



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## Health Ministry Lacks Reliable Immunization Coverage Information, Auditor General Says

(TORONTO) The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has no way of knowing the percentage of Ontarians actually immunized for diseases such as measles and flu, or whether its immunization program is cost-effective, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2014 Annual Report*.

“We estimated the operational funding for the immunization program was \$250 million in 2013/14, but the Ministry doesn’t track the total costs of the program and there is little provincial co-ordination of the immunization programs delivered by the 36 municipal public health units across Ontario,” Lysyk said today after the release of the report.

“We also found that most information the Ministry has on whether children have been immunized relies on parents reporting it to public health units, often years after their children have been vaccinated, making the province’s immunization coverage information less reliable than if captured at the time vaccines are administered,” she added.

Ontario’s publicly funded immunization schedule currently includes vaccines that protect against 16 infectious diseases. Eligible Ontarians can be immunized against these diseases at no cost to them.

Other significant findings included the following:

- Ontario’s child immunization rates are below federal targets and below the level necessary to prevent the transmission of disease. One public health unit reported that outbreaks would occur if its measles immunization coverage rate decreased from the current level by as little as 10%.
- Parents choosing a daycare for a child who is not able to be vaccinated cannot easily access public information on the percentage of children who have not been immunized at each daycare.
- The audit found questionable flu immunization billings in 2013/14, including 21,000 instances where the Ministry paid physicians and pharmacists for administering the flu vaccine more than once to the same person.
- Ministry immunization funding to the province’s 36 public health units varied significantly, from \$2 per person in one area to \$16 per person in another. The Ministry has not analyzed the reasons for these variations.
- Ontario is implementing a new system called Panorama, which includes a vaccination registry, at an estimated cost of more than \$160 million, which is \$85 million more than was initially budgeted. However, as is currently the case with the Ministry’s older system, if all vaccinations administered are not included in Panorama, it will not provide the data needed to identify areas of the province with low immunization coverage rates.
- The Ministry does not have information on what happened to over 20% of the flu vaccine doses purchased annually.

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