



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Canada – New COVID-19 Testing and Hotel Quarantine Requirements

In early February the government of Canada [announced](#) its plans to require on-arrival COVID-19 testing and a mandatory hotel quarantine for air travellers to Canada.¹ On February 14, 2021, the government of Canada issued its latest *Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Quarantine, Isolation and Other Obligations)*, which outlines the details of the new requirements that came into effect on February 22.²

WHY THIS MATTERS

Due to growing concerns of new variants of COVID-19, the Canadian government has introduced additional measures to discourage travel to and from Canada. Foreign nationals, Canadian citizens, and permanent residents who are outside of Canada, as well as those currently in Canada who are planning to travel abroad, should consider how they will meet the new entry requirements.

Those travelling or returning to Canada must also continue to make sure they are exempt from the current travel restrictions. Travellers can expect that Canada will continue to introduce changes to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Air Travellers: On-Arrival COVID-19 Testing and Mandatory Hotel Quarantine Requirements

Effective February 22, 2021, air travellers (ages 5 and up) must take a COVID-19 molecular test on arrival in Canada before leaving the airport.³ Individuals can register in advance for their on-arrival test to avoid delays at the airport.⁴ Travellers will receive a COVID-19 test kit and instructions before leaving the airport to complete a subsequent COVID-19 test on day 10 of their 14-day quarantine period. Individuals who receive a test kit should register for their day 10 test on their first day in Canada in order to receive an email reminder to take the test. These new requirements are in addition to the existing requirement to complete a COVID-19 molecular test 72 hours prior to boarding a flight to Canada.

Travellers may only leave their place of quarantine if they receive a negative result from their day 10 test and they complete their 14-day mandatory quarantine.

With some exceptions, air travellers must also quarantine in a government-authorized hotel, at their own expense, for up to three days while awaiting their on-arrival COVID-19 test results. Travellers are required to book a hotel in the city in which they first arrive in Canada, either Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, or Calgary, and provide proof of their pre-paid hotel accommodations prior to boarding their flight.

All government-authorized hotels are located near one of the four Canadian airports currently accepting international flights. The cost of these hotel stays, which may vary slightly at each hotel, includes the room, food, cleaning, security, infection prevention, and transportation.

A list of government-authorized hotels and hotel booking information can be found [here](#). At this time, a hotel reservation can only be made by phone using the following numbers:

- **1-800-294-8253** (toll-free within North America)
- **1-613-830-2992** (collect outside of North America)

Individuals who receive a negative result from their on-arrival COVID-19 test and have demonstrated a suitable quarantine plan can leave their hotel and take a connecting flight or drive to their final destination to complete the remainder of their 14-day quarantine. Those who test positive or are considered unable to quarantine themselves will be moved to a designated government quarantine facility until they complete their quarantine.⁵ A person may be considered unable to quarantine on their own, if the person:

- has not provided evidence of a completed COVID-19 test 72 hours before the scheduled departure, unless exempted;
- refuses to undergo a COVID-19 molecular test upon arrival in Canada and after entering Canada;
- has not provided a suitable quarantine plan; and
- cannot quarantine on their own at a government authorized hotel until receiving the COVID-19 test results.

Unaccompanied dependent children or unaccompanied minors are exempt from the requirement to quarantine at a designated hotel. A person who has recovered from COVID-19 and provides proof of a **positive result** for a COVID-19 molecular test that was taken 14 to 90 days before entry into Canada is also exempt from the on-arrival testing and hotel quarantine requirements. However, that person must still quarantine for 14 days at a location that meets the general quarantine requirements. At this time, proof of being vaccinated for COVID-19 will not exempt individuals from the new requirements.

Land Travellers: Pre-Departure & On-Arrival COVID-19 Testing Requirements

Previously, only air travellers were required to obtain a negative COVID-19 test result 72 hours before arriving in Canada. As of **February 15, 2021**, land travellers (ages 5 and up), subject to certain limited exceptions, must also provide proof of a **negative COVID-19** molecular test result taken in the United States within 72 hours of arriving in Canada. Those who qualify for a quarantine exemption or present a **positive result** for a COVID-19 test that was taken either in or outside of the United States 14 to 90 days before entering Canada are exempt from this requirement.⁶

Effective **February 22, 2021**, land travellers must also take a COVID-19 molecular test upon entry to Canada and on day 10 of their 14-day quarantine period. Specifically, land travellers will receive two COVID-19 At Home Specimen Collection Kits: one to use on the day they arrive in Canada and another to use on day 10 of their quarantine period. Some ports of entry are providing on-site services to assist with completing the test using the kit provided. A full list of these ports of entry can be found [here](#). At this time, land travellers are not required to quarantine at a government-authorized hotel.

ArriveCAN Mandatory for Both Land and Air Travellers to Canada

Effective **February 22, 2021**, all travellers, whether entering Canada by land or air, are required to submit their travel and contact information, including a suitable quarantine plan, electronically via ArriveCAN before crossing the border or boarding a flight. The app can be accessed at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/arrivecan.html>.⁷

Changes to Alberta's International Border Testing Pilot

Effective February 21 at 9:59 MST, Alberta's International Border Testing Pilot Program has been suspended.⁸ Individuals who are planning to travel to Canada after February 22, 2021, should be prepared to complete a full 14-day quarantine, unless specifically exempted.

Exemptions to New Entry Requirements

Travellers arriving by land and air may be exempted from the new on-arrival COVID-19 testing and hotel quarantine requirements, including persons who are exempt from the quarantine requirements or persons who provide proof of a positive COVID-19 test taken between 14 to 90 days before travel.⁹ Those seeking to be exempt from quarantine should contact their immigration advisor, legal counsel, or KPMG Law LLP to assess their eligibility.

KPMG NOTE

Key Considerations for Employers and Travellers

- Advanced planning is critical for air travellers who must receive a negative COVID-19 molecular test result within 72 hours of departure and obtain a pre-paid reservation at a government approved hotel. Initial feedback suggests that the online booking process is time consuming and should be arranged as early as possible to avoid delays.
- Travellers should inquire about government-approved hotels' refund policies prior to making a reservation.
- Air and land travellers to Canada should prepare a quarantine plan that factors in the new on-arrival COVID-19 testing and hotel requirements, as applicable. Air travellers seeking an exemption from the quarantine requirement must also develop a contingency plan if their request is not granted. Specifically, such travellers will need to comply with the hotel quarantine requirements and provide proof of pre-paid hotel reservations.
- Violating quarantine or isolation instructions provided to travellers by a Screening Officer is an offence under the *Quarantine Act* and could lead to serious penalties, including six months in prison and/or C\$750,000 in fines. Failure to comply with the requirement of completing the day 1 and day 10 COVID-19 tests may result in an individual's transfer to a designated quarantine facility.
- Employers should determine who will cover the cost of hotel accommodations and other related expenses for employees entering Canada.
- Travellers should regularly monitor changes to travel restrictions before leaving or returning to Canada.

The government of Canada strongly advises against non-essential travel outside Canada as there may be sudden restrictions and additional requirements that place travellers in difficult and stressful circumstances while abroad.

Employees and travellers who have concerns about their upcoming travels and next steps are encouraged to contact their usual travel agent and/or immigration adviser or KPMG Law LLP (see the Contact Us section for further guidance).

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 See January 29, 2021 Transport Canada News Release: "[Government of Canada introduces further restrictions on international travel.](#)" For related coverage, see: [GMS Flash Alert 2021-051](#), 8 February 2021.
- 2 See [Orders in Council](#): [<https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=40249&lang=en>]
- 3 See government of Canada: Flying to Canada: COVID-19 Testing for Travellers: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/flying/covid-19-testing-travellers-coming-into-canada#arrival-testing>.
- 4 Ibid. [<https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/flying/covid-19-testing-travellers-coming-into-canada#day-10-test>]
- 5 See Public Health Agency of Canada 12 February 2021 News Release: "[Government of Canada expands restrictions to international travel by land and air.](#)"
- 6 See government of Canada: "Driving to Canada: COVID-19 testing for travellers" <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/covid-19-testing-travellers-driving#no-arrival-test>.
- 7 See government of Canada: "[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel restrictions, exemptions and advice.](#)"
- 8 See government of Alberta: "[International Border Testing Pilot Program: International Border Testing Pilot Program.](#)"
- 9 See government of Canada: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/flying/covid-19-testing-travellers-coming-into-canada#day-10-test>.

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Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Canada:



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