

Ontario education minister calls on feds to procure COVID-19 vaccines for children ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

TORONTO -- Four months into Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination rollout, the province's education minister is calling on the federal government to plan ahead to procure shots for children and youth.

In a letter to three federal ministers, Stephen Lecce said that it is critical that Canada looks ahead and applies the "lessons learned on the importance of forward planning" in obtaining and distributing vaccines to students and children as soon as they are approved by Health Canada.

"Already numerous clinical trials are underway to assess the safety and efficacy of vaccines in children and youth of different ages," Lecce said in the letter addressed to Ministers Ahmed Hussen, Patty Hajdu, and Anita Anand.

"Some of these clinical trials may begin to return results in just a few short months. While this is hopeful news, it also underscores the necessity to start to plan immediately so that Canada is the leader on vaccine roll-out."

Lecce says that the vaccination of young people will be a critical part in ending the pandemic and urged Hussen, minister of families, children and social development, to immediately procure a "robust supply" of vaccines from several potential suppliers.

Moreover, he said that vaccines should be "rapidly" reviewed by Health Canada and approved, if safe, as pharmaceutical companies complete their clinical trials.

Last week, Moderna announced that it wants to recruit a number of Canadian children aged six months to 12 years for upcoming trials of its COVID-19 vaccine. Meanwhile, Johnson & Johnson is set to run trials for its vaccine with 12 to 17-year-olds. AstraZeneca has also started a trial with younger age groups.

And while only currently approved for adult use, the Pfizer-BioNTech shot can be used by people as young as 16, according to the pharmaceutical giant.

Ontario began administering COVID-19 vaccines in December and has fully vaccinated 309,285 people to date with 1,981,282 needles going into arms overall.

Lecce's letter is dated March 26, the same day that Premier Doug Ford called Canada's vaccine rollout "a joke" and alleged that the Trudeau government had 'dropped the ball' amid a shortage of vaccine supply.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: COVID-19 ^[4]

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