



## NEWS

## Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine could be in Canada this month, Justin Trudeau says

By **Jacques Gallant** Legal Affairs Reporter

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A game-changing COVID-19 vaccine that can quickly be put to use in long-term-care homes and remote regions could arrive in Canada this month if it gets regulatory approval, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday.

As the second COVID-19 vaccine authorized for use in Canada, the Moderna vaccine could be more easily transported than the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that's currently in use. It is stored at just -20C, while the Pfizer vaccine requires storage in ultracold freezers that reach -70C.

Speaking in Ottawa, Trudeau said that Canada has reached an agreement that could see the first Moderna doses delivered within 48 hours of its approval by Health Canada.

“Like the co-founder of Moderna pointed out a few weeks ago, Canada was among the very first to preorder their vaccine,” Trudeau said. “That, combined with our solid plan for vaccine rollout, is why we have an agreement for early doses.”

Trudeau said Canada can expect up to 168,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine by the end of December as part of 40 million guaranteed doses the country has secured through its agreement with the company.

The vaccine is the furthest along in the approval process at Health Canada, and the regulator has signalled that a green light could be imminent.

The final clinical data from the Massachusetts-based biotech company was received by Health Canada Dec. 11, and the final data on the manufacturing process is expected before the end of the week, said Dr. Supriya Sharma, chief medical adviser at Health Canada.

“It does look promising and it does look positive,” Sharma said.

Priority for the Moderna vaccine will be given to remote and Indigenous communities and the territories, given the logistical challenges involved with transporting and storing the Pfizer vaccine. Provinces will receive a mix of Pfizer and Moderna doses.

Canada is expecting a total of about 2 million Moderna doses by the end of March, and 4 million Pfizer doses, in order to vaccinate high-priority groups including health-care workers and long-term care residents. Both vaccines require an individual receive two doses.

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The Moderna vaccine is more suited for long-term care residents, given that it is easier to transport and therefore doesn't require them to be brought to vaccination centres.

Retired general Rick Hillier, who is heading Ontario's vaccination task force, said Tuesday that the province's first Moderna doses would be going to long-term-care homes in COVID-19 hot spots.

Nursing homes in lockdown areas including Toronto, Peel Region, York Region and Windsor-Essex will see vaccinations first, along with red zones such as Halton Region, Durham Region and Hamilton.

"We're ready to roll when it does arrive," Hillier said. "I can't give you a figure of how many people will be vaccinated by the end of the year because we don't know how many more vaccines are coming to us."

Hillier estimated 1.2 million Ontarians, mostly health-care workers in high-risk situations, nursing homes and some retirement home residents will get shots by the end of March depending on supplies.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration concluded Tuesday that the Moderna vaccine is safe and highly effective, and is expected to grant emergency use authorization later this week.

[Canada's vaccine rollout kicked off Monday](#) with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as injections began on health-care workers in Ontario and long-term-care residents in Quebec, and is expanding to other provinces this week.

Canada is expected to receive an initial shipment this week of 30,000 Pfizer doses, and will receive 200,000 further doses next week, Trudeau said 70 vaccination sites across the country will be ready to receive the doses, up from just 14 this week.

Pfizer and Moderna are among seven vaccine manufacturers that signed agreements with Canada that could provide access to up to 414 million doses, though most have yet to be approved.

Vaccines from AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson are also currently under review by Health Canada.

With files from Rob Ferguson and The Canadian Press

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