



News Release

May 26th, 2021

Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman calling for cautious approach to vaccination certification schemes

As countries around the world, and some jurisdictions in Canada contemplate how or if certification of COVID-19 vaccination status will be implemented in daily life, Canadian Ombudsmen are stressing a cautious approach that places fairness at the heart of any potential vaccination certification system that is applied to public services.

The Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman (CCPO) issued a guidance document today aimed at provincial and territorial public sector organizations under the jurisdiction of Ombudsman across the country. This includes agencies and government ministries providing services such as public education, housing, and health services.

“Although we are not seeing yet that people are having to show vaccination status to receive public services in Canada, with the guidance we are providing, we want to plant the seed both with public organizations, and with the public, that if this does start to happen it is done in a way that is fair, reasonable and just,” said Bill Smith, President of the CCPO and Ombudsman for Nova Scotia.

The guidance document calls on provincial and territorial governments to consider key fairness principles when contemplating COVID-19 vaccination certification approaches including:

- Clear direction for the use of vaccination certification must be given by government via legislation or publicly available policy.
- Any vaccine certification program must be evidence-informed and all decisions must be subject to review and appeal processes.
- Accommodations must be made for those who have not received the vaccine, including alternative service delivery options.
- Decisions about restricting access to a service based on a person’s vaccination status must be done in a transparent, procedurally fair manner and be clearly communicated to the affected person in an accessible way.

“Implementing new measures such as vaccine passports runs the risk of creating a lot of confusion, concern and formal complaints,” said Smith. “This guidance today serves as a

reminder that may help prevent unfairness from occurring if this is something governments decide to apply to their public services.”

To view the CCPO guidance document visit:

https://ombudsman.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/CCPO-Fairness-Principles_Vaccine-Passport-EN.pdf

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These administrative fairness principles have been developed by the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman. The CCPO is comprised of provincial and territorial Ombudsman, whose mandate is to ensure people are being treated fairly in the delivery of public services. These guidelines are intended for those public bodies under the jurisdiction of the provincial/territorial Ombudsman. They are not intended for the federal government, Indigenous governments, international travel procedures or the private sector.