



Thursday, December 10, 2020

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister
Ministry of Health
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
christine.elliott@ontario.ca

Re: Vaccine Distribution for Essential Workers

Dear Minister Elliott:

The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine marks a turning point in the battle against this pandemic. Like many Ontarians, I am thrilled and frankly relieved to hear that it will become available to most Ontarians in the first half of 2021. I do not envy the difficulty and ethical maze that is in front of you as you design a plan to prioritize deployment of vaccines. In fact, my purpose in writing is to further complicate these deliberations.

To be clear, those Ontarians most at risk of dying from the virus should also be at the front of the vaccine line.

Similarly, those Ontarians that keep us safe should be prioritized. Frontline medical staff. Firefighters. Paramedics. Police. For these professions, response time is critical to efficacy.

As winter sets in across Ontario, I am deeply concerned that municipalities may have to close roadways because those charged with keeping them open and safe during the winter have fallen ill. If this happens, it directly undermines the efficacy of those men and women mentioned above, who we all count on to be there for us during an emergency.

OGRA has pushed its municipal members to tackle the risk of COVID head-on. We have collaborated with the private sector, insurers and other associations to raise awareness and provide best practices. Municipalities across Ontario have risen to this challenge. However, even these efforts cannot overcome the fact that for many municipalities, the risk of even one infection could result in the shuttering of public works departments.



I would respectfully and strongly urge you to consider prioritizing the men and women who are on the frontline of winter road maintenance in Ontario. Including this very small cohort of people in your prioritized vaccine distribution list will ensure that those we are relying on to get us through this pandemic are not undermined by something as foreseeable as snow in Ontario.

Keeping our roads safe and open depends on it.

Sincerely,

Rick Harms
President, Ontario Good Roads Association

cc. Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Sylvia Jones, Solicitor General
Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing
Shelley Gibson, Assistant Deputy Minister, COVID-19 Vaccine Planning and Implementation Division
Emily Beduz, Director of Pandemic Response
Graydon Smith, President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Bill Wilson, President, Association of Ontario Road Supervisors