

# Canada administers first doses of COVID-19 vaccine

December 14 2020, by Rob Gillies

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A health-care worker watches as the first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine are delivered to the Maimonides CHSLD in Montreal, Canada, Monday, Dec. 14, 2020 in Montreal. The long-term care facility is slated to be one of the first in Canada to administer the vaccine. (Ryan Remiorz/The Canadian Press via AP)

Canada administered its first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine on Monday, becoming one of the first countries to do so in the effort to beat back the pandemic.

Five front-line workers in Ontario were among the first Canadians to receive the vaccine at one of Toronto's hospitals.

Anita Quidangen, a personal support worker who worked throughout a COVID-19 outbreak at the Reikai Centre nursing home in Toronto, got the first dose in Ontario.

"It's an honor, thank you very much," she said. "I'll continue to do my job as a PSW."

A major black mark in Canada has been the death of senior citizens in long-term care and retirement residences; more than 8,460 of Canada's 13,430 deaths have occurred there.

Quebec announced that a long-term care resident in that province's capital had been injected with the vaccine at 11:25 a.m. making her the first in Canada to get immunized.

"It was very emotional for me," said Federal Health Minister Patty Hajdu, who witnessed it in Quebec. "I cried."

The Canadian government recently amended its contract with Pfizer and BioNTech so that it would deliver up to 249,000 doses this month. But most Canadians are not expected to get the vaccine for months.



The first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine are delivered to the Maimonides CHSLD, Monday, Dec. 14, 2020 in Montreal, Canada. The long-term care facility is slated to be one of the first in Canada to administer the vaccine. (Ryan Remiorz/The Canadian Press via AP)

"We are dealing with an incredibly competitive global environment," said Anita Anand, Canada's minister of public services and procurement. "It's very much the long game here."

Canada has contracts with six other vaccine makers and is currently reviewing three other vaccines, including one by Moderna that Canadian health officials said could be approved soon.

Canada has ordered more doses than needed for Canadians, 10 doses per Canadian according to the government. Canada eventually plans to donate excess supply to impoverished countries.

Overall, there have been more than 460,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Canada since the pandemic began, a stark contrast to the U.S. which is recording almost half that number each day.

People in Britain and the United States are also starting to receive coronavirus vaccines.



Tamara Dus, left, director of University Health Network Safety Services, administers the first Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in Canada to personal support worker Anita Quidangen in Toronto on Monday, Dec. 14, 2020. (Frank Gunn/The Canadian Press via AP)



A man dressed as Santa Claus takes photos with families from behind a glass enclosure in Vaughan, Ontario, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020, after Vaughan Mills cancelled their seasonal in-person visits with Santa amid the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. York Region will go into lockdown starting Monday. (Cole Burston/The Canadian Press via AP)



A man dressed as Santa Claus greets children from a glass enclosure in Vaughan, Ontario, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020, after Vaughan Mills cancelled their seasonal in-person visits with Santa amid the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. York Region will go into lockdown starting Monday. (Cole Burston/The Canadian Press via AP)

The encouraging developments come as the coronavirus continues surging across much of the world.

Ontario reported 1,940 new cases of COVID-19 Monday, and 23 new deaths while Quebec announced 1,620 new cases of COVID-19 and 25 more deaths.

Canada's health regulator approved the Pfizer's vaccine for use last

Wednesday.

Ontario received 6,000 doses of it on Sunday night and plans to give them to approximately 2,500 health-care workers. Residents of two long-term care homes in Quebec started to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in that province.

Derek Thompson, another personal support worker who received the vaccine in Toronto, said it felt just like getting a flu shot.

"What happens next? We continue on, we continue the fight," he said. "It's an honor, there was a lot of people they could have picked, but we were the ones they picked."

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