of vaccination, or so-called vaccine passports, will not give people a free pass to travel abroad easily, said Singapore Health Minister Ong Ye Kung during a press conference on Tuesday (May 18), in response to a media query.

Ultimately, countries will have to come to an agreement to recognise the vaccine certificates issued by their counterparts before travel will be allowed, he added.

Mr. Ong was responding to a question about whether Singapore has plans to introduce vaccine passports as a condition for travelling in or out of the country.

"I always felt that the concept of a vaccine passport is actually a bit of a misnomer," the minister said at a press conference held by the multi-ministry task force on COVID-19, which he co-chairs.

"It gives you the impression that, as with a passport, you can travel to many places. It actually wouldn't work like that."

Explaining how it would work, he said two different regions would assess each other's risk profile, and if it is similar, will form an air travel corridor, like the air travel bubble between Singapore and Hong Kong.

The travel bubble, which will allow quarantine-free travel between both cities, was originally slated to start on November 22 last year, but was pushed back to May 26 this year.

It has now been postponed a second time, following a recent spike in COVID-19 cases in Singapore.

Mr. Ong said such an arrangement starts with both sides recognising each other's vaccine certificates, after determining that vaccination is carried out using good vaccines and under well-supervised conditions in both places.

Then, both sides will have to decide on policies such as whether the quarantine period should be done away with or cut short, among other things.

"What is more likely is a two-step process. Number one, mutual recognition of vaccine certificates; and number two, what to do with those vaccine certificates, and you confer the appropriate restriction relaxations," he added.

Eight Hours At The Airport Pre-Flight? IATA Urges Efficiency As 79% Of Canadians Say They're In Favour Of Vaccine Passports For International Travel

By Kathryn Follitt, Editor, Travel Week, May 26, 2021

https://www.travelweek.ca/news/8-hours-at-the-airport-pre-flight-iata-urges-efficiency-as-79-of-canadians-say-theyre-in-favour-of-vaccine-passports-for-intl-travel/?utm_source=Daily&utm_medium=Lead_Story&utm_campaign=News&vgo_ee=AHpzGuv3esOwkkyrZ%2Bu8Tg%3D%3D

A strong majority of Canadians favours proof of vaccination, better known as vaccine passports or vaccination certificates, for travel outside Canada.

That bodes well for restarting the travel industry, and it's in line with initiatives from the EU, where the Digital Green Pass recently got the green light with a potential July 1 start date.

But what if countries and regions around the world forge ahead with vaccination certification, without effective digital solutions at airports to process those credentials?

If that happens, time spent at the airport could reach 5.5 hours per trip at 75% pre-COVID-19 traffic levels – and 8 hours per trip at 100% pre-COVID-19 traffic levels, according to new projections from IATA.

Majority Of Canadians Onboard With Vaccination Certificates

Three-quarters of Canadians (76%) say they're in favour of vaccine passports for cross-border travel to the U.S. And an even higher percentage (79%) say vaccine passports are a good idea for international travel.

Those results come from a just released Angus Reid poll.

Just over half (51%) of Canadians maintain that the Canada-U.S. border closure should remain in place for the time being. However as the analysis from Angus Reid notes, Canadians who travelled regularly before the pandemic were far more likely to say that the Canada-U.S. border should have been opened after the May 24 long weekend (37%) compared to those who did not take any international trips from 2018 to 2020 (16%). Overall, 48% say they would keep the border closed until September.

The survey also polled Canadians' stance on proof of vaccination for things like going to public places in the community, e.g. restaurants, movies and the like, and for the workplace. The acceptance for vaccine passports is considerably higher for travel, with 55% saying they were in favour for mandatory proof of vaccination for public places in the community, and for workplaces.

“Nobody Will Tolerate Waiting Hours At Check-In Or For Border Formalities”

A revised forecast by IATA and Tourism Economics shows there’s reason for optimism for travel as the world emerges from the pandemic.

According to IATA...

- In 2021 global passenger numbers are expected to recover to 52% of pre-COVID-19 levels (2019).
- In 2022 global passenger numbers are expected to recover to 88% of pre-COVID-19 levels.
- In 2023 global passenger numbers are expected to surpass pre-COVID-19 levels (105%).
- By 2030 global passenger numbers are expected to have grown to 5.6 billion. That would be 7% below the pre-COVID-19 forecast and an estimated loss of 2-3 years of growth due to COVID-19.

However IATA is warning of potential airport chaos unless governments move quickly to adopt digital processes to manage travel health credentials (COVID-19 testing and vaccine certificates) and other COVID-19 measures.

The impacts will be severe, says IATA...

- Pre-COVID-19, passengers, on average, spent about 1.5 hours in travel processes for every journey (check-in, security, border control, customs, and baggage claim).
- Current data indicates that airport processing times have ballooned to 3 hours during peak time with travel volumes at only about 30% of pre-COVID-19 levels. The greatest increases are at check-in and border control (emigration and immigration) where travel health credentials are being checked mainly as paper documents.
- Modelling suggests that, without process improvements, the time spent in airport processes could reach 5.5 hours per trip at 75% pre-COVID-19 traffic levels, and 8 hours per trip at 100% pre-COVID-19 traffic levels.

“Without an automated solution for COVID-19 checks, we can see the potential for significant airport disruptions on the horizon. Already, average passenger processing and waiting times have doubled from what they were pre-crisis during peak time – reaching an unacceptable three hours. And that is with many airports deploying pre-crisis level staffing for a small fraction of pre-crisis volumes. Nobody will tolerate waiting hours at check-in or for border formalities. We must automate the checking of vaccine and test certificates before traffic ramps-up. The technical solutions exist. But governments must agree digital certificate standards and align processes to accept them. And they must act fast,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director General.

Not surprisingly, despite the myriad challenges airlines have faced over the past 15 months, and continue to face, Walsh is bullish on aviation and the travel industry. Sustainability is key, however.

“I am always optimistic about aviation,” he said. “We are in the deepest and gravest crisis in our history. But the rapidly growing vaccinated population and advancements in testing will return the freedom to fly in the months ahead. And when that happens, people are going to want to travel. The immediate challenge is to re-open borders, eliminate quarantine measures and digitally manage vaccination/testing certificates. At the same time, we must assure the world that aviation’s long-term growth prospects are supported with an unwavering commitment to sustainability. Both challenges require governments and industry to work in partnership. Aviation is ready. But I don’t see governments moving fast enough.”

Ombudsmen From Across Canada Warn Provinces Of Domestic COVID-19 Vaccine Passport Pitfalls

By Mike Hager, The Globe and Mail, May 26, 2021

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-ombudsmen-from-across-canada-warn-provinces-of-domestic-vaccine/>

As provinces begin their post-pandemic plans to re-open as the myriad risks of COVID-19 recede, a group of ombudsmen from across the country are warning premiers and other officials to weigh the potential pitfalls of making people show proof of vaccination – or vaccine passports – to access public services.

The Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman released a guide Wednesday outlining how, if they do intend to create such a passport system, provincial and territorial governments can avoid human-rights complaints and legal challenges by creating fair and transparent rules.

“For every action, there’s a reaction, so we don’t want to inadvertently affect somebody’s right or somebody’s access to a service the government provides,” CCPO president Bill Smith, the Ombudsman for Nova Scotia, told The Globe and Mail. “You could see how something as simple as taking a driving test might demand a vaccine certificate, or accessing a recreational arena.”

The report states that to create a fair system, any government must give clear direction on the new rules by passing a new law or making the new policy publicly available. They must also build in a review and appeal mechanism for those who challenge the vaccine passport requirement and accommodate those who can’t get vaccinated for medical reasons, the ombudsmen note.

Last week, Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial privacy commissioners issued a joint statement sounding a similar note of caution to politicians hoping to bring in such passports. Federal Transport Minister Omar Alghabra also said last week he cannot yet commit to a date – or COVID-19 vaccination rate benchmarks – for when vaccine passports will allow Canada to ease its restrictions on international air travel, which has been restricted to the Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver airports.

Until now, provinces have only been discussing creating vaccine passport programs, Mr. Smith said.

Last December, the Ontario government debated plans to issue digital “immunity certificates” to people as they received their COVID-19 vaccinations, according to provincial government documents obtained through freedom of information legislation and reported on last month by The Globe. Premier Doug Ford’s head of communications has said his government drew up those plans to examine all options but has not decided on creating such a system.

Quebec began sending people electronic proof of their vaccination earlier this month, but the provincial government has said it is still analyzing the idea of a vaccine passport.

In Alberta, Premier Jason Kenney has said his government won’t require vaccine passports, nor will it provide them.

“We’ve made it absolutely clear that we will not be facilitating so-called vaccine passports,” Mr. Kenney said during an online question-and-answer session earlier this month.

He added that anyone in Alberta who needs proof of vaccination to travel internationally should use the documentation they received when they got their vaccine.

The United Conservative Party government has tabled legislation that would remove an old provision of the province’s Public Health Act that allowed the government to force people to get vaccinated. The change was endorsed by the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, who noted the provision has never been used.

At a news conference on Tuesday, May 25 unveiling B.C.’s re-opening plan, Provincial Health Officer Bonnie Henry said she has been studying the issue and does not want proof of vaccination to be required on Canada’s West Coast.

“This virus has shown us that there are inequities in our society that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, and there is no way that we will recommend inequities be increased by use of things like vaccine passports for services [or] for public access here in British Columbia,” she told reporters. “That’s my advice and I’ve got support from the ... Premier.”

When children return to school in B.C. this fall, it is unlikely they will need to prove they have been vaccinated, according to Terri Mooring, president of the BC Teachers’ Federation, which is against vaccine passports. Ms. Mooring, who represents 45,000 public educators, said disadvantaged teens and their families are having a difficult time getting vaccinated in some of Metro Vancouver’s hardest-hit neighbourhoods.

Even though the province has legislated up to three hours’ paid leave for all workers to get vaccinated, that doesn’t apply to transporting family members to get their jab, she said. Plus, many single parents are working multiple jobs and may have a tough time getting to their local mass vaccination sites, she added. Ms. Mooring said the union doesn’t see why some larger schools couldn’t vaccinate students onsite, which would make access much easier for them and their parents.

“The passport plays into this [inequity], because in a sense you could be discriminating against students through no fault of their own,” she said.

Americans Want To Travel Again But Some Vacations Are Now Way More Expensive Than Normal, Thanks To A 17% Spike In Flight Fares And Rising Hotel Prices

By Anna Cooban, Business Insider, May 24, 2021

[Americans want to travel again but some vacations are now way more expensive than normal, thanks to a 17% spike in flight fares and rising hotel prices \(msn.com\)](#)

The cost of vacations is soaring as airlines and hotels hike their prices ahead of an anticipated summer boom in travel, CNBC reports.

Prices for international flights from the US have gone up 17% since April, while domestic flights prices have jumped 9%, according to analysis by the research firm Bernstein, cited by CNBC.

A rise in demand has fueled the price jumps, with many travelers taking vacations to see family they have been separated from during the pandemic. Theme parks re-opening and mask guidelines relaxing at these venues could also be contributing.

Rates are still mostly below pre-pandemic levels, but some hotel prices are even higher than in 2019. Average hotel rates in Cancun, Mexico were roughly \$205 a night in early May, up from \$45 a year ago and \$160 in 2019, according to data from hospitality firm STR, cited in CNBC's report.

Room rates in New York City are also rising - rooms costing an average of \$123 a night last year rose to an average of \$151 in early May. This is still below 2019 levels, when these rooms went for \$269, according to STR.

Airlines are also re-introducing strict rules on their cheapest "basic economy" fares, such as change and cancellation fees, which they suspended last year to encourage more travelers to fly.

Delta Air Lines said customers who bought tickets after April 30 are no longer eligible to change or cancel their flight for free under its COVID-19 waiver, following a standard 24-hour cancellation window.

The cost of gasoline has also risen to its highest level in seven years, topping \$3 following the Colonial Pipeline hack in early May, making road trips more expensive.

U.S. Warns Against All Travel To Japan Due To Surge In COVID-19 Cases As Olympics Loom

By *The Associated Press*, May 24, 2021

<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/us-warns-japan-travel-ahead-of-olympics-1.6038887>

The U.S. State Department and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued twin alerts on Monday, warning against visiting Japan — which is due to open the Tokyo Olympics on July 23 — due to the country's recent surge in COVID-19 cases.

The twin alerts issued Monday don't ban U.S. citizens from visiting the country, but they could have an impact on insurance rates for travellers and may factor into decisions by Olympic athletes and spectators on whether to compete in or attend the games, which are due to start in July.

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee said it still anticipates that American athletes will be able to safely compete.

The Public Health Agency of Canada, meanwhile, continues to advise Canadian travellers to avoid all non-essential travel outside of the country.

Canada is planning to send a full contingent of athletes to the Games. A message left with the Canadian Olympic Committee was not immediately returned.

Biden Signs Bill Opening Door For Alaska Cruises To Resume

By *Becky Bohrer*, Associated Press, May 24, 2021

<https://apnews.com/article/canada-alaska-lifestyle-travel-cruises-3bec530bb3a6b2f0d1a758c7cafc78c8>

President Joe Biden signed into law on Monday, May 24 legislation that opens a door for resumed cruise ship travel to Alaska after the pandemic last year scrapped sailings.

The measure pushed by members of Alaska's Republican congressional delegation will allow large cruise ships to sail directly from Washington state to Alaska without stopping in Canada. It is intended as a temporary workaround of a longstanding federal law that requires certain large cruise ships bound for Alaska to stop in Canada or start trips there.

Canada, amid COVID-19 concerns, has barred cruise operations through February 2022.

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski said Alaska has a limited opportunity for cruise travel, unlike sunny locales such as Florida. Before the pandemic, the season in Alaska would begin in late spring and extend through the summer or sometimes early fall.

She said cruise lines now have an opportunity to book trips to bring people to Alaska and “help us with our economy that has really been smacked hard by COVID.” Tourism is an important industry in the state, particularly for many southeast Alaska communities heavily reliant on cruise ship passengers.

Passage of the Bill underscores the importance of not giving up, Murkowski said in comments alongside Senator Dan Sullivan and U.S. Representative Don Young, the other members of the state’s congressional delegation, in Washington, D.C, on Monday, May 24.

COVID Testing’s Value Shrinks As Vaccines Beat Back Virus In The US

By Matthew Perrone, The Associated Press, May 23, 2021

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/science/COVID-testing-s-value-shrinks-as-vaccines-beat-back-virus/ar-AAKi4zY?ocid=msedgdhp>

US federal health officials’ new, more relaxed recommendations on masks have all but eclipsed another major change in guidance from the government: fully vaccinated Americans can largely skip getting tested for the coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said last week that most people who have received the full course of shots and have no COVID-19 symptoms don’t need to be screened for the virus, even if exposed to someone infected.

The change represents a new phase in the epidemic after nearly a year in which testing was the primary weapon against the virus. Vaccines are now central to the response and have driven down hospitalizations and deaths dramatically.

Experts say the CDC guidance reflects a new reality in which nearly half of Americans have received at least one shot and close to 40% are fully vaccinated.

“At this point we really should be asking ourselves whether the benefits of testing outweigh the costs — which are lots of disruptions, lots of confusion and very little clinical or public health benefit,” said Dr. A. David Paltiel of Yale’s School of Public Health, who championed widespread testing at colleges last year.

While vaccinated people can still catch the virus, they face little risk of serious illness from it. And positive test results can lead to what many experts now say are unnecessary worry and interruptions at work, home and school, such as quarantines and shutdowns.

Other health specialists say the CDC’s abrupt changes on the need for masks and testing have sent the message that COVID-19 is no longer a major threat, even as the U.S. reports daily case counts of nearly 30,000.

“The average Joe Public is interpreting what the CDC is saying as ‘This is done. It’s over,’” said Dr. Michael Mina of Harvard University, a leading advocate of widespread, rapid testing.

With more than 60% of Americans not fully vaccinated, he thinks screening of those without symptoms still has a role, particularly among front-line workers who have to deal with the public.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said the updated guidelines are based on studies showing the robust effectiveness of the vaccine in preventing disease in various age groups and settings. Even when vaccinated people do contract COVID-19, their infections tend to be milder, shorter and less likely to spread to others.

As a result, the CDC says vaccinated people can generally be excluded from routine workplace screening for COVID-19.

That change could eliminate testing headaches like the one recently reported by the New York Yankees, when one player and several staffers tested positive on a highly sensitive COVID-19 test, despite being vaccinated.

Baseball officials are discussing whether to drop or reduce testing of people who have no symptoms.

But widespread attempts to waive testing for vaccinated people could face the same dilemma seen with the CDC's new guidelines on masks: there's no easy way to determine who has been vaccinated and who hasn't.

Employers can legally require vaccinations for most workers, though few have tested that power, since the vaccines don't yet have full regulatory approval. Even asking employees to disclose their vaccination status is viewed as intrusive by many employment law specialists.

For now, testing appears to be continuing unchanged in places that adopted the practice, from offices to meatpacking plants to sports teams.

Pork producer Smithfield Foods said it continues to conduct a combination of mandatory and optional testing for employees, depending on conditions at work sites. Amazon said it will still offer regular, voluntary testing.

The NBA has indicated it plans to keep its testing system in place for now. The league has been praised for using rigorous testing to create COVID-19-free "bubbles" around players, coaches and staff.

On a national level, the supply of COVID-19 tests now vastly surpasses demand. U.S. officials receive reports of about 1 million tests per day, down from a peak of over 2 million in mid-January, though many rapid tests done at home and workplaces go uncounted.

Consumers can buy 15-minute, over-the-counter tests at pharmacies and other stores. That's on top of increased capacity from U.S. laboratories and hospitals, which ramped up testing after last year's crushing demand.

The U.S. will be capable of conducting 500 million monthly tests in June, according to researchers at Arizona State University.

As recently as this winter, many health experts were calling for a huge testing effort to safely re-open schools, offices and other businesses. But that was before it was known how effective the vaccine would be in the real world, how quickly it could be distributed and whether it would protect against variants.

“The vaccines over-performed, which is the best news possible,” said Dr. Jeffrey Engel of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. “So now you can begin to peel back some of these other layers of mitigation like mask use and screening.”

Congress set aside \$46 billion in the last pandemic relief package to boost testing, particularly in schools. But with all Americans 12 and older now eligible for shots, many middle and high school students will be fully vaccinated when they return to classrooms in the fall.

And many school systems have already rejected routine testing for elementary students, since children rarely become seriously ill and a positive test can trigger disruptive quarantines.

Some states have even returned federal testing funds, preferring simpler measures such as mask wearing and social distancing.

Many school officials, Engel said, “just see screening programs as a huge burden that’s not going to help.”

B.C. Cruise Ship Debacle Reveals The Abject Failure Of The Canadian Government To Plan

By Rupa Subramanya, National Post, May 27, 2021

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/rupa-subramanya-b-c-cruise-ship-debacle-demonstrates-the-abject-failure-of-the-canadian-government-to-plan-ahead/ar-AAKrQc5?ocid=entnewsntp>

While much of Canada remains under lockdown, life is starting to return to normal in the United States. On May 24, President Joe Biden signed into law a bill that allows cruise ship operators to travel from Washington state to Alaska without stopping at ports in British Columbia en route.

Canada’s federal government has suspended cruise ship operations until March 2022, while the Americans are eager to re-open them. The new US law was required as a workaround, since the Passenger Vessel Services Act (PVSA) of 1886 mandated that foreign cruise operators stopped at a foreign port in between stops at American ports. Given geography, this antiquated protectionist law was basically a gift to the tourism industry in B.C.

Naturally, successive Canadian and B.C. governments were happy with the PVSA and its boon to the B.C. tourism industry, worth close to \$3 billion. Canadian officials have been blindsided by the swift passage of the new law through Congress with bipartisan support and the president’s willing signature. B.C. Premier John Horgan badly misread U.S. politics when he predicted that the law had little chance of passing. His government is now scrambling to negotiate with the state of Alaska to prevent this bypassing of British Columbia from becoming permanent.

The federal government bears a good deal of the blame as well, with the intransigence of federal transport authorities about allowing cruise ships to make “technical stops,” which would not have allowed passengers to disembark in B.C., but would have kept them on the right side of the PVSA and brought docking fees and at least some work for harbour staff. This would have posed no risk of new COVID-19 infections in Canada and it’s extraordinary that this possibility was rebuffed when the border remains open to flights from overseas, which continue to bring passengers into Canada, including those who test positive for COVID-19.

Centuries of shared history, culture and the world’s longest undefended border have conspired to create a remarkable sense of complacency among Canadian policy-makers when it comes to the bilateral relationship with the United States. The cruise ship fiasco, with both the feds and the province dropping the ball, is a perfect illustration. Although the law theoretically has a sunset clause, there is no guarantee that B.C. won’t be cut out permanently when life returns to normal. While the PVSA was good for Canada, which is why successive governments lobbied the U.S. to keep it, the new law is good for Alaska’s tourism industry, and we would be naive to think that they would give a chunk of that business back to Canada out of sheer altruism.

The cruise ship debacle demonstrates the abject failure of the Canadian government to plan ahead as the pandemic’s end is in sight in the U.S. and in other countries that are approaching a high rate of full vaccination such as the United Kingdom and some European nations. In the EU, vaccine passports are increasingly the norm, and have allowed for the safe re-opening of dining and cultural events, travel and tourism. Without using the loaded term “vaccine passport,” the U.S. has loosened restrictions on fully vaccinated people. For example, Americans returning to the U.S. from abroad who are fully vaccinated still need to show a negative COVID-19 test but are not required to quarantine.

You don’t have to be a genius to figure out that the road to normalcy in a post-pandemic world will involve vaccine passports that will allow the resumption of normal activity without undue restrictions. Bizarrely, Canada’s chief public officer of health, Theresa Tam, recently poured cold water on the common sense idea that full vaccination equals immunity and a return to normal. Obviously, the risk of transmitting COVID-19 if you’re fully vaccinated doesn’t go to zero but it is low enough that countries such as the U.S., U.K. and many in Europe deem the level of protection sufficient for a return to normalcy.

A cynical explanation for why the Trudeau government is not keen to re-open the Canada-U.S. border for fully vaccinated travellers is that it would be almost entirely a one-way street. Our American friends and relatives could visit us but we couldn’t visit them. The optics for a government that claims to have managed the pandemic well and is eyeing the next federal election would be terrible. Perhaps this explains why talks on re-opening the border haven’t even really begun.

Even as government officials thump their collective chests that Canada has surpassed the U.S. in terms of first vaccinations, they forget to mention that we are way behind in the percentage of the population that is fully vaccinated. That is why as Canadians were under lockdown over Victoria Day, Americans were looking forward to getting together with family and friends over Memorial Day. And cruise ships will not be stopping in B.C. this summer.

Australia's Success At Fighting COVID Has Closed It Off From The World

By Andrew Newman, *Special To The Globe and Mail, May 24, 2021*

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-australias-success-at-fighting-COVID-has-closed-it-off-from-the-world/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Globe%20Opinion&utm_content=2021-5-25_17&utm_term=Australia%e2%80%99s%20success%20at%20fighting%20COVID%20has%20closed%20it%20off%20from%20the%20world&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeFJOJkTb

When I heard the news earlier this month that Australia wasn't planning to allow its citizens to travel abroad until mid-2022, my heart dropped. As a Canadian expat living in Australia, I've been grateful for our success in suppressing and effectively eliminating COVID-19. But with a snail-like vaccine rollout and little natural immunity, I am concerned by the distant horizon for re-opening to the world.

I'm all too conscious of not being in Canada with my family when needed, both in times of sorrow and joy. A close family member became ill and died. A new member of the family was born. While we are lucky to be enjoying a more-or-less normal life here, it's a strange feeling knowing we are stuck in what is now being dubbed "the Hermit Kingdom."

Australia has been one of the world's most successful countries in terms of managing the virus. The country has had less than 30,000 cases and 910 deaths since the start of the pandemic. Nearly all of those cases and deaths were during the first wave last spring and the second wave, which occurred only in Melbourne in the second half of last year due to mismanagement of the hotel quarantine system.

The success can be attributed in part to an early recognition from the national and state governments that the virus would be suppressed only if human movement was radically curtailed. Australia's remote location and status as both a country and an island continent are obvious advantages. The international border was shut and state borders within Australia were also closed for much of 2020. The city of Melbourne was surrounded by a hard border, known as "the ring of steel," for 123 days. When small numbers of cases increased, authorities put cities into strict lockdowns, with fines for thousands of dollars readily issued. Compliance was high. Unlike in Canada, the rules have been fairly consistent and generally communicated clearly.

Other than limited sporadic lockdowns of a few days' duration in various parts of the country, life is now largely normal within Australia's borders. Students have been back at school since October. Sports are resuming. Restaurants are open. Masks are no longer generally required. Large gatherings are again permitted. Even handshaking has cautiously resumed. The economy has benefited – and more importantly, we've largely avoided the deaths and medical burdens that other countries have had to bear.

Due to the success of its strategy, there has, however, been much less pressure to vaccinate people than in Canada. This has increased vaccine hesitancy, with up to a third of Australians saying they are unlikely or not very likely to be vaccinated in the months ahead. One key reason reported for the hesitancy is the lack of a rush to be vaccinated while the borders are closed.

Australia's vaccination program has lagged far behind the U.S., Canada and the EU. Only 3.2 million doses have been administered in a population of 25 million. While some 195 million doses have been ordered, the rollout is far behind schedule. A plan for domestic manufacturing hasn't gone as planned, and European officials have been reluctant to allow vaccines to be sent here, given our low infection numbers. Australia remains highly vulnerable to a third wave, particularly of new variants. The current normal way of life is hard-won and easily lost.

Australia cannot open to the rest of the world until mass vaccination has occurred. Until then, Australians have the unusual legal restriction of being unable to leave their own country without permission. This is not a border closure in the Canadian sense. A permit is required to travel, and it is rarely given. Even if one was permitted to travel, there are few commercial flights to transport travellers. Coming back to Australia is the hardest part, even for citizens. That requires waiting for a spot on a repatriation flight under strict caps, and with a 14-day hotel quarantine requirement. After the recent outbreak in India began, Australia initially banned its citizens there from coming home, threatening them with criminal charges and a \$50,000 (in Australian dollars) fine.

While I am grateful to live in a country that protects its people and has largely been led by science, we need to find a way to accelerate the vaccine rollout and re-open ourselves to the world. In Melbourne, 40 per cent of the residents are born overseas, and we feel the distance from our homelands every day. It's already been three years since my children have been back to Canada to see our family. I hope they won't have to wait another year.

British Researchers Train Dogs To Detect COVID-19 With 'Incredible Speed And Accuracy'

By Paul Waldie, Europe Correspondent, The Globe and Mail, May 23, 2021

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-britain-training-dogs-to-detect-COVID-19/>

They've been used to sniff out drugs, explosives and other contraband, and now a team of scientists in Britain has trained dogs to detect COVID-19 in humans with up to 94-per-cent accuracy.

The researchers, from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Durham University and a British charity called Medical Detection Dogs, trained six dogs to pick out tiny bits of clothing from people who had been infected with the virus, in some cases months earlier.

The dogs were between 82-per-cent to 94-per-cent accurate in identifying the COVID-19 samples. They also achieved up to 92-per-cent specificity, which measures the ability to tell if someone doesn't have the disease.

"The results are extremely exciting," said James Logan, the project leader and head of the Department of Disease Control at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. "The dogs could detect COVID with incredible speed and accuracy, even if a person was asymptomatic."

The study has yet to be peer-reviewed and further trials are under way, but Dr. Logan said the early results demonstrated that teams of dogs could be used at airports, sports stadiums or other large gatherings as an initial check for people who might be infected, even mildly.

He said the dogs had no trouble identifying cases of the COVID-19 variant first detected in Britain and they weren't thrown off by samples from people who had other respiratory illnesses such as a common cold. The overall results were so impressive, he added, that the dogs performed better than lateral flow tests, a common rapid test for the virus, and they were almost as accurate as polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, tests which are considered the gold-standard for verifying COVID-19 cases.

"Dogs are significantly quicker than any of the other tests," Dr. Logan said, adding that two dogs can screen 300 people in 30 minutes. "What we are suggesting is that there could be what we call a rapid screen and test strategy. Dogs would first give the initial screen and those who were indicated as positive would then receive a confirmatory PCR test."

Scientists have long known that body odour changes when people are sick and dogs have been trained to spot a variety of illnesses including malaria, Parkinson's disease and bladder cancer. Recent studies have shown that COVID-19 also causes a strong and distinctive smell that dogs can pick up.

Claire Guest, the chief scientific officer at Medical Detection Dogs, said most canines have 300 million scent receptors in their noses, which gives them a remarkable sense of smell. Humans, by contrast, have roughly five million. The best breeds for detection work – Labradors, golden retrievers and cocker spaniels – have up to 350 million receptors and an inbred penchant for hunting.

"These are dogs that absolutely just love searching," Dr. Guest said. "These are dogs that if you throw a ball into the grass a hundred times, the dog just wants to go out and find it, go out and find it, go out and find it. And they are not using their eyes, they are using their nose." Their noses are so finely tuned, she added, that they can detect odours in concentrations as low as 1.5 parts per trillion, equivalent to finding a teaspoon of sugar in two Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Recent studies in France and Germany have also shown that dogs can be trained to find COVID-19, but the British research is the most comprehensive so far and involved 3,500 samples and hundreds of volunteers.

Dr. Guest and the others started by training the dogs to detect the virus in fragments – roughly the size of a loonie – of socks, T-shirts and masks submitted by people who had been mildly infected or who were asymptomatic. Once fully trained, the dogs were tested in a double blind, randomized study where no one in the lab knew which samples had COVID-19. A final trial involved the dogs identifying COVID-19 cases as groups of volunteers walked through a room wearing T-shirts from people who had been ill.

The animals had to not only identify which samples had the virus but also correctly ignore those that tested negative. "The dog understands that he must give the correct answer to get a reward, not just find the odour," Dr. Guest said.

The next phase of the trial involves using the dogs in real-world situations and Dr. Logan believes the results could be even better.

“These dogs have been detecting a very, very small amount of odour on some samples that are several weeks old,” he said. “Sometimes the odour that will be coming off an actual person that’s infected is going to be a much, much bigger signal. So it could be that the dogs may actually improve in their accuracy when they are tested in the field.”

Even if all the trials are successful, training enough dogs to cover airports won’t be easy. Dr. Guest said it takes about two months to train a dog and only 10 are currently in training. The researchers are trying to develop a chemical that mimics the scent of COVID-19 to simplify and speed up training, but that hasn’t happened yet.

There are also questions about how the dogs will perform in densely packed crowds and whether ventilation in airports will disperse odours and reduce the dogs’ effectiveness, said Lawrence Young, a virologist at the University of Warwick.

“The big question is ‘Will this approach work in the real world on people rather than samples of socks and shirts?’” he said.

Why Herd Immunity To COVID-19 Is Proving Elusive – Even In Highly Vaccinated Countries

Even in highly vaccinated countries such as Chile, Seychelles and the UAE, new surges are defying predictions about how quickly COVID-19 can spread – and countries whose rates are still low are watching with concern

By Eric Reguly, European Bureau Chief, The Globe and Mail, May 27, 2021

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-herd-immunity-may-never-come-as-COVID-19-variants-threaten-countries/>

The European Union’s smallest country, Malta, this week declared it had achieved herd immunity – a rare victory in the continent’s 15-month battle against COVID-19.

Malta said 70 per cent of its population over the age of 16 had received at least one vaccine dose and that 42 per cent of its people were fully vaccinated. The rapid vaccine rollout has reduced pandemic-related hospitalizations by 95 per cent, the government said, and the mask requirement will be gone in July.

The rest of the world will be watching Malta closely, wondering whether its declaration of victory is premature. Several countries with high vaccination rates – among them Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Seychelles and Chile – are struggling to contain new COVID-19 surges even though the math says they should be on the verge of herd immunity, defined as the level at which enough people have been vaccinated to stop the virus from spreading. Among the most vaccinated countries, only Israel, where 57 per cent are fully vaccinated, is not seeing new outbreaks.

Herd immunity is proving frustratingly elusive, with many epidemiologists, virologists and public-health officials warning that it may come a lot later than expected – or not come at all – making summer opening plans uncertain.

“Herd immunity is a moving target,” said Martin McKee, a professor of European public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. “Anyone who says that vaccines alone can end the pandemic is wrong.”

Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at the University of East Anglia, in England, is more blunt. He doesn't think herd immunity will ever come, given the rapid proliferation of highly contagious new variants, vaccine hesitancy and the fact that no vaccine is 100-per-cent effective.

“We'll never achieve herd immunity, but that does in no way diminish the value of vaccines,” he said in an interview.

There is no precise immunity level at which a virus shuts down because there are no longer enough hosts to ensure its survival. Herd immunity in general depends on the type of infectious disease – how contagious it is.

The measles virus can rip through a population much faster than COVID-19, and experience shows that 95 per cent of the population needs to be vaccinated to protect everyone.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic early last year, the thinking among scientists was that herd immunity could come if 60 per cent of the population achieved immunity through infection or vaccination. That number is gradually creeping up, with 75 per cent to 85 per cent now being touted as the required level.

An early warning that herd immunity may not come appeared last year in Manaus, the Brazilian city of two million in the Amazon. It was hit late last spring with a devastating outbreak that required the digging of mass graves. But by August, excess deaths attributed to COVID-19 dropped to zero, according to an October report in Nature magazine. The reason: some two-thirds of the city's population had been infected with the virus and herd immunity was reportedly achieved without the help of vaccines.

The story did not have a happy ending. In January, a vicious second wave arrived, overloading the hospitals and baffling health officials. There are various theories to explain the second wave, including the arrival of new variants that managed to evade the antibodies produced in response to the original strain, the possible rapid decline of those antibodies and the premature relaxation of physical distancing and other restrictions.

Whatever the case, Manaus helped blow up the theory that herd immunity could be readily achieved. A report by The BMJ medical journal called it a case of “misplaced confidence that the region had become immune” to COVID-19. The outbreaks in highly vaccinated countries seem to support this view.

In Seychelles, 73 per cent of the population has received one vaccine dose and 64 per cent has received both, making the Indian Ocean archipelago the most vaccinated country. Yet new cases have doubled in the past month, with more than a few fully vaccinated people getting hit with the disease. The number of reported cases per 100,000 people is more than 10 times the count in India (though the latter's number is thought to be hugely under-reported).

Part of the problem may be the widespread use of the Chinese-made Sinopharm vaccine, whose protection may not be as great as that of rival vaccines. Earlier this month, the World Health Organization expressed "very low confidence" in Sinopharm data that showed 78-per-cent efficacy (Seychelles is also using Covishield, the AstraZeneca shot produced in India).

Herd immunity is also proving elusive in the U.K., another highly vaccinated country. On Wednesday, France said it would impose new travel restrictions on visitors from the U.K., where it is feared the highly contagious variant first associated with India could trigger another wave. In the week ending May 19, cases of the Indian variant rose 160 per cent in Britain, and eight areas have been identified as hot spots.

The Seychelles and U.K. cases, among others, suggest that a key factor behind delayed herd immunity is the varying efficacy of vaccines against the new variants.

"We know that, with some of the new variants, the vaccines are less effective," said Professor McKee. "The AstraZeneca vaccine does not work well against the African variant" (the trial published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that the AstraZeneca vaccine had only 10.4-per-cent efficacy against mild to moderate infections triggered by the variant first associated with South Africa, known as B.1.351).

The slow rollout of vaccination programs in many countries is also pushing the potential herd immunity date further into the future.

Paolo Groff, the director of the emergency department of Santa Maria della Misericordia Hospital in Perugia, in central Italy, said stuttering rollouts have allowed the virus to travel where it faces the least resistance.

"To properly achieve immunity, we would have to vaccinate extensively under strict lockdown, and only after a certain time allow re-opening," he said.

"Instead, the vaccinations came in bits and pieces as the re-opening took place. This allowed the virus to continue spreading as the variants developed."

Two other problems are impeding the herd immunity effort. The first is vaccine hesitancy. The second is the exceedingly low vaccination rate among teenagers.

Vaccine hesitancy is an issue in every country, rich and poor. Some people are convinced vaccines are outright dangerous. Others are worried about even minor side effects. The concerns about a rare form of blood clotting associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine damaged confidence not only in that vaccine but vaccines in general.

Still others, including many U.S. Republicans, reject them on political grounds – they see vaccination programs as big-government initiatives – and as such are opposed to vaccine “passports” or “green passes,” which bestow certain travel rights on individuals who have been vaccinated while penalizing those who have not.

Whatever the case, vaccine hesitancy is stubbornly high. A recent survey found that a third of Australians are unlikely to get vaccinated. Polls suggest hesitancy rates of 45 per cent in France and 35 per cent in the United States, with some U.S. states even offering bribes such as free beer or lottery tickets to lure the hesitant into vaccination clinics.

The good news is that vaccines are being tested among adolescents and early results are positive. This week, Moderna revealed that its vaccine was safe and 100-per-cent effective in Phase 3 trials involving 3,700 participants between the ages of 12 and 17. Vaccinating children is seen as an essential tool to end the pandemic, and the U.S. and other countries are keen to do so before the start of the next school season.

But herd immunity seems a long way off, if it comes at all. Professor Hunter says it’s premature to celebrate victory over the pandemic – even in highly vaccinated countries. “What happens next depends on the new variants,” he said. “We could well see restrictions continuing as we move through next winter.”

How The COVID Pandemic Ends: Scientists Look To The Past To See The Future

By Helen Branswell, Senior Writer, Infectious Disease, Stat News, May 19, 2021

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/05/19/how-the-COVID-pandemic-ends-scientists-look-to-the-past-to-see-the-future/>

We’re approaching the year-and-a-half mark of the globe’s collective experience with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the COVID-19 pandemic it has triggered. At this point, it’s fair to assume people the world over are asking themselves the same two questions: How will this end? And when?

There may have been a fleeting chance humans could have halted spread of SARS-2 and driven it back into nature, as happened with its cousin, SARS-1. But that door was firmly shut long ago. It also seems that another option — vaccinating our way out of the pandemic — is an expensive toll highway that few countries will be able to access in the near term.

That probably sounds bleak, but don’t despair. The truth of the matter is that pandemics always end. And to date vaccines have never played a significant role in ending them. (That doesn’t mean vaccines aren’t playing a critical role this time. Far fewer people will die from COVID-19 because of them.)

But there were no flu vaccines in 1918, when the world didn't yet know that the great influenza was caused by a virus, H1N1. In 1957, when the H2N2 pandemic swept the world, flu vaccine was mainly a tool of the military. In the pandemic of 1968, which brought us H3N2, the United States produced nearly 22 million doses of vaccine, but by the time it was ready the worst of the pandemic had passed, and demand subsided. That "too little and too late" phenomenon played out again in 2009, when the world finally had the capacity to make hundreds of millions of doses of H1N1 vaccine; some countries canceled large portions of their orders because they ended up not needing them.

How did those pandemics end? The viruses didn't go away; a descendent of the Spanish flu virus, the modern H1N1, circulates to this day, as does H3N2. Humans didn't develop herd immunity to them, either. That's a phenomenon by which a pathogen stops spreading because so many people are protected against it, because they've already been infected or vaccinated.

Instead, the viruses that caused these pandemics underwent a transition. Or more to the point, we did. Our immune systems learned enough about them to fend off the deadliest manifestations of infection, at least most of the time. Humans and viruses reached an immunological détente. Instead of causing tsunamis of devastating illness, over time the viruses came to trigger small surges of milder illness. Pandemic flu became seasonal flu.

The viruses became endemic.

If the pattern holds, and it is expected to, SARS-2 will at some point join a handful of human coronaviruses that cause colds, mainly in the winter, when conditions favour their transmission.

When will that happen? That's the big, unanswerable question. "I thought that we'd be out of this acute phase already," admitted Maria Van Kerkhove, the World Health Organization's leading coronavirus expert. Van Kerkhove's thinking, though, is influenced by her adamant view that the world could stop the pandemic if countries would only take the steps countries like New Zealand, Vietnam, and others have done, and bring transmission under control.

"There's nothing — there's nothing — including the virus variants, that suggests we couldn't be out of the acute phase already," she told STAT in a recent interview. "Because this is controllable."

Experience from the last four pandemics — the ones mentioned above — would suggest that viruses morph from pandemic pathogens to endemic sources of disease within a year and a half or two of emerging. But all of those pandemics were influenza pandemics. A different pathogen could mean we'll see a different pattern.

There may well have been previous coronavirus pandemics; there's a school of thought that a pandemic in 1889, known in medical histories as "the Russian flu," might actually have been caused by one of the human coronaviruses, OC43. All four of the human coronaviruses are assumed to have jumped to people from an animal species; OC43 is believed to have come from cattle, potentially in the late 1800s. But this is in the realm of theory, not conclusive fact, having occurred before the era of modern virology.

There's no historical record of how much illness and how much severe illness those other coronaviruses caused when they started to infect humans or how long it took for them to settle into an endemic state. As such, the flu pandemics are the closest thing we have to road maps. "In recent history, everything has been influenza and the timeline has been within a couple of years," said Jennie Lavine, a biology research fellow at Emory University who was the first author of a modeling paper published in Science that envisioned how the pandemic might end.

Lavine and her co-authors predicted that as older adults — most susceptible to hospitalization and death with COVID — acquire experience coping with the virus, it will no longer induce severe disease, at least not in most of those people. (Nothing is absolute; flu, for instance, occasionally kills previously healthy people.)

That immune system training will likely turn future COVID-19 infections into the equivalent of a cold, the authors concluded. Over time, as a degree of protection becomes more standard in adults, the people who will most commonly catch COVID will be young kids, in whom infections even now are rarely serious. That's the pattern with human coronavirus infections.

"I think the scenario ... remains the most likely one," said Marc Lipsitch, an infectious diseases epidemiologist at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "That essentially, almost everybody has some form of immunity from natural infection and/or vaccination and/or one followed by the other, and that that will persist long enough so that they don't get really sick when they get it again. And then we transition to endemicity."

Lavine is unfazed by the notion that SARS-2 could still be with us when the pandemic is over.

"It's not a death sentence in any way, shape, or form to say we're not going to have herd immunity," she said. "It just means it's going to become endemic and then the question is, is it going to be mild and endemic, or is it going to be severe and endemic? And I would say my odds are on mild and endemic at some point. I think that seems really, really likely."

Lavine is not alone in thinking we're not going to control spread of SARS-2 through herd immunity. Earlier this spring, Jonathan Yewdell, a senior investigator in cellular biology and viral immunology at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, published an opinion piece in the journal PLOS Pathogens arguing that coronaviruses don't trigger the kind of long-lasting immune protection we'd need for herd immunity to take hold.

Endemic SARS-2 would have a seasonal pattern, spreading in the winter months when kids are in school and when we spend more time indoors in proximity to each other. Florian Krammer, a vaccinologist at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York, said that early on some of these seasons may be more severe than others — but not pandemic severe.

"If this thing becomes seasonal and you have countries where the vaccination rate is low and the immunity background is low, those seasons in the beginning might be a little bit stronger. In countries where vaccination rates are high, they might be very low," said Krammer.

He and others told STAT this transition will play out at different times across the globe. “I think we will see a huge difference between the West and everybody else who kind of didn’t get enough vaccines,” Krammer said. “Although there might be countries like Iran, where the infection rates have been incredibly high, and I think they have by now so much background immunity that if they bring it down now, it’s unlikely to come back as a wave.”

Lavine believes the shift could happen fairly soon in countries such as the United States that have had both high levels of infections and large numbers of vaccinated people.

“In the U.S., I would say that is not far off,” she said. “Not to say that it’s just going to disappear, but the idea that it would no longer be this kind of pathogenic scourge, I think we might not be too far from that.”

There are some experts who are more cautious about the timeline. Historian John Barry, who wrote the definitive account of the Spanish flu, “The Great Influenza,” noted there are significant differences between COVID infection and transmission and influenza infection and transmission. The incubation period — the time from exposure to illness — is longer with COVID. People are sick for longer; they’re infectious for longer, too.

“This is like influenza moving in very slow motion,” Barry said. Influenza pandemics have abrupt endings to their waves, with transmission dying out in any given location in a matter of weeks. That has not been the case with COVID. Instead, human behaviour — societal shutdowns and re-openings — appear to be driving patterns.

Lipsitch worries that the recent explosive waves in Brazil and India are reason for us to be wary about forecasts that a transition might be near. Both had experienced substantial transmission early in the pandemic, yet have been walloped by second waves triggered by mutated viruses, so-called variants of concern.

“I think we do have to have some account of how it’s taking this whole year with multiple waves and still there’s no real evidence that it’s ending on its own in any country. And I think that a slower natural history is probably a piece of it,” he said. “It’s been niggling at me.”

Cécile Viboud, an infectious diseases modeler who has extensively studied flu pandemics, also believes the pandemic ends with SARS-2 being endemic. But she’s not sure when.

“I’m trying to be cautious, because I’ve always been an optimist and during COVID-19 I’ve been proven wrong,” said Viboud, who is based at the National Institutes of Health’s Fogarty International Center.

She suggested it’s possible that the four seasonal coronaviruses, the ones that cause colds, were always milder than COVID. Or that SARS-2 will continue hurling variants at us — especially once it comes under pressure to evolve when large swathes of people are vaccinated. “So I think we have to be cautious. We only have like 15 months of data or something, right?”

Mike Ryan, head of the WHO’s Health Emergencies Program, agreed.

“We don’t know where we are, because this is the first pandemic of a SARS coronavirus,” he said. “From my perspective, crystal-balling it ... we’re not even close to the end of it.”

Ryan picks up Van Kerkhove’s refrain, arguing countries shouldn’t be waiting for vaccines or for the virus to transition into an endemic mode. They should be using the other tools that have been shown to stop transmission, he said. “I think we can get to very high levels of disease control, so much so that this ceases to be a pandemic in the sense that it ceases to be ... causing disease and deaths and filling up our hospitals. So, in that sense it ceases to be a public health crisis.”

Porter In Talks With Pearson, Other Airports For Passenger Jet Service

By Eric Atkins, Andrew Willis, and Nicolas Van Praet, The Globe and Mail, May 20, 2021

Porter Airlines has approached Toronto’s Pearson International Airport and other airports in southern Ontario about establishing a passenger jet service postpandemic, sources say, a shift in strategy for the carrier that is blocked from flying jets at its base on the Toronto Islands. Porter’s move comes as the carrier is reportedly buying 30 passenger jets from Embraer of Brazil. Porter has long sought to fly jets out of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, but those plans have been prevented by the federal government owing to concerns that include noise, pollution and the impact of the longer runway that would be required. Porter’s talks with the airport authorities are preliminary, according to two people familiar with the matter whom the Globe and Mail agreed not to name because they are not authorized to speak publicly on the matter. In addition to Toronto Pearson, Porter has approached airports including Ottawa, Hamilton, Kitchener and London, one of the sources said. The airports declined to comment or did not respond to interview requests.

Read Story (Subscription Required): <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-porter-in-talks-with-pearson-other-airports-for-passenger-jet-service/>

Sunwing Extends Its Temporary Suspension Of Operations To July 29

By Travelweek Group, May 25, 2021

https://www.travelweek.ca/news/sunwing-extends-its-temporary-suspension-of-operations-to-july-29/?utm_source=Daily&utm_medium=Lead_Story&utm_campaign=News&vgo_ee=AHpzGuv3esOwkkyrZ%2Bu8Tg%3D%3D

Sunwing has extended its temporary suspension of operations until July 29, 2021.

“In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing travel restrictions, Sunwing is extending its temporary suspension of flights until July 29, 2021,” says the company.

“Customers or their travel agents impacted by cancelled flights are being contacted by Sunwing directly to review their options.

“For any questions or concerns about cancelled flights, customers can contact their travel agent or get in touch with the Sunwing Sales Centre at 1-877-786-9464.”

All four of Canada’s major carriers agreed to a request from the federal government in late January 2021 to suspend sun destination flights through April 30.

In the intervening weeks, all four airlines have updated their suspension of operation timelines.

Transat, while initially targeting mid-June, later adjusted that date to July 29. Sunwing’s original target was June 23, now updated to July 29. WestJet is so far sticking to its temporary suspension of operations until June 4. Air Canada had three sun destinations on its schedule in May (Bridgetown, Kingston and Mexico City) but those were primarily for essential workers, and cargo.

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

Web Seminar: Uniquely Kate (Katie Dudtschak, RBC): One Woman’s Story of Embracing Her True Self

Date: Monday June 7, 2021

Time: 3:00 – 4:30 pm EDT (90 minutes)

Join us for an intimate conversation with Katie Dudtschak, Executive Vice President, Regional Banking, RBC and Nikki Gershbain, Chief Inclusion Officer, McCarthy Tétrault.

As Executive Vice President at RBC, Katie leads the country’s largest advisor force with more than 20,000 employees. She is also a woman with gender transition experience, revealing her journey to embrace her true self to friends, family and thousands of RBC colleagues in 2019. Throughout her more than 30 year career, Katie has been long admired and respected for her leadership and business acumen. Katie and RBC are now leading the way when it comes to inclusion in corporate Canada.

Join our Chief Inclusion Officer Nikki Gershbain, herself a proud member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, for an intimate conversation with a true Canadian trailblazer. Katie will share her powerful journey, offer her thoughts on the urgent importance of social and economic inclusion, and provide practical guidance for today’s leaders on how they too can embrace their vulnerability and lead with authenticity and courage.

[Register Here](#)

Web Seminar: A New Type Of Capitalism (Featuring Guy Cormier, CEO, Desjardins Group)

Date: Tuesday, June 8, 2021

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 pm EDT (60 minutes)

All eyes are on social responsibility as the business community responds to the pandemic's economic impacts. Canadian businesses — large and small — have stepped up to support each other and their communities during the pandemic. Leaders agree — those that prioritize community will ultimately be more sustainable, more resilient and better set up for long-term business growth. Join Canadian Club Toronto on June 8 for a discussion that will feature opening remarks from Guy Cormier, CEO of Desjardins Group, and a panel of business leaders including Jenn Harper, Founder of Indigenous-owned beauty brand Cheekbone Beauty and Kayla Isabelle, CEO of StartUp Canada — both who have a unique perspective on “doing good through business”, and supporting their communities and other entrepreneurs along the way.

[Register Here](#)

Web Seminar: Featuring Dean Connor, CEO, Sun Life

Date: Thursday June 10, 2021

Time: 12:00 -1:00 pm EDT (60 minutes)

Join Canadian Club Toronto on June 10, as Sun Life CEO, Dean Connor, sits down with Marcia Moffat, Managing Director, Country Head of Canada, BlackRock for a candid virtual fireside chat. Dean will reflect on leading after the pandemic, the Canadian insurance industry on a global stage, and the evolving roles of executives and directors.

[Register Here](#)

Web Seminar: McMillan LLP On Advertising In The Virtual World

Date: Thursday June 17, 2021

Time: 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm EDT (90 minutes)

Join members of McMillan LLP's Marketing and Advertising Group on **Thursday, June 17, 2021 at 12 pm ET** as we discuss current trends in marketing and advertising in an increasingly virtual world, and during the ongoing global pandemic. Topics include: Digital Enforcement in a Virtual World; Under the Influencer; Advertising Issues au Québec; Comparative Performance Claims; and Ad Standards Disputes - How to Win.

[Register Here](#)
