

Bolton senior raises alarm bells over second dose delay

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When Bolton resident Sandy Forester was notified that she and her husband's second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine was being moved from April 20 to July 6, she couldn't believe it.

She and husband are both over 80 years old and have health conditions that make them more susceptible to the virus. Forester assumed that would mean they would be prioritized, but instead she feels they've been pushed aside.

Not able to feel fully comfortable until she gets both doses of the vaccine, Forester decided to send a letter to her Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones to try and get some answers as to why their second doses were being delayed.

"Just found out that our second dose of the vaccine has been changed from April 20 to July 6," Forester wrote.

"My husband and I both over 80 with underlying health conditions now have to wait another 12 weeks. Why is this the case? From all the media reports, there is plenty of vaccine coming, enough for every Canadian so why penalize the highest risk group? I am just devastated, really am. Please do something for us, the highest risk group, and get us totally vaccinated before July for safety's sake! We are the ones that are dying, please help!"

Having received the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on March 16, Forester and her husband understand the importance of distributing the vaccine to all Canadians, but they fear for their health and don't understand the thought process behind delaying a second dose for those who are high-risk.

"When I got a notification that the second dose that was scheduled for April had been changed to July, I thought why do we the highest priority group have to wait even though we are the ones that are dying? I thought I should let Sylvia Jones know because she's [involved in the] vaccine rollout for the province and we are in her riding. I thought I should let her know how one of her constituents is feeling. Any seniors that are friends of mine all agree with me that having our second doses moved from April to July is not really a wise thing to do."

Forester says the reason she was given for their second doses being delayed was because the government wants to spread out the doses since one dose can help protect against the virus. She makes it clear that she understands the importance of protecting the most people, but doesn't think that should minimize the urgency of fully vaccinating the highest risk group.

"I heard back from Sylvia Jones' office that more people can be protected that way (with one dose) and I understand that for people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, but for people like me and my husband between the two of us we've got cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, plus our age I think moving us to 16 weeks is rather ridiculous. We keep hearing we have all these different vaccines coming in, and yet in Peel, you have to wait. It's bad management on the part of the provincial government and all the seniors I've talked to agree with me on it."

Seeing other areas in Ontario with more efficient vaccine rollouts for residents is alarming to Forester considering Bolton is in Peel Region which has the third highest COVID-19 rate per 100,000 people and the second most recent cases in the province.

"My daughter lives in Orangeville and she's in her 50s and she's already got her first appointment for next week," she said. "She didn't have to wait long, not like me, who's over 80 with all kinds of health conditions. A lot of my friends and I had to wait two

weeks to get an appointment, but my daughter got hers right away because of where she lives. All I'm saying is it's not being done right? When you get your vaccine and how long you have to wait depends on where you live.?

Given the differing situations in different regions of the province, Forester feels there should be a focus put on high-risk residents in areas hit harder by the virus.

?Toronto and Peel should be top priority because we have been in lockdown the longest, we have the most number of cases, and the most number of deaths. It would be more democratic to put doses into Peel and Toronto rather than the regions that have few cases and haven't been in lockdown. Not only is it an inconsistent situation, but it doesn't make sense to make high-risk people wait longer and have us go out of our communities? we have to go to Brampton to get it? they don't make it easy for you. The main point is, Toronto and Peel aren't being treated properly and the excuses are that they're too big. Well, they are the ones that have the most cases and deaths so shouldn't they be the ones that get the first rollout of the vaccines and have the shortest waiting period??

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has previously stated that by the end of September all Canadian who wish to be vaccinated will be, but feeling the vaccination rollout problems in the country firsthand, Forester is doubtful the government will be able to reach that target date.

?It's my feeling that we're being unfairly treated,? she said. ?And now I won't be able to feel totally confident until July. If everyone who wants to be vaccinated can be vaccinated by September, well at this rate if you can't even get the seniors done by the summer then how are you going to get everyone else done? Especially in the larger areas that aren't getting the doses.?