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#### Columnists

# GUNTER: Liberal vaccine mandates are all about political gain

Lorne Gunter

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland take part in a news conference outside the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa, Oct. 21, 2021. PHOTO BY BLAIR GABLE /REUTERS

In the logistics and delivery industry, it's called the "last mile" problem. The greatest number of complications usually occur during the final steps of getting a package to your door.

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I think that's where we're at with the pandemic. We're close to the last mile and that's

what's making so many people testy.



In Canada, nearly 90 per cent of those 12 and over have had at least one shot. And over 80 per cent have had two.

Pretty soon five- to 11-year-olds will be approved for vaccines. Shortly after that, expect 85 to 90 per cent of the entire population to be immunized.

Also, a study of 10,000 Brits released on Thursday showed that a third, booster shot within six months of a person's second dose provides near-total protection from any symptoms of the virus.

Still, we're tired of it. So at precisely the time our officials should be discussing how to ease us back into life as we knew it, we are getting daily announcements of hospitals preparing to fire nurses, airlines readying to prevent the unvaccinated from boarding, kids' sports leagues barring parents from the sidelines.

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This week, for instance, the CBC announced it would “seal” its buildings. No unvaccinated member of the public, no contractor, no employee, no on-air guest will be allowed in any of Mother Corp’s premises without proof of shots.

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On Parliament Hill, the oxymoronically named board of internal economy (the committee that essentially runs the House of Commons operation), also dictated that unvaccinated MPs and their staffs would be barred from in-person attendance on the Hill.

And, increasingly, because of our impatience with COVID, these sorts of absolutist measures make sense to more and more people.

We seem to think if the unvaccinated’s refusal to be inoculated is what’s keeping the rest of us from getting back to semi-normal, then damn ‘em: Force them to get vaccinated or let the bas\*\*\*ds lose their jobs.

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Who cares about technicalities and niceties like the Constitution or the rule of law?

The Liberals understand this frustration and impatience and are pandering to it for political gain with their talk of ironclad vaccine mandates.

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Trouble is, nearly every legal opinion says 100 per cent mandates can't legally be done. You can't force people to accept something into their body if they don't want it. So, if your goal is to prevent a recurrence of the infection, you have to find some other way to ensure the vaccine-hesitant are virus-free.

This has been the Conservatives' point all along. Get as many people as possible vaccinated, then make it a requirement for the rest to have regular tests to prove they aren't positive as a prerequisite to being admitted to public places and events.

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The federal Justice department has cautioned the Trudeau government that zero-tolerance vax mandates are unconstitutional; tests must be offered as Plan B.


The federal Transportation department quietly announced that the vaccine mandate for air and rail travellers would have to be put off until December, and even then domestic passengers can probably not be forced to be vaccinated. Negative tests likely will have to be accepted in lieu.

And there is almost certainly no legal way the House of Commons' board of internal economy can compel MPs to get jabs, and probably not their political staffs, either. The MPs work for their constituents, not the board or the House. And it's important that voters retain ultimate authority over them.

The Trudeau government knows all of this, of course. But it assumes many Canadians don't. So all it's tough talk about MPs getting vaccinated is nothing more than virtue signalling for political gain – just like its vaccine mandate for “all” civil servants that lets 70 per cent of federal employees quietly skirt the requirement.




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