



Alliance for Healthier Communities
Alliance pour des communautés en santé

afhto association of family
health teams of ontario

Ontario College of
Family Physicians 

To: Premier Doug Ford
Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier, Minister of Health

Cc: Dr. Dirk Huyer, Coordinator, Provincial Outbreak Response
Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (MOH)

Re: Changes to dosing schedule for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution to Urban Indigenous populations

March 26, 2021

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Elliott,

We write to you today, urgently, with regards to the announcement made on March 18, 2021 that, while on-reserve First Nations people will receive their second vaccine doses within 21-28 days, those living in urban areas will have to wait up to four months for their second doses.

Indigenous adults were prioritized within the vaccine framework with good reason; due to historical health barriers linked to colonialism and continued pervasive anti-Indigenous racism, Indigenous people living everywhere in Ontario – on reserve *and* in urban areas – face health vulnerabilities that others living in Ontario do not. For those living in urban areas, this includes higher rates of homelessness and transient housing, overcrowded housing, and poor health status, among other factors. In addition, there are still many Indigenous people living in urban areas who have yet to receive their first shots. This sudden change to the priority of Indigenous people undercuts the confidence and trust in the vaccines themselves, and in the system that is distributing them, as well as the providers tasked with reaching marginalized Indigenous people. This is, simply put, unacceptable, and frankly avoidable.

We are standing in solidarity with the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council and asking that, at bare minimum, those Indigenous people living in urban areas who've already received their first doses of vaccines be grandfathered in, and permitted to receive their second doses within 21-28 days. This allows for continuity of care, and confidence in this process and the vaccine itself.

Premier, Minister, there is already mistrust mounting in Indigenous communities because of this confusion. There are different approaches being taken across Public Health Units, further adding to the potential for miscommunication and misinterpreted guidance. These moments risk seeing the spread of COVID-19 into First Nations communities, and creating more challenges for all. Urban Indigenous vaccine strategies must be delivered consistently across the province to avoid these ambiguities and variances in the delivery of COVID-19 care for the Indigenous population.

As many Alliance members serve urban Indigenous populations across the province, alongside the members of the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, we look forward to working with you to ensure that the clearest possible plan and strategies can be enabled to ensure the safety of all Indigenous communities in the province.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hobbs, CEO, Alliance for Healthier Communities

Kavita Mehta, CEO, Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario

Leanne Clarke, CEO, Ontario College of Family Physicians

cc.:

Shawn Batise, Deputy Minister, Indigenous Affairs

Nadia Surani, Acting Director, Primary Care Branch, Ministry of Health