



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Canada - Enhanced Border Measures for New Coronavirus Variant

In response to the emergence of the new "omicron" SARS-CoV-2 ("coronavirus") variant, the government of Canada has implemented a flight ban for foreign nationals travelling from ten African countries to help prevent the spread of the new variant. On November 26 the Canadian government restricted travel from the following seven African countries: **South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini**. Effective December 1, 2021, the Canadian government added three countries to the travel ban: **Nigeria, Malawi and Egypt**.¹

Additionally, Canada will be re-instating the on-arrival COVID-19 test requirement for all travellers, other than vaccinated travellers from the United States.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The flight ban will affect employers and their mobile employees who planned to travel between these ten countries and Canada. They also need to consider the new testing and entry requirements for all those affected by the measures.

New Measures Impacting Travellers from the African Region

The omicron variant was first reported by South Africa on November 24, 2021.² Since then, it has been detected in over 20 countries.³ The variant has been classified as a "variant of concern" by the World Health Organization as it has a significant number of mutations. As of November 30, 2021, six cases of the omicron variant have been confirmed in Canada.

In light of the introduction and spread of omicron, the Canadian government announced a series of enhanced border measures for those coming from the ten African countries noted above. The following measures are effective from

November 26, 2021 (and from December 1, 2021 for Egypt, Malawi and Nigeria) until at least January 31, 2022:

- All foreign nationals who have travelled through these countries in the last 14 days are prohibited from entering Canada.
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and people with status under the Indian Act, travelling from these countries must obtain a PCR test 72 hours before arriving in Canada.
 - With no direct flights from the region, the pre-departure test must be taken in a third country before arriving in Canada.
- Upon arrival in Canada, Canadian citizens and permanent residents from these countries will be subject to immediate COVID-19 testing.
 - Those arriving by air must wait for the results in a designated hotel, regardless of their vaccination status.
 - Those arriving by land may be allowed to proceed directly to their suitable isolation location.
 - If the test is negative, they must then quarantine at home for 14 days. They must then take another test on day eight of their arrival.
- Anyone who has arrived from one of the countries in the 14 days leading up to November 26 must get tested for COVID-19 immediately. There are no exemptions specifically provided for in these new requirements. These individuals must quarantine at home until they get their test results.
 - There will be increased scrutiny of quarantine plans for travellers from these countries and rigorous monitoring to ensure travellers are complying with quarantine measures.

On-arrival Testing to Be Reinstated

The Canadian government announced that in the coming days, all vaccinated air travellers coming from outside Canada, apart from the U.S., will now need to be tested on arrival in Canada. These travellers will be required to self-isolate until a negative test is received. Unvaccinated travellers are required to quarantine in a designated government facility while they await the results from their on-arrival test before transferring to their selected place of quarantine for the remainder of their 14-day mandatory isolation.

KPMG NOTE

Key Considerations for Employers and Travellers

- The government of Canada has issued an advisory against *travel to* the seven African countries above-noted; however, it has not implemented any travel restrictions to these countries.
- There are currently no direct flights between Canada and the affected southern African countries.
- Recent travellers from these countries arriving in Canada by land may be allowed to proceed directly to their suitable isolation location provided they have a suitable quarantine plan. A suitable plan must demonstrate they have a place to stay where they will not have contact with anyone they haven't travelled with and they have private transportation to their place of quarantine.⁴

KPMG NOTE continued:

- The United Kingdom, European Union and United States have instituted similar restrictions to mitigate the risk of spreading this variant from the southern African region.

Canada continues to maintain pre-entry molecular testing for vaccinated and unvaccinated international travellers arriving from any country to reduce the risk of importation of COVID-19, including variants. The government of Canada will continue to assess the evolving situation and adjust border measures as required.

Travellers who have questions or concerns about their travel to Canada are encouraged to contact their qualified immigration counsel, employment counsel or KPMG Law LLP for further guidance

FOOTNOTES:

1 See "Government of Canada introduces new measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern" (November 26, 2021) at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-introduces-new-measures-to-address-covid-19-omicron-variant-of-concern.html> .

See "Government of Canada introduces additional measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern" (November 30, 2021) at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-introduces-additional-measures-to-address-covid-19-omicron-variant-of-concern.html> .

2 See World Health Organization, "Classification of Omicron (B.1.1.529): SARS-CoV-2 Variant of Concern" (November 26, 2021) at: [https://www.who.int/news/item/26-11-2021-classification-of-omicron-\(b.1.1.529\)-sars-cov-2-variant-of-concern](https://www.who.int/news/item/26-11-2021-classification-of-omicron-(b.1.1.529)-sars-cov-2-variant-of-concern) .

3 Ibid.

4 See "Quarantine or Isolation – Additional changes to entry, testing and quarantine requirements in response to the Omicron variant" at: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/isolation> .

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Contact us

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