vaccine delivery, and his procurement minister Anita Anand, Trudeau told reporters the first shipment is expected imminently in anticipation that Health Canada will give that authorization this week.

The early delivery of doses will arrive in batches, but overall the initial amount expected — 249,000 doses — by the end of December is enough to begin the two-stage inoculations of nearly 124,500 people. It is a two-dose vaccine, with each shot spaced three weeks apart.

Under fire by Opposition critics — who continued to call for a clear date when all Canadians would be vaccinated — and facing media questions about whether the early delivery was a result of political pressure, Trudeau said his government has resisted calls to specify dates until there was a firm timeline in sight, saying it did not want to "get people's hopes up."

"We are facing the largest immunization in the history of Canada," Trudeau said. "This is no small task, which is why we have a clear plan."

But it did not satisfy Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole who in a written statement said, "Canadians still don't have critical information needed to know when lockdowns might end," including the date when "every Canadian have access to a vaccine."

He demanded to know details such as how many people each month will be inoculated, how safe storage and distribution requirements will be met, and how vaccines will be delivered to Indigenous communities, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and veterans — all of whom fall under federal jurisdiction.

The NDP said the small initial batches are not nearly enough to cover priority groups.

But now that the reality of a vaccine campaign is at hand, Trudeau's government is providing more clarity to premiers and to Canadians, saying vaccines will be distributed on a per capita basis to all provinces, and it will be free of charge, with Ottawa footing the bill.

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