

COVID-19 Vaccination Program

I'd like to talk to you about our audit of the **COVID-19 Vaccination Program**.

Ontario spent about \$1.5 billion dollars from April 2020 to May 2022 on the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines purchased by the federal government.

Ontario paid:

- public health units;
- hospitals;
- pharmacies;
- physicians; and
- nurses and pharmacists for administering COVID-19 vaccines to Ontarians.

Our audit assessed whether Ontario's vaccination program was fair, equitable and cost-effective in minimizing transmission, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

We found that while a vaccination plan was established, the prioritization criteria in the plan were not applied consistently across all regions.

This resulted in some hotspot communities being overlooked.

- Eight lower-risk neighbourhoods received vaccines ahead of higher-risk neighbourhoods, and nine higher-risk neighbourhoods were excluded from the strategy.

We also found that pay was not consistent for the same work by vaccinators.

Physicians, at 170 to 220 dollars per hour, received much higher compensation than nurses, who were paid 32 to 49 dollars per hour, and pharmacists, who were paid 30 to 57 dollars per hour.

Also, our audit noted that the vaccination booking process was not well coordinated and organized.

Because it wasn't centralized, many Ontarians booked multiple appointments on different booking systems, resulting in many no-shows at appointments.

- 227,000 no-show appointments were noted in 2021 in the provincial booking system alone.

During COVID-19, the Ministry of Health had to create a new database to record COVID-19 vaccines administered, because the system that was in place at that time could not fill this need.

We noted that the lack of a registry of Ontarians' vaccination records still limits Ontario's ability to rapidly adapt to new or existing disease outbreaks

Our report contains 11 recommendations for the Ministry, including that it:

- incorporate into its future pandemic response plan, the need to consistently apply vaccination prioritization methodologies supported by scientific data, and make this information publicly available;
- develop and implement technology options, such as that used by Vaccine Hunters Canada to assist the public with finding openings for vaccination appointments centrally;
- review the differences in compensation paid to health-care professionals, and update compensation rates to address differences for future vaccination campaigns; and
- create a comprehensive vaccine registry that will allow for more efficient service delivery for all vaccines.

Visit www.auditor.on.ca for more information.

Thank you.