

June 16, 2021

The Honourable Monte McNaughton
14th Floor, 400 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7

RE: A Plan for Fully Vaccinated Manufacturing Employees

Dear Minister McNaughton:

On behalf of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME) and our member companies, I am writing to seek guidance on Ontario's reopening plan as it relates to manufacturing operations and your support for introducing a plan that provides clarity on health and safety regulations as more Ontarians become fully vaccinated.

CME has partnered with the Government of Ontario on all facets of the COVID-19 recovery and actions; we have stood by and supported the government publicly throughout. Not the least of which was working together with your office in designating the sector as essential and allowing the sector to continue its operations under strict health and safety guidelines. The guidelines introduced by the province were largely based on industry best practices as established by CME and our member companies from across Canada. These guidelines along with aggressive rapid testing, when possible, were fundamental in protecting Ontario's 750,000 manufacturing workers throughout the pandemic. Today, CME and our members are pushing an aggressive agenda of vaccinations. Not only are our members proactively encouraging their workers to get vaccinated, they are providing paid time off, paying vaccination bonuses, and even hosting vaccination clinics.

Vaccination efforts are working. COVID case counts are coming down along with hospitalization rates. As more and more Ontarians get vaccinated over the coming weeks, we fully expect these trends to continue. Now is the time for the province to begin looking at ending or loosening all the restrictions put in place to control the spread of COVID and clearly define a path forward for companies and their employees. Just as CME and the manufacturing sector partnered with your government on establishing guidelines and keeping the sector operating safely throughout the pandemic, we are now offering to partner on the wind-down plan for these requirements.

Over the past several weeks we have seen guidance stemming from the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) that states that there can be less restrictions for those who are fully vaccinated. This has resulted in US states, such as Michigan, unwinding many workplace requirements for vaccinated employees that were established as COVID started to spread in 2020. Today, for many of our members' sister and customer plants in the US, vaccinated workers can gather for breaks, carpool together, work without wearing a mask, and do not have to screening such as rapid testing. And where COVID cases are found in the workplace, fully vaccinated employees are being treated as if there was no risk of exposure.

These policies and actions do not discriminate against those who cannot get a vaccination for whatever reasons but provide clear and reasonable benefits to those who have been vaccinated because the risks have been eliminated. Those who cannot get vaccinated will be provided accommodations so that they can continue their employment as they are today.

Manufacturers thrive on certainty and predictability. Throughout the pandemic, manufacturers have had to contend with a business climate that has been very uncertain and very unpredictable. While our sector clearly supports the need for stringent public health protocols, we must have a plan and guidance protocols in place to unwind these policies once the science says they are no longer needed. To date, the province has not committed to an unwinding or loosening of workplace restrictions on fully vaccinated employees. CME believes that it is critical that the province also looks to unwind workplace restrictions in a similar fashion to what we have seen in the US. For fully vaccinated employees, workplace restrictions put in place to protect against and control the spread of the virus should be lifted. Our goal should be to follow the lead of the US and return to a state of operation as close to pre-pandemic as possible for those that have been fully vaccinated.

We are hopeful that as we approach the summer months, the province will be able to provide clear and reasonable guidance to all of Ontario's employers and employees along these lines. CME and our members would be pleased to meet with you and your Ministry to discuss the importance of these unwinding plans over the coming weeks.

Sincerely,



Mathew Wilson
Senior Vice-President, Policy, Government Relations and Ontario

Cc. Hon. Christine Elliot, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade