

**JAGMEET SINGH**

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April 18, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I know you share my deep concern at the escalating third wave of COVID-19. Health care workers and others are sounding the alarm bell – warning us that as ICUs fill up, the ability of our health care system to cope with the sickest of patients is at risk.

Early on in the pandemic, you raised the possibility of a declaration of a public welfare emergency under The Emergencies Act. In light of the dire situation in Ontario, the question of The Emergencies Act must be revisited. I believe such a declaration, applied to Ontario, could help ensure a more coordinated delivery of vaccines to those who need them most, as well as enabling workers to prevent the spread by taking paid sick days and time off to get vaccinated.

Canada is not yet receiving enough vaccines and vaccines have been slow to arrive. In some places, this means that vaccines are not available to those in danger. The most glaring example of this is in the city of Toronto, where the wealthiest neighbourhoods have higher rates of vaccination than neighbourhoods where racialized and working-class people live – and which have higher levels of COVID-19 positivity.

The public health advice is clear. The virus is spreading in workplaces. Paid sick days and paid vaccination leave is urgently needed. We have spoken many times of the need to make changes to the federal sickness benefit to make it more accessible, more flexible and to offer full pay. For some workers, this is their only option. I am urging you to work with me to find solutions – including reimbursing employers who begin to provide paid sick time, if necessary.

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Many provinces have taken steps to contain the virus and distribute vaccines to priority populations. I do not believe a declaration should apply to provinces where it is not needed. Ontario is a glaring exception. If public confidence in the government's response to COVID-19 is further eroded, this will make it almost impossible to stop the spread of the virus. The stakes could not be higher. Doctors have called the current situation in Ontario a "catastrophe". There is still time to change the course of the pandemic. There is still time to save lives. But we have to act.

I encourage you to convene a meeting with Opposition Leaders and Premiers to work together on solutions. We must come together and work as a united front against this catastrophic pandemic. There will be disagreements. But I believe we can find a way to put those aside to protect the health and lives of people across Canada.

You have my commitment to work with you on this most important challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jagmeet Singh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jagmeet" and the last name "Singh" clearly distinguishable.

**Jagmeet Singh, MP (Burnaby South)**  
**Leader of New Democratic Party of Canada**