

Daily Update – 18 March 2021

U.S. plans to send 1.5 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Canada

The United States plans to send roughly 4 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine that it is not using to Canada and Mexico through loan deals with the two countries, the White House confirmed today.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that a number of countries, including Canada and Mexico, have asked the U.S. for doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, but those loan deals are still being worked out.

The Biden administration has come under pressure from allies worldwide to share vaccine doses — particularly the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is authorized for use in other countries but not yet cleared for use in the United States.

AstraZeneca has millions of doses made in a U.S. facility and has said that it would have 30 million shots ready at the beginning of April.

Atlantic bubble 2.0 expected to begin by April 19

Round two of the Atlantic bubble is expected to begin by April 19, the Council of Atlantic Premiers announced on Thursday. The opening of the bubble — which allows people in the four Atlantic provinces to travel within the region with no self-isolation requirement — is "conditional upon COVID-19 case numbers remaining low in the region, containment of outbreaks, and ongoing advice from Atlantic Chief Medical Officers of Health," the council said.

N.L. participation conditional

While there were initial discussions of [opening a 'Maritime bubble'](#) and excluding Newfoundland and Labrador at first, following a large spike in cases last month, Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin said Thursday that province will be included in the bubble this year.

The Council of Atlantic Premiers said Newfoundland and Labrador's participation in the bubble "is conditional on continued progress in easing its provincial alert-level restrictions."

Ontario restaurant workers will not get COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 2 but many other groups will be eligible

Restaurant workers will not be included in Phase 2 of Ontario's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan, leading one group to wonder why the government is prioritizing industries that weren't forced to shutter during lockdown because they were at higher risk during the pandemic.

When the Ontario government released their comprehensive list of those eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 2 of its rollout two weeks ago restaurant workers were not included.

Restaurants Canada and others reached out to the government for clarification on whether or not restaurant workers were included. After two weeks the government clarified that they are not included in Ontario's Phase 2 vaccination plan.

Phase 2 of Ontario's COVID-19 rollout is expected to begin in April. In addition to age being a factor, the government said they would be prioritizing "individuals who are at risk of severe outcomes from contracting the virus, those who are at a high risk of spreading the virus to vulnerable individuals, and those at high risk of exposure to the virus in their daily work."

A [list of essential employees](#) who cannot work from home was provided. Under this categorization, workers were divided into two priority groups. The first included teachers, child-care workers and those in food manufacturing or agriculture. The second included high-risk and critical retail workers, such as those in grocery stores and pharmacies, as well as lower risk workers in financial services.

FULL LIST: [Who is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 2](#)

Front-line workers in B.C., including teachers, grocery store staff to begin receiving vaccines in April

More than 300,000 front-line workers in B.C., such as teachers, child-care workers, grocery store staff and first responders, will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine next month as the province moves ahead with its vaccination plan.

The Ministry of Health said people in priority groups will receive their first dose of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine in April. Those groups include:

- K-12 educational staff.
- Child-care staff.
- Grocery store workers.
- First responders like police, firefighters and emergency transport workers.
- Postal workers.
- Manufacturing staff.
- Wholesale and warehousing employees.
- Bylaw and quarantine officers.
- Correctional facility staff.
- Cross-border transport staff.
- Workers living in shared housing in places like ski hills.

Health Minister Adrian Dix said the age-based rollout is ahead of schedule and that progress, combined with the incoming supply of AstraZeneca vaccines, means the province can move to vaccinate those working in specific front-line industries.

The province said it expects to receive about 340,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine by the end of May and it plans to use a combination of community pharmacists, existing clinics and mobile clinics at some worksites to administer the vaccine to the workers.

BC expands grant program to \$30M to help businesses build or expand online

BC has expanded its grant program supporting small- and medium-sized businesses looking to expand or pivot to online sales, more than doubling the amount of money initially available for struggling owners.

Premier John Horgan and Ravi Kahlon, minister of jobs, economic recovery and innovation, said Wednesday the government is now spending \$30 million to help businesses launch or upgrade their online stores.

The Launch Online Grant program initially opened in February with \$12 million to give business owners up to \$7,500 each. After receiving more than 3,500 applications in six weeks, that money ran out. The province says the additional money will help about 4,000 more businesses.

The program has also been expanded to include businesses not only selling goods, but providing services as well.

For more information on the Launch Online Grant program, including the application process and eligibility, visit: www.launchonline.ca

Alberta to begin formal consultations for shifting recycling costs to producers

The Alberta government is launching consultations to design a program that aims to reduce landfill waste by transferring recycling costs to companies, Minister of Environment and Parks Jason Nixon announced Wednesday.

Speaking at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta's spring convention, Nixon said the implementation of an extended producer responsibility program (EPR) will encourage companies to produce less waste and packaging, and come up with innovative ways to recycle more materials.

The program would transfer the cost and management of recycling away from municipalities and taxpayers, he said, and to the companies that are directly producing and consuming goods.

Consultations to inform the program will start immediately and run until April, and will be held with municipalities, industry experts and Indigenous communities through stakeholder meetings.

The public will be able to engage through an online survey.
