



October 19, 2021

Hon. Christine Elliott
Ministry of Health
College Park, 5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Sent via email: christine.elliott@ontario.ca

Dear Hon. Christine Elliott,

On behalf of the Board of Health for Huron Perth Public Health, we wish to express our great concern for the variation in vaccination policies for the Home and Community Care sector and the risk this presents to those who are trying to stay in their homes.

It is our understanding that home and community care in Huron and Perth is made up of multiple partners and classified as follows:

Home and Community Support Services (HCSS) – have care coordinators in the field and are direct deliverers of some specialized services.

Home Care Service – agencies that have contracts to deliver home care through agreements with Home and Community Support Services.

Community Support Services (CSS) – agencies that provide a range of services including assisted living, adult day programs, transportation, meals on wheels and friendly visiting.

Private agencies – agencies that provide home and community care with no direct provincial funding.

Members of the public, as well as Primary Care stakeholders, are aware that allowing unvaccinated home and community workers to enter a client's home poses additional and avoidable risk to vulnerable clients in whom an exposure to Covid-19 could do irreparable damage and cost them their independence or even their lives. We have received reports from clients who have requested, and have been unable to access, vaccinated workers; these clients have chosen to decline services, meaning they are not receiving appropriate levels of care.

It is our understanding that most agencies that fall under Home Care Services in Huron and Perth have mandatory vaccination policies with only exemptions due to medical purposes. We are grateful that these organizations have embraced this direction and are supporting the safety of their clients. However, some agencies under HCSS and CSS, in compliance with Directive# 6, allow for staff to opt out of vaccination with regular testing allowances. We know that the sensitivity of Rapid Antigen Tests is limited, and particularly if only performed once weekly. Clients do not have the choice to request a fully vaccinated worker and must choose if they are willing to take that risk.

We know that current risk of COVID-19 spread is highest among those who are not vaccinated and that unfortunately, it can be passed to fully vaccinated individuals, including those who are trying, with the aid of home and community services, to stay in their homes. We commend the Ministry of Health for making staff vaccinations mandatory in Long Term Care Homes and are calling for direction to make vaccination mandatory for all staff working and caring for vulnerable clients such as Long Term Care, Retirement Homes and agencies across the Home and Community Care sector.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Regards,



Kathy Vassilakos
Board of Health Chair

Copy: Premier of Ontario, Hon. Doug Ford
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
aPHa
Randy Pettapiece, MPP
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Home and Community Care Support Services - South West