

AUPE Executive Committee Statement on Vaccinations

AUPE encourages members to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves, their families, their colleagues, and vulnerable members of the public. Not only are vaccines a critical tool for protecting individual Albertans from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but they are also important to prevent the overextension of Alberta's health care services. COVID-19 vaccines have been demonstrated to be safe and effective by numerous large-scale scientific studies. AUPE believes that any risk associated with the vaccines is outweighed by the benefit to AUPE members and the general public in being protected from COVID-19.

Employers across Canada have begun announcing policies requiring workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19. While labour arbitrators have not yet had the chance to consider these COVID-19 vaccination policies specifically, historically arbitrators have found employers are entitled to implement vaccination policies. In particular, labour arbitrators have found that employers are justified in requiring front-line workers who deal with the public, including vulnerable and immunocompromised individuals, to be vaccinated. Additionally, a policy requiring workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 is consistent with the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act which places legal obligations on employers, workers, and unions to ensure that all workers are protected from workplace hazards such as COVID-19.

For the protection of AUPE members and the general public, AUPE will support a policy requiring members to be vaccinated against COVID-19 provided the policy:

- Respects the terms and conditions of applicable collective agreements.
- Complies with Human Rights legislation. When an individual is not able to be vaccinated on the basis of a medical condition, or other protected ground under the Alberta Human Rights Act, employers must accommodate the individual to the point of undue hardship.
- Complies with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations.
- Does not impose discipline on members for non-compliance but provides non-disciplinary alternatives to vaccination (work from home or reassignment where possible and leave of absence without pay as a last resort).

AUPE encourages members who cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccine due to a medical condition, or other protected ground under the **Alberta Human Rights Act**, to contact their **Membership Services Officer (MSO)** via the **Member Resource Centre 1-800-232-7284**.

Finally, while vaccination plays a role in preventing workplace infection and the transmission of airborne disease, it is only one component of a larger plan. As such, AUPE continues to support comprehensive disease prevention plans including work from home arrangements, access to handwashing stations and PPE suitable for COVID-19.

For more information contact **Vice-president Bonnie Gostola** at b.gostola@aupe.org or **Vice-President Mike Dempsey** at m.dempsey@aupe.org

In Solidarity,
Your AUPE Executive