

25 fevrier, 2021



Mme. Isabelle Melançon, députée de Verdun
Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Porte-parole de l'opposition officielle en matière de culture et de communications

CC : Marguerite Blais, Ministre responsable des Aînés
Jean-François Parenteau, Maire de Verdun
Sterling Downey
Luc Gagnon
Marie Andrée Mauger

Ref : Covid-19 Vaccination for Seniors

Dear Mme. Melançon,

As MNA for Verdun, you are familiar with our elderly population. Indeed, we know you have personally met some of them at community events, including at SouthWest Mission, so you know this is a resilient generation. Still, as you are surely also aware, this past year has been extremely hard on our elderly church members and neighbours. Some live in residences where, thankfully, they received Covid-19 vaccinations, but many in their 80s and 90s still live in their homes.

We are delighted and relieved that as of this week, this population will be eligible for vaccination, but we are writing to express some concerns about the way this is being done. Principally, we are concerned that no vaccination site has been announced in Verdun.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, people over 85 have probably been the most compliant with government instructions of any age group: staying home, ordering grocery delivery, not seeing friends and family. This isolation has taken a toll on them both physically and psychologically.

A lack of exercise in the last year has weakened them to the point where any outing can be exhausting. If the government tells these Verduners that they have to go to the Palais des congres to be vaccinated, many of them, even if accompanied, will be daunted by the distance from home as well as the thought of encountering crowds of people, exactly what they have been told to stay away from for a year!

Although our church has had to be closed for much of the past year, we have done our best to keep in touch with the elderly members of our congregation by phone and mail,

as many of them do not have internet. Many of them do not have cars either, or no longer have drivers' licenses. While taking the vaccine to these people in their homes would be the ideal scenario, we understand that that is very difficult. We have a few younger people in our church community who are ready to help our seniors make and get to their appointments, but we have concerns about the mass vaccination sites being proposed. Surely there is a happy medium between a home visit and a trip to the Olympic Stadium!

The best thing would be to have small clinics in local pharmacies and other spaces that are easily accessible. Surely there are facilities that have been underused this last year that could be put to use as vaccination sites. (Le Centre Communautaire Marcel-Giroux, Le 5160? A testing clinic has been operating for months at the Douglas Hospital. Is it not possible to bring a vaccination clinic there?) We have just come through a flu season which saw vaccinations taking place in local clinics and pharmacies. Why, when it comes to Covid-19, a virus which is extremely contagious, would we opt for mass vaccination sites?

If our seniors *must* go to places like the Palais des congrès and the Olympic stadium, these spaces *must* be wheelchair accessible, and all efforts must be made to reduce the distance people have to walk once there. If the distance to the actual vaccination site is more than 25 metres from the building's entrance, or if there is a possibility of having to wait in line, these venues should, as hospital Emergency departments do, have wheelchairs located just inside the door for anyone to use in the building.

In the interest of getting as many of our seniors vaccinated, as quickly and as safely as possible, we ask you to collaborate with municipal governments and local partners to set up Covid-19 vaccination sites within Verdun to serve the elderly population of this riding.

Sincerely,

Pastor Beryl Barraclough, DLM

Dennis Brown, Clerk of session