



*Saskatoon  
Community  
Clinic*

**Community Health Services (Saskatoon) Association Ltd.**

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April 14, 2021

The Honourable Paul Merriman  
Minister of Health  
Government of Saskatchewan  
Room 204, Legislative Building  
Regina, Saskatchewan, S4S 0B3  
[he.minister@gov.sk.ca](mailto:he.minister@gov.sk.ca)

Dear Honourable Minister Merriman:

We are writing today to express our frustration with how non-SHA health care workers, who are not physicians, have been treated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are aware, the Saskatoon Community Clinic (SCC) is a co-operative primary health care centre, one of the largest in Canada, serving close to 15,000 patients in the city of Saskatoon and surrounding area. We operate out of two locations in the city, one in the downtown area, and one in the inner city core neighbourhood. The physician group is one staffing department out of many, including nurse practitioners, lab and diagnostic staff, mental health counsellors, outreach workers, primary care nurses, community mental health nurses, clinical office assistants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, and pharmacists. We work very closely as an interdisciplinary team in order to provide the best possible patient care. During this entire last year, SCC did not reduce its operating hours, nor did we close our doors once to our clients. We remained open every day during the pandemic, abiding by all public health orders, while many of our partner agencies restricted their operations and reduced access to members of our community. This past year, our staff have provided 71, 624 appointments to patients in the community.

Our physician group is pleased that we are now eligible to receive our COVID-19 vaccine. As front-line providers, we feel it is imperative that we are adequately protected so that we can continue to offer our services in the fight against COVID-19. It has come to our attention, however, that many of our co-workers and team members have been denied the opportunity to receive their vaccines (even though they meet the April 12<sup>th</sup> expanded Phase I criteria) because they are not employed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority. We are writing to you today to let you know that this is not acceptable. Health care workers who have direct contact with patients are all at risk for contracting COVID-19, regardless if they are employed by the SHA or by a partner organization such as the SCC.

**“Your Health Care Co-op”**

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At SCC we have many disciplines that have prolonged contact with patients. Often, for example, our primary care nurse will spend more time with the patient than the physician will; then the patient may go downstairs and spend as much as an hour with our physical therapists. We employ nurse practitioners who work alongside us in our practice, yet, according to the Ministry of Health, they are not eligible to receive their vaccine. These are a few of the inequities that are resulting from your decision to only vaccinate SHA employees, and non-SHA physicians.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunizations (NACI) released clear guidelines on the efficient and equitable allocation of initial doses of authorized COVID-19 vaccines. Specifically, this committee recommends that in Phase I, health care workers (including all those who work in health care settings and personal support workers whose work involves direct contact with patients) should receive the vaccine. Nowhere in these recommendations does it state that a health care worker's ability to receive the COVID-19 vaccine is dependent upon their place of employment.

Minister Merriman, we are respectfully asking you to reverse your decision to exclude health care workers who are not physicians, yet who provide direct patient care, from receiving their COVID-19 vaccine when they clearly meet the eligibility criteria set forth by the province.

Sincerely,

The Saskatoon Community Clinic Medical Group

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Dr. Jodi Parent  
Dr. Larissa Kiesman  
Dr. Kali Gartner  
Dr. John Dosman  
Dr. Thomas Milne  
Dr. Nicole Dubois

Dr. Beavan Talukdar  
Dr. Paula Paley  
Dr. Jessica Harris  
Dr. Doug Bell  
Dr. Kendra Morrow  
Dr. Reem Abdul Hadi  
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Cc: Dr. Ryan Meili, Leader of the NDP Opposition  
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