

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release
March 1, 2022

Update on Court Petition to Stop Vaccine Mandate Terminations and New Employee Testimonials

VICTORIA – More B.C. public servants are joining a [court petition](#) filed last week to stop their employer from terminating them over its proof of COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

Five more non-union BC Public Service employees have joined the original four petitioners seeking an injunction from B.C. Supreme court to stop the firings. The filing last week resulted in a two-week pause to terminations for a number of employees who were expecting dismissal starting February 22.

BC Public Service Employees for Freedom, a group formed late last year in response to the Public Service vaccine mandate policy, welcomed the employees' move to join the court petition.

"More of our colleagues are recognizing the need to stand behind this petition and our efforts to end the unnecessary, unjust and unethical vaccine mandate and terminations," said the group's spokesperson.

"Most of the general public doesn't know that the BC Public Service is trying to terminate us with cause and deny us severance pay and Employment Insurance. We are being punished for not revealing our personal, private medical information or not submitting to pressure to take vaccines that don't stop viral transmission or infection. We have members who have more than 25 years of service and are experts in their fields. This kind of treatment is beneath the dignity of the professional public service."

On November 19, 2021, the B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor, Janet Austen, signed into law [Order in Council 627/2021](#) amending the *Public Service Act* to make the new proof of COVID-19 vaccination policy a term and condition of employment. Any employee terminated under the policy is "deemed to have been dismissed for just cause." The order was passed without parliamentary hearing or debate in the B.C. legislature and one business day before employees who had not proven their vaccination status were to be placed on unpaid leave.

Most other Canadian provinces [are moving on](#) from their proof of vaccination mandates for the general public and government workers. Starting [today in Ontario](#), vaccine certificates will no longer be mandatory in indoor public settings.

No Response from the Employer or Support from the Union

BCPS Employees for Freedom, which has grown to nearly 500 registered members in recent weeks and includes both union and non-union staff, as well as management employees, has received no response to [letters](#) sent to the Head of the BC Public Service, Lori Wanamaker, who announced the proof of vaccination mandate in October. Members of the group represented by the B.C. General Employees' Union (BCGEU) have faced a similar lack of response to their appeals for help.

"The BCGEU has completely abandoned us," said one union member of the group, a BC Corrections Officer based in the south-central interior. "They've sided with the NDP government on this vaccine mandate and think it's OK to fire us with cause and deny us severance. If the union isn't fighting for us, what's the point of having a union? We're hoping this process with the court petition helps where our union has failed us."

***NEW Testimonials* - More B.C. Public Servants Speak Out**

BC Public Service Employees for Freedom has released three new videos of B.C. public servants speaking out about the vaccine mandate and their looming terminations.

"We have many colleagues coming forward now to share their personal stories of public service. We believe the B.C. public deserves to know how the indiscriminate and arbitrary firing of professional public servants is affecting our province. We are your colleagues, neighbours, friends and family."

Kasey - Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

[Kasey](#) has worked for the BC Public Service for a year and a half. In her role as a Probation Officer with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Kasey has helped clients while on bail, making sure they were meeting their conditions and receiving support in the community. She is passionate about her job. "It made me feel like I had a purpose and a reason, and I was helping people". After having worked through the pandemic, she feels it's a shame to let employees go because of their personal choice to not share their private medical information. "I think it's a step backwards for inclusivity". Kasey has been on leave without pay for three months and is expecting termination.

Cheryl - Ministry of Citizens' Services

Cheryl has worked with the Ministry of Citizen's Services for 8 years. As the only person performing her role in her office, she knows being placed on unpaid leave has had a big impact. "I've always been health-minded and always looked at alternative things and never would... had I ever thought that this would be a requirement". Her husband, also a public servant, felt forced to follow the mandate so they could survive. Cheryl has been on unpaid leave for three months and expects to be terminated at any moment.

Diana - BC Wildfire Service

Diana has been with BC Public Service for over 27 years, and for the last 18 has worked for the BC Wildfire Service in Penticton. In her role as Operations Assistant, Diana prepares the zone for the upcoming fire season, including hiring heavy equipment and making sure the necessary fire crews are in place and ready. She plays an integral role working side-by-side with the Zone Wildfire Coordination Officer during intense wildfire fighting operations. She thinks the mandate will have a significant impact on B.C.'s ability to fight wildfires because of the number of contractors who choose to be vaccine-free. "What BC Wildfire Service employees do for the public is above and beyond. I can't even describe everything that they do." Diana has been put on unpaid leave for three months, coinciding with the beginning of fire season, and has been told she will be terminated without severance after her leave ends.

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 nearly 500 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 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, contact:

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