

February 12, 2022

Kevin Falcon  
BC Liberal Party Leader  
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Dear Mr. Falcon:

Congratulations on your recent election to the leadership of the BC Liberal Party. Democracy in British Columbia benefits from a strong, loyal opposition in the Legislative Assembly.

We are BC Public Service (**BCPS**) Employees for Freedom, a growing group of many hundreds of current and recently retired and/or resigned BC public servants who stand for medical privacy and bodily autonomy. Many of our members have been placed on leave without pay since November and are facing imminent termination on February 22, 2022, for declining to prove their COVID-19 vaccination status in accordance with the proof of vaccination policy implemented by the Head of the BCPS, Ms. Lori Wanamaker, on November 1, 2021.

We have written to Ms. Wanamaker, first on October 28, 2021, and again on February 6, 2022 (please see our [letters](#) and [news release](#)), to express our serious concerns and opposition to this policy and ask for an end to its implementation due to its harmful and discriminatory nature. We feel the policy is premised on an assertion that has now been proven to be inaccurate, namely that mandatory COVID-19 vaccination is an effective and necessary measure to reduce virus transmission and ensure workplace safety.

It is now widely acknowledged that COVID-19 vaccines neither prevent infection or transmission of the virus and its variants. Recent data from the BC Centre for Disease Control show that currently nearly 80% of new cases and more than two thirds of people hospitalized and dying from COVID-19 in BC are vaccinated. Furthermore, the majority of office-based BCPS employees have worked remotely from home since March 2020 and continue to do so to this day. Many other frontline BCPS employees have continued to work safely throughout the pandemic by following COVID safety protocols, including masking, social distancing, working behind physical barriers and implementing rigorous cleaning procedures.

Many other jurisdictions are now recognizing the harms in continuing proof of vaccination policies that can no longer be credibly justified and which are causing more harm than good. This week, along with the imminent cancellation of the vaccine passport in Saskatchewan, Premier Scott Moe announced the end of the requirement for proof of vaccination or regular testing for public service employees. He stated that it

is time to move on from a policy under which the benefits no longer outweigh the costs, and that is incumbent on government to remove public health orders when they have run their course.<sup>1</sup> Interim Conservative Leader Candice Bergen has also called upon the federal government to lift all federal COVID-19 restrictions, including vaccine mandates for the travelling public, federal public service employees, and federally regulated workers.<sup>2</sup>

Guidance from BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner<sup>3</sup> on proof of vaccination policies in the workplace states that any such policies should be:

- **justified** by scientific evidence of the risk of transmission in the specific setting;
- **time-limited** (in place for the shortest possible length of time) and regularly reviewed;
- **proportional** to the health and safety risks they seek to address;
- **necessary** due to a lack of less-intrusive alternatives; and
- **authorized** by applicable privacy laws.

We believe that the BCPS employee vaccination mandate now fails on each of these metrics, particularly in the current context of the dominant Omicron strain. There are many reasonable and practical alternatives to mandatory vaccination that are more effective at controlling the spread of COVID-19 in BCPS workplaces which are far less prejudicial and damaging than the summary termination of hundreds of loyal employees.

We have yet to receive any substantive response from Ms. Wanamaker to our concerns and requests, or any indication that the current provincial government will address this matter affecting a large number of BCPS employees and their families, the integrity of public services in B.C. and the provincial bottom line. This mandate has taken an unprecedented toll on public services and created an enormous legal and financial liability for the provincial government. The costs to the provincial government, and ultimately taxpayers, of arbitrarily dismissing such a large number of employees is anticipated to reach many millions of dollars in legal fees, severance pay, rehiring and training of new employees, not to mention the costs of losing the valuable institutional knowledge and years of experience of these employees. Government programs and services have suffered, and will continue to suffer, until this unjustified mandate is lifted.

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<sup>1</sup> Saskatoon Star Phoenix. "Sask. ends vaccine mandates for tens of thousands of public servants" February 9, 2022. <<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/sask-ends-vaccine-mandates-for-tens-of-thousands-of-public-servants/ar-AATCNG8?ocid=msedgntp>>

<sup>2</sup> CBC. February 10, 2022. <[Federal Conservatives call on anti-vaccine mandate protesters to go home | CBC News](#)>

<sup>3</sup> BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. <[A human rights approach to proof of vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic - BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner \(bchumanrights.ca\)](#)>

We are grateful for your recent statement on February 9<sup>th</sup> calling for explanations and data with respect to the provincial health restrictions, and for your comments that it is “imperative that public officials are open about why and when decisions are being made” and that “it is not the time for a ‘because we said so’ attitude”. Mr. Falcon, we are asking for your support to take the changing realities of COVID-19 into consideration and to help us find a solution, including the avoidance of imminent termination of hundreds of loyal BC public service employees who wish to get back to work and serve the public. We are requesting a meeting with you and Honourable Member Bond to discuss these urgent issues, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

BCPS Employees for Freedom

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Cc:

Shirley Bond (Leader of the Official Opposition and Health Critic)

Todd Stone (Critic for Jobs, Economic Recovery, Trade and Innovation)

Peter Milobar (Finance Critic)