



January 8, 2021

Sent via email to premier@ontario.ca

Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Subject : **COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization**

Dear Premier Ford,

As the President of the Ontario Public Works Association, I am contacting you to strongly encourage that as you set the priority on how COVID-19 vaccines are disseminated, you are considering public works professionals.

The committed men and women in public works perform many of the critical responsibilities fundamental to public health such as operating and maintaining critical infrastructure services including transportation; solid waste and refuse disposal systems; a clean and safe water supply; safe and clean public buildings, spaces and facilities; and logistical efforts in setting up COVID-19 testing sites – as well as operating and maintaining public parks, forests and green space, which have become so important to Canadians in sustaining health, wellness and physical distancing. These jobs are not only critical to the continuity of protecting the lives of all Canadians, but many are at a heightened risk of contracting COVID-19 because they come into daily contact with the public.

[Public Safety Canada has developed a set of functions deemed essential in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) to help provinces/territories, Indigenous communities, and municipalities protect their communities while maintaining the reliable operation of critical infrastructure services and functions to ensure the health, safety, and economic well-being of the population. This set of essential services and functions includes many performed by the public works sector:

- Workers performing mortuary services, including funeral homes, crematoriums, and cemetery workers
- Employees and others needed to operate and maintain drinking water and wastewater/drainage infrastructure
- Employees needed to maintain and test water quality
- Workers required to carry out construction and restoration projects and services associated with the water sector, including building and commissioning water and wastewater systems and supporting the health and safety of users of the system

- Workers who maintain, ensure, or restore the compression, storage, transmission, and distribution of natural gas, including call centres, utility workers, reliability engineers and fleet maintenance technicians, etc.
- Workers required to carry out construction and restoration projects and services associated with the natural gas sector, including for the storage, compression, transmission and distribution of natural gas
- Transportation workers in support of any emergency response
- Transportation workers involved in construction work and necessary supporting services
- Workers in organizations that provide materials and services for the operation, maintenance and safety of the transportation system, such as clearing snow, collision response, and completing needed repairs to the transportation system (e.g. road repairs)
- Automotive and heavy vehicle repair and maintenance workers
- Public/mass transportation workers, including those with maintenance, operations, and dispatch responsibilities
- Workers who support the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential public works facilities and operations, including dams, bridges, heating and cooling plants, water and sewer main breaks, fleet maintenance personnel, construction of critical or strategic infrastructure, structural engineering, geomatics, custodial health and safety requirements, environmental compliance, integrity of underground infrastructure, management of non-hazardous solid waste, traffic signal maintenance, emergency location services for buried utilities, maintenance of digital systems infrastructure supporting public works operations, and other emergent issues
- Workers to ensure continuity of government property and building management
- Municipal employees who support essential functions, support systems and services, and communications networks
- Municipal employees who support the policy, program and operational systems and services needed to ensure the business continuity of government and the economic security of Canadians
- Waste and Garbage collectors and processors (compost, garbage and recycling)

We support the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\) December 4, 2020 Guidance on the prioritization of initial doses of COVID-19 vaccine\(s\)](#) recommending that initial doses of authorized COVID-19 vaccine(s) be offered to residents and all staff of congregate living settings that provide care for seniors; adults of advanced age; health care workers; and adults living in Indigenous communities. NACI's guidance recommends that essential workers be vaccinated in 'Stage 2' as additional COVID-19 vaccine supplies become available. **We respectfully request that public works professionals be included among essential workers.** Sadly, essential workers have been stretched to the breaking point while being asked to carry out their responsibilities, over the course of nearly 10 months, and concurrently maintain peak mental and physical health and

conditioning to ward off susceptibility to COVID-19. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our request in greater detail at your convenience.

Thank you for taking these perspectives from the Ontario Public Works Association into consideration. For more information, please contact Brian Barber, Executive Director, at brian.barber@rogers.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott Stewart
President

cc Patty Podoborzny
Brian Barber