



For Immediate Release

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Community Groups Call on the Province to Ensure Racialized Precarious Essential Workers Get Prioritized for Vaccine Roll Out

Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ) and Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC) have been raising public awareness about the rise of anti-Asian racism in Ontario and Canada as well as the differential impact of the pandemic on Asians and racialized communities since January 2020.

In a recent letter to Ontario's Minister of Health, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution TaskForce, CCNS-SJ and CSALC is urging the Ontario government to ensure racialized communities at heightened risk of COVID are prioritized for vaccination. This includes those with precarious status and those facing barriers in accessing the vaccine.

“Beside seniors in long-term care, there is no dispute that racialized Ontarians, particularly those providing essential services as well as those living in low income neighbourhoods, have been hit especially hard by COVID-19. Media reports have also shown the devastating impact of the pandemic on migrant workers,” said Avvy Go, Clinic Director of the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic.

“Lesser attention however has been paid to the plight of those without immigration status (undocumented persons) providing essential services – for example, in small restaurants and grocery stores. These workers are at high risk but are reluctant to be tested, let alone getting vaccinated for fear of being caught,” added Avvy Go.

“Relying on online registration for vaccination will inadvertently deny access to disproportionately more racialized persons, including seniors, workers and others who do not speak English or French, or have limited or no access to technology,” said Amy Go, President of Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice.

“Lack of trust in government or authority by racialized communities may also make them reluctant to receive the vaccines,” added Amy Go.

In their letter to the province, CCNC-SJ and CSALC proposed a number of recommendations to align the vaccination program with the principles of equity, including:

1. Working with community groups that serve racialized groups and with ethno-specific business chambers to ensure timely vaccine access for essential workers such as workers in grocery stores and restaurants, including those that are operated by Asian Canadian and other racialized small business owners;
2. Ensure that the vaccine roll out process will be available to all regardless of the individual's immigration status without any negative consequences;
3. Set up multi-lingual interpretation phone lines to schedule vaccinations.

Prioritizing the most at risk is the tenet of the vaccination program. CCNC-SJ and CSALC urge the province to adopt their recommendations to help Ontario reach its stated goal.

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