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Canada to donate almost 18 million surplus AstraZeneca doses to low- and middle-income countries

Canada is donating 17.7 million doses of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine to help inoculate people in low- and middle-income countries, federal ministers announced Monday.

International Development Minister Karina Gould and Procurement Minister Anita Anand said the doses are a part of the federal government's advance purchase agreement with the company and would be distributed through COVAX.

COVAX is a global vaccine-sharing initiative jointly co-ordinated by the World Health Organization, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance.

The program pools funds from wealthier countries to buy vaccines for those countries and ensure that low- and middle-income countries have access to vaccines as well. This new donation is on top of the \$440 million the federal government already has committed to COVAX.

"This donation is a result of our proactive approach to securing hundreds of millions of COVID-19 vaccines in our initial contracts. With close to 55 million vaccines in Canada, and with the demands of the provinces and territories for this vaccine being met, we are now in a position to donate these excess doses," Anand said.

The federal government also announced it's partnering with UNICEF on a donation-matching fundraising campaign to encourage Canadians to donate vaccine doses by contributing \$10.

All donations by Canadians will be matched by the federal government, up to a maximum of \$10 million. The campaign runs until Sept. 6 and people can donate via UNICEF or by texting VACCINES to 45678.

Anand and Gould said that if the UNICEF campaign is maxed out, it will provide enough money to vaccinate four million people in countries where inoculation campaigns are struggling to meet demand.

Canadians well stocked with vaccine: Anand

Anand said 79 per cent of eligible Canadians have received at least one dose of a vaccine and 55 per cent are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

She said the federal government is also holding a reserve of three million doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which she said the provinces have asked the federal government to hang on to until they're ready to take delivery.

Anand said the provinces told the Public Health Agency of Canada that they have all the AstraZeneca they need, which allowed the federal government to make the donation.

The ministers said that the AstraZeneca doses are coming from the advance purchase agreement the government struck with the company and that these doses, which will be manufactured in the United States, will start being delivered to COVAX in the coming weeks.

The Public Health Agency of Canada and the National Advisory

All remaining lockdown restrictions in England will be lifted in a week despite a sharp rise in coronavirus cases, Britain's health secretary said Monday, maintaining it's the right time to allow Britons a chance to return to normal life.

Sajid Javid told Parliament that Britain's successful vaccine rollout means that nine out of 10 adults in the U.K. now have antibodies against the virus. The government is on track to meet its target of offering all adults a first vaccine dose by July 19, the day when all remaining lockdown restrictions, including mandatory mask-wearing, are set to be lifted.

Javid said while new infections could reach 100,000 a day later in the summer, two doses of the vaccine offer effective protection against serious illness from the virus and officials believe the surge in cases will not put "unsustainable pressure" on hospitals. Waiting any longer to lift restrictions will risk having the virus spread peak in the winter, when hospitals are most likely to be overwhelmed, he said.

"There will never be a perfect time to take this step, because we simply cannot eradicate this virus - whether we like it or not, coronavirus is not going away," he said.

Many of the infections have occurred among younger people, many of whom have yet to receive a first dose of vaccine. The government has no plans yet to offer vaccines to children under 18.

The British government believes that the vaccine rollout has severely disrupted the link between infections and those needing hospitalization. The numbers of people requiring hospitalization or dying from COVID-19 have stayed low and broadly stable, though they have been edging up in recent days.

Still, concerns over the rapid increase in cases and the more transmissible delta variant have piled

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

pressure on the government to take a more cautious approach over lifting restrictions.

Jonathan Ashworth, the health spokesperson for the opposition Labour Party, said Javid's plan was akin to "pushing his foot down on the accelerator while throwing the scabell off."

The government has said the final stage in lifting lockdown rules means that all restrictions on social gatherings will be removed and physical distancing measures will be scrapped. Nightclubs can reopen for the first time since March last year, but will be encouraged to only let in people who can show a negative test or have been double-jabbed.

Shifting from regulations to "personal responsibility"

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said last week that Britons must now learn to live with the virus, and legal requirements to wear masks and other measures will shift to a reliance on "personal responsibility."

Public health officials and scientists have been voicing concerns, saying ditching masks and physical distancing altogether could be dangerous.

Prof. Peter Openshaw, a member of a group that advises the government on new and emerging respiratory viruses, said it was vital to keep some protective measures in place, such as wearing masks.

"I really don't see why people are reluctant to wear face coverings. It is quite clear that they do greatly reduce transmission," he told BBC Radio.



"Vaccines are fantastic but you have to give them time to work. And in the meantime, keeping up all those measures which we have learned to reduce the transmission is to me really vital."

The British government, which enforced one of the longest lockdowns in the world, has lifted restrictions for England in a series of steps that began with reopening schools in March.

The fourth and final stage was delayed last month to provide time for more people to be vaccinated amid the rapid spread of the delta variant.

Other parts of the U.K. - Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - are following their own, broadly similar road maps out of lockdown.

What's happening across Canada

5,259 considered active. National deaths stood at 26,437. More than 42.2 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered so far across the country, according to CBC's vaccine tracker.

In Ontario on Monday, health officials reported no new deaths and

114 new cases of COVID-19.

Quebec, meanwhile, on Monday reported one additional death and 199 new cases since Friday.

Across the North on Monday, there were no new cases reported in Nunavut, Premier Joe Savikataaq tweeted. Health officials in Yukon and the Northwest Territories had not provided any additional information for the day.

In Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia was the first province to provide updated information Monday, reporting one new case of COVID-19.

New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador had not reported any new information for the day.

In the Prairie provinces on Sunday, Manitoba reported one death and 63 new cases of COVID-19.

In Saskatchewan on Sunday, health officials reported one death and 19 new cases of COVID-19.

Health officials in Alberta and British Columbia are expected to provide an update later Monday.

What's happening around the world

As of late Monday morning, more than 186.8 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, according to Johns Hopkins University, which has been tracking coronavirus-related data from around the world. The reported global death toll stood at more than four million.

Rich countries should not be ordering booster shots for their vaccinated populations while other countries have yet to receive COVID-19 vaccines, the World Health Organization said on Monday. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said deaths were again rising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the delta variant was becoming dominant and many countries had yet to receive enough vaccine doses to protect their health workers.

"The delta variant is ripping around the world at a scorching pace, driving a new spike in COVID-19 cases and deaths," Tedros said, noting that the highly contagious variant had now been found in more than 104 countries.

"The global gap in COVID-19 vaccine supply is hugely uneven and inequitable. Some countries and regions are actually ordering millions of booster doses, before other countries have had supplies to vaccinate their health workers and most vulnerable," said Tedros.

In the Asia-Pacific region, a nighttime curfew and other new coronavirus restrictions began Monday in Thailand's capital and several other provinces, as health officials announced that medical workers will be given booster shots of the AstraZeneca vaccine after already receiving two doses of China's Sinovac vaccine.

Thailand has been battling rising COVID-19 cases and deaths since April, worsened by the spread of the more contagious delta variant.

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Loosened COVID-19 travel rules boost visits to Canada - but half still turned away

The number of incoming visitors to Canada has been gradually increasing in the days since travel restrictions began easing for fully vaccinated, eligible travellers - and the country's border agencies are expecting more this weekend.

The Canada Border Services Agency says incoming traffic last week increased about 25 per cent after quarantine rules were waived Monday for fully vaccinated Canadians, permanent residents and others already allowed to cross the border.

But despite the agency's best efforts to publicize the requirements, roughly half of the people seeking the exemption had to be turned away, said Denis Vinette, vice-president of the agency's travellers branch.

"It's a question, I think, of folks not understanding the rules," Vinette said in an interview.

Cruise industry continues to open up COVID-19 restrictions to open up Canadian citizens, permanent residents and eligible foreign

nationals who have gone two weeks since a full course of one of the four COVID-19 vaccines approved by Health Canada - Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson - are exempt from quarantine.

Canada has exceptions in place for foreign nationals who are immediate family members of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, as well as a process to allow extended family members and international students to apply for entry.

Of those who were denied the exemption last week, most had either had only one dose of a two-dose vaccine, had not waited the requisite 14 days after their last shot or had received a vaccine not cleared for use in Canada, Vinette said.

"The big thing for folks to understand is what qualifies as a fully exempted traveller under Canada's definition," Vinette said in an interview Friday.

"It is about having had one of the

four Health Canada vaccines. It's about having had the full regimen, or both shots, and having had 14 days pass after your second shot."

Travellers are also required to use the ArriveCAN app or online portal to submit their vaccine information and the results of a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than three days before departure.

Air Canada and WestJet are also helping to promote the rules with signage at airports, and airport authorities and provincial public health agencies are also doing their part, Vinette said.

The agency is anxious to make sure people understand what has changed and what has not in order to prevent excessive delays or tie-ups at border control points, he added.

He said the delays have not been extensive, except for at busy border crossings like Windsor-Detroit, Fort Erie, Ont., and the Pacific Highway crossing in B.C., where peak wait times were sometimes close to 45

minutes. "We ask people to be patient at the border if they find that there are long lines and folks coming in for the weekend," Vinette said.

"It's our first test, if you will, especially in the land border environment."

The ArriveCAN portal can be accessed either via the Apple or Android app or online via the federal government's website at canada.ca. Travellers must use the latest version of the app, which was updated when the rules changed.

As for when the restrictions will be relaxed further, that remains an open question.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Thursday he has no intention of jeopardizing Canada's recovery from the pandemic by prematurely opening the border. He said the next step would be easing the restrictions on fully vaccinated travellers who aren't Canadian, but didn't say when that might happen.

South of the border, patience for the return of Canadian visitors has been running low. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who represents the border state of New York, urged the two countries to come up with a mutual plan to reopen the border as soon as possible, and failing that, for the U.S. to take unilateral action.

Under the proposed minimum rate, companies that escape taxes abroad would pay them at home, ostensibly eliminating incentives for using or establishing tax havens.

A second part of the plan would permit countries to tax a portion of the profits of companies that earn profits without a physical presence, such as through online retailing or digital advertising.

That pillar took shape after France, followed by other countries, imposed a digital service tax on U.S. tech giants such as Amazon and Google. The U.S. government regards those national taxes as unfair trade practices and is holding out the threat of retaliation against those countries' imports into the U.S. through higher import taxes.

The terms of the proposed deal would see those countries drop or refrain from national taxes in favor of a single global approach, in theory ending the trade disputes with the U.S. tech companies would then face only the one tax regime, instead of a patchwork of different national digital taxes.

If the deal is approved, implementation would begin as soon as 2023 but would depend on action at the national level.

The draft proposal was approved July 1 in talks among more than 130 countries convened by the OECD.

Bidding wars to rent a house? In Ontario, tenants and agents say it's a



While the price to rent a condo in some major cities may have gone down during the pandemic, high sales prices in the housing market appear to be having a ripple effect on single-family rental homes in Ontario.

The situation has prompted bidding wars in some cities, with some experts saying it may be part of a broader trend in the real estate market.

"I've never seen it like this before," said Sue Heddle, a real estate agent with nearly 15 years of experience in the Greater Toronto Area cities of Mississauga, Oakville and Burlington.

Heddle said she is routinely seeing tenants go above a rental's list price, as well as offer months of advance payments. One of her clients recently leased a house that rented for \$700 more a month than what was posted.

"Every run-of-the-mill place has a bidding war," she said. Real estate agents and other experts say a shortage of rental houses has become particularly acute in some areas of Ontario, which, like much of Canada, is dealing with housing affordability issues. And they fear the problem will get worse as new families are created or arrive through immigration.

Ashley Livo got into multiple bidding wars while looking for a rental house for his family of five last month in Richmond Hill, a suburb north of Toronto.

"I felt extremely devastated and desperate," said Livo. "You could continue bidding and bidding and bidding, and just come back unsuccessful. So that makes it extremely stressful."

There is no comprehensive data source that tracks prices for rental houses, never mind statistics that track bidding wars.

But Dana Senagama, an economist with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), says bidding wars over rental houses are a byproduct of the housing price crisis.

"Traditionally, whenever there's a very heated ownership market," she said, "it almost duplicates itself in the rental market."

CBC News interviewed a dozen real estate agents and tenants who described bidding wars over rental houses.

The fact is there just aren't many houses available for rent right now. According to CMHC data, just over 90 per cent of detached homes in Canada are owner-occupied, leaving less than 10 per cent either vacant or potential rentals.

CMHC data also shows average rents for all housing types in the Ontario cities of Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, London and Windsor went up between 4.7 and 8.4 per cent in 2020 - even as vacancies increased in nearly all those cities. (Hamilton was the exception.)

The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), which operates Realtor.ca, says it doesn't track data for rental houses because they're such a small part of its listings.

Ralph Ciancio has been selling houses for more than a decade in Markham and other areas northeast of Toronto.

In the past, he said, only highly attractive rental houses would offer over the list price. Now bidding wars are common as people battle for the few listings in his area.

"The bidding war that's taking place now is coming from a position of necessity on behalf of the tenants," he said.

Agents and renters in the Ottawa area interviewed by CBC News also

described a desperate shortage of rental houses, with some encountering bidding wars in smaller Ontario cities.

Renting houses as stressful as buying one.

For his part, Livo was so worried about finding a rental home for his family that he was literally pulling out some of his hair.

He moved to Canada from Hong Kong in 2019 and still has a job here. His wife's savings are being stretched, he said.

Scoring on a hot housing market, his landlord recently sold the five-bedroom Richmond Hill house where he, his wife and his three kids were living, paying \$3,500 a month.

While searching for a new place, Livo said he applied for one home listed at \$3,800 a month. It went for \$4,600.

After looking at dozens of listings, changing real estate agents and losing eight bidding wars where he offered above the listed rent, his ninth offer was accepted.

The family's new rental is smaller, older and, at \$3,900 a month, costs \$400 more than what they had previously paid. On top of offering extra money, Livo also paid four months' rent in advance to seal the deal.

The process he faced is similar to the blind bidding process common in real estate, though the practice has become under scrutiny for potentially fanning the flames of an already red-hot market driven by desperate buyers.

Livo said his experience made him wonder if some rental bidding wars are manufactured by landlords and agents, because "they know the situation they are applying with."

Candice Steedly, an entrepreneur and

single parent to three boys, also had a very hard time finding a rental house. She was paying \$3,000 a month for a three-bedroom home in Oakville, Ont., but felt forced to leave after a dispute with her landlord.

She says she applied for 20 homes over a few months and lost more than a dozen bidding wars, even when offering \$400 a month extra and six months' advance rent. She says she has a strong credit score, steady income and savings.

"None of it made sense," said Steedly.

The combination of bidding wars and rejections was "extremely stressful, especially since you compound that with a housing pandemic," she said.

Steedly just moved into a house she found on Kijiji without a bidding war, but it's smaller, in a less desirable area and still almost \$500 more per month than her former rental.

The pandemic premium on space. Martyna Halder, who teaches real estate management at Ryerson University in Toronto, says the pandemic put a premium on space, and that added to Canada's housing affordability crisis.

For many, he says, COVID-19-related public health measures turned a home into more than a place where you sleep and eat, our homes are now our offices, schools, gyms and churches as well.

He sees rental-based bidding wars as the result of the pandemic exposing the importance of extra space that houses owners do not want to rent out.

"The home's value - intrinsic value - has increased," said Halder.

He said the other part of the problem is that Canada has "years of under building" when it comes to detached, semi-detached and row houses - the ground-oriented homes highly desired by many families.

CMHC data shows that in Toronto, for example, 37.7 per cent of residential building projects started in 1990 were houses.

By 2020, houses fell to just 15.2 per cent of starts.

Over the same three-decade period, starts on condos and apartments went from 51.3 per cent to 72.7 per cent.

Could bidding wars over rental houses get worse?

Real estate agents and experts are concerned that rents for houses will just keep going up for the foreseeable future, potentially fueling more bidding wars.

As Senagama predicts, single detached houses are going to be these "very rare commodities," with pricing going higher and higher.

Ciancio is worried that as immigration ticks back up post-pandemic, there will be a huge spike in the demand to purchase and also - in the demand for rental, which will add to the problem.

Finance minister says Canada is committed to proposed global corporate tax rate

VENICE, ITALY - Canada stands firmly behind a two-pillar plan to enact sweeping reforms to the global corporate tax system and limit multinational companies' capacity to shop around for lower tax rates, the country's finance minister said Saturday.

Christy Freeland and her counterparts in the rest of the Group of 20 countries, which represent the bulk of the world's economic activity, formally endorsed the proposed reforms at a meeting in Venice, Italy.

Freeland said the first pillar of the plan includes allocating taxing rights to market jurisdictions where the world's largest multinational corporations do business regardless of whether they have a physical presence there, she said.

The second prong involves a 15 per cent global minimum corporate levy to deter big companies from making use of low-rate tax havens, a scheme that has cost governments across the



world billions of dollars.

"This is really bringing the global tax system in line with the realities of the global economy of the 21st century," Freeland said in a Saturday teleconference. "This is an opportunity for us to act together to end tax arbitrage, to end jurisdiction shopping by multinationals."

A global corporate minimum tax rate is now supported by 132 countries, she said.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is set to launch out more key details of the proposal before G20 leaders make a final decision at their meeting on Oct. 30-31 in Rome.

Freeland said the deal could "end the race to the bottom in corporate taxation around the world and ensure that all multinational corporations pay their fair share of taxes, regardless of where they do business or their headquarters are located."

It may also level the playing field for Canadian companies by ending jurisdiction shopping, ensuring that the country's workforce and social safety net are globally competitive, she added.

The international tax proposal aims to deter the world's biggest firms from using accounting and legal schemes to shift their profits to countries where little or no tax is due - and where the company may do little or no actual business.

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Canada's employment sees some recovery in June

Canada added 231,000 jobs last month, not quite recovering from the losses of the previous two months. Canada saw some economic recovery in June, though gains in employment did not quite match up in losses from the third wave.

Employment was up 231,000 last month, according to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. The data reflected Canada's labour market conditions during the week of June 13 to 19.

In the two months prior, Canada saw a cumulative job loss of 275,000. Canada's employment was on an upward trajectory following a slow down between November and January. With third-wave restrictions hitting in March, employment fell once again in April and May.

Restrictions started to lift in the weeks leading up to the reference week. Many restaurants, retail, personal care services, and other recreational activities had resumed in eight Canadian provinces.

For example, Ontario lifted its stay-at-home order on June 2. Outdoor dining and some



non-essential shopping were also allowed, although, indoor dining and gyms, as well as personal care services, remained closed during the reference week.

Despite these restrictions, Ontario was one of the four provinces to see employment growth in June. The others were B.C., Quebec, and Nova Scotia. Immigrant employment in June

immigrants have generally seen a slower recovery rate. The employment rate in June among immigrants who had been in Canada for more than five years was at about 57 per cent, down two percentage points compared with February 2020. Compared to Canadian-born workers who were employed at a rate of about 60 per cent, down just more than one percentage point over the same

period. Very recent immigrants, who landed within the past five years, have seen a higher rate of employment. This is due to the number of newcomers falling as a result of coronavirus-related travel restrictions. In the three months ending in June, the number of very recent immigrants was down nearly 12 per cent while their employment was down nearly seven per cent. As a result of their population falling faster than their employment, the employment rate for this group was almost 68 per cent in June, up nearly four percentage points compared with pre-pandemic levels.

Monitoring economic recovery The employment rate is calculated by the number of people employed as a percentage of the population of people over age 15. Therefore, to understand Canadian labour market trends, part of the puzzle is to consider how employment changes compare to population changes.

Between February 2020 and June 2021, Canada's population grew slightly more than one per cent, or 334,000. In order to keep pace with this growth, employment would have had to grow in that time frame by 203,000, instead, it dropped by 240,000. The employment rate was nearly two percentage points lower in June 2021 compared to February 2020.

The central bank is due to update its economic forecasts at a policy announcement on Wednesday.

If firms need to raise wages to attract workers, they could pass on those cost increases to customers, charging higher prices for their goods, which could further fuel inflation.

And June data from the Canadian Confederation of Independent Business shows that a shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour is a concern for a rising share of small businesses, with the unskilled measure at its highest level since October 2018.

"Labour shortages are a key risk to the inflation outlook," said Sal Guertin, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets. "This is the main reason we expect more inflation persistence than the consensus or central bank views."

The BoC could welcome wage increases that lure more people into the labour market, making the recovery more sustainable. The potential reopening of schools is the final and winding down of government support could also add to the availability of workers.

But data on Friday showed that employment in Canada has recovered to within 1.8 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, much less than the U.S. gap of 4.5 per cent, in a sign that labour market slack is easing.

What Canada needs to do now to capitalize on low COVID-19 levels and keep them that way

COVID-19 levels haven't been this low in Canada in a long time - and that's the reason to breathe a collective sigh of relief - but the actions we take now to maintain control mean the difference between living with the virus or hiding from it in the weeks and months ahead.

In the past seven days, Canada averaged fewer than 500 new COVID-19 cases per day, under 750 patients in hospital and just 366 people in intensive care.

Ontario, Canada's largest province with a population of close to 15 million people, recorded two new deaths from COVID-19 on Wednesday for the first time in nine months.

"That's remarkable," said Dr. Zain Chagla, an infectious diseases physician at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. "That's in the context of not having everyone vaccinated, so that's even more remarkable. Vaccines are holding up, they're doing exactly what they're supposed to be doing."

But without a clear strategy for containing the spread of COVID-19 as more of the country reopens, experts say Canada is destined to repeat the mistakes of the past by failing to protect our most vulnerable - which now includes the vaccinated.

Delta variant has "moved the goalposts" in Canada. Dr. David Fisman, an epidemiologist at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, says the more contagious and potentially more deadly coronavirus variant known as delta has significantly "moved the goalposts" for eradicating COVID-19 in Canada.

"A few months ago my working assumption was that Canada would basically be done with this pandemic over the summer because we were going to be vaccinating so much," he said, adding that individuals infected with delta are more likely to have severe outcomes from COVID-19.

"That's moved herd immunity probably beyond reach."

Canada has so far fended off another surge in COVID-19 largely thanks to vaccinations, but Fisman says delta has raised the reproductive rate of the virus from about 2.4 to between six and eight, meaning one person can typically pass it on to between six



and eight others. In addition to that increased transmissibility, Fisman and co-author Prof. Ashleigh Tuite, an infectious disease epidemiologist and assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, suggest in a new preprint study, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, that delta also has an increased risk of hospitalization and death.

Thankfully the vaccines are holding up well against the variants, with another recent Canadian preprint study on vaccine effectiveness, also awaiting peer review, signalling strong protection against severe illness from delta and echoing earlier global data from countries like Israel.

"There is that potential that the vaccinated people are going to be fine. At most, it might seem like they have a cold," said study co-author Dr. Jeff Kwong, an epidemiologist and senior scientist at the Toronto-based Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences.

"But the people who are not vaccinated can still get very sick from delta and those are the people who are at risk of having serious outcomes like getting hospitalized or dying."

The challenge now lies with the millions of unvaccinated Canadians who are now more at risk of COVID-19 than ever - despite hopes Canada can hit a goal of getting 80 per cent of our eligible population fully vaccinated.

"Unfortunately, for a 90 per cent efficacious vaccine, that's not going to be enough," Fisman said. "You have these pockets of vulnerability and you're going to have tremendous pressure to not lock things down again."

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam urged unvaccinated Canadians to get their

"We really need to figure out how to make those places safe," said Fisman. "Vaccines are a lot of it, but with the variants we're not going to have this thing disappear as I think many of us had hoped in the spring." Borders vulnerable to 'import' of variants

The importation of new and existing variants from countries around the world is another challenge for Canada's ability to control COVID-19 in the future - especially with pressure to reopen the U.S. border mounting.

"We should look at border controls a bit more carefully," said Deonandan. "Even if we get it under control in Canada, it's raging around the world. We don't want to import cases."

Fisman says Canada's borders are another key vulnerability for the future, because of the repeated pattern of variants from abroad arriving in the country in the past - more than almost any other country in the world.

"The U.S. is less vaccinated than we are - they're probably going to be a variant factory come the fall," he said, adding that Canada needs to address its "leaky quarantine system."

"We need to be doing better on getting surveillance and coming up with smarter systems for actually doing proper quarantine and tracking people as they cross the border." Fortunately, Canada is armed with an incredibly effective weapon against the importation of variants - vaccines - we just need to build a big enough border wall of immunity.

"The issue is that with travel, with reopening the borders, there are going to be people coming in with infections potentially as well," said Kwong.

"But as long as people here are vaccinated, then there's nowhere for the virus to go." COVID-19 now a "disease of the unvaccinated"

There's been much discussion about the last group of unvaccinated Canadians that need to be reached due to hesitancy or accessibility, but what is less often talked about is that they are not a single homogeneous group - making them much harder to target.

"The issue is that getting the last 25 per cent is going to take us double the work than it took us to get the first 75 per cent vaccinated," said Sabina Vohra-Miller, a pharmacist and science communicator with the South Asian Health Network.

"There's a whole host of different reasons as to why they're not vaccinated. So, we kind of have to peel through the layers and each layer is going to take a very targeted, very focused effort to get them."

Canada's lost year for immigration will add to Bank of Canada's inflation headaches

Data is already showing signs of rising worker shortages that could push wages higher as the economy reopens.

TORONTO - Plunging Canadian immigration during the pandemic threatens to feed more persistent inflation pressures than the Bank of Canada is expecting, with data already showing signs of rising worker shortages that could push wages higher as the economy reopens.

A gap between the workers needed as economic activity picks up and the willingness of people to take jobs at the offered wage is already a hot topic in the United States, which is further along than Canada in reopening its economy.

But in recent years, Canada has relied much more than the United States on immigration to boost its workforce. With borders closed, the number of new permanent residents fell last year to 185,000, from 341,000 in 2019.

The pace has picked up this year, with 70,000 new permanent residents



added in the first quarter, compared with 41,000 in the final quarter of 2020, but some of that increase comes amid a push to transition more foreign students and workers already in the country to resident status, rather than actual new arrivals.

Low immigration at the same time as the economy is reopening could put upward pressure on wages, said Stephen Brown, senior Canada economist at Capital Economics. "It could lead to a bit more sustained

upward pressure on inflation than the Bank (of Canada) currently expects," Brown added.

A survey by the central bank released last week showed that firms' expectations of faster wage growth were at a record high in the second quarter.

Canada's annual inflation rate has accelerated to a decade-high of 3.6 per cent, which the BoC has put down to temporary factors, such as higher gasoline prices and the statistical comparison to taking prices last year.

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