

July 16, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Minister Patty Hajdu
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

The Hon. Christine Elliott
Ministry of Health
5th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Re: OCC Position on Proof-of-Immunization

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Premier Ford, Minister Hajdu, and Minister Elliott,

On behalf of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and our 60,000 members, thank you for your continued leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Canada's vaccination rate continues to rise, a safe and sustainable reopening of our economy is on the horizon. We support a centralized, Canada-wide approach to COVID-19 proof-of-immunization that could be easily used to confirm vaccination status for international and domestic use. Without inter-provincial harmonization, Canada risks a piecemeal approach, making life more difficult and unpredictable for individuals and employers during an already uncertain time.

Implementing proof-of-immunization would both encourage more Canadians to get vaccinated and allow more businesses to safely reopen and remain open with the possibility of future outbreaks still uncertain. Public health restrictions, such as capacity limits, could then be modified accordingly based on the lower risk involved with close contact among fully vaccinated individuals.

However, in absence of a national standard for proof-of-immunization, the Ontario government should review and assess the applicability of Manitoba's model in Ontario. Manitoba's secure model uses COVID-19 proof-of-immunization cards or digital QR codes to confer additional benefits to card holders and accelerate reopening of facilities and major events that remain heavily restricted or have been closed since the beginning of the pandemic. For example, by requiring proof-of-immunization upon entry, large event venues and arena concerts could safely reopen over the summer and visitation capacity could be expanded at long-term care homes and hospitals. To protect individual privacy, the QR code and card only show the person's name and vaccination status when scanned.

A federal or provincial approach should avoid creating additional red tape or barriers to reopening, particularly for small businesses. Existing reopening privileges should be maintained under Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen, while providing an option for expanded benefits for individuals who are fully vaccinated.

In the ongoing management of this crisis, we also ask government to consider alternative methods of addressing the possibility of future outbreaks while avoiding the economic damage of locking down the province as a whole. For instance, if case counts rise in a particular region, a new framework could specify measures to reduce individual contacts and outline capacity restrictions for public-facing businesses in that region. This framework must be science-based and informed by public health officials. In addition, reopening guidelines should be applied fairly and consistently to all businesses regardless of sector or establishment size.

We would be happy to discuss these issues further and look forward to continuing to work with you on solutions that support the health of Canadians and our economy.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce