



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF NURSES UNIONS
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS

POSITION STATEMENT

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COVID-19 Vaccination: Time to Speed Up the Rollout

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions welcomes Health Canada's approval of a number of COVID-19 vaccines. The rapid development of a number of different vaccines for COVID-19 within less than a year is a tribute to the ingenuity of the scientific community working together towards the global objective of containing the virus and limiting its spread. Large-scale trials on the efficacy of vaccines, with tens of thousands of participants, were undertaken, which resulted in high rates of protection and few or no reported serious adverse events.

Historically, immunization programs have saved countless lives worldwide. The COVID-19 vaccine offers much-needed protection against the continued spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. However, the global goal of reducing the spread of COVID-19 can only be achieved if sufficient numbers choose to be vaccinated.

The approval process in Canada is safe and effective. The assessment of scientific and clinical evidence is done independently by Health Canada; this process is known to be stringent and provides assurance that the vaccine is safe for distribution to the public.

As the national voice of Canada's nurses, the CFNU represents close to 200,000 nurses and student nurses serving on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic. CFNU's membership is playing a pivotal role in Canada's fight against COVID-19 and the immunization rollout strategy.

The CFNU supports the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI)'s recommendation that populations most at risk of severe illness, such as seniors in long-term care, need to be targeted immediately in order to curtail the number of deaths in Canada. In addition, the CFNU urges governments to begin planning and immunizing the general public as soon as possible. CFNU's membership are ready and willing to help with administering the vaccine to all those living in Canada. We encourage governments to significantly accelerate the timeline for vaccine rollout working together with nurses and other health care professionals to facilitate its distribution.

The CFNU calls on governments across Canada to increase the number of clinics where the vaccine is made available, and to create vaccination teams to harness the energy of volunteers that can be rapidly deployed to provide support to these clinics in communities across Canada. It is also essential for a successful rollout that there is an effective strategy for reaching rural, remote and Indigenous communities in Canada, as well as urban populations most impacted by the virus.



The successful rollout of the vaccine remains crucial to Canada's objective of containing the virus and bringing this pandemic to an end. Governments, at all levels, must work collaboratively and transparently, including with nurses unions, to implement a COVID-19 immunization strategy that ensures rapid and equitable distribution of the vaccine.

In determining their vaccine distribution strategy, governments must follow the scientific evidence and the recommendations of the NACI. Together with all levels of governments, the CFNU will continue to provide clear evidence-informed information and resources so that those receiving the vaccine may provide informed consent, and that they are aware of the benefits of a vaccine, as well as any potential risks.

As recommended by the NACI, those most likely to be exposed because of their work, including health care workers, must receive the vaccination as soon as possible.

CFNU's membership, along with other health care workers and essential workers, are at high risk of exposure to COVID-19. As such, the CFNU is encouraging its membership to receive the vaccine to protect themselves, their families, their colleagues, their vulnerable patients/residents/ clients, and the general public.

Members with questions or concerns about the vaccine are encouraged to reach out to their unions, educate themselves and consult with their health care provider. For nurses who are unable to receive the vaccine, the CFNU recommends that they contact their union representative.

While the CFNU believes that any risk posed by the vaccine is outweighed by the benefits to its membership in being protected from COVID-19, the CFNU does not support mandatory vaccination programs.

Employers, working in conjunction with nurses, have a role to play in educating nurses, other health care workers and the general public about the benefits of vaccination.

While vaccination plays a significant role in infection prevention, it is only one element of a larger plan. Employers must have a comprehensive infectious disease prevention and control plan that includes adequate staffing, reducing hospital overcrowding, sufficient handwashing stations, isolating those with infectious diseases within facilities, and readily accessible appropriate PPE.