



The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Date 12 April 2022

Via email

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of the 54 International Air Transport Association (IATA) member airlines that serve the Canadian market, I congratulate you and your government for the April 1, 2022 lifting of the requirement for a pre-departure test for fully vaccinated passengers entering Canada by air. In doing so, Canada has joined other leading governments in removing a major impediment to international travel that is no longer justified from a health perspective.

As you know, the international airline industry has been significantly harmed by COVID-19 and responses by governments around the world. While we are beginning to see signs of a recovery, the industry today globally has nearly 50% less passenger traffic than it did in 2019. We have suffered total losses in 2020-2021 of US \$189.5 billion, with an anticipated US \$11.6 billion expected loss this year.

In Canada, passenger traffic was down 49% in January 2022 compared to the same month in 2019. Only Argentina and Jamaica have seen a larger percentage drop in passenger traffic in this hemisphere during that time period. When healthy, the global airline industry supports \$3.5 trillion in global GDP and supports US \$49 billion in direct and indirect contribution to Canada's GDP (3.2% of total GDP) along with 633,000 jobs.

Now is the time for the government of Canada to remove remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions. Doing so will support the Canadian economy and provide passengers the ability to regain the benefits that are offered by commercial aviation without raising health risks to the general population.

In particular, we ask the Government of Canada to consider the following changes to current COVID-19 travel policies:

- **Removal of mask mandate:** The Government of Canada should remove the federal mask mandate. It is not logical to continue to require masks on airplanes when the majority of provinces are no longer requiring them in various public settings. Aircraft are equipped with highly sophisticated hospital quality filtration systems and have much higher airflow and air exchange rates than most other indoor environments. In addition, mask mandates have contributed directly to a substantial increase in disruptive passenger behavior. Like in many other public settings, people should be given the choice, rather than the mandate, to wear masks on airplanes.
- **Removal of vaccination mandates:** We strongly support the removal of all vaccination requirements for both passengers and crew. This mandate on domestic and international flights is no longer appropriate given the current state of the pandemic and the fact that 82% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. The small percentage of Canadian passengers who either cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons or chose not to be vaccinated for religious or other reasons are hesitant to make travel plans in advance because of the uncertainty as to whether they will be deemed qualified for an exemption to the



vaccination rule. Requiring airlines to make subjective decisions as to the validity of a persons' particular religious beliefs exposes the airlines to potential liabilities and is increasingly resulting in unruly passenger behavior at airports. The ban on all foreigners that are unvaccinated from entry into Canada should either be eliminated or replaced with a short-term requirement that those passengers present a negative COVID-19 test prior to departure.

We are well aware of the fact that the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve and that case numbers are rising in some of the countries where governments have removed these restrictions. However, the history of this pandemic has demonstrated that border restrictions have been ineffective in controlling the spread of the virus. Outdated restrictions should not be maintained solely to address the possibility of future health challenges. We urge you to direct your government officials to move as quickly as possible to remove or modify these remaining COVID-19 travel policies.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

**Willie Walsh**

Director General  
International Air Transport Association