

A clear picture for Air Canada

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Airport kiosks get serious attention as part of the CleanCare+ program

Air travel into Canada from other locations was still rife with restrictions and limited access at the beginning of July; but the country's flag carrier was already thinking beyond lockdowns and quarantines to a time when passengers will be boarding again, all with various levels of anxiety and trepidation.

As the industry was rocked to the foundations with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, Canadians were traveling within the country on limited airline schedules. However, passengers flying in from abroad still have to languish in a 14-day quarantine when they arrive, while US citizens to the south must show an essential need to be in the country. Some of those restriction will hopefully fall away as the summer wears on. When they do, [Air Canada](#) will be ready with a step-by-step plan to elevate the passenger experience by degrees through the end of the year.

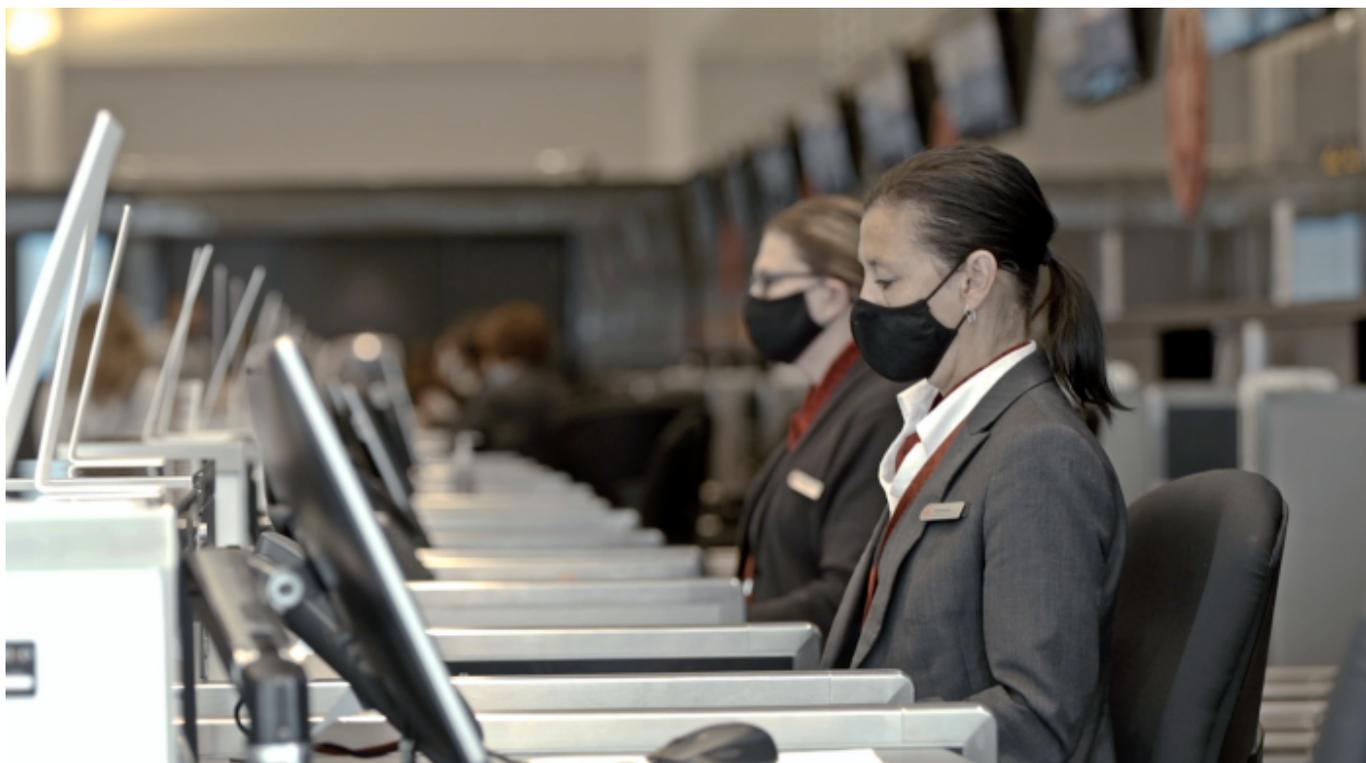


Andrew Yiu, Vice President of Product, Air Canada

And if there are silver linings to the whole experience, Andrew Yiu, the airline's Vice President of Product, says they can be found in the ability for Air Canada to design a passenger experience from the ground up and move faster to realize the industry's dream of a "connected cabin."

Right now, Air Canada is in the midst of a multi-stage process announced at the end of June. Some of the changes promise flexible re-booking options for Economy Class passengers anxious about a too-full cabin. The airline will notify passengers with rebooking options if seating in Economy Class is filled near capacity.

Air Canada has also launched a program called *CleanCare+*, designed to make passengers feel as safe as possible about their trip.



Virtual queuing alerts passengers when staff at airports are ready to assist them

Passengers will soon see additional touch-free features at airports, that will allow them to check their own baggage. Later this month a “virtual queuing” at select counters will alert passengers through a phone notifications when an agent is available to help them. At the airline’s Maple Leaf Lounges passengers will be able to minimize human contact at a self-scanning entry station.

To enhance the passenger experience, Air Canada will resume a more robust meal service in Signature Class and on international flights in Economy Class. Awaiting passengers as they board will be the airline’s *CleanCare+* customer care kits developed in-house. Comfort items like pillows, blankets and duvets will arrive sanitized in plastic. Yiu said Air Canada was working with its suppliers on more sustainable options for plastic wrapping.

On flights of more than two hours in North American Economy Class passengers able to pre-order meals. An expanded offering of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks will be available on flights where they are offered complimentary.

Behind the scenes the airline has a number of safety and sanitation measures outlined in videos on [its website](#).

The initial policies that became *CleanCare+* began back in April. It was then, Yiu said, that Air Canada first began mandating face masks. Along the way, pre-flight temperature checks and seat blocking were also added. Later, Yiu said planners decided it was important to have a transparent program with a name and a full set of initiatives.

“Ultimately we wanted to put a program together that was something easy for a customer to understand which puts everything we are doing for their health and safety from COVID-19 under one brand name,” Yiu says.

Phase one of the airline’s food service improvements was the product of the Air Canada [Culinary Panel](#) with meal boxes designed by one of the group’s chefs. Hot meals will be served in Signature Class while passengers Premium Economy Class and Economy will be served a cold meal. Beverages ³

of all types will be delivered to the passenger in single-serve containers.



Air Canada is modifying its service in Signature Class to deliver meals in a meal box. Cold meals are being used extensively in Economy Class

“It goes with the whole concept of slowly phasing things in,” said Yiu. “We want to make sure the crew are comfortable heating up meals. We want to make sure the crew is comfortable putting a hot meal in a box and delivering it to the customer.”

When Air Canada feels that it is safe to move on to the next phase, Yiu envisions a return of wine service poured from larger bottles and hot meal service in the rear cabins. Choices will be expanded in Economy Class. Buy on board options are also being considered.

One thing that may remain a part of the Air Canada meal service is a cold meal option, he says. While hot meals in airline service are pre-made, frozen and heated up on board, the freshness of a cold meal may appeal to passengers in the future.

What passengers in the future may also see is the aforementioned dream of a connected cabin where orders are placed and purchases are regularly made through a personal electronic devices or a seatback screen or before the flight through technology that has been in place for years.

“Those are things that customers wanted to see before COVID-19,” Yiu says. “And now it’s almost becoming a necessity.”