Canada to require negative Covid-19 test for entry

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Canada will require travellers to obtain a negative Covid-19 test before being allowed into the country, the government announced Wednesday.

The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests will need to be conducted within three days of boarding a flight, officials told a news conference.

Upon arrival travellers will still have to quarantine for 14 days.

Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic Leblanc said the new measure—along with increased monitoring at Canadian airports—would be in place "quickly," but did not provide a specific date.

It comes after a new strain was identified in Britain, and has already spread to Canada.

At the same time, Ontario's finance minister, Rod Phillips, was publicly chided this week for taking a family vacation in the Caribbean just as Canada's most populous province went into lockdown and the number of new daily Covid-19 cases across Canada hit record highs.

"Although most Canadians have heeded advice for non-essential travel, some Canadians are still travelling for non-essential reasons. This is deeply concerning," said deputy chief public health officer Howard Njoo.

"We must iterate that now is not the time to travel," he said.

Only about two percent of Covid-19 cases in Canada have been traced to recent travel.

Its borders have been closed to most non-essential travel since March, and last week Canada halted entry of all flights from Britain over the new virus variant.

Days later, Ottawa confirmed the first cases of the particularly infectious coronavirus variant in Canada.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, meanwhile, has criticized Phillips for vacationing outside Canada when officials are urging against travel, and

has ordered him back home.

"I have let the minister know that his decision to travel is completely unacceptable and that it will not be tolerated again—by him or any member of our cabinet and caucus," Ford said in a statement.

"I have also told the minister I need him back in the country immediately."

As of Wednesday, Canada reported 571,070 Covid-19 cases, including 15,440 deaths.

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