



## Q & A – Vaccination for COVID-19

### What OPSEU/SEFPO Members Need to Know

#### Q: Does OPSEU/SEFPO support the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Yes, OPSEU/SEFPO believes that vaccination is an effective strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- There are many individual and societal benefits to vaccination: produce immunity in the absence of illness, reduce the severity of COVID-19 if contracted, and slow the spread in the community.
- While adverse effects may occur, Health Canada reports only 0.015 percent adverse effects following immunization, and the majority resolved within a few days after vaccination.

#### Q: Is the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory in Ontario?

- No, but it is recommended, especially for workers in high risk areas or who provide care for others.
- It is the responsibility of the government/public health – not employers – to determine when and if vaccination should be mandatory.
- For some specific situations, vaccination may not be appropriate, depending on individuals' health conditions and circumstances. For these reasons, vaccination should result from discussions between a patient and their health care provider.

#### Q: What can Joint Health and Safety Committees/Locals recommend that employer policies say?

- That vaccination remains a personal choice, but may be recommended.
- That employers (in consultation with the JHSC) draft information and awareness materials regarding benefits of vaccination and take “an awareness and encouraging” approach. Workers should receive information about the vaccine, its advantages, any known disadvantages or effects, possible contraindications, any programs or initiatives to assist workers, and any other relevant information about the vaccine program.
- That workers shall not be adversely affected by a vaccination policy and program.
- That processes be developed to accommodate workers who cannot receive the vaccine due to medical or other reasons protected by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and/or decline the vaccine for personal reasons; these processes must not be disciplinary/adverse in nature, and should make sense in terms of health and safety, risk, outbreak situation, etc., keeping workers' jobs protected.
- That employers make it easy and convenient for workers to get vaccinated (by giving them paid time off or by offering the vaccine at the workplace).

#### Q: What should workers do if they suffer consequences if they choose not to take the vaccine?

- If an employer makes vaccination mandatory for its workers, a local may wish to file a policy grievance.
- If a worker faces any negative job consequences for declining a vaccine, the worker should speak to a steward right away. The worker may need assistance in seeking an accommodation or to obtain help and advice about his or her rights in this situation (such as filing a grievance, etc.).

Questions? Contact your JHSC, your steward, your local, or your union. We are all here to help you.