



## COVID-19 Media Lines

### Posting of the Request for Information regarding Federal Quarantine sites

**Issue statement:** On September 17, 2020, the Government of Canada posted a Request for Information on the [Buyandsell](#) website to determine potential industry interest and seek feedback regarding technical requirements and the engagement of a third party to manage federal quarantine sites, with the potential contract award expected in March 2021.

Since March 2020, federally designated quarantine sites have been used as a last resort to safely quarantine or isolate travellers with no other means for 14 days upon entry into Canada, as required by the Emergency Orders under the *Quarantine Act*.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) currently operates 11 designated quarantine sites in nine Canadian cities.

The media and the public have expressed an interest in federal spending on quarantine sites. These media lines can be used to answer potential media questions about the scope and purpose of this contract. Public Services and Procurement Canada will answer questions about procurement methods, processes and time frames.

### Key messages

- The Government of Canada is exploring options for operating and managing federal quarantine sites and services through one or more third-party service providers.
- On September 17 (to be confirmed), the Government of Canada issued a Request for Information to obtain industry feedback on possible options and best practices for the private provision of housing and operation and management of services associated with federal quarantine sites, as well as potential barriers to competition.
- This process will help the Government of Canada determine whether and how to establish a viable strategy for third-party management of federal quarantine sites.
- If the Government of Canada determines that a third-party managed solution is a viable strategy, Public Services and Procurement Canada may issue a competitive Request for Proposal to give suppliers the opportunity to bid on these services, with the potential contract award expected in March 2021.

### Questions and answers

#### Q1. Why is the government looking for a third party to provide these services?

As long as emergency orders are in place to make quarantine mandatory after foreign travel, the Government of Canada must be proactive and prepare for safe isolation or quarantine options for travellers who do not have suitable options. The use of federally managed facilities depends on a variety of factors, especially the following: the potential easing of travel restrictions; an increase in the number of travellers; the development and distribution of vaccines; and, the capacity to plan for the quarantine or isolation of travellers.



The Government of Canada currently manages federal quarantine sites and related service contracts. Other options are being considered in order to remain flexible and adapt to future quarantine needs.

A third-party supplier may be able to adequately and effectively meet the ongoing and unpredictable needs of federal quarantine sites. For example, the industry's agility in activating and providing resources for a site on very short notice could help the Government of Canada to respond effectively to changing quarantine needs.

The Government of Canada is seeking feedback from the industry on this potential option and gathering information on industry standards and best practices that could provide information for a potential Request for Proposal.

**Q2. Would the use of a third party increase costs for the Canadian taxpayer?**

No. In fact, it is expected that this approach will result in efficiency gains in the provision of quarantine accommodation and management of services under consolidated contracts, resulting in cost cutbacks in the program delivery.

**Q3. Does this mean that the government anticipates that mandatory quarantine following international travel will still be required after March 2021? Why does the Emergency Order expire before that date?**

Canada's risk-based response to COVID-19 follows a set of general guidelines, which include collaboration, evidence-based decision-making, proportionality and flexibility.

Currently, mandatory quarantine or isolation after foreign travel is one of our main public health measures that has proven to be effective in reducing the importation and spread of COVID-19. Canada's border measures, including mandatory quarantine or isolation upon entry, are enforced by Emergency Orders under the *Quarantine Act*.

As the situation evolves, decisions to extend Emergency Orders are made before the existing orders expire. Orders are extended in stages, allowing the government to adopt a prudent approach to ethical decision-making based on the general guidelines outlined above.

In the absence of targeted treatments or vaccines available at this time, border measures such as quarantine after foreign travel to areas known to be at risk could become the "new norm" to maximize our capacity as a society to limit the spread of the virus over the long term.

The government must remain flexible to adapt to Canada's future quarantine needs. A third-party supplier may be able to adequately and effectively meet the ongoing and unpredictable needs of federal quarantine sites.

At the same time, we are actively exploring options for greater flexibility at the border, while ensuring that protecting the health of Canadians remains paramount. This means that any changes to border measures, particularly those that have proven successful, must be based on sound scientific observations.