



UNITED ASSOCIATION
of Journeymen & Apprentices of the
PLUMBING & PIPEFITTING
Industry of the United States and Canada
Local Union 170 – Affiliated with AFL-CIO-CFL

1658 FOSTERS WAY, DELTA, BC, V3M 6S6
Tel: 604.526.0441 | Fax: 604.526.6261
Toll Free: 1.888.223.7711
info@ualocal170.com
ualocal170.com

March 3, 2021

The Honourable Adrian Dix, MLA
Minister of Health
PO Box 9050
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Sent via email: HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Vaccine Prioritization for BC's Construction Workforce

Dear Minister Dix,

I received a response sent on your behalf, from Thomas Guerrero, Executive Director, Patient Client Relations Corporate Issues and Client Relations, in response to my letter of December 19, 2020 advocating for the prioritization of our members and construction industry workers for COVID-19 vaccination.

His email indicated that the first phases of the Plan are focused on immunizing those who are most vulnerable to severe illness and death, including long term care residents and “the health care workers who care for them”. As I outlined in my letter of December 19, 2020, our members specialize in the trades of Plumbing, Sprinklerfitting, Steamfitting and Welding. Our service technician members work right alongside health care workers in maintaining, servicing and modernizing long-term care facilities, hospitals, clinics and places of work for health care professionals. More concerning, is the fact that many of our members travel from facility to facility on a daily basis, providing these critical services to several institutions. It is inexplicable to me as to why they are excluded from the initial phases of the Immunization Plan. For their safety, as well as the safety of patients, residents and other health care workers, they must be prioritized for COVID-19 vaccination.

I also strongly suggest that you review the prioritization of all essential workers; in particular, those in the construction industry. While I understand that the current Immunization Plan based on age stems from scientific and expert evidence, this evidence is incomplete and still evolving. The recent modelling study (Canadian Press – February 24, 2021) published by Simon Fraser's University (Mathematics, Genomics, Prediction in Infection and Evolution) indicates that vaccination plans that prioritize essential workers (which our members have been deemed) would be more effective. It is our essential workers who are mobile, have greater contacts with others, cannot distance as part of their job, and are the greatest source of transmission to our elderly and vulnerable populations. Our construction and industrial jobsites, where our members must often work in confined and smaller spaces, are particularly susceptible to outbreaks. With the arrival of the new highly transmissible variants, vaccinating these workers has never been more critical.

I want to extend our appreciation to the provincial government and health ministry for your continued efforts in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. I urge you to consider this request on behalf of our membership; to prioritize vaccines for our members who work alongside our health care workers and to prioritize all workers who have been deemed essential and continue to provide critical services during this crisis.

I would appreciate a meeting to discuss this urgent request and can be contacted at any time to provide further details if required.

Sincerely,

A.D. Al Phillips, RSE
Business Manager & Financial Secretary

cc: Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC Provincial Health Officer