

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.