

Canada to allow in vaccinated U.S. tourists after 16-month ban

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A truck leaves the Canada-US border crossing at the Thousand Islands Bridge in Lansdowne, Ontario in September 2020 [File: Lars Hagberg/Reuters]

Ottawa, July 20 (RHC)-- Canada will allow American tourists who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter the country as of August 9, the Canadian government has announced, ending a 16-month ban on most non-essential travel between the neighbouring countries.

In a statement issued on Monday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government said U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to travelling would be allowed into

Canada without having to quarantine.

Canada and the U.S. – which share the longest international land border in the world – restricted most non-essential travel in March 2020 amid rising coronavirus infections. Businesses in both nations, particularly the travel and airline industries, had demanded an end to the restrictions.

The Canadian government said inoculated visitors from countries other than the U.S. will be permitted to enter Canada beginning on September 7, explaining that the relaxation depends on COVID-19 epidemiology remaining favourable.

“Canadians’ safety and security always come first,” Canadian Health Minister Patty Hajdu said in Monday’s statement. “With rising vaccination rates and fewer cases in Canada, we can begin to safely ease border measures. A gradual approach to reopening will allow our health authorities to monitor the COVID-19 situation here and abroad. Canadians have worked hard and sacrificed for each other, and because of that work, we can take these next steps safely,” she said.

Canadian Public Safety Minister Bill Blair said U.S. officials told him it was likely Washington would extend the U.S. ban for a month when it expires on July 22.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki declined to say whether the move would be reciprocal. “We are continuing to review our travel decisions and we’ll be guided by our public health and medical experts,” Psaki said during a news briefing on Monday. “I wouldn’t look at it through a reciprocal intention.”

Trudeau told reporters on Monday afternoon that Canada has kept Washington apprised of its plans to lift restrictions on US travellers. “We will continue to work with them but understand and respect that every country makes its own decisions about what it does at its borders,” he said.

U.S. health officials have warned of a recent rise in COVID-19 infections, with Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy saying on Sunday that nearly all coronavirus-related deaths in the country now are among the tens of millions of people who have not been vaccinated.

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