



Hon. Merrilee Fullerton
Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services
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We write to you today on behalf of the Provincial Network for Developmental Services to share with you the complex challenges that we are being presented with in the face of supporting a workforce and workplace where vaccination status varies. For the reasons that we will share with you below, we request that actions be taken to make vaccinations mandatory for employees who work in the Developmental Service Sector.

People who live and rely on supports from our congregate care system have had disproportionate impact from Covid-19. They have lived with very restrictive directives from both Public Health and MCCSS for the duration of this pandemic with slow to non-existent freedoms to resume life and interactions with family and community. While we appreciated the directives that have helped us ensure our environments are safe, we need your leadership now more than ever so that we can continue to provide the supports and services people need without further delay, interruption, added risk and increased cost. We need your assistance in the form of mandating vaccines not only to keep supported individuals and employees safe but to also allow us to start moving back to a way of life outside of the walls of our homes.

Most importantly, we must continue to be vigilant in our efforts as we know the rate of hospitalization, and risk of death is higher for people with disabilities, particularly those with certain disabilities and health conditions. For these citizens, impact of contracting Covid-19 can be much worse.

Congregate care living supports are often hands on and provided in close proximity within apartments or houses making social distancing challenging if not impossible. The safety and quality of life we work to provide for this vulnerable population is at risk if our employees themselves are ill and if they are not able to come to work. Further, shortages in staffing, mean greater demand on those remaining employees, necessitating greater reliance on temporary staffing agencies to fill gaps resulting in greater risks to this population as a whole.

As this fourth wave hits, we understand that with the new variants the impact is even greater, and we know we need vaccinations to keep people safe. The fears are real, and we are already addressing great concern from people supported, their families and vaccinated workers who are afraid to be cared for, live with or work alongside those who are unvaccinated.

Our position, like yours is that we must do everything in our power to help avoid outbreaks in our congregate care settings and we must do our best to ensure that our interventions no longer rely solely

on PPE and confinement of individuals with developmental disabilities within these settings. As you are well aware, during situations of outbreak people are isolated to their bedrooms for two weeks but what you may not be of is that this prescribed precaution is also applied for real or even potential exposures and upon observation of symptoms related to Covid-19. This approach while effective in minimizing spread of Covid-19 is particularly unbalanced in its application within these settings and in comparison, to the general public's experiences. This is primarily the case due to the number of interactions residents of congregate settings are exposed to through their support workers and the support staffs' multiple "social-bubbles". As you can imagine, because of these unavoidable interactions, scenarios of precautionary isolations can be numerous and could be reduced significantly if vaccination was made mandatory for all employees.

The risks of not mandating vaccinations within congregate care settings are numerous. Families and loved ones who have not been able to visit for so long may once again be forced to stay away. Daily living routines that are not yet fully reinstated will once again become restricted. Staffing shortages will grow beyond the current crisis to a point where continuity of existing services will be compromised. The isolation, the invasiveness of enhanced cleaning routines and changes to meal preparations etc. will not only impact those who are ill but all those who reside in this setting. These continued and numerous far-reaching restrictions impact the number of people affected and strain our ability to maintain environments that promote good mental health and family/community connections.

We cannot afford to go backwards and further compound the effects of isolation due to Covid-19 on this population. We need vaccines to ensure we don't.

While we appreciate your government's opposition to broadly mandating vaccines for all citizens, we request once again that you mandate a targeted approach for our sector and other sectors which support vulnerable and medically fragile people.

Thank you,



Michelle Brooks
Chair, Provincial Network



Chris Beesley
CEO, Community Living Ontario



Geoff McMullen
President, OASIS

Cc. Rupert Gordon, ADM, Children, Community and Social Services