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## Mandatory hotel quarantines could harm lower-income Canadians: lawyer

OTTAWA – The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is questioning Ottawa's move to require hotel quarantine for international travellers, saying it may harm lower-income Canadians and infringe on citizens' mobility rights.

Cara Zwibel, a lawyer who heads the organization's fundamental freedoms program, is calling on the federal government to produce any evidence that returning passengers are breaching the current requirement to self-isolate at home, which she suggests is the only fair basis to tighten the rules.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced more than two weeks ago that travellers flying back from abroad will have to quarantine at a federally mandated hotel for up to three days at their own expense, though he acknowledged that only a fraction of COVID-19 cases appear to stem from overseas trips.

Zwibel suggests that the cost – \$2,000 or more, according to the government – could be prohibitive for lower-income Canadians who need to care for sick relatives or receive specialized medical care abroad.

Health conditions that would make isolating in a hotel particularly challenging are another concern.

In a letter to Canada's transport minister and attorney general, the civil liberties association is demanding Ottawa carve out



quarantine exceptions and fire waivers for Canadians who seek to look after loved ones or receive treatment overseas, particularly people in narrow financial straits.

"For those individuals, travel is not a luxury," Zwibel says in the letter. "The government's definition of what constitutes 'essential travel' for these purposes will be important."

Ottawa has not announced when mandatory hotel quarantines will come into effect, one of several measures aimed at choking off viral spread at the border and deterring non-essential travel.

Trudeau announced on Jan. 29 that Canadian airlines had suspended flights to Mexico and the Caribbean until April 30. Residents who do

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Analyst Uber Eats couriers working in the province say they're earning as little as \$3.99 per trip before tips, months after the food delivery service implemented a new pay policy in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's making so little now that I'm thinking what is the point of even getting out there if I'm just going to make this much and it's getting worse?" said Spencer Thompson, a Toronto man who has been dropping off meals for Uber Eats since 2016.

He spent hours tabulating his 2020 pay and discovered what so many of his fellow couriers have long suspected: their wages are declining at a time when people are relying on food delivery more than ever before.

Thompson, for example, made about \$10 per trip – sometimes involving multiple stops – in January 2020, but by December, that had sunk to as low as \$3.99 per trip before tips.

The 60 per cent drop came in a year where Thompson worked in Toronto's downtown core nearly every day of the week during the lunch-and-dinner windows, where pay tends to be higher. He averaged two or three trips an hour.

Couriers like Thompson, who are not formally employed by Uber but use its platform to pick up work, worry the situation could worsen and they'll be left with few other job alternatives as COVID-19 continues to spread, unemployment remains high and companies increasingly seek the benefits of the gig economy.

"We can't do this on our own and

## 'I just need to survive,' Canadian Uber Eats drivers say wages being squeezed during pandemic

our lot this happen because if we do, then the future will be all work like this," said Irena Sopher, an Uber Eats courier and organizer with the Gig Workers United union, who recalls making \$9 or \$10 per trip at the start of 2020, but now averages half that.

While couriers like Sopher and Thompson have long wanted of the gig economy's low pay, no job security and lack of coverage for injuries and sicknesses, their concerns became even more alarming after last June.

That was when Uber scrapped its earnings structure offering couriers fixed amounts based on pick ups, drop-offs, distance and time and a series of bonuses for using the service during busy periods or in high-demand neighbourhoods. By taking advantages of bonuses and more rewarding orders, Thompson would land as much as \$12.15 per trip before tips at the start of 2020.

The new system Uber brought in lowered base fares – "and couriers are offered to deliver an order that fluctuate based on time, distance, pickup and drop-offs - and started including a trip supplement to account for lengthy wait times at restaurants or distances couriers travelled to get there."

At first, the lowered base fares didn't seem so bad because the company would offer high "boosts," which multiplied courier earnings if



they delivered food in areas seeing a surge in demand, said Sopher.

Under the new system, some workers were even making a little more than before, but slowly the boosts decreased, he recalled.

"They did it little by little, so that you wouldn't notice," he alleged. "But you would have this sneaking suspicion."

The changes made tips more important than ever before, but customers are notoriously unreliable when it comes to tipping couriers, said Thompson. Some will be generous, while others avoid the extra hands altogether.

Uber, whose Eats service was first

priced at that amount with two steps is quite rare but can happen.

"Uber Eats is committed to transparency in pricing: before a delivery person accepts a trip, they are able to see the expected earnings for each trip. And, on average, 100% of tips go directly into their accounts," the company said in an email.

Sopher said he was disappointed with the changes because he and other couriers used to work 20 hours a week last spring and make \$500, but now earns \$300 over the same time span.

It's not easy work either, he said. Being on a bike for long periods can be exhausting and visiting so many homes and restaurants puts couriers at more risk of picking up COVID-19.

"I feel enraged because it's really profiting during a pandemic," he said.

"It's what we've seen with a lot of major companies and with essential workers this pandemic really being told that they're expendable workers. It's pretty demoralizing."

Sopher wants Uber to revert to pre-pandemic pay policies, while Thompson prefers a guaranteed minimum trip rate.

Thompson recently enrolled in a web development course in hopes of finding a more stable income source that will allow him to pursue his love of facing on the side.

He loves being out on his bike and is determined not to stop fighting for fair pay, but even he has a breaking point.

"I need to have something that can pay me much more per unit time and still give me time to do additional, and realized this is not a sustainable paid job," he said.

"I just need to survive."

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## Why Ontario will ease province-wide COVID-19 lockdown regionally

Despite Ontario's overall downward trend in new COVID-19 cases, there remains sharp regional differences in transmission rates, making it unlikely that the Ford government will lift public health restrictions uniformly across the province in the coming week.

Ontario's province-wide stay-at-home order is due to expire on Tuesday, four weeks after it came into effect. The government will then begin a phased reopening of the economy in regions where COVID-19 infection rates are lowest, the Canadian Press reports, citing government sources.

Premier Doug Ford, who will announce the timetable as early as Monday, has already said publicly that any easing of restrictions would happen regionally.

"Especially in the northern and many areas, we want to get the economy opening up, but safely," he said during a visit to the province's COVID-19 testing facility for international arrivals at Toronto's Pearson Airport.

"I know a couple of those areas might be a bit slower."

The wide range in COVID-19 infection rates around the province provides evidence why Ontario would likely take a regional approach to loosening the lockdown. Such a move would mean a return to color-coded alert levels for public health units, which haven't been applicable since a province-wide lockdown took effect on Monday.

Other provinces, including Quebec, Alberta and Nova Scotia are preparing to ease COVID-19 restrictions in the coming week, while British Columbia is keeping its measures in place for now.

"I think we have to be really careful about easing restrictions for the entire province," said Dr. Jeff Kwong, a senior scientist at ICES, an independent research institute that studies Ontario health issues, and a professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

If measures are loosened in some parts of the province, Kwong said the ban on non-essential travel needs to remain in place so that people from COVID-19 hot zones don't spread infections elsewhere.

Reopening retail shops with capacity



restrictions could be safe, said Kwong in an interview with CBC News. But he warned against situations where people would be gathered without masks, such as allowing restaurants or bars to resume serving customers indoors.

Ontario's red level of restrictions includes a limit of 10 people indoors at bars and restaurants. It also recommended against non-essential travel, a provision that was widely ignored in mid-December, according to mobility data produced by the province's COVID-19 Science Advisory Table.

The government set 40 new cases per week per 100,000 population as a threshold for imposing red level measures in local public health units.

According to the most recent weekly epidemiological report published by Public Health Ontario (covering the week ended Jan. 11), some of the densely populated urban areas were seeing cases at or below that level.

By contrast, some of the more sparsely populated health units in northern, eastern and southwestern Ontario are showing lower rates of transmission, putting them in the range set for the green or yellow levels of restrictions.

There are exceptions to the general urban versus rural trend: Ottawa's weekly rate of new cases per 100,000 population was 38.2 while Chatham-Kent's was 107.2.

Data analyzed by ICES shows 11 public health units with test positivity rates higher than the province's 2.5 per cent threshold of red-level restrictions.

Phasing out restrictions regionally would follow the pattern that Ontario set with in-person classes in the province's schools.

## Don't cancel March Break for Ontario students, Official Opposition says

TORONTO — As thousands of students return to in-class learning across Ontario today, the province's New Democrats are calling on the Progressive Conservative government not to cancel March Break.

NDR Leader Andrea Horwath said students, parents and teachers are "burning" and are in desperate need of a break from the strain of virtual classrooms and the stress of health protocols from in-class learning — echoing a call from educationists.

"At school it's constant vigilance and lots of anxiety. At home it's hours upon hours of screen time. Parents are doing the supermarket juggling act of working while helping kids learn," Horwath said.

While a final decision has not been made, Education Minister Stephen Lecce indicated the government is exploring whether the break week would be cancelled to help students catch up on learning they may have missed during the extended winter break in January.

"My decision point is going to be made exclusively on medical advice. If they believe that cancelling the break is in the best interest of public health, I'm going to follow that advice full stop," said Lecce told CTV Morning Live in Ottawa last week.

Education Critic Marii Siles said a decision on the break should be communicated sooner rather than later.

"Doug Ford owes families and educators certainty, clear messaging, and action," said Siles. "Before last Spring Break he told people to travel and the virus was rampant in Ontario as a result."

"This time, educators and families are looking for certainty that this break is going ahead."

## -51.9°C recorded in Canada, country's coldest temperature in 4 years

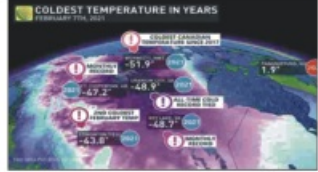
Monday, February 8, 2021, 5:50 a.m. — Temperatures are tumbling frighteningly low across Canada and some regions fell like -60 with the wind chill on the weekend.

A prominent lobe of the polar vortex settled over western Canada on Sunday and created the coldest Canadian temperatures in years and in some cases, record-breaking cold that was reported by a handful of weather stations.

It was so chilly on Sunday that even the most sophisticated satellites were perplexed and caused them to pick up the ground and mark it as freezing cloud tops. The resulting output looked like a gargantuan student on the Prairies, which can be seen in the graphic below.

So how chilly were the reads above? On Sunday, Wexweir, N.W.T. recorded -51.9°C, which is Canada's coldest temperature since March 2017. Before 2017, you have to go back to Old Crow, Yukon to find a temperature below -52.0°C in the Canadian database.

What's the coldest temperature you've ever experienced? Perhaps -30°C/-40°C? Only a handful of Canadians have ever experienced temperatures colder than -50°C without the wind chill, and those in Whitecourt and Old Crow are some of the luckiest.



Not all regions near the Arctic Circle saw bone-chilling cold conditions. In comparison to northern Saskatchewan, regions in eastern Nunavut experienced relative beach weather as mild air surged up to 25 degrees normal, pushing the mercury up to 2.0°C on Sunday.

The dense, Arctic air had no trouble infiltrating the Prairies, where Uramic City managed a rare feat — beating the coldest temperature so far.

In 2019, Calgary became the first major Canadian city to adapt body-worn cameras.

## Toronto Police Service to issue thousands of body-worn cameras to officers by October

The Toronto Police Service says all front-line officers will be deployed with body-worn cameras by the end of October.

Superintendent Michael Basky, who oversees the project, says roughly 650 officers are currently wearing the cameras. He says that's about 20 per cent of Toronto's front-line members.

Toronto police recently reported the signing of a five-year deal with Axon for \$34 million, which includes 2,300 cameras and related equipment.

Basky says the cameras, adopted last year, create an objective account of how police officers deal with the public.

"To look at that in a controlled environment, where we can actually see if a situation has escalated, if there was a reason or rationale for what happened," Basky explained.

The cameras are meant to hold both sides accountable. Sgt. Chris McCare, who says he's been wearing



a body camera for a couple of months, says he's become accustomed to the extra piece of equipment.

"It hasn't changed the way I interact with the public. Everything remains the same. Technically, you gotta remember to turn the camera on with any interaction," he said.

The need for improved policing is well-documented. Two reports from Ontario's Human Rights Commission found Black people in Toronto are "disproportionately" arrested and subjected to use of force by police.

"Throughout my life, I've been

stopped for the station at -48.9°C. Key Lake in Saskatchewan (-48.2°C) and Fort Chipewyan in Alberta (-47.2°C) set rare low monthly minimum temperatures, as well.

Wicked wind chill values left us icy, dangerous chill across northern Canada in recent days and the coldest of 2021 is currently a staggeringly low -66 that was recorded at Emerald Lake, Nunavut on February 6th.

Over the past couple of days, we've been tracking if some select cities will remain under -30°C for the entire day. Well, Edmonton you'll have to wait a bit longer, but a few cities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba managed this impressive feat on Sunday. It's significant because Sedationton hasn't managed to stay consistently below -30°C for a day since 2008!

Frigid air will remain in place throughout the week, keeping daytime highs hovering well into the -20°C's, or even -30°C's in some locations, with overnight lows continually plunging into the -40°C's further east.

The lobe of the remnant polar vortex will remain situated between Manitoba and Alberta for the time being, so an Arctic high refuses to budge in Western Canada.

"We're also going to show the world what our procedures are, what the opening procedure is, and what the requirements of an officer in using this technology [are]," Basky said.

"Nowhere in Canada has that happened."

Not every jurisdiction, however, is sold on body cameras. Halifax, where police issued a formal apology for Street Checks in 2019, is taking a cautious approach.

Lindell Smith, a city councillor who is also chair of the Halifax Board of Police Commissioners, says there's no consensus on important questions, including whether the cameras help end abuses like racial profiling or distract from finding solutions.

"Cameras don't deal with the underlying issue where it comes to racial injustice. Cameras just capture it. That doesn't deal with the issues," Smith said.

"And we're seeing de-funding the police (movement) and we want to deal with racism within the police forces. It doesn't deal with those issues. It just makes it visible."

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## Canada's travel restrictions: How hotels, isolations sites help stop COVID-19

As concerns about internationally imported COVID-19 variants hit closer to home, public health authorities are asking - and increasingly ordering - people to find alternative accommodations so they can self-isolate safely.

Here are some examples of how hotels and quarantine facilities are being used to keep the virus from spreading through communities.

### TRAVELLERS WAITING FOR TEST RESULTS

As the federal government rolls out new restrictions to prevent contagious mutations of the COVID-19 virus from crossing the border, more travellers are set to be sent to hotels and other facilities to stay at least part of their mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Under the new rules, which are expected to take effect soon, returning travellers will have to take a COVID-19 test at the airport at their own expense. They're then required to spend the first three days of their quarantine at a supervised hotel while awaiting their results, and foot the bill for the stay, upwards of \$2,000.



Those with negative results can serve the remainder of their two-week quarantine at home, while those with positive tests will be sent to government-designated facilities.

FEDERALLY DESIGNATED FACILITIES FOR TRAVELLERS QUARANTINE Since the outbreak took hold in Canada, Ottawa has been putting up travellers in hotels and other lodging sites as a "last resort" for those without a suitable place to self-isolate, said a spokesman for the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Terry Jarbeau said in an email that the agency currently operates 11 designated quarantine facilities in nine cities across Canada, with access to

two provincial prisons. These sites had lodged 5,030 travellers as of Jan. 24, said Jarbeau. She said the cost of the program wasn't readily available.

As of last Thursday, all international passenger flights must land at one of four airports - Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary or Montreal. Jarbeau said the government designates or cancels quarantine sites as needed, but declined to disclose their locations to "protect the privacy and safety of travellers."

ISOLATION SITES FOR NORTHERN TRAVELLERS Two of the northern territories have long required travellers to make a

public health step before entry.

To fly back to Nunavut, residents must first spend two weeks at health isolation sites in Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton or Yellowknife before they can be cleared to return to their home community. The territory covers costs such as a hotel room, meals and internet access, but travellers are responsible for any additional flight expenses.

Travellers headed to Northwest Territories must self-isolate in one of four communities: Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River or Fort Smith. Those who don't have a place to quarantine are sent to isolation centres.

Last month, the territory said it would no longer pay to put up residents travelling for recreational reasons. Non-residents still have to cover their own accommodations.

### VOLUNTARY ISOLATION SITES

A growing number of jurisdictions are setting up voluntary COVID-19 isolation sites to help people recover from the virus without putting other members of their household at risk.

Public health officials say many Canadians can't safely self-isolate at home because of crowded housing conditions, contributing to the disproportionate spread of infectious

## Coronavirus: What's happening in Canada and around the world on Monday

Why there aren't few treatments for COVID-19

People in Alberta, Quebec and Nova Scotia will see some COVID-19 restrictions lifted Monday, while students in more than a dozen public health regions in Ontario who had been learning remotely will venture back into the classroom.

Quebec is again allowing non-essential businesses, including personal care businesses like hair salons, to open their doors.

The province, which over the weekend surpassed 10,000 deaths since the outbreak began, will keep a curfew in place - but "red zone" communities will see their curfew start earlier than communities with fewer cases.

Restaurants and theatres will also be allowed to open in "orange area" communities as of Monday, though those businesses will stay closed to customers in "red zones" for some. The gradual reopening comes as Quebec reported 1,081 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday and 32 additional deaths. Hospitalizations continued to trend downward, with 963 COVID-19 patients in hospital and 158 in intensive care units, according to a provincial dashboard updated on Sunday.

In Ontario, students in 13 public health units will head back into their classrooms on Monday, with students in Toronto, Peel and York regions expected to resume in-person learning.

Premier Doug Ford is expected to offer some detail around his government will handle a gradual reopening later Monday. The province's current state of emergency is set to expire on Tuesday.

Ontario reported 1,265 new cases of COVID-19 on Monday and 33



additional deaths, bringing the provincial death toll to 6,538. Hospitalizations in the province decreased to 901, with 335 people listed as being in intensive care units, according to a provincial dashboard updated on Monday.

In Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia is allowing retail businesses and fitness facilities to operate at 75 per cent capacity. The province, which is loosening restrictions in a range of sectors as of Monday, reported just one new case of COVID-19 on Sunday.

Businesses and organizations holding events like weddings, funerals, sporting matches and festivals in Nova Scotia will be allowed to increase the number of people in attendance, but the number of people allowed to get together informally and inside a home is holding at 10.

Meanwhile, in Alberta, restaurants will be allowed to reopen for in-person dining. Sports and entertainment-related activities can resume in schools, and youth will be able to participate in lessons and practices for team-based minor sports and athletics.

Not every restriction is rolling

back, though, as indoor gatherings are still banned, and outdoor get-togethers remain capped at 10.

As of 16:15 a.m. ET on Monday morning, Canada had reported 805,525 cases of COVID-19, with 44,259 considered active. A CBC News tally of deaths stood at 20,800.

What's happening around the world As of Monday morning, more than 106.2 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, with almost 59.2 million of those cases listed as recovered or resolved by Johns Hopkins University, which maintains a case tracking tool. The global death toll stood at more than 2.3 million.

In Africa, South Africa has suspended plans to inoculate its front-line health-care workers with the AstraZeneca vaccine after a small clinical trial suggested that it isn't effective in preventing mild to moderate illness from the variant dominant in the country.

South Africa received its first one million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine last week and was expected to begin giving jobs to health-care workers in mid-February. The disappointing early results indicate that an inoculation drive using the AstraZeneca vaccine may not be

useful. The trial results, which aren't yet peer reviewed, suggested the AstraZeneca vaccine "provides minimal protection against mild-to-moderate COVID-19 infection" among young adults exposed to the South African variant.

Oxford University and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg said in a statement that protection against more severe forms of the disease could not be assessed in the trial because those participating were at low risk. The variant appears more infectious and is driving a deep resurgence, accounting for more than 90 per cent of COVID-19 cases, Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said Sunday night.

In the Asia-Pacific region, South Korea's daily tally of newly confirmed coronavirus cases has fallen below 300 for the first time in more than two months as authorities slightly ease tough physical distancing rules in the country.

South Korea's virus caseload has gradually slowed in recent weeks amid stringent physical distancing rules. On Monday, officials began allowing restaurants, coffee shops, indoor gyms and other facilities outside the densely populated Seoul metropolitan region to stay open an hour longer. Authorities say they'll maintain a ban on social gatherings of five or more people throughout the Lunar New Year holidays.

China appears to have stamped out its latest coronavirus outbreaks centred on the northwest, reporting no new cases of local infection in its latest daily report.

The National Health Commission said Monday that 14 new confirmed cases had been brought from outside the country but no new cases were registered in the provinces of Hubei and Jilin that have seen China's latest clusters. While China has relaxed some physical distancing rules, extensive testing, electronic monitoring and periodic lockdowns remain in place.

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