



Tel: 604-273-5722 | **Fax:** 604-273-5762 | **Toll Free:** 1-866-273-5766 | **Toll Free Fax:** 1-866-273-5762
105 - 21900 Westminster Hwy., Richmond, BC V6V 0A8
info@apbc.ca | www.apbc.ca

September 16, 2021

Dear Members,

Re: Member Update - Vaccinations

We have received inquiries around the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and Ministry of Health's (MOH) announcement <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93Rnjmr7iCk> regarding "mandatory vaccinations" for healthcare workers in BC and more specifically as it relates to employment with BCEHS. As a result, we want to provide our members with an update and some reference material to address these concerns.

It is important to note, we are working closely with BCEHS, PHSA, HEABC and the MOH, however we still do not have all the information on how this announcement will affect our members and our profession. There are several details we are still awaiting clarity on and will require before we are able to address the concerns that have arisen from the announcement. At this point we have been advised the orders will be in scope and applicable to APBC, CUPE 873 members, and First responders, however we will keep members updated as we get additional information or clarity.

First, it is important to define what is meant by "mandatory vaccination." In the context of the PHO orders, we are talking about the requirement by some employers and establishments to provide proof of fully vaccinated status against COVID-19. There is no current requirement to inject a vaccine into people. People will have a *choice*. Choices come with consequences and currently the consequence for not being able to prove vaccination is that you cannot enter a non-essential establishment as described in the PHO order or work in some environments. Employers and owners of establishments can also establish policies above and beyond the PHO order, provided they are conforming with common law and associated jurisprudence.

People's "human rights" must also be taken in context of the safety of the public (seatbelt and smoking arguments) as well as the rights of the vaccinated population. In the employment context, the test is almost always what is "reasonable."

We have included a recent article by the BC Human Rights Tribunal and the main points are captured at page 5 and 10, particularly the following: "In my view, a person who chooses not to get vaccinated as a matter of personal preference — especially where that choice is based on misinformation or misunderstandings of scientific information — does not have grounds for a human rights complaint against a duty bearer implementing a vaccination status policy." In addition, we have provided CUPE National's Vaccine mandate guidelines.

We understand that some people may have a different view on this and respect that they have the right to those views. They also have the right to not be bullied or harassed because of that view, just like people who support the vaccination passports do.

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APBC supports evidence and science-based vaccinations and will comply with directions and orders. We are an evidence-based profession and encourage anyone unvaccinated to research reliable and credible information to ensure we do all we can to protect paramedics, our patients, health and public safety partners, families, and the public. We are advised we are in the mid 90% of Paramedics and Dispatchers having at least one vaccination.

It is important to remember that while we may not all agree with the PHO and MOH's direction, and while we may all not agree with another, we can do so while still maintaining respect for one another. Our Paramedics and Dispatchers have epitomized professionalism during these tumultuous and uncertain times and have truly emerged as leaders during this pandemic. Please continue to foster the qualities expected of those who are gifted with the responsibility of caring for others.

We understand that for some this announcement has created a great deal of stress and we remind members that there are supports available to you through our peer CISM team as well as Homewood.

APBC is committed to representing the interests of our members and our profession as both the labour Union and the professional voice of paramedics in British Columbia. The health, safety and wellbeing of our members is our priority, as is the health, safety, and wellbeing of our patients.

Lastly, when more information is made available to us, and we receive the written order from the PHO regarding vaccine requirements, we will provide a more detailed update.

BC HRT - [BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner July 2021 Vaccination Policy Guidance](#)

CUPE National - https://cupe.ca/vaccine-mandate-guidelines?utm_medium=email&utm_source=CUPEToday

Sincerely,

Provincial Executive Committee
Ambulance Paramedics of BC
CUPE Local 873

TC/sb/MoveUp

