

## NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release  
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### **Judge Defers Decision on Injunction to Pause Firings of B.C. Public Servants Over Vaccine Mandate**

VICTORIA – A B.C. Supreme Court justice deferred a decision today on whether to grant an injunction to pause terminations of B.C. public servants for not complying with their employer’s proof of COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

#### **WATCH \*NEW Testimonials\* - BC Public Service Employees Speak Out:**

- [Philip](#) – Advanced Education and Skills Training
- [Guy](#) – Citizens’ Services
- [Christopher](#) – Liquor Distribution Branch

Four B.C. public servants, Philip Davidson, Zoran Boskovic, Karine Bordua and Clinton Chevrier, filed the petition for injunction on behalf of a group of more than 500 union and non-unionized employees. The petition seeks a temporary stay of terminations pending a 2-day hearing set in May for judicial review of the B.C. government’s [Order 627](#) and [HR Policy 25](#). The order and policy make proof of COVID-19 vaccination a new term and condition of employment for public servants. Under the mandate employees can be terminated with cause for not complying and denied severance and Employment Insurance benefits.

Justice Carol J. Ross heard oral arguments from Bruce Hallsor, Q.C. and Umar Sheikh, representing the petitioners. Upon conclusion of arguments, Justice Ross announced she would reserve her decision until Friday, April 1.

“We put forward a thorough argument until our constitutional concerns can be heard in May. It is our sincere hope that no one is fired before the merits of this case are heard and determined. We are dealing with fundamental constitutional rights,” said Sheikh.

BCPS Employees for Freedom (BCPSEF), a group formed in response to the mandate and now a registered not-for-profit society, supports the court action taken by the petitioners. Davidson, a member of the society, says he is grateful

to remain a B.C. public servant for the time being and looks forward to the outcome of the constitutional case in May. He has been eligible for termination from his position with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training since February 24.

“Every day I’m still a B.C. public servant is a good day, even though I’m on leave without pay and haven’t had any income for four months. I’m proud of my 14 years of service with the BC Public Service, and I hope to serve the public for many more. Sadly, some of my colleagues have already been terminated because of the mandate, but I hope we will all be able to see this through and go back to work.”

In its submission to the court, the provincial government disclosed that as of March 7, 2022, fifteen BC Public Service employees have been terminated for not providing proof of COVID-19 vaccination, while 389 have requested medical, political or religious exemptions. 47 employees have had exemption requests denied, 16 have been approved, and 212 are still waiting for final decision.

With public servant vaccine mandates having been withdrawn by almost every other province and territory in Canada, B.C. now stands virtually alone in its determination to dismiss and deny severance and EI to public servants for not proving they have had at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine in response to a pandemic that has largely subsided and a virus that has become endemic.

On March 10, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced that B.C. would be dropping the requirement to show a BC Vaccine Card to enter certain public spaces, including restaurants, by April 8. However, the digital ID Vaccine Card continues to be a requirement for B.C. public servants to remain employed.

“We hope the government will change their minds about firing us, but we are prepared to go the distance if they don’t. Likewise, our unionized colleagues are very dissatisfied with the lack of representation from the BCGEU [B.C. General Employees’ Union] on the proof of vaccination mandate. Ultimately there has been an injustice done to tens of thousands of B.C. public servants that needs to be corrected, and BCPS Employees for Freedom Society has been created to do just that.”

On March 20, BCPSEF [opened registration](#) for its legal challenge against the BCGEU. B.C. public servants who are BCGEU members and employees of a provincial government ministry, central agency, crown corporation, board, commission, tribunal, office or organization affected by Order 627 and HR Policy 25 are eligible to register with a donation to cover legal costs of the

action. Since registration opened, 120 BCGEU members have signed on and donated.

## **BC Public Service Employee Personal Stories**

B.C. public servants from a wide range of professional backgrounds, government ministries and organizations have agreed to speak with BCPS Employees for Freedom Media on camera or have their audio testimony recorded. Their stories have been made into video clips for the public. Only employees' first names or initials are used, and all testimonies have been prepared in accordance with the BC Public Service [Oath of Employment](#) and [Standards of Conduct](#).

### **Philip - Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training**

**Philip** has been with the BC Public Service for 14 years and has worked for several ministries in various policy roles. Most recently he has served as Director, Policy and Stakeholder Relations, with StudentAid BC in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. Philip helps government develop policy and implement it. Currently his work focuses on student financial assistance policy and helping British Columbians access, afford and complete post-secondary education and training. When the mandate was brought in, Philip didn't feel comfortable being required to disclose his personal medical information in order to keep working. He had worked primarily from home since the pandemic began. Philip is concerned about the fear, division and worry that has come with the pandemic and the mandate. "I just hope for more love, empathy and courage because we're going to need that to heal from this as a society." Philip has been on leave without pay for four months and expects to be terminated at any moment.

### **Guy - Ministry of Citizens' Services**

**Guy** has been with the BC Public Service for four and a half years. As a Data Network Analyst with the Ministry of Citizens' Services, he works with clients from across government to resolve Tier 2 core network communication issues. He is able to do 100 percent of his work from home, but enjoys the face-to-face communication and camaraderie of working in the office. When the mandate came out, Guy studied the information made available about the required new medication but felt it wasn't sufficient for him to make an informed decision. "The science, as it's coming out now, is way different than what we expected even a year ago." Guy has a lot of questions and just wants clear answers. "Mandates don't unify anything - they divide." Guy is on leave without pay and expects to be terminated at any moment.

## **Christopher - Liquor Distribution Branch**

**Christopher** joined the BC Public Service in 2019 to work with the Liquor Distribution Branch in a BC Cannabis Store, initially in Parksville and more recently in Nanaimo. In his role as a cannabis consultant, Christopher offers customer support and helps inform clients about the use of certain products for different needs. Getting this job made him feel like he was finally on the path to achieving his life goals. When the mandate came into effect, Christopher went through a lot of stress and symptoms he had experienced after a serious motor vehicle accident returned, including appetite loss, nausea and depression. “Everything in life just kind of got put on hold. I just felt like I needed to step up and hold true to my values”. Christopher would like everybody to understand the division that has been put in place and hopes we can find a peaceful loving way to come together. Christopher has been put on unpaid leave for three months and expects to be terminated at any moment.

### **Learn More:**

BCPS Employees for Freedom is a non-partisan public service employee group and registered not-for-profit society seeking an amicable solution on behalf of its members with their employer. The group is a growing association of more than 500 B.C. public servants from a wide range of professional backgrounds and disciplines, and includes both management and regular employees. Collectively, we have thousands of years of faithful public service behind us, and we look forward to performing many more. We are trying 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.

### **BCPS Employees for Freedom Media**

Website: [bcpsforfreedom.com](http://bcpsforfreedom.com)

YouTube: [BCPS Employees for Freedom](#)

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