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Canadian Chamber of Commerce Health Credentials Framework

Although the future path of the pandemic is not predictable as variants of concern emerge, we are heading into a new way of documenting health status as other countries move ahead with plans for health credentials. Canada needs to accelerate its efforts to ensure that we do not fall behind other jurisdictions as well as to enable a resumption of economic activity. However, Canada's approach to health credentials cannot repeat the patchwork that has created confusion for Canadians on other issues during the pandemic.

Regardless of our domestic approach, Canadians will need to meet health credentials requirements when travelling to foreign destinations. If we are not ready to support Canadians who do need to travel to countries requiring health credentials, this will ultimately hamper our economic recovery, particularly for sectors that rely on people mobility. In addition, unless governments specifically forbid organizations from requiring proof of vaccination for participation in activities like concerts, sports events, cruises, or working in conditions where physical distancing may be impossible, many non-governmental organisations will set their own requirements to seek to reopen more quickly while still protecting customers and employees.

While there is an immense amount of technical work that needs to occur in consultation with health experts, technology experts, privacy and cybersecurity experts, and the private sector, the following principles should guide the approach.

- The federal government should lead in developing a national standard for provinces to implement domestic health credentials that include vaccination status and test results. This standard needs to be user-centric, secure, and reliable for the consumers and businesses that decide to use them. It also needs to be inclusive in terms of usability for all age and socioeconomic demographics that have varying levels of access to digital technology.
- Cybersecurity and privacy considerations must be an essential consideration in the development and adoption of a new technology platform. Mass adoption of this technology will depend on the extent to which Canadians believe that their private information is secure. Therefore, it is critical the government ensure that the platform is being developed to the highest cybersecurity and privacy standards.
- The national standard for health credentials needs to be deployed quickly through a consistent technology platform that is secure and can be used across provinces. Rather than developing a new technology platform, the government should explore use of existing technological platforms, and ideally one integrating vaccination status and COVID-19 test results. For example, exploring whether the COVID-19 Alert App can be expanded to take on new roles.

- Canadians must receive clear and evidence-based guidelines for what being vaccinated means for various activities. Guidelines should be communicated positively as a means to incentivize vaccine uptake. For example, a vaccinated traveller will have a different risk profile and measures around such travellers can be different, such as reduced or no quarantine.
- Canada's approach to credentials for vaccination status must strongly assert and communicate the parity of approved vaccines.
- Decisions around technology must be augmented with a sustained promotion campaign to support widespread uptake by the general population. Businesses should be treated as partners to communicate with their employees and customers.
- The federal government and provinces need to ensure that vaccine records issued domestically can be easily and securely uploaded into the health credential systems of foreign jurisdictions, and that Canada aligns with major international standards under development, including for cybersecurity and privacy, to support outbound travel by Canadians. This could be more easily achieved through securely digitizing health records.