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**National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC)
February 2016**

Public Health Agency of Canada Update

Dear Colleagues,

Included below please find an update on recent vaccine and immunization activities at the Public Health Agency of Canada (the Agency).

The Agency, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and other key stakeholders is working to strengthen federal/provincial/territorial collaboration on immunization issues of mutual interest and benefit. Current areas of collaboration include: vaccine research, innovation, and development; security of vaccine supply; coordinated public health guidance on new and existing vaccines; and increasing vaccine acceptance and uptake.

1. Vaccine Research, Innovation, and Development

There is a federally-led national Action Plan being reviewed that will address both human and animal vaccine needs in support of public health, health security, agricultural productivity and international development and assistance objectives. The first part of this Action Plan, the identification of a list of vaccine research priorities, was posted on the Agency website on May 1, 2015 (<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/immunization-immunisation/vaccine-priorities-priorites-vaccins-eng.php>).

2. Security of Vaccine Supply

This initiative is to ensure ready, reliable, and equitable access to affordable vaccines of good quality to meet public health objectives for the prevention and control of infectious diseases. An expert task group was formed to conduct analysis and make recommendations. In 2015, the task group produced a report with detailed recommendations titled "*A Vaccine Supply Risk Management Strategy for Canada*". The report makes recommendations to strengthen security of supply, such as the development of vaccine-specific contingency plans for high-risk situations; and general system improvements for procurement planning and inventory management. This report and its recommendations were formally reviewed and endorsed by the federal/provincial/territorial Public Health Network Council in December 2015.

The implementation of operational elements (such as stable multi-year resource commitments for vaccine procurement and other contracting strategies) will be further discussed by federal/provincial/territorial working groups, incorporated into their work plans, and each province and territory will consider implementation feasibility within their jurisdiction.

3. Common Vaccine Guidance

The Agency is continuing to develop a process to broaden the scope of recommendations of Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization to include socio-economic and programmatic guidance, complementing existing assessment of vaccine characteristics and epidemiologic evidence. This "common vaccine guidance" will provide provinces, territories and other stakeholders in Canada with:

- a single source of evidence, analysis, recommendations, and guidance on vaccine use, vaccine schedules, and immunization programming;

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- timely and equitable access to information;
- independent expert advice; and
- an efficient process to engage expertise in Canada, and internationally in guidance development activities.

The Agency is currently assessing governance and engagement for the expanded committee, as well as operational and implementation planning. We are expecting to initiate pilots in 2016.

4. Vaccine Acceptance and Uptake

A task group of experts (Vaccine Acceptance and Uptake Task Group) was established to develop recommendations for federal/provincial/territorial governments on increasing Canada's immunization coverage rates. The Task Group's mandate includes a review of the following:

- Coverage Assessment:
 - environmental scan of Canada's evolving patterns and trends in immunization coverage, vaccine uptake and vaccine attitudes (as a tool to identifying and targeting particular regions and populations of concern)
 - review of progress with immunization registries, immunization surveys, and other tools/approaches to monitor vaccine acceptance and uptake, and affirmation of their importance and strategic use at national, regional and local levels
- Best practices in addressing hesitancy and barriers:
 - synthesis of contemporary knowledge of known and suspected factors affecting vaccine acceptance and uptake at the national, regional and local levels, with consideration of the Canadian context
 - synthesis of innovative best practices to address hesitancy and barriers in a Canadian context including effective use of social media and other technologies
 - suggested strategies to more effectively engage F/P/T communications functions and capacities
- Research and knowledge development:
 - suggested priority research topics to address knowledge gaps on vaccine acceptance and uptake in the Canadian context, for consideration by appropriate research organizations

It is expected that the recommendations will be presented to the federal/provincial/territorial Public Health Network early in 2016 for consideration. The Task Group was grateful to call upon the draft recommendations contained in NVAC's own report "*Assessing the State of Vaccine Confidence in the United States.*"