

Ottawa

Fewer than 10 Ottawa police officers on unpaid leave for missing vaccination deadline

Partially vaccinated officers remain in service despite mandate's deadline

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An Ottawa Police Service cruiser is seen at Laurier Avenue West and Metcalfe Street as trucks are parked throughout downtown Ottawa during a rally against COVID-19 restrictions. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)



Fewer than 10 Ottawa police officers remain on leaves of absence without pay after missing the force's deadline to become fully vaccinated, although that doesn't mean all service members have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Officers had until Jan. 31 to get fully vaccinated, but only those who remain unvaccinated were put on unpaid leave as of Feb. 1.

"Officers who have one dose are not on leave; only those with no dose are on a leave of absence without pay," a police spokesperson wrote in an email.

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Before the deadline, those who hadn't received their two doses were tested every 72 hours.

The service is comprised of 1,480 officers and more than 620 civilians, according to its website, and 95 per cent of officers were fully vaccinated as of Jan. 10.

While concerns arose that implementing such a policy could affect [frontline staff](#), the number of officers now on unpaid leave represents a miniscule portion of the Ottawa Police Service.



Ottawa Police Association president Matt Skof says it was a tough day on Tuesday when the remaining unvaccinated workers were sent home. (Justin Tang/Canadian Press)

Vaccine mandate a 'heavy-handed' approach, union says

Still, police union head Matt Skof said it wasn't "a good day" when the officers were sent home.

"As I've been saying, from the beginning, it's a very heavy-handed approach to having a mandatory policy," said Skof, president of the Ottawa Police Association.

The police service is now among a minority of police forces, he said, as most still use rapid tests as an acceptable compromise.

Skof also called city councillors "sickeningly hypocritical" for what he termed as "screaming, crying for police resources to attend their communities" during this

ongoing protest — after supporting a reduction of the police budget at the end of 2021.

"We're spending a fortune on having outside public resources ... or because Ottawa was not properly equipped to deal with a demonstration of this magnitude, of this scope," Skof said.

"They have been improperly staffed. The budgets have been restricted. And now we're sending officers home [for being unvaccinated], both sworn and civilian. All critical pieces."

With files from CBC's Joanne Chianello and Radio-Canada

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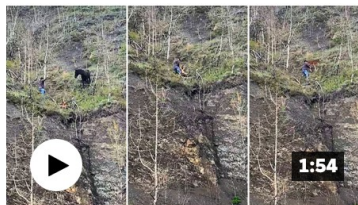


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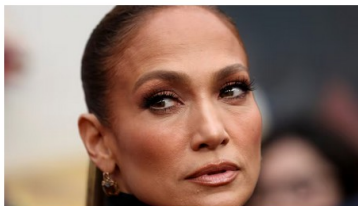
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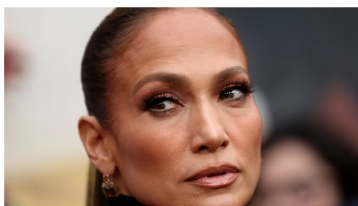
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