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## Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms? Hold off on getting your booster shot, experts say

While the number of Canadians who have received their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine continues to increase, competing with it is the rise of the Omicron variant.

Health officials continue to urge Canadians to get their third dose as a way of protecting against severe infection. While symptoms of Omicron may be milder compared to other variants, concerns remain over its high rate of transmissibility.

So, what should someone do if they start to develop COVID-19 symptoms right before they're scheduled to get their third dose?

"People who have symptoms, with the prevalence of disease that we have, likely do have COVID and if you likely have COVID, now isn't the time to rush to the booster," Dr. David Carr, an emergency physician at the University Health Network in Toronto, told CTV News in a phone interview on Wednesday. "We wouldn't recommend getting a booster shot in the course of an active infection."

Instead, both Carr and Dr. Gerald Evans, chair of Queen's University's infectious diseases division in Kingston, Ont., recommend that anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should hold off on getting their third dose until they have recovered. This applies whether or not the symptoms are actually related to COVID-19 or a different virus, both said.

Part of the reason for this is a "reduced immunogenicity effect" that often comes with getting any kind of vaccine while experiencing a viral

infection, said Evans, particularly if the infection is severe.

"We don't give it to you while you're acutely ill because the vaccine seems to have less of an effect in producing the response we want from the immune system," he told CTV News on Wednesday in a phone interview. "Your immune system doesn't seem to respond as well to the vaccine as it would when you're feeling well."

Generally speaking, this applies to any vaccine, both experts said. Another reason for this is that it can lead to confusion over whether any side-effects are related to the vaccine or a progression of the illness, said Carr.

"It confuses the clinical picture [and] can re-challenge your immune system. It's just not the right time," he said. "As a general rule of thumb, we don't want to introduce a vaccine when someone's not feeling well."

**HOW LONG SHOULD YOU WAIT?**

Carr said that as a general principle with vaccines, it's recommended to wait about a month after the onset of symptoms before getting vaccinated. If someone is infected with COVID-19, this provides them with more than enough time to recover, he said, and those who are infected with the virus should not be concerned about getting reinfected so soon after.

"A common parameter with most cases in virology is if you just had the illness, you're probably not going to get the exact same illness right away, you have high levels of

## 4th COVID-19 vaccine dose: What's the science behind another booster?

Patricia Flemming says she is feeling more motivated and less fearful of catching COVID-19 after getting her booster shot.

The 71-year-old is among the 87 residents at Chester Village to have received a fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose since Dec. 30 at the Toronto nursing home.

"The third one, I noticed a bit of fatigue," said Flemming, who is a retired nurse from Nova Scotia.

"This one had a little more fatigue associated with it. But other than that, there [were] no real issues," Chester Village was one of the first long-term care homes in Ontario to fully vaccinate almost all of its residents against the coronavirus last January. And now a year later, the not-for-profit facility is offering all eligible residents the Moderna vaccine as a fourth dose.

As the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 surges across the country, Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has recommended that moderately or severely immunocompromised Canadians may receive a second booster or fourth shot at least six months after their last dose.

"Many of these individuals are at a higher risk of severe outcomes of COVID-19 and also at increased risk of decreasing protection over time since vaccination," NACI said in its updated guidance released on Dec. 3.

Besides long-term care homes, the Ontario government is making fourth doses available to residents of the province's retirement homes, elder care lodges and other congregate settings.

Meanwhile, Manitoba is recommending a fourth dose for "moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals" at least six months after the last received dose.

Saskatchewan has also opened up

fourth doses to people who are immunocompromised, provided it has been three months since their third dose.

According to NACI, the intent of a booster dose is to restore protection that may have decreased over time or is no longer sufficient in individuals who initially responded adequately to complete primary vaccine series.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has repeatedly warned against "blanket booster programmes", stressing greater equity globally in the distribution of and access to vaccines.

The agency says more people worldwide should be vaccinated with first doses before others receive boosters.

"Booster after booster in a small number of countries will not end a pandemic while billions remain completely unprotected," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO's director-general, during a news conference on Jan. 6.

But Canada, like several other countries, is pressing ahead with boosting its population amid a surge in infections thanks to the Omicron variant.

What does the data show?

A growing body of research shows that a first booster or third COVID-19 vaccine dose, which is recommended for all Canadian adults, raises antibody levels, cuts death rates and hospitalizations.

But there is limited data to back the need for a fourth dose or additional subsequent doses, experts say.

"It is, in my view, somewhat early to start thinking of a fourth dose when the third dose itself hasn't been fully deployed in our population," said Dr. Ciriaeco Piccirillo, an immunologist and senior scientist at the Research Institute of McGill University Health Centre (RI-MUHC).

As of Sunday, 9,810,166 people or roughly 25 per cent of the Canadian population had received a third COVID-19 vaccine dose, according to covid19.ca.

Piccirillo believes a two-dose or triple-dose vaccine series should be "more than sufficient" for people who do not have pre-existing conditions and who have normal immune systems.

However, subsequent boosters are "likely very important" for the elderly, immunocompromised individuals and cancer patients, he added.

Israel, which is now administering fourth doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to people over 60, health workers and immunocompromised patients, has played a leading role in studying the effects of COVID-19 vaccines.

The country was the fastest to roll out two-dose inoculations to a wide population a year ago and one of the first to give third shots as boosters.

Citing preliminary findings of an Israeli study, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Jan. 4, that a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine boosts antibodies five-fold a week after the shot is administered.

Like Canada, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended a fourth shot for anyone who is moderately and severely immunocompromised.

But in the U.K., the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization has advised the government that there was no need to offer a fourth dose, or second booster, to vulnerable people at this time. It cited data that shows a third shot offers lasting protection against admission to the hospital three

months after the dose.

The purpose of giving a booster is to raise the level of neutralizing antibodies from a vaccine, especially in immunosuppressed individuals, who have difficulty producing antibodies due to a weakened immune system, said Dr. Horacio Bach, an infectious diseases expert at the University of British Columbia.

However, more research is needed to see the impact of a fourth shot before it can be rolled out to the general population, he said.

Dr. Samir Sinha, director of geriatrics at Sinai Health and University Health Network hospitals in Toronto, said while a fourth shot may provide benefit in certain vulnerable populations who are at risk of waning immunity, it still remains to be seen if mass rollout among the general population is needed going forward.

"This might become one of those illnesses that we need a booster on an annual basis, for example," he said.

"But right now, we just don't have that information on whether a fourth shot would truly be beneficial for younger, healthier populations."

Are boosters targeting variants?

The current booster shots have exactly the same formula as the first two doses.

For now, each dose is targeting the same S protein of the original Wuhan strain of SARS-CoV-2, Piccirillo said. The S protein is the key that the virus uses to dock into cell receptors to enter human cells, causing infection.

Early findings about a single booster in the context of the Omicron variant are promising.

Citing data from the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the United States' top doctor, Anthony Fauci, has said that the current "booster vaccine regimens work against Omicron," whether your dose is Pfizer or Moderna.

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## Investors say millions are missing and a businessman can't be found. How an alleged Ponzi scheme played out

A Toronto businessman accused of court filings of being one of two masterminds in a multimillion-dollar COVID-19-related Ponzi scheme can't be located as angry creditors, their lawyers and shadowy figures with ties to illegal gambling rings try to find him and their money.

Mark E. Cohen, who previously worked in the rental car industry at Toronto's Pearson International Airport, hasn't been seen at his North York home since August, according to documents filed with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The documents also say that he hasn't been in contact with investors for months.

While some of those investors have turned to the courts to challenge Cohen, others have taken matters into their own hands, CBC News has learned.

According to a source familiar with

the situation, who is not authorized to speak publicly on the matter, some individuals with ties to illegal gambling rings in Woodbridge, north of Toronto, have made late-night visits to the 46-year-old's former home, and the homes of his family members, making violent threats and demanding to know Cohen's whereabouts to get their money back.

Cohen is facing three lawsuits accusing him of convincing investors to help him buy used cars that would be resold at huge profits amid the pandemic-triggered vehicle shortage last year.

None of the allegations against him or other defendants named in the filings has been proven in court.

Investors were promised returns of as much as 13 per cent a month on their investments. Some handed over more than \$5 million before Cohen allegedly disappeared with their

money, according to civil court proceedings.

Cohen has acknowledged receipt of CBC's request for comment but has so far not provided one.

He has not filed a statement of defence or shown up to a preliminary court proceeding.

Investors suing another businessman

Cohen isn't the only one being accused of maintaining the used car rental program.

Another Toronto businessman, Josh Lief, is being sued by another set of investors going after both him and Cohen.

Lawyer Robert Karrass is representing those investors.

They allege Lief acted as the middleman, convincing them Cohen was trustworthy, his business legitimate and accepting the money on Cohen's behalf without doing due diligence.

"To date, we have not seen any evidence to suggest that this car scheme was in fact real, but rather that somebody was collecting this money and using it to pay off investors," Karrass said.

To complicate matters, Lief is also one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit filed by Anisman against Cohen.

## Rapid spread of Omicron showing 'tale of two pandemics: rich and poor'

As parts of Canada see staggering rises in COVID-19 activity amid Omicron's rapid spread, experts say the highly transmissible variant is training a spotlight on social inequities across the country.

Dr. Amit Arya, a palliative care physician in Mississauga, Ont., and Dr. Andrew Boozary, who leads the Social Medicine Program at Toronto University Health Network, both say Omicron's rise continues to show "a tale of two pandemics," with those who can afford to better protect themselves pitted against those who can't.

Arya said lower-income populations often don't have the funds to buy upgraded masks or rapid antigen tests, nor can they easily take time off work to isolate or get their booster doses.

"If you have money, you're able to afford the protection you need to survive and be safe," he said.

Essential workers bore the brunt of COVID-19 infections during Canada's Delta-driven wave last spring, and Arya said low-wage employees are likely to experience some of that

again.

As provinces scale back eligibility for PCR testing, he pointed out that private testing companies in Ontario, which can offer same-day results for those willing to pay \$160 or more for the service, further show an income divide in how people can deal with COVID-19.

Risk profiles have also differed across economic lines throughout the pandemic, Arya said, but the more transmissible Omicron variant may exacerbate them.

"(Essential workers) by definition have to leave the house to work," he said. "They might be taking public transit to work, they might be working around 400 people in a distribution centre... many front-line workers are racialized, they're immigrants in Canada, they're more likely to live in multi-generational households with elders and vulnerable children who aren't vaccinated."

Cynthia Carr, an epidemiologist in Winnipeg, said while all that holds true, the heightened spread of Omicron makes it harder for everyone, regardless of economic status, to

avoid exposure.

The difference with lower-income groups, however, is what happens once they're infected.

"I do think it's shifting in terms of perhaps everyone bearing the brunt, but with sick days and isolation, that's where the change is," she said. "If I'm infected, I'm fortunate and fully vaccinated. I may be mildly ill, if at all, and I can continue to work because I'm at home."

Carr said efforts to take sick days can be further affected if low-income workers can't get a test to prove to their employer that they have COVID-19. Arya added that may have downstream effects with insurance companies if people develop long COVID symptoms and need to collect long-term disability benefits, but don't have a test showing they ever had the virus.

Health experts have said vaccine boosters are the best way to protect against severe disease and death with Omicron, noting that those who have had three doses are less likely to require hospitalization.

Data from Health Canada shows

## How Canadian employers can hire immigrants permanently

Canada's Express Entry system is the main immigration pathway for foreign workers, but it's only open to "skilled" occupations. In this article, we will help you understand what is considered to be a "skilled" occupation, what makes a "valid job offer," and how to help your new employees to become permanent residents.

Before hiring immigrants, it is important to know the National Occupational Classification (NOC) code and NOC skill level of the job you are hiring for. For now, NOC skill levels are divided into 0, A, B, C, and D.

Occupations are classified into those skill levels based on how much education, experience, and job-specific training is required for the worker to carry out the necessary duties. Once you know this, it will help you figure out your employee's immigration options.

Express Entry only recognizes occupations in three of these skill levels: 0, which are management positions; A, jobs that require a university degree; and B, technical jobs and skilled trades that may require college or apprenticeship training. If you are hiring for an NOC C or D occupation you will have to use a different immigration program.

Keep in mind, NOC skill level classifications will change in late 2022. There have been no official details released on what occupations will become eligible for Express Entry, and which ones will become ineligible. The changes will not affect the immigrant hiring process.

Most employers need an LMIA. Oftentimes, the first step to hiring an immigrant is to demonstrate to the federal government that there is no Canadian available to fill the open position.

To do this, you need a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). There is usually an advertising requirement for the LMIA, which means you have to post your job on the Government of Canada's Job Bank and advertise in two other places.

Once you have done the advertising requirement, you can apply for the LMIA. If ESDC agrees you need to hire a foreign worker because no Canadian is available, you will get a positive LMIA.

If you want to help your employee get Express Entry points

you can use the positive LMIA to



help your employee get more points in the Express Entry system. While the LMIA helps your employee get points for their job offer, it is not necessarily a requirement. The more points they have, the more likely they are to be invited to apply for Canadian immigration. It is possible for employees to apply on their own without their employer's backing.

If your employee is not an Express Entry candidate yet, they need to see if they are eligible for one of three immigration programs: the Canadian Experience Class, the Federal Skilled Worker Program, or the Federal Skilled Trades Program.

If they are eligible, they can create an Express Entry profile. Once all their documents are uploaded, they will get a score based on their credentials, age, and other factors. After that, they may be invited to apply for permanent residence in an Express Entry draw.

They do not need a job offer to create an Express Entry profile, but having a valid job offer can score them some extra points. They can get 50 points for having a valid job offer in an NOC 0, A, or B occupation. It is rare, but if their NOC code starts with 00 they can get 200 points for that job offer.

A valid job offer has to be full-time at 30 hours per week, and good for at least one year after the employee gets their permanent residency visa.

The only way they can get the points for the job offer without an LMIA is if they have an employer-specific, LMIA-exempt work permit. That means, if you hired them and did not do the LMIA process because they had an open work permit (Post-Graduation Work Permit, for example), you will need to get an LMIA so that they can receive the points.

To recap, to hire an Express Entry candidate with a valid job offer, employers need:

- 1) a positive LMIA, if you need one, and;
- 2) offer full-time, LMIA-supported job to the candidate in writing that is

## Ontario announces off-peak electricity rates for residents, small businesses starting Jan. 18

The Ontario government says it is once again announcing electricity rates for some Ontarians as the province endures another shutdown due to COVID-19.

The government announced it would adjust electricity rates to current off-peak pricing of 8.2 cents per kilowatt-hour.

Rates would go off-peak starting Jan. 18 at 12:01 a.m. - all day - for 21 days.

The off-peak rates would automatically apply to residential customers, small businesses and farms who pay regulated rates set by the Ontario Energy Board.

The province implemented a "modified Step Two" on Wednesday for at least three weeks in an effort to limit contacts and low down a surging Omicron wave by closing some businesses and implementing capacity restrictions on others.

Ontario has previously switched electricity rates to off-peak due to shutdowns such as in the second wave of COVID last January when people were forced to stay home amid a lockdown.



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# Bigg Boss 15: Salman Khan warns Abhijit Bichukale he'll drag him out of the house by his hair

During the "Weekend Ka Vast" episode of 'Bigg Boss 15', host Salman Khan blasted Abhijit Bichukale for the abusive language he used for Pratik Sehajpal and Devendra Bhambhani...



Salman said he will drag Abhijit by his hair and kick him out of the house in the mid-week...

Later, Abhijit was seen warning the makers that he will leave the house...

# Sutaria signs her first solo lead film bankrolled by producer Murad Khetani

Bollywood actress Tara Sutaria seems to be a hot favourite currently. While her last film Tadap alongside Ahan Shetty didn't perform well at the box office...

# Tom Latham slams unbeaten 186, Conway 99 as New Zealand in command on Day 1

New Zealand skipper Tom Latham struck a fine unbeaten century, while Devon Conway played a superb innings of 99 not out as the duo helped the hosts post 349/1 on the opening day of the second Test against Bangladesh here on Sunday...



Mount Maunganui. It was Bangladesh's first win against New Zealand in New Zealand in any format of the game with the tourists breaking the hosts' 17-match unbeaten streak at home...

On a day when Bangladesh bowlers failed without success, Latham brought up his 12th Test ton halfway through the day, hitting a staggering 28 boundaries around the wicket in his 278-ball stay at the crease...

Putting on 148 for the opening wicket with Will Young (54), Latham was accompanied by Conway, who was one short of reaching two figures himself (99 not out) when stumps were called...

# Ashes, 4th Test: 'Absolutely fantastic, Usman Khawaja will dominate world cricket,' says Warne

Legendary spinner Shane Warne on Saturday showered praise on batter Usman Khawaja for his 'brutal' ton in the second innings of the fourth Ashes Test against England here...

Khawaja became only the first batter to complete two Test tons at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) after Doug Walters (vs West Indies in 1968/69) and Ricky Ponting (vs South Africa in 2005/06)...

# Tom Holland starrer Spider-Man: No Way Home to exclusively play in cinemas for at least the next two months

Global blockbuster Spider-Man: No Way Home recently hit the Rs. 263 cr (GBP) mark in India and is showing no signs of slowing down...

to theaters if the film in question offers them everything they are looking for. Spider-Man: No Way Home did exactly that...

girlfriend Tejaswi Prakash and always asking her to apologise in front of Umar Riaz. Tejaswi is seen crying in front of Salman...

# Bangladesh fielding error vs New Zealand goes viral; leaves cricket fans in splits

A fielding error from Bangladesh first gave New Zealand batter Will Young a lifeline and then seven runs off a delivery bowled by Ebadot Hossain, even as the pace bowler flamed on Day 1 of the second Test here on Sunday...



Wicket-keeper Nurul Hasan, after receiving the ball from the fine leg fielder, threw it towards the non-strikers end. But a miffed three saw the ball race to the boundary with Ebadot giving a futile chase right till the very end...

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# Omicron continues to drive up COVID-19 hospitalizations across Canada

COVID-19 cases are threatening to overwhelm hospitals in several parts of Canada, with hospitalizations nearing or reaching record high in Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick.

Former CEO of the University Health Network and Ontario deputy health minister Dr. Bob Bell says every Western country dealing with COVID's fast-spreading Omicron variant has a stressed hospital system right now.

But he says Canada will pursue lockdowns and restrictions sooner than places such as the United States because Canada has a lower tolerance for deaths from the virus.

Meanwhile, students in British Columbia and Alberta are back in their classrooms this morning after an extended winter break.

Many provinces imposed a week-long delay in the return to



In-person schooling as the Omicron variant spread rapidly across the country.

But officials in the two westernmost provinces have argued that virtual learning presents its own risks to kids, saying it jeopardizes their mental health.

Even so, some kids, parents and education workers have expressed concerns about reopening schools while the virus puts pressure on health-care systems across the country.

Alberta Education Minister Adriana

# COVID hospitalizations hit critical levels as kids in B.C., Alberta return to class

Children in Alberta and British Columbia returned to the classroom on Monday, as surging COVID-19 cases threatened to overwhelm hospitals in several parts of Canada.

Quebec reported an all-time high of 2,554 patients in hospital with COVID-19, a rise of 118 from the previous day's record of 2,436. Intensive care cases ticked down by nine for a total of 248.

The province also reported 10,573 new COVID-19 infections, while 26 more people died from the disease.

Quebec also opened up appointments for third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to those aged 40 and older on Monday, as the province prepares to expand eligibility to all adults aged 18 and up next week.

In Ontario, there were 2,467 people hospitalized with COVID-19, including 438 patients in intensive care, Health Minister Christine Elliott said on Monday, noting that not all hospitals report data from the



British Columbia's return to school is 'essential' for the emotional, physical and intellectual well-being of children, while reassuring parents that safety measures have been put in place to mitigate the risks posed by Omicron.

Dr. Bonnie Henry acknowledged on Friday that some families may feel uneasy about the move, but maintained that students are safer in the classrooms than in some of the "unstructured settings that children are in outside of the school environment."

Also starting immediately, staff at National Microbiology Laboratory facilities across the country are being asked to work from home if possible.

A statement from the Public Health Agency of Canada said the move is aimed at protecting essential workers doing critical on-site diagnostic and lab research.

# 3 Ontario nurses disciplined for social media posts related to pandemic launch \$1M libel suit



Three Ontario nurses who have faced discipline for their stances on the pandemic are suing the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and a media outlet in British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta.

Kristian Nagle of London, Kristal Pitter of Tillsonburg and Sara Choujounian of Toronto have been investigated by the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) for sharing their controversial views about the pandemic on social media.

All three nurses are entitled to practice in Ontario without restrictions.

Pitter, a nurse practitioner and former nursing home inspector for the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care, has been cautioned by the CNO, along with Nagle, about spreading misinformation on social media about the pandemic.

Nagle, a former neonatal intensive-care nurse at London Health Sciences Centre, was fired last January after she was charged by law enforcement for failing to comply with Ontario's emergency pandemic health restrictions in November 2020. She was charged again in April 2021.

Three members of Canadian Frontline Nurses

Choujounian, a former practical nurse with a Toronto home-care agency, will face a CNO disciplinary hearing this June for professional misconduct in connection with a

dozen social media posts related to the pandemic, including claims surgical masks increase the risk of cancer, the COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax and COVID-19 vaccines are "unsafe."

Nagle and Choujounian were also investigated by the Ontario nursing regulator for making a trip to Washington with a group of peers, during last January's non-essential travel ban, for allegedly promoting theories that the pandemic is a hoax and hospitals had a role to play in misrepresenting it.

All three nurses are part of Canadian Frontline Nurses (CFN), an offshoot of Global Frontline Nurses, that was created to "empower health-care workers who disagree with lockdowns," according to the CFN's Facebook page.

The statement of claim was filed in a Toronto court on Dec. 13, 2021, by the CFN on behalf of Pitter, Nagle and Choujounian, and names four defendants:

"The CNA.

"CNA's chief executive officer, Michael Villanove.

"The B.C. media company Together News Inc., which has four small-town newspapers in the Comox Valley.

The lawsuit claims the defamatory statements against the plaintiffs were made by each organization separately in September 2021, against a

public health and safety at risk" and "formed part of a crowd that was intent on causing trouble or violence" through harassing and threatening health-care workers.

Suit claims plaintiffs faced 'ridicule, harassment'.

In its allegations against Together News Inc., the lawsuit claims, the company made defamatory statements in an anonymous opinion piece published on Sept. 11, 2021, entitled "Quack! Quack! These pro-virus nurses have dangerous ideas."

The article explicitly names Canadian Frontline Nurses, Pitter, Nagle and Choujounian.

The statement of claim alleges the article paints the three nurses as "disgraced," "highly disturbed and unstable" and that all three women were "terminated because their employers did not trust them."

The lawsuit also claims the TNI article suggests "Pitter was responsible for COVID deaths in long-term care facilities," and paints Nagle and Choujounian as participants in the Jan. 6, 2021, protest that resulted in an attack on the U.S. Capitol Building.

The lawsuit says Pitter, Nagle and Choujounian have been subjected to "ridicule, hatred and contempt," and have been "injured in their feelings, their personal and professional character and reputation."

Court documents also say the three nurses "continue to suffer personal embarrassment and humiliation, and have experienced great emotional anxiety" as a result of the publications.

Lawsuit asks for \$1M in damages. The plaintiffs are asking for \$750,000 in general damages and \$250,000 in punitive damages.

CBC News contacted the CNA on Friday. Through a spokesperson, the organization said via email it couldn't comment because it "had no knowledge of this lawsuit and has yet to be served."

Also Friday, Together News Inc. said in an email that it would not comment on the matter as it had yet to receive court documents.

"We have not been served, so don't have sufficient detail to comment at this time," the email said.

CBC News also spoke with Alexander Boisjoseph-Lebrun, the lawyer for the plaintiffs, on Friday.

"As the matter is before the courts, it would be inappropriate for me to comment at this time," he said.

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