

Council Member Motion

Notice given on: Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Meeting Date Wednesday, April 17, 2024
From Councillor Findlay
Subject Request for Termination of the Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate

Background

It is estimated that upwards of 10,000 BC healthcare workers were impacted by the province's vaccine mandate in 2021. Many took early retirement, and some moved out of province or into other local industries. However, the estimation of those workers who remained in BC, who wanted to return to work and STILL want to return to work, is between 2,500 and 4,500.

On February 21, 2023, a BC resident (Miya Regeir) wrote an email to North Cowichan council (and other jurisdictions) and asked that council write a letter to request that the province remove the mandate and allow those workers to return. The letter was pulled from the consent agenda and discussed at length at that meeting, and council voted against the mayor writing a letter, with many stating that the healthcare industry was not "in our lane".

On September 21, 2023, due to ongoing staffing shortages in the healthcare system and the strain it was putting on workers within the industry, a motion was brought forward at UBCM to request the province remove the vaccination mandate.

On March 7, 2024, Peace River South MLA Mike Bernier rose in the BC legislature and discussed this issue at length. The province, and the federal government, are creating programs and incentives to fast-track the inclusion of immigrant healthcare workers as well as recent graduates of medical programs, in order to try and fill in the void left by both the unvaccinated healthcare workers and the expansion of care needed for an aging population. In his speech, Mr. Bernier discussed the state of healthcare in BC, including northern communities who are struggling to find doctors and nurses willing and able to work. He discussed the thousands of unvaccinated workers who are sitting on the sidelines, waiting to be called back.

On March 20, 2024, North Cowichan council voted in favour of supporting the Cowichan Valley Primary Care Society and providing a grant-in-aid to try to attract doctors and other healthcare workers to North Cowichan, showing that healthcare is a concern of both council and our residents.

It is time the province removes its mandate over healthcare workers to help alleviate the ongoing staffing shortages, the burnout and overtime incurred by the current workforce, and allow those unvaccinated healthcare workers to return.

Recommendation

WHEREAS North Cowichan Council voted on March 20, 2024, to provide a grant-in-aid of \$1,000 to the Cowichan Valley Primary Care Society, and to send a letter in support of the Cowichan Valley Primary Care Society to the BC Minister of Health;

AND WHEREAS the healthcare industry in British Columbia is stretched to the limit, from all accounts;

AND WHEREAS approximately 10,000 healthcare workers retired, left the industry, moved out of province, or chose to stop working due to the provincial Covid-19 vaccine mandates;

AND WHEREAS approximately 4,000 healthcare workers remain out of the industry, but wish to return to their previous healthcare positions;

AND WHEREAS British Columbia remains the only jurisdiction in North America to maintain a vaccine mandate for healthcare workers.

NOW THEREFORE be it resolved that North Cowichan Council authorize the Mayor to send a letter to Minister of Health, Adrian Dix, and the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, to request the termination of the Covid-19 vaccine mandate and invite over 4,000 healthcare workers back to work, to help alleviate the stress on the provincial health care system.

Attachment: