



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

Canadian Cancer Society COVID-19 vaccine self-advocacy toolkit

How to contact government about COVID-19 vaccine concerns



May 2021

About this toolkit

At the Canadian Cancer Society, we are committed to uniting and inspiring Canadians to take control of cancer. Your voice is powerful and can help drive change from the governments elected to serve you. This toolkit includes information and resources to help you advocate for better access to the COVID-19 vaccine and share your concerns with various levels of government.

You may choose to advocate for faster access to the first or second dose of a two-dose vaccine, simpler booking systems, better accommodations at mass vaccine clinics, or any other important cause related to the successful rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in Canada.

If you have any questions about using this toolkit or the work that CCS is doing to advocate for people impacted by cancer through COVID-19, please contact advocacy@cancer.ca.

This toolkit includes:

1. Overview of jurisdictional responsibility on the COVID-19 vaccine
2. A draft letter to help you share your concerns with a body of government or organization
3. A list of important contacts that you can use to submit your letter or contact for information
4. Other ways to get involved

Jurisdictional responsibility

Federal government, agencies and other entities

The federal government is responsible for the regulatory approval of vaccines, obtains vaccines for provinces and provides guidelines on their use. The federal government distributes these vaccines to provinces and territories based on their population.

Additionally, the federal government is responsible for the vaccination of [certain groups of people](#), including First Nations people living on reserves.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) largely leads efforts to help prevent and control infectious diseases in Canada. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) is an external volunteer advisory body that provides PHAC with advice related to immunizations. In the context of COVID-19, NACI is developing and updating recommendations to facilitate timely decision-making for publicly funded vaccine programs at provincial and territorial levels. Provinces can choose whether to follow NACI guidance or set their own.

More information on the federal responsibility in COVID-19 immunization efforts is [available here](#).

To find your Member of Parliament, [click here](#).

Provincial governments

Provinces and territories are responsible for the bulk of immunization efforts, including preparing their health systems to allocate, deliver, store, distribute, administer, monitor and



report on vaccines within provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Provinces can distribute vaccines based on NACI recommendations but are not obligated to follow them and ultimately, set their own rules in areas like which populations to prioritize for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Some provinces have set up specific COVID-19 vaccine task forces as advisory bodies on vaccine access and distribution, while the Chief Medical Officers of Health oversee vaccine distribution in other provinces.

To learn about the latest vaccine eligibility criteria, visit your province's vaccine plan below:

- [Alberta vaccine program](#)
- [British Columbia immunization plan](#)
- [Manitoba eligibility criteria](#)
- [New Brunswick vaccine strategy and immunization program](#)
- [Newfoundland immunization plan](#)
- [Northwest Territories vaccination rollout](#)
- [Ontario vaccination program](#)
- [Prince Edward Island vaccine plan](#)
- [Quebec vaccination campaign/immunization program](#)
- [Saskatchewan vaccine delivery strategy](#)

Health units, health authorities, health regions or equivalent

In some provinces, the provincial government relies on local public health units, health authorities, health regions or equivalent bodies for the logistics of vaccine administration. While the province still ultimately sets the criteria for who qualifies for a vaccine, these bodies are responsible for managing and overseeing the distribution and administration of vaccines for their area.

Draft advocacy letter

To find your provincial or territorial representative, use one of the following links:

- [Newfoundland & Labrador](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Québec](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Alberta](#)
- [British Columbia](#)
- [Nunavut](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Yukon](#)



Template letter

Dear [Premier, Minister, Speaker, if applicable or Mr/Ms if not] [Elected Official's name],

I am writing today as a [person with cancer/caregiver for someone with cancer/cancer survivor/someone who cares about the challenges people with cancer are facing] who lives in your riding. I am asking for your help on behalf of me and people like me who need more support regarding the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Cancer doesn't stop being a life-changing and life-threatening disease in the middle of a pandemic, and people with cancer are at a higher risk for more serious outcomes of COVID-19.

We know many people are contacting you about the vaccine rollout and when they can get their shot. However, people with cancer have been identified as a priority population for vaccination in most jurisdictions across the country. To that end, I ask:

1. What is your government doing to make it easier for people with cancer or other chronic illnesses to access the vaccine?
2. If people with cancer need accommodations to get their vaccine, who should they contact?

[Provide your experience and the particular challenges you are having with the vaccine rollout].

[Add the paragraphs below if you want to ask about the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccines and when people with cancer will get it.]

Regarding the second dose of vaccines, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends waiting 4 months between the first and second doses, but this differs from the shorter times between doses listed in manufacturers' guidelines. While some provinces have exempted people undergoing cancer treatment from the delayed schedule, others have not.

Today, I ask that you:

1. Immediately clarify whether your government will be adhering to the product guidelines or NACI's recommendations as it relates to delivering the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to people with cancer.
2. Commit to prioritizing people with cancer, caregivers and survivors to ensure they have access to both first and second doses of COVID-19 vaccine prior to general population.
3. Empower healthcare providers to determine the timing of the second COVID-19 vaccination dose based on the unique circumstances of their patients.

[Insert any other specific questions about your circumstance you would like to share or about any accommodations or support you might need.]

We know this is a significant challenge during an unprecedented time. But people with cancer are counting on you for support to get their vaccines quickly and to help lessen their risk of more serious outcomes of COVID-19.

Best regards,



[Your Name]
[Your Address & Postal Code]
[Your Phone Number]

List of key contacts for COVID-19 vaccine information

[View the contact list](#)

This list provides a brief overview and contact information for public bodies in each province/territory that can provide specific information about vaccine access in their area. Along with the contacts on this list please reach out to your healthcare provider regarding your specific circumstances. Healthcare providers are best placed to address the needs of their patients based on their cancer type, cancer treatment and risk.

Other ways to get involved

- **Become a CCS advocacy volunteer:** We have a dedicated volunteer group for advocacy called CCS Voices For Change. You can [sign up here](#) to join and you will receive more information about getting involved in our advocacy to support people with cancer through the pandemic.
- **Take your voice to social media:** Share your thoughts on social media and tag those you want to influence, such as your provincial or territorial representative. Use hashtags like #cdnpoli and #cdnhealth and don't forget to tag the Canadian Cancer Society on Facebook ([@CanadianCancerSociety](#)), Twitter ([@cancersociety](#)) and Instagram ([@cancersociety](#))