



Hope for a Post COVID World

The Family Reunification Border Transition Plan
10 Recommendations for Piloting Vaccinated Entry Into Canada

Organization:
Faces of Advocacy

June 15, 2021

Addressed to:
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Public Health and Emergency Preparedness William Blair
Minister of Health Patty Hajdu
Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Marco Mendicino



The Family Reunification Border Transition Plan

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The announcement by the Government of Canada on June 9, 2021 to begin testing border reopenings through increased mobility for vaccinated travellers is a welcome one. Interestingly, in combination with the Immediate and Extended Family Travel Exemptions already in place, this presents **a unique opportunity to pilot the evolving immigration system with a group of incoming foreign nationals** who:

- 1) Have a publicly sympathetic reason to enter Canada (family reunification)
- 2) Are accountable to a Canadian with a stable Canadian address
- 3) Are already tracked by IRCC records
- 4) Do not want to jeopardize their family by breaking any Canadian laws or immigration rules.

The Faces of Advocacy, a Canadian grassroots organization dedicated to the safe reunification of binational families, was directly responsible for the Extended Family and Compassionate Exemptions into Canada announced in October 2020. This only occurred due to the **collaborative approach taken alongside the Ministries of Health, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.**

For these reasons, I ask to meet with the ministries and discuss how the **implementation of vaccine verification can be executed in an efficient, compassionate, and common-sense manner.** Taking lessons from the challenges encountered by the Extended Family and Compassionate Exemption process, alongside international precedent, we can build ***Hope for a Post COVID World.***



Recommendations:

- 1) Fully vaccinated individuals must be exempt from both mandatory hotel quarantine as well as home quarantine upon negative COVID-19 arrival testing (based on the [Government of Canada's own expert panel](#) and the [Iceland precedent](#)). This must be given a clear start date, ideally July 1, 2021.
- 2) Fully vaccinated foreign national family members of Canadians should no longer be subject to a 15-day minimum stay requirement.
- 3) **Explicit clarity** that these rules will apply to all travelers, **including foreign national Immediate and Extended Family members**, coming into Canada via land, air, and sea.
- 4) No pre-departure testing (based on the [Government of Canada's own expert panel](#) and the [Iceland precedent](#)) for fully vaccinated Canadians and their foreign national family members coming into Canada. They should be exempt from pre-departure testing.
- 5) Arrival testing with quarantine until negative test result for fully vaccinated individuals (based on the [Iceland precedent](#), though the [Government of Canada's own expert panel](#) does not recommend quarantine while waiting for the results)
 - a) Rapid testing should be authorized and employed for arrival testing.
 - b) Fully vaccinated Canadians and their foreign national family members coming into Canada should test on arrival and quarantine until the results are received.
 - i) If the results are negative, no further quarantine is required.
 - ii) If the results are positive, follow public health guidance for continued quarantine and monitoring.
 - c) Fully vaccinated Canadians and their foreign national family members arriving into Canadian airports should be allowed to board their connecting flight as they are awaiting their arrival test results.



- 6) Proof of vaccination can be presented in person, or inputted on the ArriveCAN app or website, and confirmed at the border by the CBSA officer.
 - a) CBSA officers are already trained in interpreting PCR tests for the purposes of immigration into Canada.
 - b) Clear instructions on canada.ca **must detail what requirements are needed on the proof of vaccination papers to reduce erroneous discretionary decisions** on the part of the CBSA officer.
 - c) There should be no application submission to the government to verify vaccination credentials, as similar systems for Family Reunification have shown this can be subject to backlog and delay, particularly when CBSA agents can be trained to identify common vaccination credentials (ex: CDC white cards, European Union QR codes)
 - d) Proof of vaccination may be presented in multiple ways given the variability of procedures within Canada and around the world. This includes “mix and matched” vaccine brands, and each of the vaccinations administered by a different country.
 - i) If the Government of Canada finds these complex cases are not interpretable by the CBSA officer, there must be a method for the immigrating individual to attest that vaccination has been completed (ex: doctor’s note, notarized government form).
- 7) Plan for safe family reunification for partially vaccinated and those who cannot get vaccinated, based on the [Government of Canada’s own expert panel](#).
 - a) Expedited assessment of vaccines other than the currently available four vaccines approved by Health Canada.
 - b) Reduce 14 day quarantine to 7 days based on the [Government of Canada’s own expert panel](#).
- 8) Foreign national family members of Canadians who were rejected at the border by the CBSA during the COVID-19 related travel restrictions should have their immigration records cleared of any related flags, as the fluctuating



requirements for entry into Canada since March 2020 were difficult to interpret and navigate for binational Canadian families.

- 9) Keep current guidelines that accompanied minors, who are unable to get vaccinated, will follow the quarantine rules applicable to their guardians.
 - a) As is already the case, unaccompanied minors should not be subject to any hotel quarantine, and allowed to safely quarantine at a household where all household contacts will follow public health guidance.
- 10) Systemic, retroactive refunds for families affected by the Government Approved Accommodation / mandatory hotel quarantine system
 - a) Should a Canadian or their foreign national family members be sent to a quarantine hotel by CBSA and later found to have been exempt, refunds must be given for this error.
 - b) Binational Canadian families who traveled for the purpose of family reunification and have been subject to hotel quarantine should be subsidized or refunded retroactively.
 - c) The government must offer clear directives to the Government Approved Accommodation / mandatory hotel quarantine system to refund charges for unused and unneeded nights for those entering Canada and testing negative before all nights were used.



Ties That Bind: Safely Reconnecting Canada to the World Faces of Advocacy Policy Draft - The Two-Pronged Approach

Regarding Vaccinations

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Prime Minister, the Federal Cabinet, and Public Health Officers have pledged that Canada would both follow the best available science to respond to the pandemic and implement appropriate public health measures based on science. The government has not entirely lived up to that commitment and frequently lagged in examining and accepting emerging science as evidenced by Canada's late call for public masking, the slow rate of Health Canada examination of therapeutics to treat COVID-19, and the introduction of a delayed second vaccine dose strategy, to name but a few examples. Canada must improve its ability to consume and evaluate emerging science on the COVID-19 virus and must **immediately accept the recommendations presented by its own expert scientific panel.**

1. Vaccines have a high protective value against the acquisition of COVID-19 and a high protective value against transmission of the virus to others.
2. Hotel quarantine should be discontinued.

The above two scientific findings should guide Canada's public health response to COVID-19. Risk mitigation measures should be aligned and tiered to match the apparent risk. For example, according to the CDC, a fully vaccinated person is at much lower risk to either acquire or transmit COVID and should therefore be given more mobility under current public health measures. When applied to the treatment of travellers arriving in Canada from international destinations, citizens and non-citizens alike, the public health measures applied to these travellers should match their inherent level of risk according to their vaccination status.

Traveller Status	Quarantine Period	Home Quarantine	Pre Departure Negative Test	COVID Test on Arrival	Test 7 Days After Arrival	Observe Public Health Measures
Unvaccinated	Until receipt of negative Day 7 test	Yes *Subject to conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Partially Vaccinated (1 dose)	Until receipt of negative arrival test	Yes Awaiting negative arrival test	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Fully Vaccinated	None	None	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Quarantine not to conclude before receipt of negative results from Day 7 COVID Test.



Regarding Mandatory Hotel Quarantine

Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) facilities, aka Mandatory Hotel Quarantine, present a risk to Canadians, and according to the Government's own scientific panel, should be discontinued. The government has not produced evidence of its superiority to home quarantine. However, if the government continues this program, it should not apply to fully or partially vaccinated Canadians or family members who do not need to quarantine.

The Hotel Quarantine should be recognized as high risk due to inadequate ventilation increasing the risk of aerosol transmission. Canada must also refer to studies conducted on Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore's COVID-19 outbreaks within their MIQs and ensure the vulnerabilities to virus spread addressed in those reports are addressed in Canada's quarantine facilities. Unvaccinated individuals travelling for the purposes of family reunification awaiting a negative Day 7 COVID-19 test **should be provided access** to a MIQ in which to complete their quarantine. MIQ Centres should be purposefully designed to minimize contacts and employ ventilation systems capable of preventing aerosol transmission of COVID-19. MIQ specifications and implementation must take into account:

1. Employment of air gapped accommodations or the deployment of negative pressure ventilation systems.
2. Employment of portable HEPA air filtration units in each occupied space.
3. Procedures to limit contacts within the MIQ such as contactless check-in procedures.
4. **MIQs should be provided at no cost as are other public health measures.** If not practical, MIQs should operate on a cost recovery model without financial strain on travellers. The current prices of Government Approved Accommodations are cost prohibitive to families already disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Canada's border measures during the COVID-19 pandemic should be based not only on risk mitigation, but also on the concepts of family essentiality and reciprocity with our key allies/trading partners.

Canada has engaged in travel shaming for the last 15 months and its impact is felt deeply by those needing to travel for family reunification. The government must amend its list of essential travel to include the reunification of immediate and extended family.

Canada has negotiated the continual closure of the Canada/U.S. land border with American officials for 14 months, while providing much needed exemptions for travel **into Canada** for authorized immediate and extended family members. Canada must negotiate that the U.S. mirror Canada's entry exemptions **into the American land border**.

Finally, Canada has successfully employed the ArriveCan application to facilitate travel into the country. The application should be enhanced to further reduce processing times for arrival into the country, introducing the following enhanced capabilities:

1. The ability to confirm pre-departure COVID test result reports to the application.
2. The ability to confirm documents verifying the traveler's vaccination status.

For Donna

Donna McCall is a Canadian woman who fell in love with an American man, John McCall. They married in Madoc, Ontario on April 23, 1983. They have two adult children, both born in the United States. She is an ICU nurse who taught the values of compassion and care to future medical professionals at multiple Ontario hospitals, and loved, and was loved by, her family.

Donna was diagnosed with liver failure early in 2020, just as the COVID-19 travel restrictions were put into place. As her condition worsened, the McCall family pleaded with the Canadian government for a compassionate exemption to enter Canada. Despite clear paperwork and birth certificates showing the McCall children having Canadian birthright to enter Canada, they were not allowed entry until IRCC could process their right to citizenship.

Donna died on August 10, 2020. She said goodbye to her children on Facetime.

We advocate in honour of her.





About Faces of Advocacy

Faces of Advocacy is a grassroots organization dedicated to reuniting Canadian families separated from their loved ones during the COVID-19 related travel restrictions. Founded in May 2020, we are asking for a fair and transparent process for timely reunification of Canadians with their loved ones during these challenging times. Our 11,000+ members span the world, and participate in our weekly letter writing campaign to government officials, “Reunification Thursdays.” We have spoken on Parliament Hill, acted as witnesses in multiple Parliamentary Committees, and hosted the first of its kind Virtual Rally for Family Reunification with MPs present from every Canadian political party. Our advocacy directly resulted in Extended Family Travel Exemptions announced October 2, 2020 by Ministers Mendicino, Hajdu, and Blair.

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Image: Over 400 attendees to the Faces of Advocacy: Cross-Partisan Virtual Rally for Families on September 26 2020, the first of its kind. In attendance were Members of Parliament from the Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Green, and Bloc Québécois parties.