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Investigators, RCMP remain on site following Newfoundland refinery explosion

The company which owns and operates the Come By Chance refinery in Newfoundland says there is still no clue as to the cause of the explosion which sent eight workers to hospital Friday.

Braya Renewable Fuels, owned by Crest Fund Management, said in a release Saturday afternoon that the investigation into the incident was ongoing and that Occupational Health and Safety inspectors and RCMP remain at the refinery.

According to the release, management also remains on site and is cooperating with the investigation.

Braya CEO Frank Almaraz said their "thoughts and prayers are with those injured and their families."

8 injured, 5 airlifted to St. John's
Five of the eight people injured in the explosion have now been airlifted to St. John's to be treated for serious injuries, according to a Saturday release from Eastern Health.

Previously only three had been taken to St. John's, while the other five stayed in the Clarenville hospital for the night.

One person has since been treated and released.

The cause and exact location of the explosion have not been released, but the company that operates the refinery and the RCMP both say the resulting fire was under control soon after the incident occurred.

The explosion happened shortly after 4 p.m. on Friday and multiple ambulances were seen coming and going from the refinery over the next two hours. All eight injured workers were first transported to Clarenville, about a 30-minute drive west of the refinery.

Around 8:30 p.m., two helicopters landed in a Sobears parking lot near the hospital and three patients were loaded aboard for the short flight to St. John's, about 180 kilometres southeast.

The patients had towels on their faces and were hooked up to an array of medical equipment upon arrival at the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's.

The explosion has sent shock waves throughout the small town of Come By Chance, which has about 200 residents.

Mayor Carol Molloy didn't have information on how the explosion happened, but said people are doing their best to help each other through the situation.

"Everyone comes together," Molloy said. "Certainly as you can appreciate in a town this size, everybody knows everybody. Coming together and certainly standing together and always being there to support each other is key."

Braya Renewable Fuels, which operates the refinery, confirmed the incident just after 6 p.m., and said it's working with the proper authorities.

"We will do everything we can to support [the injured] and their families during this time," the statement read. "The authorities have been notified and we will cooperate fully with their investigation."

Refinery switching to renewables

In Canada fears of 'dangerous' politics mounting

Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland has been the subject of verbal abuse and threats.

Online threats, racist or misogynistic insults, public harassment and outright physical intimidation are just some of the behaviours that officials warn are changing the face of Canadian politics.

The issue was highlighted last weekend, when a man was filmed launching an explosive-laden verbal assault at Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland.

The incident - which was posted to social media - shows a man shouting at her as she approached a lift in Grande Prairie's city hall during a visit to Alberta.

The man was seen calling her a "nazi" and using various profanities as he tells her to leave the western province. Police have since confirmed they are looking into the incident.

It comes after other public incidents, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau being pelted by gravel by anti-vaccine mandate protesters during the last federal election and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh being verbally harassed outside an event earlier this year.

Some officials are ringing alarm bells warning that worse - maybe even dangerous - incidents are yet to come and are calling for better security for politicians.

Ms McKenna said she fears that the country will one day see an incident reminiscent of that which took the life of Jo Cox, a Labour MP in the UK who was murdered in 2016 by an extremist.

"Every single day I'm concerned about that," she said. "That's what we all worry about."

In June, Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino - who has himself faced death threats - announced that Canadian parliamentarians will be given mobile alarms after several politicians publicly criticised the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) for not adequately addressing their security concerns.



threats and verbal abuse, which she said often took a distinctly misogynistic tone.

"Quite frankly, it was terrifying," she said. "This is what happens, and it's very dangerous."

Canadian legislators from across the political spectrum have raised similar concerns.

Former federal Conservative cabinet minister Lisa Raitt, for example, harshly condemned the incident, tweeting that "physical intimidation is not a form of democratic expression".

Conservative member of parliament Gerard Deltell said online that ministers should be given security "worthy of a G7 country".

Cabinet ministers in Canada are not automatically assigned security, but can request it based on specific threats.

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Officials and legislators alike have said publicly that the threat level against politicians has risen over the last several years, while political discourse has become increasingly uncivil and polarised, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Steven Weldon, the director of the Centre for the Study of Public Opinion and Representation at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, said that he believes the rise in harassment of politicians is - at least partly - the result of activists in Canada "learning" from the highly divisive politics of the US.

"There's a sort of copying of behaviour," he told the BBC. "There's an aggressive, in-your-face kind of political activism that's taken hold."

Audrey Champoux, the press secretary for Mr Mendicino, said that authorities are taking threats "very seriously" and continuing to explore "other options" to help keep members of parliament safe.

"This is not a partisan issue, but rather a matter of public safety that goes to the security of our democracy," she said.

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"I don't know if there's increasing public acceptance of it, but [among] a certain group of anti-government activists in Canada, there is. It's hard to tell what they're looking for."

Media caption,
Justin Trudeau was hit by gravel thrown by protesters during a campaign stop.

The man in the video has since defended his actions in interviews with Canadian media.

According to Mr Weldon, public support for "in-your-face activism" in Canada remains "compartmentalised" to a particularly loud, but vocal minority, and is still considered fringe.

This harassment, Canadian observers note, often falls disproportionately on women, members of Canada's LGBT community and ethnic minorities.

Ms Freeland said the weekend incident will not stop her from returning to Alberta, which is "filled with kind and welcoming people", adding "one unpleasant incident doesn't change that".

Ms McKenna, for her part, said she fears that the increasingly nasty tone of Canadian politics, and failures to adequately protect politicians, may dissuade potential future politicians - particularly young women - from seeking out a career in public service.

"Most people get into politics because they want to build a better community... and we need vigorous debate," she said. "But this isn't what's happening."

"If you go into politics and your safety and that of your family are threatened, you're going to say 'why would I do that?' That's terrible for democracy."

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Canada will return remaining gas turbines covered under sanction exemption, Joly says

Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly says Canada still plans to return five turbines used in a Russian natural gas pipeline — despite the fact that the company operating the pipeline refused to accept one turbine that has been returned to Germany already.

In July, the government granted an exemption to allow six turbines to undergo maintenance in Montreal before shipping them back to Germany. The turbines would be subsequently handed over to the Russian state-owned firm Gazprom, which operates the Nord Stream 1 pipeline that provides Germany and other European countries with natural gas.

One turbine has been returned to Germany but Gazprom has refused to accept it, citing technical issues and claiming it wants further documentation showing that the equipment is not subject to Western sanctions.

The remaining five turbines have yet to be shipped to Montreal for maintenance. Despite Gazprom's refusal of the first, Joly told CBC News Network the plan is to allow the maintenance schedule to proceed.

"That was the decision that we took," Joly told host Hannah Thibodeau on Wednesday. "That's exactly what Germany asked for."

Ukraine has criticized the federal government for agreeing to Germany's request to exempt Siemens Canada from sanctions so that it could return the turbines. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy himself said the Kremlin would view the move as an act of "weakness."

The federal government has defended the move as necessary to secure gas supplies for Germany. Ottawa also argues the Kremlin would have exploited a refusal by Canada to return the turbine to redirect the blame for Europe's energy shortages toward the sanctions on Russia — which could undermine public support in the West for Ukraine.

Joly repeated that argument during Wednesday's interview. "Canada doesn't want to give any form of excuse to [Russian President Vladimir] Putin to continue to weaponize his flow of energy to Europe," she said.

But in an interview with the Canadian Press, Ukrainian Ambassador to Canada Yulia Kovalyuk again called on Canada to cancel the sanctions waiver.

She said it's clear that Russia will not accept the turbine that Siemens has delivered to Germany, and accused Russia of using gas supplies to pressure Europe.

"Our position is quite clear — we do think that this waiver should be cancelled and now," she said. "If it was an argument to call Putin's bluff, everybody sees for the last few weeks it is now quite obvious that it is Russian games."

In recent months, Russia also has cut the gas flow through Nord Stream 1 to 20 per cent of capacity and adults may want to wait for a new vaccine that targets the Omicron variant.

NEW COVID-19 VACCINE STILL EXPECTED IN FALL. Canada has purchased millions of doses of Moderna's bivalent vaccine that targets the original COVID-19 strain in addition to the Omicron variant, however Health Canada's approval is still needed before they are rolled out to provinces and territories.

On Wednesday, Moore said that the vaccine is expected to be available in the "coming weeks and months."

"If it starts with a high-risk strategy at first but then is made available to the public," he said.

"I'm anxiously anticipating the Health Canada approval of the product and to be able to review [the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's] recommendations on the product and then be able to distribute it to our immunization partners."

He said he anticipates getting a limited amount of doses at first for high-risk communities and seniors. He said that adults may want to "buffer" on when their last doses were when making the decision to get a fourth dose now or to wait for the bivalent vaccine.

"I think there is political understanding that we will cooperate, that we are friends and that we will not make it feasible that the Russian game is working," Scholz told host Vasy Kapelos.

Scholz was in Canada this week to meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and sign a "joint declaration of intent" that calls on the two countries to invest in hydrogen, establish a transatlantic Canada-European supply corridor and start exporting hydrogen by 2025.

But Orest Zakydalyk of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress said the government should have used Scholz's visit as an opportunity to revoke the exemption for the turbines.

"There is no purpose in maintaining the permit. It is disappointing to our community that Canada missed the opportunity to cancel the permit during the chancellor's visit," Zakydalyk said in a media statement.

While the new shot doesn't directly target dominant Omicron subvariants B.4.4 and B.4.5, which the U.S. approved an updated shot for this week, Pfizer submitted an application for Health Canada approval for its B.4.4-5 vaccine Friday and Moderna is expected to soon.

"The evidence we have to date shows that the bivalent vaccine with B.4.1 offers good protection against B.4.4 and B.4.5," Deputy Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Howard Njoo said during a technical briefing Thursday.

"Certainly as the situation evolves we'll have to look at the evidence and see what happens with real-world effectiveness."

But what an updated booster can do for you depends on how vulnerable your immune system is, whether you're one of the millions of Canadians who've recently been infected with COVID and when you last had a vaccine. Duration: 52

Will updated vaccines stop COVID spread? Infectious diseases experts, virologists, epidemiologists and immunologists are hopeful updated vaccines will be more effective at preventing transmission than the original shots — at least initially — but also caution Canadians not to expect them to be a silver bullet.

With limited data on the impact these vaccines will have, all eyes will be on the effect they have on slowing rates of infection and transmission and whether they better protect vulnerable groups in the population heading into the fall and winter months.

"We do not know what the impact is because that's not available," Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam said during a COVID-19 conference Thursday when asked by CBC News how effective the updated vaccines will be at stopping the spread of the

What protection to expect from updated COVID vaccines this fall



Canada has just approved an updated COVID-19 vaccine to target the first highly contagious Omicron variant, with doses expected to start rolling out within days. But what exactly can we expect from these new shots when they land in the real world?

The updated Moderna vaccine is a combination of two strains, also known as a "bivalent" vaccine, that targets both the original virus and the Omicron variant B.1.1 that emerged late last year and drove the largest wave of infection and hospitalization in the pandemic.

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getting a booster within two months of an infection could negatively impact B cells that help generate immune protection against severe disease.

NACI recommends waiting three months after an infection before getting another shot, and three to six months between doses, but also said in its most recent guidance that anyone at high risk of severe COVID in Canada should be offered a fall booster.

"Timing is everything and in general the recommendations are to wait a few months following infection before receiving a booster dose," Skowronski said.

She added that people shouldn't immediately rush out to get a booster after infection because it could actually interfere with the immune response.

Updated vaccines 'will help,' but not a 'miracle' More than half of Canadians have been infected with COVID since the emergence of Omicron and its highly contagious subvariants, and the added protection from prior infection in a vaccinated population appears to be providing an edge.

A new research letter published in the New England Journal of Medicine looked at the risk of B.4.5 infection among people in Portugal who had a prior infection with past variants, including B.1 and B.1.2, and found they had strong protection against the newer variant.

That's in part because Portugal has such high levels of vaccination, with more than 98 per cent of the population studied having at least two doses, meaning that much like in Canada our high levels of two-dose vaccination and infection provide strong immune protection.

Two Canadian preprint studies from May and June, which have not been peer reviewed, also found prior Omicron infections provided robust immunity against future reinfection and hospitalization — especially when combined with vaccination.

"In general, we can anticipate that those who have hybrid immunity are going to be better protected," said Dr. Danuta Skowronski, a vaccine effectiveness expert and epidemiology lead at the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and co-author of the preprints.

"And it is also true that vaccine strains that are a better match to the circulating variant will likely provide better protection."

The longer you wait after your last infection or vaccination is also important to consider, with emerging evidence suggesting getting a booster too closely after being infected or vaccinated can impact how effective the shot is.

A new small preprint study, which has not been peer reviewed, found that

Ontario expands booster doses to children 5 to 11 ahead of rise in infections

Children between the ages of five and 11 in Ontario will be eligible as of Thursday for a COVID-19 booster shot as officials gear up for a rise in infections this fall.

The announcement was made by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health on Wednesday afternoon. Parents and caregivers can book appointments for a pediatric booster dose as of 8 a.m. on Sept. 1 through the provincial portal or through their public health units, health-care providers or at participating pharmacies.

The booster should be administered at least six months after the most recent dose. "Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters is still the best tool to keep people healthy and out of hospitals, and to ensure Ontario's economy stays open," Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Sylvia Jones said in a news release issued Wednesday.

Expanding access to boosters for ages five to 11 will give parents more opportunities to protect themselves, their families and their communities this fall as kids go back to school and as people are spending more time indoors.

As for older residents, the Ontario government expanded fourth-dose eligibility to all adults in July as well. Speaking with reporters on Wednesday, Dr. Kiran Moore said that Ontario is still living in the seventh wave of the pandemic. While infections appear to have plateaued, COVID-19 remains within the community.

"We're seeing some improvement and we need to turn our attention to move forward and being prepared for what the fall and winter is likely to bring. We know that COVID-19 will continue to evolve and circulate in the community and that other respiratory viruses, including the flu, begin circulating, but we know how to protect ourselves and prevent serious

severities."

As part of this "all respiratory virus approach," Moore also released updated isolation guidelines for the general public, saying that individuals who are all no longer have to participate in a five-day self quarantine.

Instead, individuals are simply being urged to stay home when symptomatic. After 24 hours of being symptom free, individuals may return to work or school regardless of whether or not they test positive on a COVID-19 test.

These same individuals are being asked to wear a mask for 10 days once they emerge from their voluntary isolation.

Tenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 are already eligible for a booster dose while children under the age of five became eligible for their first vaccine shot in July.

All adults are eligible for their fourth COVID-19 dose, however Moore previously said that healthy

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Canada is moving military air transports from Kuwait to U.K. to support Ukraine

The Canadian military's air detachment in the Middle East - which has been supporting anti-terrorism operations and UN peacekeeping missions in Africa - is being relocated to the United Kingdom.

Responding to questions from CBC News, the Department of National Defence described the redeployment of two C-130J cargo planes and their associated ground support crew as necessary in light of ongoing efforts to supply Ukraine with weapons and ammunition.

The airlift detachment has been headquartered out of Kuwait under Operation Impact for several years.

Canada's top military commander, Gen. Wayne Eyre, confirmed the redeployment to CBC News on Wednesday while visiting the military air base at 5 Wing Goose Bay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

While the demands of missions related to the war in eastern Europe prompted the decision, Eyre said he's confident that the cargo planes can

continue to support missions in Iraq and peacekeeping deployments as needed.

"What we have done is consolidated in Scotland our C-130 tactical air detachment to be able to provide that support to Ukraine within Europe [and] to episodically provide support in the Middle East, and as well episodically provide support in Africa," he said.

Canada's military cargo planes - both the C-130s and the bigger C-17s Globemasters - have been working overtime since Russia stepped up its invasion of Ukraine in February. They have been ferrying humanitarian aid, military hardware and ammunition to points in eastern Europe where the supplies can be shuttled across the border into Ukraine.

Although it's not part of the equipment airlift, flight tracking shows one of Canada's military surveillance aircraft - a CP-140 Aurora that has been attached to NATO as part of an intensified effort to monitor for signs of Russian aggression - has

also been flying out of northern England on patrols over the North Atlantic.

News of the redeployment comes as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg arrives in Canada on Thursday to meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and tour Arctic defence facilities.

Trudeau's government recently signed on to a U.K.-led military mission that will see British and Canadian troops training Ukrainian recruits at bases in the U.K.

It is a massive undertaking. The aim is to train as many as 10,000 soldiers every five weeks.

Dan Le Bouthillier, DND's manager of media relations, said Canadian aircraft are not involved in flying the Ukrainian trainees to and from Britain. That's the job of the Royal Air Force, he said.

Eyre said the military is trying to strike a balance between overseas operations and the need for airlift resources at home.

The C-130 Hercules aircraft were

first deployed to the Middle East in 2017 as part of the federal government's revamped commitment to the international coalition fighting Islamic State extremists. They hauled troops and equipment around Iraq and throughout the wider region.

Later, Ottawa expanded the mission to include what were supposed to be one- or two-week support missions for United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa.

Dave Perry, a defence expert at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, said the strain of keeping up the pace of all these flight operations - especially in eastern Europe - started to show a few months ago.

"It didn't surprise me that there's been a realization, just given the volume of stuff, material, that's being moved," said Perry, whose organization has occasionally hosted events sponsored by defence contractors.

Military planners have learned some hard lessons over the last several months as overseas demands have increased, he said.

"Whenever there's an international crisis, airlift is always in short supply," said Perry, who added that the Liberal government's recent decision to replace the air force's air-to-air refuelling fleet and VIP transport likely was influenced by the increased demands.

Canada is buying into the rent-to-own concept. Here's how it works

When Christian Franchia first heard about a rent-to-own opportunity in Port Moody, B.C., four years ago, he saw a way to realize his dream of first-time home ownership, so he put his name in a lottery for 30 units.

About 10 per cent of the 358 units in the development still under construction at 50 Electronic Avenue were sold rent-to-own, meaning the buyers pay a fixed rent for two years, which is then converted into equity.

Franchia, a 28-year-old software developer, has an appointment a week from now to tour his new one-bedroom apartment near the SkyTrain and a seaside park. All this for \$10,000 down and \$1,000 per month rent, which goes toward a down payment on the \$270,000 place in two years' time.

"Essentially, it's like free rent for two years. That money [I pay now] I get to keep as long as I go through with the sale," said Franchia, who will move in with his wife in a few months.

Rent-to-own is a unique path to home ownership that delays one of the biggest hurdles for new homebuyers - the hefty down payment.

Advocates say this model of home financing allows people with limited or damaged credit who can't qualify for a traditional mortgage to work toward ownership.

Back in 2016, when the Panatch Group offered rent-to-own units in Port Moody, 500 people applied.

Developer Kush Panatch of Richmond, B.C., said he'd never offered rent-to-own before and was shocked by the fervent interest.

He ended up only inviting Port Moody applicants in a sort of lottery, after reviewing essays - including one from Franchia, who wanted to stay in the community he loved.

While exciting, Panatch cautions that rent-to-own is not always the perfect path to home ownership.

"We learned a lot by doing it. There were some nasty surprises, unfortunately," he said.

He discovered unforeseen costs - like the fact that his company had to carry the cost of the GST from the moment the renter moved in until they bought the unit. As well, there were complex legislations to navigate.

"I think some assistance from both the federal and provincial level would really go a long way toward facilitating a program like this," he



rent-to-own agreements can vary, and but are generally in line with market value rents at this time.

Oliver and her husband work with investors who take on the debt burden until the renter can build up equity and become a first-time owner much faster than they could save.

Clover Properties is expanding into Alberta and Quebec given the increasing need for families to get a home before prices get too high.

Oliver says rent-to-own is best suited for renters struggling to get a mortgage approval due to low income or damaged credit.

She warns, however, that the devil is in the contractual details, which is why she says she works with the buyer and investor to ensure success and avoid investors "being greedy."

Meet the terms, or lose the down payment

Oliver also notes that rent-to-own needs to be committed. During the pandemic, she says some lost down payments because family breakups or other hardships meant clients couldn't honour their contracts and were forced to walk away.

"If they stop paying on time or paying the contract amount, it would be a breach of the contract. We'll do our best to work with individuals in this situation. Once we've exhausted all options... they have to leave the property and forfeit their down payment credit," Oliver said. "That's why we screen so strictly."

Also, unlike regular renters, rent-to-owners are often responsible for maintenance and upgrades.

While Oliver gives the government credit for exploring an unconventional homebuying tool, she is disappointed the new federal fund focuses on development projects and does not allow rent-to-owners to shop on the open market for resale homes.

"They are basically subsidizing developers. Hopefully, the builders will pass on savings in a legitimate way to the end user," said Oliver, who believes developers should collaborate with experienced rent-to-own providers to manage the complex agreements.

Novel path, not well tested

According to housing advocates, rent-to-own programs have been operating in pockets of the U.K., with some success.

But as is the case in big Canadian cities, properties in the U.K. are so expensive that it's proven difficult to bridge the gap between low wages and home ownership, and there has not been huge uptake.

Paula Higgins, chief executive of the Home Owners Alliance in London, said building safety codes there are weak, and there were some issues with rent-to-own funding being tied to new developments.

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