

Canada receives first shipment of Moderna COVID vaccines

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Officials say vaccine will be distributed to remote, isolated communities in northern Canada.

Ottawa, December 25 (RHC)-- Canada has received its first shipment of Moderna Inc's COVID-19 vaccines, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Thursday, as the country urged people to limit their contacts

during the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Trudeau said the first shipment of Moderna vaccines is part of the 168,000 doses that Canada expects to receive before the end of December. "These are part of the 168,000 doses we'll be getting before the end of the month, and part of the 40 million doses we're guaranteed from Moderna overall," he tweeted.

Health Canada on Wednesday approved the Moderna vaccine for use in Canada, saying it had met the agency's "stringent safety, efficacy and quality requirements." Canada is the second country to approve the Moderna vaccine, after the United States' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on December 18 approved it for emergency use.

Moderna's COVID-19 shot is the second approved in Canada after the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which is already being administered to healthcare workers and long-term care home residents in several provinces. Unlike the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the Moderna vaccine does not have to be kept at ultra-low freezing temperatures, and Canadian officials said they plan to send it to more remote areas of the country.

"The different storage and handling requirements of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine mean that it can be distributed to isolated and remote communities, including the territories," Health Canada said this week.

Anita Anand, Canada's minister of public services and procurement, tweeted Thursday that the first Moderna shipment "will be the first #COVID19 vaccine deployed in Canada's North".

The health and social services minister for Yukon, one of Canada's northern territories, said in a statement Wednesday that the Moderna vaccine approval was "exciting news Yukoners have been waiting for." Pauline Frost said Yukon expects to receive an initial shipment of 7,200 doses of the vaccine to inoculate 3,600 people with two shots. "Yukon will receive enough doses to vaccinate 75 percent of the eligible adult population in early 2021," said Frost, adding that long-term care residents and staff would receive the vaccine first.

Canada is battling a surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations across the country.

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