

# Canada orders 37M syringes to be ready for COVID-19 vaccinations

*Alex Ballingall*

OTTAWA—Canada is gearing up for an eventual COVID-19 vaccine, having inked a contract to buy 37 million syringes — roughly enough to deliver shots to the country’s entire population.

Public Services and Procurement Minister Anita Anand said Tuesday that the purchase order from the Canadian branch of Becton Dickinson, a global medical giant, doesn’t include a definitive timeline for delivery but is part of a wider effort to prepare the country for “mass vaccinations” if a cure is found.

“We are making sure that when a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready,” Anand told reporters on Parliament Hill.

Statistics Canada [estimates](#) the Canadian population is more than 38 million people. The [2016 census](#) counted more than 35 million Canadians.

“We are working to procure supplies, including those syringes, and other supplies that would be needed for the eventual discovery of a vaccine and its administration throughout Canada,” she said.

Researchers around the world are racing to find a vaccine for the novel coronavirus that has spread across the globe and killed more than 375,000 people over the past six months.

In Canada, the federal government has [authorized](#) 38 clinical trials for possible treatments to COVID-19, the illness sparked by infection of the coronavirus. These include trials for the malaria treatment hydroxychloroquine, inhaled nitric oxide for infection patients, cellular immunotherapy and more.

CanSino Biologics, a Chinese pharmaceutical company collaborating with the National Research Council of Canada, is conducting the sole [COVID-19 vaccine trial](#) authorized by Health Canada.

Speaking alongside Anand Tuesday, Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam said the number of syringes ordered was meant to reflect the “maximum number of Canadians who may wish to be vaccinated” when—and if—a vaccine is discovered.

Anand added that there is not yet a definitive timeline for when the government will receive the 37 million syringes it has ordered, and that the purchase is part of the government’s effort to plan ahead.

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Canada’s bulk syringe purchase is the latest step the federal government has taken to

stock up on much-needed pandemic equipment as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and authorities in the provinces gear up for possible successive waves of infection over the coming months.

Anand has repeatedly [described](#) a “hypercompetitive” global marketplace for personal protective equipment that front-line health care workers need during the pandemic. Ottawa has responded by buying whatever it can on the global market, Anand said. The government has also hired logistics firms to make sure goods ordered in places like China actually make it to Canada without getting bought out by someone else.

At the same time, the federal government has rallied Canadian companies to shift production lines to so that Canada has a reliable domestic supply of pandemic gear. Navdeep Bains, the federal minister for innovation, science and industry, said Tuesday that four companies will now receive federal funding to develop rapid testing kits that could be used in remote communities and local clinics.

In early May, a previous effort to procure made-in-Canada rapid test kits from Ottawa-based Spartan Bioscience hit a snag when Health Canada [warned](#) there was a risk the kits would show false negatives for COVID-19.

“This is early stages,” Bains said Tuesday, describing the new contracts as a “long-term play” that will take months before the new testing kits are available.

The government has placed huge orders for a range of other supplies, including tens of millions of face shields, gloves, medical gowns and masks for health-care workers. Statistics published by Anand’s department show that small portions of the government’s orders have been received. As of May 26, the federal government had received more than 9.6 million face shields, 39 million gloves, 3 million gowns, 11.9 million N95 respirator masks, 101 million surgical masks and 203 ventilator machines.

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