

## NEWS RELEASE



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### **B.C. Public Servants File Court Petition to Halt Vaccine Mandate Terminations**

VICTORIA – B.C. public servants filed a petition for injunction today in B.C. Supreme Court to stop their employer from terminating them over its proof of COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

The petitioners, four non-union employees, work for four different government ministries and collectively have nearly 60 years of service with the Province of B.C.

BC Public Service Employees for Freedom, a group of more than 450 employees formed in the wake of the BC Public Service's October 5, 2021 announcement that it would require all employees to prove their vaccination status, applauded the court action.

"We are pleased and very grateful that our colleagues have stepped forward to file this petition today," said the group's spokesperson. "This action affects not just the four petitioners, but all B.C. public servants facing termination over the vaccine mandate."

The group has written twice to the Head of the BC Public Service, Lori Wanamaker, first in [October](#) last year and again earlier [this month](#), seeking reconsideration of the policy in light of clinical and population evidence showing the vaccine does not stop COVID infection or transmission. The group has received no response to date.

"We were told that proof of vaccination was necessary to ensure workplace safety and reduce transmission of the virus. However, [BCCDC statistics show](#) that 80% of new cases in B.C. are among those who have received one, two or three doses of vaccine. Many of us have worked remotely since March 2020, and many of our vaccinated colleagues who are still working today, over 40 percent we have been told, have telework agreements in place to work from home."

"We don't understand why the BC Public Service is moving to terminate dedicated public servants in this heavy-handed manner when the evidence shows the virus is becoming endemic and Ontario, Quebec, Alberta,

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI, Northwest Territories and Nunavut do not require their public servants to prove they have been fully vaccinated to continue working.”

A [recent report](#) from the Institute for Research on Public Policy showed that as of February 15, only B.C., New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Yukon had vaccine mandates in place for their public servants. New Brunswick has since indicated it is [reviewing](#) its mandatory policy for government employees, and Newfoundland has said it will [drop its vaccine passport](#) by March 14.

The petitioners’ lawyer, Umar Sheikh of Crease Harman LLP, says the petition filed today is the first of many steps to try and correct an imminent and irreparable injustice.

“Creating two classes of Canadians and dividing us further is certainly not the answer. These public servants have worked faithfully for British Columbians throughout the pandemic and do not deserve to be simply discarded. The Province stands to lose a significant amount of talent and many years of dedicated experience, which will be costly for British Columbians to replace” said Sheikh.

BC Public Service Employees for Freedom [announced](#) on Friday, February 18, that it has begun to share personal stories of public servants impacted by the mandate.

“We have heard from several colleagues now about how this mandate is impacting public services and the toll their impending termination is taking on them and their families. We have so many powerful stories to share, and we believe the public deserves to know how the indiscriminate and arbitrary firing of professional public servants is affecting our province.”

“Our hope is that reason will prevail and we will be allowed to continue fulfilling our passion of serving the public, like our colleagues in other provinces and territories. We look forward to putting this unfortunate episode in B.C.’s history behind us and getting back to work.”

### **Learn More:**

BCPS Employees for Freedom is a non-partisan public service employee group seeking an amicable solution on behalf of its members with their employer. The group is a growing association of more than 450 B.C. public servants from a wide range of professional backgrounds and disciplines, and includes both management and regular employees. Collectively, we have many hundreds, if not thousands, of years of faithful public service behind us, and we look

forward to performing many more. We are not protesting, but rather trying to follow the right process to resolve our current employment situation by writing and communicating with our employer, public officials and the public, and undertaking legal action only as a last resort.

**For Comment on the Court Petition filed, contact:**

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