

December 7, 2021

Via email

To: Bell Locals & Servicing Representatives

Greetings,

Re: Amendments to Bell Vaccination Policy

Following guidelines of public health agencies and after assessing the profound economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workers and the strain of the pandemic more generally, Unifor took a strong and principled public position in support of vaccination. Unifor continues to recognize vaccination is essential to protecting the health and safety of workplaces and communities. The union has always been clear that any assessment of safety measures, including vaccination policies, would need to be re-evaluated as those measures and/or surrounding circumstances change. It has also been our commitment to fully consider the individual circumstances of every worker who faces disciplinary consequences as a result of non-compliance with an employer vaccination policy.

Bell recently announced amendments to its Vaccination Policy. We have reviewed those changes. There have also been some recent developments in case law which we continue to monitor. We anticipate rapid and ongoing evolution of the law in this area. For those who work from home and for those where previous testing has been a viable option, there have been some limited victories. As a result of these factors, Unifor is advising union representatives to continue to carefully look at the individual circumstances of those affected and file individual grievances where the member so wishes. Members will need to provide an explanation as to why the policy is unreasonable in relation to their personal circumstances.

Workers should be cautioned that success is not assured and if the policy is deemed reasonable by an arbitrator, very serious employment consequences for a refusal to abide by its terms, may in fact stand.

It is important for our staff and local unions to communicate this to workers who decline to be vaccinated because of the serious risk of loss of employment. It should also be noted that the grievance and arbitration process can take many months to complete, (often over one year) due to the back log of grievances and the lack of arbitrator availability.

Unifor anticipates that workers who are not vaccinated by December 10, may wish to file individual grievances immediately thereafter because once at this stage, according to the terms of the Policy and guidance notes sent out by Bell, they will be subject to disciplinary consequences for failing to abide by the Company's vaccination mandate. Those who have not received their first dose of the vaccine by December 10, 2021 will not be able to complete the vaccination process by January 31, 2022 and will therefore be subject to discipline based on the current policy.

[The Government of Canada announced today](#) it will require employees in all federally regulated workplaces to be vaccinated against COVID-19. We are not yet sure whether this has an impact on Bell's vaccination policy, but it is an example of how quickly things are changing.

Local Unifor representatives who require additional guidance can contact their National Staff Representatives.

In solidarity,



Chris MacDonald
Assistant to the National President



Olivier Carrière
Assistant to the Québec Director

CM/OC/ja:cope343

Copy: N. Rizvi, N. Lundquist, R. Plante, R. LeBlanc