

April 19, 2021

The Honourable Sylvia Jones  
Solicitor General  
25 Grosvenor Street, 18th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y6

Dear Minister:

I am extremely concerned that Ottawa Public Health is refusing to provide workplace vaccinations to my members who work at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. Further, correctional staff at 14 other institutions currently have no access to a vaccine clinic.

As the daily rate of COVID-19 infections in Ontario continues to soar, the health and safety of corrections members must be made a top priority. Corrections facilities are among the only environments in Ontario where front-line staff deal directly with unmasked individuals in extremely close quarters. That puts them among the most at risk of being infected on the job – a job that’s already hazardous at the best of times.

Ottawa is one of the very few municipalities in Ontario that continue to vaccinate solely according to age, rather than according to workplace risk or other demographics. As the most vulnerable elderly receive their shots, this policy has become less and less practical. Front-line workers are the ones most at risk of getting infected and dying now. They must become the new priority.

I realize that municipalities are responsible for the rollout of vaccines within their respective jurisdictions. I urge you to contact public health in Ottawa to stress the necessity of immediately giving Local 411 workers the option of being vaccinated in their workplace.

It’s vital that my union’s 9,000 Corrections members get the vaccine as quickly as possible for their safety and for public safety.

I look forward to your early response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Thomas".

Warren (Smokey) Thomas  
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union