



September 29, 2021

To the members of the Provincial Government, York Region Health, and the CFIB,

We have learned today that York Region has imposed mandatory vaccination requirements for all participants in sport aged 12+. The order was dated September 28th. There was no warning, and there is no grace period to give families the opportunity to complete their vaccinations. Everywhere else, enough notice has been provided for people to complete their vaccinations before they were turned away from businesses, activities, or their employ. We cannot understand why York Region Public Health is being so punitive towards our industry.

This is going to have a devastating financial impact. Most dance school businesses charge tuition on a monthly basis, like a gym membership. Imposing this requirement on the first of the month will mean the potential loss of thousands of dollars of revenue at a time when our businesses are just re-opening after lengthy closures. This move will guarantee further closures.

This is also extremely unfair to the families and children that were told by the Province nearly a month ago that children participating in activities such as dance would be exempt from these requirements. Families signed up for these activities in good faith, and some children are going to be faced with losing their in-person activities at a time they need it most. This is true even for those who have received one shot and have every intention of completing their vaccinations. The impacts on their physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being has been made clear through numerous reports from the medical community.

Especially maddening in all of this is that with capacity restrictions, many dance schools have turned students away because classes were 'full'. In some cases, there would have been eligible students turned away in favour of those who are now going to be faced with being kicked out of their dance school. It is a terrible position to put a small business owner in.

And while further restrictions are once again being imposed on our businesses, there is no loosening of the capacity or other restrictions that are currently in place, and there is no additional financial support for the losses our industry faces while we are forced with increasing the vaccination rates.



Already, businesses have had to hire additional staff to manage screening and verify vaccination certificates. This order will create even greater staffing needs. Without a standard vaccination passport system, this is a time-consuming process as well, often leading to long lines outside of our facilities, in the increasingly cool and inclement weather.

The Province has once again let down our industry. Had the Government mandated vaccinations for school children as they have been called upon to do, this would be largely a non-issue. We would ask that York Region Public Health turn their efforts to mandating vaccinations in the school system where there is a far greater risk of transmission and outbreak than in dance classes. We have physical distancing measures in place, and in most cases dancers remain masked. A mask mandate would be a viable alternative to this order.

With 276 active cases in York Region as of this writing including only 15 active cases in schools, this feels like an unnecessary step at this time. The percentage of cases amongst the unvaccinated in the last seven days is 58.4%, meaning that the number of cases amongst the unvaccinated in school-related infections is statistically insignificant. These measures will be anything but for our businesses however.

Southlake Health has ZERO patients in critical care for COVID at present. Markham Stouffville has two, and Mackenzie Health has eight. Ten patients being cared for in ICU is unfortunate, but hardly seems to make these additional measures necessary.

At a minimum, York Region should provide a two-month window to allow families to get their children fully vaccinated and continue with their activities. However, based on current measures in place at the Provincial level, the near-zero rate of infection amongst unvaccinated children in school-settings, and the low number of patients receiving critical care in hospitals, we are asking that York Region Public Health delay this order until such time that it becomes absolutely necessary. Given rising voluntary vaccination rates, the prospect of approval for children 5-12 in the near future, and continued public health measures already undertaken, in addition to the extraordinary steps taken by our individual businesses, our hope is that this need never arrives.

We look forward to hearing from you all and discussing this further.

Respectfully,
Lee Newman and Tom Carter
on behalf of Dance Safe Ontario