

Canadian casino CEO, wife accused of posing as motel workers to get Covid vaccine meant for locals

Written by Administrator

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The CEO of a Canadian casino company resigned from his job after he and his wife were accused of posing as motel employees to get doses of the Covid-19 vaccine intended for residents of a remote community.

The couple, identified as Rodney and Ekaterina Baker of Vancouver, arrived in the city of Whitehorse on Jan. 19 and were supposed to quarantine for 14 days.

Instead, they chartered a private plane to Beaver Creek, a small community of fewer than 125 people in Canada's Yukon, on Thursday where a mobile vaccination clinic was administering the first dose of the Moderna shot to locals, according to [the CBC television network in Canada](#).

The news outlet reported that Yukon's rural communities have priority for the vaccine because many locals live hours away from a hospital and do not have proper resources to handle a potential coronavirus outbreak.

The Beaver Creek community is close to the border with Alaska in Yukon.[Google Maps](#)

Yukon Community Services Minister John Streicker said the Bakers pretended to be new employees of a local motel so they could receive the shots. They raised suspicion that they weren't from the area when they asked for a ride to the airport shortly after receiving the vaccines, he said.

"People were like, 'Well, why would you be going to the airport?' " Streicker told the CBC.

Members of the vaccination clinic learned that the couple was not employed by the motel, and authorities were contacted. The Bakers were later tracked at the airport getting ready to leave the territory, the outlet reported.

Streicker said in a statement Tuesday that he was outraged by the couple's actions.

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"Reports allege these individuals were deceptive and violated emergency measures for their own advantage, which is completely unacceptable at any time, but especially during a public health crisis," he said.

The husband and wife were charged with violating Yukon's Civil Emergency Measures Act after authorities said they failed to self-isolate and adhere to travel restrictions. They face a maximum \$500 fine per charge, six months in jail or both, according to the CBC. They have 30 days to either pay the fine or plead not guilty and request a trial.

The Bakers could not immediately be reached on Tuesday and it's not clear if they have obtained an attorney.

The White River First Nation, whose government office is located in Beaver Creek, condemned the couple's actions and said the charges were too lenient.

"WRFN is calling on the Yukon Government as well as the RCMP to pursue a more just punishment. It is important that the penalty seriously discourages any future similar behavior," the office said in a [statement](#) .

The nation's chief, Angela Demit, said the Bakers' "selfish" actions put their elders at risk.

"We implore all Canadians to respect the vaccination rollout process and to not take similar actions," Demit said. "While we understand that many want to have a vaccination immediately, it is not appropriate to skirt rules put in place and approach our community in this way. WRFN was selected for vaccines given our remoteness, elderly and high-risk population, as well as limited access to health care."

Rodney Baker worked for Great Canadian Gaming, which owns more than 20 casinos across Canada, and his wife is an aspiring actress.

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Great Canadian said Rodney Baker resigned as president and CEO on Sunday.

"As a company, Great Canadian takes health and safety protocols extremely seriously, and our company strictly follows all directives and guidance issued by public health authorities in each jurisdiction where we operate. Any such actions whatsoever that run contrary to the company's core values, that do not comply with GCGC's strict compliance policies in regards to travel, and ensure that the company and its employees follow all health guidance and directions, will not be tolerated," the company said.



Minyvonne Burke

Minyvonne Burke is a breaking news reporter for NBC News.

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