



**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. Bonnie Henry**  
Provincial Health Officer  
PO Box 9648  
1515 Blanshard Street  
Victoria BC V8W9P4

Sent via email: [bonnie.henry@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bonnie.henry@gov.bc.ca)

**Re: Vaccine Prioritization for Essential Workers - Construction Workforce**

Dear Dr. Henry,

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, based on guidance from BC's Immunization Committee, is focused on vaccinating 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 put their health and that of their families at risk by working in these environments, only made worse as they often travel from facility to facility 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 essential workers 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, as you develop your plan in the coming days for distribution of the Astra Zeneca vaccine to essential workers, to place the construction workforce at the top of the priority list. Our thanks to you and Ministry for your continued guidance throughout this crisis.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health