



March 9, 2022

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
 Prime Minister of Canada  
 House of Commons

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

On behalf of the global travel and aviation industries, we urgently request that the Government of Canada remove all remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions that are no longer fit for purpose. Doing so on an expedited basis will support the recovery of the Canadian travel industry and the Canadian economy generally without undermining vital health concerns.

On February 15, 2022, the Government of Canada announced the removal of some of its most onerous travel restrictions, including its travel advisory directing Canadians to avoid non-essential international travel, PCR-only pre-departure testing, mandatory post-arrival testing and mandatory post-arrival isolation for unvaccinated children under 12 traveling with vaccinated parents or guardians.

While these actions were welcomed, it only brings Canada in line with COVID-19 policies that have long been followed by the United States and other leading countries around the world. In short, as these policies were implemented, they were already out of date. All evidence suggests that now is the time to move beyond these marginal changes to a more robust review of the remaining barriers to travel:

- As of February 25, 2022, 85% of eligible Canadians are fully vaccinated, 89% received at least one dose and 55% are fully boosted.<sup>1</sup> As of March 2, 2022, 3,296,503 Canadians have contracted COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>
- As such, out of our total population of 38 million, over 33 million Canadians have been vaccinated and/or have some level of natural immunity. Restricting access to Canada based on fear of importation of COVID-19 makes no logical sense.
- According to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), of the approximately 2 million COVID-19 cases for which the government has exposure history since the beginning of the pandemic, only 9,974 contracted COVID-19 from contact with a traveler (0.5%) and 16,881 contracted COVID-19 for travel outside of Canada (0.8%).<sup>3</sup>
- The World Health Organization (WHO), on whose guidance the Government of Canada has relied since the beginning of the pandemic, recognizes the folly of continuing to maintain strict travel restrictions like those in Canada. In the January 19, 2022 Tenth Meeting of the Emergency Committee, the WHO noted that “the failure of travel restrictions introduced after the detection and reporting of Omicron variant to limit international spread of Omicron demonstrates the ineffectiveness of such measures over time.” The WHO recommended that States consider a risk-based approach to the facilitation of international travel by lifting measures, like testing and/or quarantine requirements, for individual travelers who are fully vaccinated, with COVID-19 vaccines listed by the WHO.<sup>4</sup>
- On February 22, 2022, the European Council advised EU countries to lift all testing and quarantine restrictions for fully vaccinated passengers traveling within the EU. The United Kingdom removed all COVID-19 testing for vaccinated air travelers entering the country and Ireland has removed all COVID travel restrictions. The UK concluded that the cost to both passengers and airlines of the testing mandate could no longer be justified as there was no evidence the testing regime protected the population from COVID-19. Multiple countries across Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia have all either removed or announced their intention to remove the pre-departure testing requirement for fully vaccinated passengers.
- A January 5, 2022 study by Oxera and Edge Health concluded, when a variant like Omicron is already highly prevalent in the domestic environment, travel restrictions would have no impact on case numbers or hospitalizations in the UK.<sup>5</sup> This modelling result was replicated for Finland and Italy in a study released on February 1, 2022, which again found that testing of travelers has virtually no impact on domestic infection rates.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/vaccination-coverage/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html#a6>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.who.int/news/item/19-01-2022-statement-on-the-tenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-pandemic](https://www.who.int/news/item/19-01-2022-statement-on-the-tenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-pandemic)

<sup>5</sup> [https://50c9e2c4-52c0-446c-ba2a-d30d413979a1.filesusr.com/ugd/80447b\\_6dab44d1412d484fac87f93874d08444.pdf](https://50c9e2c4-52c0-446c-ba2a-d30d413979a1.filesusr.com/ugd/80447b_6dab44d1412d484fac87f93874d08444.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/5e2769dffcee4ac4b4317886be726a20/oxera-report-travel-restrictions-italy-finland.pdf>

Given all of these factors, we urge the Government of Canada to take additional steps to remove the most onerous, complex, and costly remaining travel restrictions, and to work with industry to define a roadmap to the full return to pre-COVID 19 travel policies.

**Immediate Action: Remove pre-departure testing requirement**

The Government of Canada has reported that the positivity rate for the 1,075,062 fully vaccinated passengers arriving by air between November 28, 2021 and February 19, 2022 stood at 4.38%.<sup>7</sup> More recently, the PHAC reported that less than 1% of cases reported have travelled outside of Canada during the exposure period, and less than 1% reported exposure to a traveler. It is difficult to justify requiring costly pre-departure testing when case rates stand at 15% in communities over the last seven days in Canada, and significantly higher in the weeks preceding. Pre-departure testing is a significant barrier to international travel as Canadians are concerned about being unnecessarily stranded in foreign countries.

Canada should join leading countries around the world in removing this onerous and unnecessary travel restriction before or as of April 1, 2022, when the provisions in the Orders in Council “Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order” requiring pre-entry testing cease to have effect.

**Roadmap**

In addition to the removal of pre-departure testing, we urge the Government of Canada to work with industry to develop a near term roadmap to modify or eliminate all remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Canada is one of the most highly vaccinated countries in the world. As Omicron recedes, it is time for Canadian citizens to reap the rewards of this achievement by removing travel restrictions that can no longer be justified by the science. Canada, its economy, and its citizens benefit from the ability to travel and the ability of people to visit this great country. Canada should lead in returning to pre-COVID-19 travel policies and procedures. Canada’s economic recovery requires the recovery of the aviation and the travel and tourism industry. With the continued collaboration of the Government of Canada, we will help drive a return to the connected way of life that matters to all of us; connecting people with each other and Canada with the world.

Respectfully,

*Advantage Travel Partnership  
Air Transport Association of Canada (ATAC)  
Airlines For America (A4A)  
Airlines For Europe (A4E)  
Airlines UK  
American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA)  
Arab Air Carriers’ Organization (AACO)  
Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)  
Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA)*

*Canadian Chamber of Commerce  
Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA)  
Global Business Travel Association (GBTA)  
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade  
International Air Transport Association (IATA)  
Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA)  
Marriott International, U.S. and Canada  
National Airlines Council of Canada (NACC)*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/testing-screening-contact-tracing/summary-data-travellers.html#:~:text=Border%20testing%20results%20for%20fully%20vaccinated%20travellers>

*Business Council of Canada*  
*Business Travel Association (BTA)*  
*Canadian Association of Tour Operators (CATO)*  
*Canadian Business Aviation Association (CBAA)*

*Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)*  
*Travel Tech, The Travel Technology Association*  
*UKinbound*

CC: The Hon. Omar Alghabra, P.C., M.P., Minister of Transport  
The Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health  
The Hon. Randy Boissonnault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance  
The Hon. Marco E.L. Mendicino, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety