



ALBERTA
HEALTH

*Deputy Premier
Office of the Minister
MLA, Edmonton-Glenora*

AR 141039

Date: January 16, 2017
To: Edda West (info@vaccinechoicecanada.com)
Subject: Mandatory Immunization and Bill 28

Thank you for your e-mails to Premier Notley and me regarding Bill 28, the *Public Health Amendment Act*, and mandatory immunization. As Minister responsible for Health, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Government of Alberta.

I understand that you have various concerns regarding Bill 28. The Government of Alberta passed amendments to the *Public Health Act* with the goal of increasing immunization rates in Alberta, which currently are not high enough to protect against outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in schools. The amendments also aim to improve the delivery of immunization services to help ensure it is done in a safe and consistent manner.

Our government recognizes immunization as one of the most important public health measures used to protect the health of Albertans. Immunization aims to protect the whole population through achieving high levels of vaccine coverage. When the majority of the population is immunized, the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases decreases for everyone. For example, 98% of the population needs to be immunized against measles to protect the whole population, particularly vulnerable individuals such as infants, and those who cannot be immunized or are immunocompromised. Alberta's measles immunization rate at two years of age is 87.1% for 2015.

Countries with high immunization rates have improved control of measles, and in Canada, the spread of the virus was virtually eliminated by 1998. Measles and pertussis (whooping cough), both highly contagious, are on the rise in Canada and the United States; Canada due to increasing numbers of unimmunized children. Overall, 88 outbreaks of measles, mumps and pertussis have occurred in Alberta communities or schools since 2003.

Our government has a role in protecting children and all Albertans from contracting a potentially deadly vaccine-preventable disease and preventing further spread. Currently, we are missing immunization information for 15 to 25% of students in Alberta. The current process of trying to identify unimmunized students in the middle of an outbreak is inefficient, reactive and costly.

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Going forward, Bill 28 will enable the Ministry of Health to collect student enrolment data from Alberta Education and cross-reference it with its existing immunization records. The Ministry of Health will then share student enrolment information with Alberta Health Services (AHS). This one-way transfer of information uses existing databases to enable a more efficient information-sharing process between the Ministries of Education and Health. The privacy of Albertans' personal and health information will be maintained in accordance with provincial and federal laws throughout this process.

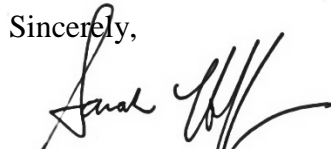
Student enrolment information will then be used by public health professionals, employed by AHS, to contact parents of students with missing immunization information to inform them that their child is missing immunization records, and to explain the benefits of immunization to parents with doubts or concerns. Parents will have to provide their child's immunization records, complete any needed immunizations, get a letter from a doctor indicating a medical exemption, or sign a form indicating they decline immunization for their child. Immunization will remain voluntary. Parents may choose not to have their child immunized, but will be reminded that their child will be excluded from school in the event of a serious vaccine-preventable disease outbreak such as measles; a practice that already takes place.

Bill 28 also includes changes related to immunization service delivery. For example, health practitioners who provide immunization will be required to report information about all immunizations and follow vaccine schedules posted by Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health. Health practitioners will also be required to report adverse events following immunization, and all persons who handle, transport, or store vaccines will be required to follow protocols developed by government to ensure safety and effectiveness.

I appreciate the questions you have raised and have answered similar questions raised by Parents for Choice in Education. For more information on [Bill 28](#), please visit the Government of Alberta website. For more information on immunization safety and services in Alberta, please visit <http://immunizealberta.ca>.

Thank you again for writing to share your concerns.

Sincerely,



Sarah Hoffman
Deputy Premier
Minister of Health

cc: Honourable Rachel Notley
Premier of Alberta