

Hon. George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Main Legislative Building
Room 447
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

05/04/04

Honourable Minister,

Re. Childhood Vaccinations

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), I am writing to express our appreciation for your recent reiteration of the Ontario government's commitment to a provincial meningococcal vaccination program.

As you are already aware, alPHa has for years been advocating for the inclusion of this, as well as vaccines for varicella and pneumococcal infections in the routine and universal schedule of provincially funded childhood immunizations. Vaccination has been consistently demonstrated as one of the most effective and cost-beneficial health interventions ever developed, and these three vaccines are no exception.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has recommended routine vaccination of all children against each of these infections, which in Ontario must currently be paid for out of a family's own resources. Other Canadian provinces already cover one or more of these vaccines, the full complement of which costs families between \$700 and \$800 per child. The current situation resulting from this is unequal and ineffective vaccine coverage across the country and health protection based on ability to pay.

We hope that Ontario, starting with the provincial immunization program for meningitis, will set the standard for the rest of the country and approve funding of each of these recommended vaccines for all children. We look forward to working with you to set that standard.

Sincerely,



Alex Hukowich, M.D., C.C.F.P., D.P.H.
President

Copy: Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Chairs, Ontario Boards of Health