



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

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Dr. Caroline Quach-Thanh
Chair of the Secretariat of the
National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI)

Via email: phac.naci-ccni.aspc@canada.ca

Re: Vaccine Prioritization for the Construction Workforce

Dear Dr. Quach-Thanh,

I am writing to you on behalf of the membership of the United Association Local 170; a BC craft union representing plumbers, pipefitters, sprinkler fitters, service technicians and welders. Our workforce has been deemed essential and continues to work throughout this crisis; building, maintaining, servicing and modernizing long-term care facilities, hospitals, and clinics. Our work also spans across many other industries and our members continue to play a key role in our economy's road to recovery.

While we are pleased that the vaccine rollout plan for our province, which is based on guidance from the NACI, is 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, I am writing to advocate to prioritize our service technician members who work right alongside them, while maintaining and servicing health care facilities. These workers continue to risk their health and that of their families by working in these high risk environments, which is further heightened as they travel from facility to facility, servicing several institutions on a daily basis. 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 the vaccine for all essential workers; and in particular, those in the construction industry. While I understand that our current immunization strategy 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 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. Construction and industrial jobsites, where work is often performed 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 important. In addition to reducing transmission, vaccinating our construction workforce will support our essential workers in building back our economy; ensuring safe jobsites and allowing major infrastructure and building projects to continue.

I urge you to consider this request on behalf of our membership: to ensure the prioritization of vaccines to our members who work alongside our health care workers, and for those in our construction workforce, who have been deemed essential and continue to provide critical services during this crisis.

Our thanks to you and the committee for your guidance throughout this challenging and unprecedented pandemic.

Sincerely,

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