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Canada warns China may detain travellers with ties to Xinjiang region

TORONTO — In an update to travel advice for Canadians visiting China, the government has added more detail regarding the Xinjiang region, warning that Canadians with ethnic ties to the region could be "at risk of arbitrary detention."

The official travel advice page for China on the government's website was given a "thorough review and update of the entire travel advice content" on Sunday, the webpage stated.

Some of the changes are relatively minor, including rewriting the requirements to take a COVID-19 test to enter China as a "PCR test" to "nucleic acid test".

More notable were changes related specifically to the Xinjiang region.

Previous advice regarding the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region noted that it was "several to see armed police," that authorities were "increasingly detaining ethnic minorities in the region," and that "family members of Canadian citizens with Chinese citizenship have been detained."

But the new wording is more specific, describing reported internment camps and outlining that Canadians with ethnic ties to the region may be at danger of being detained if they travel there.

"Local authorities have put in place invasive security measures in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," says the page.

"Chinese authorities are increasingly detaining ethnic and



Muslim minorities in the region without due process. There are reports of extrajudicial internment and forced labour camps. Family members of Canadian citizens with Chinese citizenship have been detained. You may face arbitrary detention if you have familial or ethnic ties to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."

The page notes, as it did before the update, that "accurate information is hard to obtain" on the situation in the region.

There have been numerous reports by journalists, international human rights organizations and those who claim to have survived these "re-education camps" in China, alleging human rights violations, forced labour, extended detention and even torture at facilities for Uyghurs in China.

In February, MPs in Ottawa passed a motion denouncing China's treatment of the Uyghur Muslims as genocide, although Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and most of his cabinet did not participate in the vote.

In March, China responded to

nursing shortage in Ontario hospitals causing difficult, doctor says

Ontario Premier Doug Ford and his cabinet are considering closing schools and moving students to online learning as the province sees a surge of new COVID-19 cases, sources told CBC News.

Cabinet is set to meet at 1 p.m. ET Monday to discuss the potential move and Ford is scheduled to hold a news conference at 2:30 p.m. Health officials in the province reported 4,401 new cases of COVID-19 since Friday.

Ministers across much of Ontario will start scaling down elective surgeries and non-urgent procedures to ensure they have the capacity to treat more COVID-19 patients. Health Minister Christine Elliott said Ford that could increase intensive-care unit capacity in Ontario to 1,000 patients.

The province on Monday reported a single 1,646 COVID-19 cases, with 619 patients in intensive-care units.

Hospitals in northern Ontario are exempt from cancelling non-urgent procedures, but a memo from Ontario Health on Thursday night said they should prepare to ramp down quickly in the near future. The memo also asked hospitals to identify staff who may redeploy elsewhere if necessary.

Anthony Dale, president and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, said CTV News Network on Monday that the surgical backlog in the province is only going to get worse as hospitals adjust and cancel non-emergency services to deal with critically ill COVID-19 patients.

"We're asking people who need cardiac care, cancer care, even organ transplantation through this pandemic to wait - to wait even longer," said Dale.

Meanwhile, more than 700

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

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What's happening elsewhere in Canada

In Quebec, health officials on Monday reported 1,599 new cases of COVID-19 and 11 additional deaths.

According to a provincial dashboard, hospitalizations stood at 636, with 142 people in ICUs.

The updated figures come after the province, which has moved up its curfew in Montreal and Laval, saw hundreds of protesters gather in Old Montreal on Sunday.

Across Atlantic Canada, meanwhile, health officials reported 15 new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday.

Nine new cases in the Edmundston area of New Brunswick, which entered a lockdown on Sunday.

Five new cases in Nova Scotia, which brought the number of active cases in the province to 40.

One new case in Newfoundland and Labrador, putting the number of active cases in the province at 10.

In the Northwest Territories, there were new cases of COVID-19 reported on Sunday in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

What's happening around the world

As of Monday morning, more than 136.1 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, according to a tracking

site run by Johns Hopkins University in the United States. The reported global death toll stood at more than 2.9 billion.

In Europe, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has urged people to "behave responsibly" as shops, gyms, hairdressers, restaurants and bars reopen after months of lockdown. Monday sees the easing of restrictions that have been in place in England since early January to combat a new strain of the virus.

In Northern Ireland, health officials decided that all adults who live or work in Whistler are eligible as of Monday for a COVID-19 vaccine as the region struggles with increasing cases.

Across the North, there were new cases of COVID-19 reported on Sunday in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

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In Asia-Pacific region, the

and hit its deepest capital and financial provinces have been placed under a lighter coronavirus lockdown to avoid further damage to an already battered economy despite a continuing surge in infections and deaths. The Philippines has long been a Southeast Asian coronavirus hot spot, with about 865,000 confirmed infections and nearly 15,000 deaths.

"Our emerging strategy is to increase our budget instead of closing our economy," said presidential spokesman Harry Roque who spoke in a televised news briefing from a Manila hospital after confirming COVID-19 laboratory

cabinetmembers.

Hundreds of thousands of Hindus devotees flocked to take a holy bath in the Ganges river, even as the nation scaled up the world's highest tally of new daily coronavirus infections.

In the Middle East, Iran imposed a 10-day lockdown across most of the country Saturday.

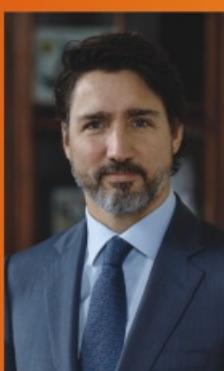
In the Americas, the United States had administered 187,047,131 doses of COVID-19 vaccines and distributed 237,796,105 doses as of Sunday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

Vaccines have secured the funds to fully pay for coronavirus vaccines via the COVAX system, President Nicolas Maduro said on Sunday, a day after a surprise announcement that the country had paid more than half the amount.

In Africa, Tunisia approved Johnson & Johnson's vaccine and will soon receive 1.5 million doses of the vaccine under an African Union plan.

From Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and your Liberal MPs.
De la part du premier ministre Justin Trudeau et de vos députés libéraux,

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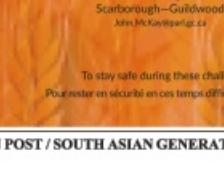
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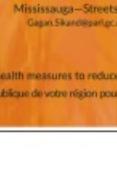
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To stay safe during these challenging times, many will be observing and celebrating traditions differently this year. Please continue to follow your local public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Pour rester en sécurité en ces temps difficiles, plusieurs observeront et célébreront les traditions de manière différente cette année. Veuillez continuer à suivre les mesures de santé publique de votre région pour aider à réduire la propagation de la COVID-19.

Canada to receive 1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses from Pfizer this week, hopes Moderna delivery delay is over

The federal government is expecting Moderna to make good on a previously promised batch of 855,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses that were expected last week, but have yet to arrive.

Those delayed doses along with a little more than one million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine represent the extent of Canada's expected vaccine deliveries this week, even as the number of new COVID-19 cases across Canada continue to surge.

Maj.-Gen. Dany Fortin, the military officer overseeing the federal government's vaccination distribution effort, flagged the delay in Moderna's planned delivery as a "headache with quality assurance."

"It's part of the manufacturing process, at the tail end of the manufacturing process, that they went to go through the proper quality assurance processes, and there's a



bottling," he said last week.

Officials have indicated there could be a similar delay in the delivery of 1.2 million doses from Moderna next week.

"It's prudent planning on our part

right now to look on the last week of April," Fortin said.

In comparison, Pfizer-BioNTech has been consistently delivering each week about 1 million doses to Canada each week for more than a month, and said the Canada is approaching the peak of its current wave of the pandemic.

Tim said many of those getting sick are younger than in previous COVID-19 surges, which experts have blamed on virus variants that are spreading more easily.

He said looking at changes to how they are administering their vaccines.

More than 10 million doses had been distributed across Canada as of Sunday afternoon, according to covid19tracker.ca, with nearly 8 million having been administered.

third wave of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last week that Canada was facing a "very serious" third wave of the pandemic [File: Blair Gable/Reuters]

[In recent days, several provinces have reimposed strict lockdown measures in an effort to curb the spread of the virus and ease the pressure on their respective health networks.]

Canada's chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, said on Sunday that an increase in "severe and critical illnesses" linked to the virus was putting a strain on healthcare systems and workers in many places.

Last week, the Hospital for Sick Children, commonly referred to as SickKids, a paediatric care facility in Toronto, also said it would open up eight beds in its ICU for COVID-19 patients aged approximately 40 and under.

"We need ICU nurses here in the GTA to care for the patients that are coming in and the patients we have already," Wiemer said.

The Ontario government said on Sunday that it would authorize 700 additional pharmacists to administer AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to people over age 55, as it works to

ramp up its vaccination campaign amid the surge in infections.

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Last week, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warned that Canada was facing a "very serious

and potentially deadly" third wave of the virus.

"If you're only transmitting for a few days out of an infection cycle, you can only have so many contacts during those days," Wiemer said. "But if that duration of shedding is now twice as long, you can have double the contacts and double the transmission rate between people."

Lissey Marr, one of the top aerosol scientists in the world and an expert on the airborne transmission of viruses at Virginia Tech, says it's possible variants may also be causing more viral particles in the exhaled air of infected individuals for longer.

The number of daily ICU patients also increased by 23 percent compared with the previous week.

"While COVID-19 continues to impact people of all ages in Canada, infection rates are highest among those aged 20-39 years of age," Tam said.

The number of confirmed variant

variants has skyrocketed in recent weeks, rising from about 2,000 a month ago to close to 17,000 this week and coasting, with more than 90 per cent of those being the B117 variant first identified in the United Kingdom.

The P1 variant first discovered in South Korea is also on the rise in Canada, with cases doubling in the past week to more than 1,000 - mostly in British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta.

And a recent outbreak at a gym in Quebec City where physical distancing and mask use were not enforced has been linked to at least 40 cases of COVID-19 and one death, officials said.

Quebec health officials say the rise of variants and a more relaxed approach to public health rules by residents have led to the spike in cases in the province, leading them to introduce a mandatory mask mandate for outdoor activities and indoor workplaces.

"I think that's just keeping up in favour of the importance of aerosol transmission," said Marr. "We thought it was important before, I would say it's probably predominant in terms of how the virus is transmitted."

Bromage says the reluctance of Canadians to follow public health guidelines to curb transmission has been "frustrating" and adds to confusion among Canadians about how infections are occurring.

Aerosol transmission refers to spread via microscopic airborne particles that can remain suspended in the air longer than larger droplets, which tend to fall to the ground within a short period of time - a trait that informed the original physical distancing guidelines.

"There has been a reluctance to accept that both in schools and in hospitals," he said of aerosol transmission. "That poor messaging

Coronavirus variants are testing the limits of what we once thought was safe in Canada

Social Shaming
Explosion of variant cases elevates risk of COVID-19 exposure in everyday situations, especially

The rapid spread of more contagious coronavirus variants across Canada is driving a devastating third wave in much of the country and increasing the level of risk in almost every aspect of life, said to be relatively safe from COVID-19.

Experts say the risk of exposure is higher in everyday situations and the margin of error is lower for what we can and can't do safely until more Canadians are vaccinated.

"The things that you've gotten away with previously, and that you've been doing for months and months, it wasn't that they were safe, it's that you got lucky," said Erin Bromage, a biology professor and immunologist at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth who studies infectious diseases.

"That luck - it's like rolling dice."

Bromage said activities such as visiting a loved one, reading a newspaper or working outside might seem safe because public health restrictions may allow them, but are even riskier now than they were before.

The variants of concern not only appear to be more transmissible and potentially more deadly, but Bromage says they may also transmit for longer periods of time in infected individuals and be more persistent in the environment - providing more opportunities for infected people to spread the virus.

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While a second CDC study found an infection occurred in a New Zealand quarantine hotel in September after an infected person entered less than a minute in an open doorway.

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"There has been a reluctance to accept that both in schools and in hospitals," he said of aerosol transmission. "That poor messaging

has led people indoors and infection starting up that really shouldn't have."

Canada revised its guidelines on how COVID-19 spreads to include the risk of aerosol transmission in November, weeks after other countries and international health organizations acknowledged the airborne threat.

"People tend to latch on to the first thing they hear, which was to wipe down your groceries, a year ago," said Marr. "But I think we need really a campaign to just clarify to people kind of what's going on with regard to the policies that match that."

The CDC also updated its guidelines to say the risk of COVID-19 infection from aerosols is now officially considered low-meaning disinfecting groceries, wiping down packages and cordoning off playgrounds are likely unnecessary.

Outdoors with mask

Experts say now more than ever, Canadians need to mitigate the increased risk of transmission from viruses by going above and beyond public health guidelines and moving activities outdoors - though not all outdoor environments are controlled.

"Imagine, for example, the issue of a dog running around on a paved walkway on three of the four walks, in which you have a lot of people close to one another at tables," said Dr. Raymond Tellez, an infectious diseases specialist and associate medical professor at McGill University.

"This is logically outdoors, but physically has all the characteristics of an indoor environment."

Dr. Arunesh Adalja, an infectious disease physician and a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore, Md., says it's important to remember that while transmission can occur outdoors, it's much less likely.

"Even with the more contagious variants, the virus is still going to have difficulty spreading in those settings," he said.

"But when you look at the United States, for example the protests after George Floyd's death, those were all outdoors and we saw very little transmission."

Even if you're moving activities outdoors, experts say to wear a mask with a filter, keep your mask on and stay as far from others as possible.

The fact is Canada's third wave of COVID-19 is showing no signs of slowing down as the vaccine rollout gradually ramps up - meaning Canadians need to buckle down until more of us get a shot, experts say.

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Canada's largest province hits new high of daily COVID infections

Ontario records 4,456 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, as health experts warn of rapid rise in intensive care admissions.

Canada's most populous province has set a new record for single-day coronavirus infections, local media reported, as it struggles to contain a surging third wave of the pandemic and cope with mounting hospitalizations.

Ontario reported 4,456 new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, as well as 21 additional coronavirus-related deaths.

The new figures come just days after Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency and imposed a stay-at-home order due to rapidly rising infections, spurred in part by more easily transmissible variants of the virus.

An increase in intensive-care-unit admissions across Ontario has driven particular concern among healthcare workers and public health experts. As of Sunday morning, 465 COVID-19 patients were in ICUs - up from

395 cases the day before.

Dr. Michael Warner, medical director of critical care at Michael Garron Hospital in Toronto warned on Saturday that the situation "is going to get worse."

"On paper, Ontario has about 2,300 ICU beds. In practice, though, we have far fewer because of how they are being used," Warner said.

He called on the federal government to help coordinate the transfer of healthcare workers, including ICU nurses, from parts of Canada less affected by the pandemic to harder hit areas such as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

"We need ICU nurses here in the GTA to care for the patients that are coming in and the patients we have already," Wiemer said.

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ramadan celebrations will be virtual again this year. We need to continue practicing physical distancing out of love and concern for our loved ones and our community. At this holy time of the year, there can be no greater service than doing our part by staying home.

جان بچائیں ، گھر رہیں۔

Rob Oliphant, M.P.
Don Valley West
wishes the community
Ramadan Mubarak!



While my office remains closed, please contact me at:
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