

Notes submitted by Michelle Dabrowski, January 21, 2021.

SESSION COVID-19 VACCINATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH ADVICE IN CANADA

Wednesday, January 20, 2021, 4 PM – 5 PM

Platform: Zoom Webinar (via Eventbrite). Live Questions via slido.com

The session is recorded for future use

SPEAKERS

- Moderators
 - Sheriff Abdou – Executive Director for Public Health Agency of Canada
 - Harpreet Kochhar – Associate Deputy Minister of Health
- Opening Prayer
 - Algonquin Elder Verna McGregor
- Speaker
 - Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Medical Health Officer, Public Health Canada
- Closing remarks
 - Ian Shuggart, Clerk of the Privy Council

ISSUE

- Public Health Canada conducted an information session with faith leaders from across the country to address vaccine roll out and to discuss key questions/concerns.

BACKGROUND

- The session was organized in collaboration with the Canadian Council of Churches, the Canadian Multifaith Federation and the Canadian Interfaith Conversation. +1300 faith leaders from across Canada were in attendance.
- Dr. Tam stressed that the vaccine roll-out's success depends half on the government and half on society's collaboration. Faith-based leaders are invited to assist in the roll-out because they know what is on many Canadians' hearts and minds and are responsible for many levels of care in local communities.
- Many people have questions about vaccines. The information session outlined the safety and efficacy of the vaccine so that this can be communicated to faith communities.
- With regards to the federal vaccine approval: while there may be risks associated with the vaccine (ex. allergic reactions), the benefits greatly outweigh the risks. The vast majority of those who have received the vaccine have not had adverse effects. Any cases of possible linked adverse events are being monitored and reviewed.
- Educational resources on the development of the vaccine and different ways to communicate the information on the safety and efficacy are provided on the canada.ca portal (PowerPoints, videos, posters, etc.)

CURRENT STATUS

- Vaccine supply is limited at first and is already experiencing shipment delays from manufacturers.
- Stage 1 includes adults 70 years old and older and includes those in close contact with them (caregivers and health care staff).
- The goal is to have the majority of Canadian vaccinated by September 2021.

- Public Health Canada is monitoring the success and efficacy of the vaccines.
- At this time, it is not known if those vaccinated can transmit the virus. This is an area of current research and requires those vaccinated to continue following public health measures.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Dr. Tam outlined three "Call to Action" areas
 1. Share credible/factual information from the federal, provincial, local public health authorities with your faith community networks. Public health has provided a tool kit of resources to help. While most Canadians want to be vaccinated, many still have concerns about the safety, efficacy and risk of side effects.
 2. Continue to stay vigilant in maintaining public health measures, such as physical distancing, hand hygiene, and staying home. There is hope on the horizon with the vaccine roll-out, and a return to everyday life and ways of worship is in sight.
 3. Continue to provide spiritual care in creative and innovative ways for your faith communities. Faith communities are an essential pillar for society, especially during this pandemic, which builds resilience for those of your faith community. Keep attentive and continue to reach out to those that may need spiritual, physical, or mental health help. "Wellness together" is a resource to share for those who require immediate crisis support.
- For any faith-based communities that wish to assist with the practical implementation of the vaccine roll-out (i.e., the use of buildings), they are encouraged to reach out to local public health authorities. This may be beneficial when the roll-out is more widespread in the coming phases.
- Ingredients of the vaccine are publicly disclosed. The two vaccines currently approved in Canada do not use cell lines from aborted fetal tissue.
- Ian Shuggart closed the session by saying that faith communities offer hope and a place to wonder and explore what this pandemic might have to teach us about ourselves and society. He said that faith communities inspire people to actions and disciplines that are oriented to the interest of others, as well as models and teaches a virtue of care.