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**Canada's budget to include digital and luxury levies, but no wealth tax: Reuters sources**

OTTAWA—Canada's first budget in two years, to be presented to parliament on Monday, proposes a sales tax for online platforms and e-commerce warehouses, a digital services tax for Web giants and a luxury tax on items like yachts, government sources familiar with the document said.

It will not include a wealth tax, a levy sought by the opposition New Democrats. Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's budget will need the support of at least one opposition group to pass.



"The government is not moving forward with a wealth tax right now," a government source told Reuters. "We will be taking meaningful steps to close loopholes and tackle tax evasion, and ask those who are doing well right now to pay just a little bit more."

The budget will include a sales tax for online platforms and e-commerce warehouses starting from July, and a digital services tax on big Web companies starting from Jan. 1, 2022, both measures originally promised last year.

Online platforms include foreign-based vendors with no physical presence in Canada that sell products such as mobile apps and online video gaming. E-commerce warehousing is the storage of physical goods before they are sold online.

In 2022 or 2023, the budget will propose limiting the ability of

private aircraft valued at more than \$100,000 and boats worth over \$250,000 will come into force next year if the budget is passed. RVs and snowmobiles would be exempt.

With the country's housing market booming, the government is proposing to tax vacant residential property owned by non-resident, non-Canadian owners from Jan. 1, 2022, sources said.

There will also be an effort to crack down on jurisdiction shopping by large, profitable companies that attempt to artificially lower their tax obligations in Canada, sources said.

From 2023, Canada will aim to limit the amount of excessive interest expenses that can be deducted from profit, although small businesses will be exempt.

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**Ontario's failure to control the third wave has implications for all of Canada**

Ontario's failure to control the third wave of the pandemic has led to a massive surge in COVID-19 cases in hospitals with devastating consequences on the delivery of health care to millions of Canadians.

"Our hospital system is literally buckling," said Dr. Allison McGeer, a medical microbiologist and infectious disease specialist at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital who worked on the first lines of the SARS epidemic in 2003.

"There is no way out of the next three weeks, because it takes that long to see an impact on serious illness and death after you start public health measures. That's awful."

Ontario extended its stay-at-home order to at least six weeks in an attempt to stem the exponential rise in COVID-19 cases, in addition to lowering capacity at essential retailers to 25 per cent, restricting outdoor gatherings, and setting up checkpoints at provincial borders with Quebec and Manitoba on Saturday.

McGeer says unless Ontario can limit their contacts as much as possible and flatten the curve by following the stricter public health measures, the level of care inside hospitals will continue to suffer.

"If we don't move now, we literally will be looking what New York City and Italy did in the first wave, and that's much more severe," she said.

"That is the circumstance in which we're going to have to say we cannot deliver the care that Canadian health-care workers expect to deliver or that Canadians expect to get."

McGeer says that while she can sympathize with people who are tired, angry and completely worn down by the pandemic more than a year after it began, "we will not have our health-care systems" if we don't do everything possible to stop the third wave.

"There's no doubt this is the worst crisis we've seen in hospitals in

**Ontario's failure to control the third wave has implications for all of Canada**

Ontario in our lifetimes," said Dr. Irfan Dhallia, a physician and University of Toronto medical professor who is also a vice-president at the Uthly Health Toronto hospital network. "This is totally unprecedented."

More than 700 patients with COVID-19 are currently fighting for their lives in Ontario ICUs and that number is projected to rise to more than 1,000 by the end of April.

"If you get in a car accident, and you end up needing surgery and that surgery goes away, there may not be any spare ICU beds for you," said Dr. Noah Ivers, a family physician and associate professor in the department of family medicine at the University of Toronto.

"This is me and you and your kids and your mom. This is at the point where it's affecting all of us. So even if you're not afraid of COVID, you should be afraid of this."

Dhallia says ICUs typically have one nurse on hand for every patient, but there are many hospitals in Ontario where that is currently not possible because of the surging third wave.

"We know that even with the best possible care, somewhere between 20 and 30 per cent of people who end up in an intensive care unit with COVID are going to die," he said.

"Hundreds of Ontarians will die during Wave 3, and in my view, every single one of those deaths was preventable."

Field hospitals are being set up to ease the burden of overflowing ICUs



in Toronto, hospital staff are being redirected to the front lines and health-care workers could be forced to make devastating decisions about who lives and who dies in the brutal weeks ahead.

"We're planning for the worst," said Dr. Stuy Houta, an infectious disease specialist at the University Health Network and an associate professor of medicine at the University of Toronto.

"The worst-case scenario is we're doing things that are just awful, like triage of patients. All of that's a reality and it's all being dusted off again."

"Scar" across Ontario's health-care system

Health-care workers are bearing the brunt of the pandemic on the front lines, with burnout a clear and present danger that further threatens hospitals.

"There is a scar that's going to be put across the health-care system with all of what's happened and it's really sad to see," said Dr. Zain Chagla, an infectious diseases physician at St.

**think anybody felt that the government could have prevented it.**

Plan for help, but few resources to spare

Ontario Premier Doug Ford has requested additional health-care workers from other provinces to help staff ICUs, but so far only Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to sending additional personnel.

The Canadian Medical Association also made a desperate plea Friday for "province-to-province collaboration" and "national leadership" to address the "scale and severity" of the pandemic and redeploy resources to hard-hit areas to "save the most lives."

"Any measures taken now will take time to have an impact given the lag from exposure to disease," the statements says. "We must act now."

But Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island rejected the notion of redeploying health-care workers, as they're already short of resources and the spread of coronavirus variants across the country could spark outbreaks at any time.

Dhallia says it's hard to imagine that any other provinces would actually have a sufficient number of staff that could be deployed to Ontario to stop the worsening crisis in hospitals.

"The fact that we are even talking about that more than a year later is really just a sign of how badly we failed," he said.

Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliott said this week the province is trying to open up hundreds of additional ICU beds in the coming days and weeks.

Ontario is expected to make a formal request to the federal government for more than 600 critical care staff to help support the province's hospitals, CBC News has learned.

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## Ontario, Alberta to lower minimum age for AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine to 40 from 55

Ontario and Alberta will start offering the AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine to people age 40 and over starting Tuesday.

A spokesperson for Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliott said the shot will be offered at pharmacies and primary care settings. In a statement Tuesday, Alexandra Hillence said the province made the call based on "current supply of the vaccine."

Hours after Ontario's announcement, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney tweeted the province will follow suit, also lowering the eligibility age from 55 to 40, citing advice from Alberta public health officials. More details will be in the morning, the premier said.

Following Ontario's announcement, the vaccine was only available to people aged 55 and older in Ontario in line with recommendations from the National Advisory Council on Immunization (NACI) earlier this spring.

On Sunday, however, the federal government said the provinces and territories were free to expand eligibility for the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine to any adult over the age of 18 as some pharmacists wanted they had done sitting idle because of the age restrictions.

"Provinces and territories are free to use AstraZeneca in any population



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

The Ontario government voted against a series of Opposition motions aimed at supporting essential workers on Monday, including one that sought to create a provincial paid sick-leave program.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath presented the motions - which required unanimous consent of the legislature to pass - during a session Monday. She called on Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservatives to pass the sick-leave motion, but the government voted against the measure.

Government House Leader Paul Calandra said he anticipates the federal government will announce further enhancements to its sick-day program today. The province has thus far rejected calls for a provincial program, saying it would be redundant overlap with federal supports.

Advocates have been calling on the Ford government to bring in paid sick leave for months, saying it would help support essential workers during the pandemic. The provincial COVID-19 assistance advisory table and other health experts have repeatedly called for Ford and his cabinet to institute a provincially run paid sick-leave program.

The federal counterpart, the Canada recovery sickness benefit (CRSB), is "too complicated, not enough and the help comes too late," Dr. Peter Jhali, the science table's director, told CBC News Network Monday.

Ontario reported 4,447 new cases of COVID-19 and 19 related deaths on Monday. Meanwhile, students across the province returned to the virtual classroom as school buildings remain shuttered following the spring break.

Faced with surging cases and a strained health-care system, checkpoints are also now posted at interprovincial border crossings in Ontario. Ford announced restrictions on travelling between provinces on Friday as part of a bid to curb transmission and ease some of the pressure on the health ecosystem.

What's happening across Canada: As of 1:30 p.m. ET on Monday, Canada had reported 1,127,187



confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 88,631 considered active. A CBC News tally of deaths stood at 23,656.

In Quebec on Monday, health officials reported 1,692 new cases of COVID-19 and 15 additional deaths. According to a provincial dashboard, hospitalizations stood at 646, with 183 in intensive care.

Motorists are stopped at a police checkpoint in Ottawa after new coronavirus restrictions came into effect, limiting travel into the province of Ontario. (Patrick Doyle/Reuters)

Across the North, Nunavut on Monday reported six new cases, bringing the number of active cases in the territory to 28. Premier Joe Savatsky said all of the cases were in Iqaluit.

In Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia reported 15 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, while both Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island reported three new cases in their respective provinces.

P.E.I. is also increasing travel restrictions in an effort to control the number of COVID-19 cases in the province. All non-resident travel to the island from outside Atlantic Canada is on hold until at least May 17, while residential workers and truck drivers who arrive in the province will need to isolate until they receive a negative COVID-19 test even if they are vaccinated.

In the Prairie provinces on Sunday,

On Sunday the country reached the milestone of having 50 per cent of adults at least partially vaccinated.

Schools in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires will open after all on Monday morning after a court overruled a federal order requiring classes to go online for two weeks amid a surge in cases that has brought hospitals to near-collapse.

In the Middle East, vaccination against COVID-19 is a requirement to perform the Umrah pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi state TV said on Sunday, citing a government official.

In the Asia-Pacific region, New Delhi imposed a weekend lockdown Monday night to prevent the collapse of the Indian capital's health system, which authorities said had been pushed to its limit amid an explosive surge in coronavirus cases.

In scenes familiar from surges elsewhere, ambulances trapped from one hospital to another, trying to find an empty bed over the weekend, while patients lined up outside medical facilities waiting to be let in.

"People keep arriving, in an almost collapsing situation," said Dr. Sumesh Kumar, who heads Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, one of New Delhi's largest hospitals for treating COVID-19 patients.

Pakistan's minister for planning and development said Monday that authorities are struggling to maintain the multi-bed supply of oxygen to hospitals for COVID-19 patients. Asad Umar, who also oversees Pakistan's response to the coronavirus, said on Twitter that hospitals were continuously receiving coronavirus patients amid a surge in new cases.

In Africa, Tunisia announced the closure of all schools until April 30, as well as restrictions on movement, to slow the spread of COVID-19.

In Europe, Austria will only use Russia's Sputnik V vaccine after the European Medicines Agency has approved it, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said, amid growing public frustration with the pace of vaccinations.

The European Union has exercised an option to acquire an additional 100 million doses of BioNTech and Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine, the two companies said.

## Ontario walks back new pandemic police powers following widespread backlash

TORONTO - TORONTO - Ontario reversed course on sweeping new police powers Saturday, just one day after Premier Doug Ford announced the measures that triggered a widespread backlash.

Officials will no longer have the right to stop any pedestrian or driver to ask why they're out or request their home address, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones said in a written statement on Saturday evening.

Instead, she said, police will only be able to stop people who they have reason to believe are participating in an "organized public event or social gathering."

As the number of people infected with COVID-19 in hospital reached record levels, Ford tweeted that another of the measures would also be reversed.

\*Ontario's enhanced restrictions

were always intended to stop large gatherings where spread can happen," Ford said. "Our regulations will be amended to allow playgrounds, but gatherings outside will still be off-limits."

Civil libertarians and pundits attacked new anti-pandemic restrictions announced Friday by Ford as misguided, saying the added police powers aimed at enforcing stay-at-home orders were overkill.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association welcomed Saturday's reversal.

"The new order rationalizes and narrows the unconstitutional Friday standard. The new standard is also tied to a public health objective, and avoids arbitrary detention," said Michael Bryant, executive director of the CCLA.

Ahead of the reversal, large and small police forces across the province said they had no intention of enforcing the new measures.

Andrew Fletcher, chief of the South Simcoe Police Service, said officers would only act on complaints. Police forces from Thunder Bay to Ottawa to Toronto and Woodstock expressed similar positions.

"We're all going through a difficult year of COVID-19 and all associated with it together. The HRPS will NOT be randomly stopping vehicles for no reason during the pandemic or afterwards (RIDE being an exception)," Halton Police Chief Steve Tanner tweeted before the province walked back the regulations.

The closing of outdoor spaces, meanwhile, puzzled many public health experts who said the measures didn't make sense.

\*Outdoor activities are vital for mental and physical health, especially with stay-at-home orders," Dr. Isaac Bogoch, who sits on the province's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force, said in a tweet.

"Science is clear: Outdoor COVID-19 transmission is incredibly low."

The pandemic, meanwhile, continued unabated on Saturday. The number of patients in hospital due to the novel coronavirus rose above 2,000 for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, with 726 in intensive care and 501 needing a ventilator, authorities reported.

To help manage the record number of hospitalizations, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair announced Saturday that two federal mobile health units would remain in the province until at least the end of June.

Health officials also recorded 34 more deaths related to the virus - the highest single-day count in almost two months, when 47 people were reported as dying from coronavirus disease.

The province logged 4,362 new cases on Saturday, down from Friday's record-setting number of 4,812. Globally, the pandemic has now killed more than three million people.

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## Quebec and Ontario impose travel restrictions to slow surging virus variants

Ontario and Quebec imposed new interprovincial travel restrictions on Monday amid growing concern over surging case counts and hospitalizations that are placing unprecedented strain on Ontario's hospital system.

Going forward, travellers from Manitoba and Quebec cannot enter Ontario unless they live or work in the province, are transporting goods, or are travelling for health or compassionate reasons or to exercise an Aboriginal right.

Quebec has enacted similar rules for its western border with Ontario and is requiring anyone returning to their primary residence from that province to isolate for 14 days unless they fall under an exception.

The province's public health director, Dr. Horacio Armada, said discussions are underway on the possibility of limiting interprovincial and international air travel in light of the more contagious variants.

"I'm discussing with my federal



colleagues and other provinces about better controls of air flights and also over land," he told reporters after receiving his first vaccine dose north of Montreal.

The measures came as Ontario reported 4,447 new cases of COVID-19 amid worries the province's intensive care units are struggling to keep up with a growing number of extremely sick patients.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to consider involving the federal Emergency Act in light of the crisis.

"I believe such a declaration, applied to Ontario, could help ensure a more co-ordinated delivery of vaccines to those who need them most, as well as enabling workers to prevent the spread by taking paid sick days and time off to get vaccinated," Singh wrote to Trudeau in a letter.

The NDP leader noted that in Toronto, the wealthiest neighbourhoods have higher rates of vaccination than neighbourhoods where racialized and working-class people live - areas that have higher levels of COVID-19 positivity.

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## Google and Facebook are a new threat, and Canada needs new weapons to fight back

In public policy terms it's called "generals fighting the last war." It's the doomed - if entirely understandable - default tactic of using the same strategies and weapons that were previous battles in an entirely new setting against a new foe.

As Canada joins other democracies in responding to Google and Facebook's predatory monopoly practices, it is perhaps the greatest risk of all: using the tried and true policy instruments of the past to resolve an unprecedented threat to local news across Canada.

It's important to note that the "generals" this time around - especially Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault - understand that what's at stake this time is clearly unlike any other threat that news media, and the millions of Canadians who rely on it, have ever faced before. In his public pronouncements, he has indicated that you can't call in the cavalry to fight a high-tech war - especially when the other side has tanks.

But not everyone sees it that way. Some are tempted to look at a new problem through an old lens. Over the last half century in particular, successive Canadian governments have effectively responded to threats to the Canadian cultural sector - including to news media - with innovative and comprehensive policies of special funds and Canadian content and production requirements.

Partis have sometimes chafed at these policies, but they've been instrumental in nurturing and sustaining a vibrant cultural sector in the face of constant bombardment from the world's dominant cultural superpower, across the border.

The fact is that our geography - a relatively small population strung sparsely along our border with the United States - our broad cultural affinity with Americans, and the tremendous economic clout of American cultural industries all combined to make Canadian culture uniquely vulnerable.

The success of the Canadian response to this challenge is all around us: a cultural sector more confident and globally successful than anyone could have dreamed of 50 years ago.

And the case for these kinds of public supports for smaller news media, particularly in rural and remote areas, still makes a lot of sense. For example, the Aid to Publishers (ATP) component of the Canada Periodical Fund is an excellent example of a relatively small, but highly effective, fund for small news media. It's been around for decades and it supports important voices. Maintaining and expanding it makes a lot of sense.

But the challenge that Canada faces from Google and Facebook is not just the latest battle in an ongoing "Cancon" (the industry argot for "Canadian content") war. And it's not about protecting Canada from a U.S. cultural onslaught. It's about protecting democracy itself. Because it is the lifeblood of democracy - local news - that is under attack from the web giants' practices.

In fact, the News Media Alliance - which represents nearly 2,000 news media organizations in the U.S. - has defined the problem well: "The marketplace (is) controlled by a few dominant platforms that decide and impose unfair terms that benefit the platforms and ensure that they reap the vast majority of digital advertising revenues. These platforms



use their power and algorithms to act as de facto regulators of the news publishing industry, including by determining how, when, and what news content readers can reach, and by collecting and controlling user data and digital advertising."

Reporting real news costs real money. And in democracies around the world - regardless of the medium - journalism is financed by advertising or paid subscriptions, or a combination of the two. Google and Facebook have broken that model.

In the U.S., a quarter of all newspapers have gone out of business in the last decade and half, resulting in vast "news deserts" across that country. In Canada, during a similar period, according to the Local News Research Project, over 300 newspapers have closed since 2008.

Economists have a technical term for what Google and Facebook have wrought: market failure. And it can't be fixed by a government fund or other Cancon tools. One-off deals and case packages from Google and Facebook won't do the trick either - though it hasn't stopped them from trying. Either approach only provides a temporary, cosmetic fix, while the web giants further consolidate their stranglehold, and local news further atrophies. The fact is that market failure can only be reversed by the state forcing an end to monopoly practices and restoring market fairness.

Meanwhile, data released by Canada's chief public health officer shows that the average daily number of hospitalizations and deaths in the country jumped by more than 30% between April 9 and 15 compared to the week before.

The latest national-level data found that an average of 3,428 people with COVID-19 were being treated in Canadian hospitals each day during the most recent seven-day reporting period, representing a 34% increase over the week before.

An average of 41 people died each day during the same period, which is 38% higher than the previous week.

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## Feds to send health-care workers to Ontario, Trudeau says

MONTREAL - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says federal departments and some Canadian provinces are working to send health-care workers and equipment to help Ontario as it battles record-breaking COVID-19 surges.

Trudeau said in a video statement that health care workers employed by government departments such as national defence and immigration will be redeployed to Ontario, and the Greater Toronto area in particular.

The prime minister says he has also spoken to the premiers of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, who are evaluating what human resources and equipment they can free up in the next few days.

He says the federal government will also work with Ontario cities to deploy rapid tests to hard-hit locations and would cover the costs of relocating resources from other provinces whose spaces are.

His statement comes as hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care units continue to reach record heights in Ontario, which reported over 4,300 new COVID-19 infections over the last 24 hours.

Premier Doug Ford announced a number of new restrictions to quell the skyrocketing numbers, but has faced pressure to roll back limits on outdoor activities, which critics have said will do little to stop the spread.

Meanwhile, data released by Canada's chief public health officer shows that the average daily number of hospitalizations and deaths in the country jumped by more than 30% between April 9 and 15 compared to the week before.

The latest national-level data found that an average of 3,428 people with COVID-19 were being treated in Canadian hospitals each day during the most recent seven-day reporting period, representing a 34% increase over the week before.

An average of 41 people died each day during the same period, which is 38% higher than the previous week.

## Filing 2020 taxes late could lead to months of delays for COVID-19 financial aid, says CRA

TORONTO - With all there is to worry about regarding the pandemic and our working lives, the idea of rushing to file income tax returns on time this year may seem a bit quaint. But anyone hoping to receive any of the various COVID-19 relief benefits going forward could face delays of up to two months if they miss the April 30 deadline, the Canada Revenue Agency warns.

In the latest post on its "Tax tips 2021" page, the CRA acknowledges the challenges that some Canadians may face meeting their filing obligations this year, but points out that it needs 2020 tax information to determine eligibility for the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB), the Canada Recovery Tax Credit (CRT) and the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB).

Canada's initial benefits rollout last year endured some hiccups as the government scrambled to quickly put measures in place to deal with the economic effect of lockdowns. The initial benefit - the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) - was rolled out on a "first come, first served" basis, which did not require a 2019 tax filing.

CRB eligibility for CERB based on income led to many recipients being told they'd need to repay thousands of dollars in aid when the government clarified late last year eligibility was determined by the higher net income bar. The government eventually reversed course and said people who had applied thinking gross income was the requirement would not have to repay benefits.

But the issue of benefit repayments will be a feature of this tax season for filers who may have earned more income than expected last year, or who received CERB payments from both the CRA and through employment insurance. Last month, Canada's auditor general said more than \$500 million of double CERB payments had been made through both programs.

The agency says on-time filings can be processed within 3-5 business days, though it encourages those using paper returns to file early as it can take 10 to 12 weeks to process those returns. More than 90 per cent of tax filers in Canada file electronically.

Last week, the federal government came under pressure from Opposition Conservatives to delay this year's tax-filing deadline, and Quebec has said it will push its deadline to the end of May. Francisco Sorbara, parliamentary secretary to the revenue minister, responded in the House of Commons question period that Canadians should file on time to avoid an interruption of benefits.

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