

December 7, 2020

The Honourable Patty Hajdu
Minister of Health
Health Canada
Address Locator 0900C2
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Hajdu:

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) is writing to urge Health Canada ensure that solid waste and recycling sector workers are prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccines. The sector has been identified as an “essential service” during the COVID-19 pandemic under applicable law throughout Canada. The solid waste sector is comprised of companies and municipal agencies that collectively employ tens of thousands of men and women who collect, process and dispose of solid waste in Canada. The sector is essential to making sure that millions of tonnes of garbage, recyclables and compostables are collected, processed and properly managed. In the absence of this daily, essential service, there would be garbage and recycling left on the street or in overflowing dumpsters, leading to unsanitary conditions and potentially causing other significant public health problems.

The Health Canada National Advisory Committee on Immunization’s (NACI) preliminary guidance on COVID-19 immunizations identifies certain populations as “contributing to the maintenance of other essential services for the functioning of society.” While SWANA recognizes that there are a number of industries that provide an essential service, some solid waste and recycling employees perform tasks on a daily basis that do not allow for social distancing. For example, recycling depot operators interface with the public, collection workers often ride in the same truck, and sorters work in close proximity at recycling facilities. For these reasons, SWANA suggests that our sector be sequenced favorably by Health Canada and provincial governments to receive the vaccines.

SWANA is the professional association that represents nearly 11,000 individuals employed at both municipal sanitation departments and private companies throughout Canada and the United States. Our members, who are located in the field, facilities and offices in all provinces and territories, are ensuring that the critical work of solid waste management, including collection, processing and disposal, is completed properly every day and the entire sector needs to be prioritized for the vaccine.

SWANA submitted a similar letter last week to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Thank you for your attention to this letter. If you have any questions, please contact me at (240) 494-2254 or dbiderman@swana.org.

Sincerely,

David Biderman

David Biderman
Executive Director & CEO

cc: Bill Cummins, President - SWANA Northern Lights Chapter
Mark Watt, President - SWANA Pacific Chapter
Darlyne Proctor, President, SWANA Atlantic Canada Chapter
Richard Schofield, President, SWANA Quebec Chapter
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