

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Revealing the Truth: Canada's F-Rated Vaccine Report Card

#### **Flu, Shingles, Pneumonia and COVID19 Vaccines Need Immediate Action to keep adults healthy, health costs down and the economy moving**

Toronto, ON – In the third annual Vaccine Report Card (2022-23), CanAge, Canada's national seniors advocacy organization is sending a sharp warning that Canada needs to start taking national immunization seriously, particularly for Influenza, Shingles, and Pneumonia. This warning is also in the context of the approval of the long-anticipated RSV vaccine for Canadian adults 60+, currently under recommendation review by NACI.

**“This third annual report shows only a very few small steps forward in vaccine coverage in Canada. These bits of good news are heavily overshadowed by governments not covering so many of the best-in-class adult vaccines which have been recommended by NACI”** says Laura Tamblyn Watts, CanAge’s CEO.

**“We have 3 key vaccines which are critical to adult health, particularly for seniors, with a 4th (RSV) likely on the way. Vaccines only work if they are funded, easily accessible and with solid information by trusted sources. Right now, Canada lags far behind other OECD countries, and that means bad news for Canadians”.**

Some of those small positive steps taken in the past year include Nova Scotia announcing that it will now publicly fund the NACI recommended quadrivalent high-dose flu vaccine for the province's 225,000 seniors, who make up more than 22% of its overall population. Also, Quebec has finally decided to cover the Shingles vaccine, but has astonishingly limited its public funding to people 80+, rather than the NACI recommended 50+. The average age of death in Quebec is 83.

Not a single province or territory in Canada covers the Shingles vaccine for all people 50 and over. Only Ontario, PEI, Yukon and now Quebec have any coverage for this vaccine at all, which costs private pay seniors hundreds of dollars, a significant barrier to many. Problematically, opioids are often prescribed to manage pain, and there is no cure for Shingles.

Tamblyn Watts notes that **“Public funding for the highly effective (94%+) shingles vaccine needs to be an immediate priority for governments. Shingles is hugely painful and debilitating, and treating it requires significant acute care costs which could be almost completely avoided through vaccination”.**

This report also highlights the importance of the pneumonia vaccine and the strong recommendation by NACI for the new PCV-20 (under the brand Prevnar 20). PCV-20 succeeds its predecessors PCV-13 and PCV-15, which have shown exceptional effectiveness in children

and covers more variants of the bacteria causing pneumonia. The CanAge Vaccine Report Card noted that provinces and territories lost points for not moving to the new recommendations.

**Tamblyn Watts cautions that, “The best-in-class pneumonia vaccinations are critical for vulnerable seniors, or any adult living in a long-term or congregate care settings. A wave of infectious pneumonia spreading through vulnerable populations is deadly. Many of those deaths can be prevented by the new pneumonia vaccine.”**

The 2022-2023 Vaccine Report Card doesn't just present numbers and grades, but reflects the quality of life and health security for our nation's seniors. Increased vaccinations equate to increased well-being and reduced health care costs, yet governments still are not funding and distributing NACI-recommended vaccines seriously enough.

**“The COVID19 pandemic may now be over, but vaccine-preventable disease is not. We must get serious about immunization or pay the price in lost lives, a broken health care system, and a stumbling economy. If COVID19 taught us anything, it taught us that,”** warns Tamblyn Watts.

Key Takeaways:

- No province got higher than a “D” on the report card for adult vaccinations
- Nova Scotia makes good on its promise to fund the quadrivalent high-dose flu vaccine for its seniors; a significant portion of its the province's population
- Quebec now covers the Shingles vaccine, but only for people 80+, rather than 50+ or even 65+. Average age of death in Quebec is 83.
- CanAge urges replacing older and less effective pneumonia vaccines with the new best-in-class PCV-20, especially for vulnerable seniors and in long-term care.
- Canada needs a comprehensive strategy for shingles and pneumonia vaccines, adopting best-in-class solutions and latest recommendations and to prepare for the now approved RSV vaccine for seniors, under review by NACI now.
- CanAge continues its advocacy for a more strategic, inclusive, and effective approach to immunization for seniors to improve quality of life and reduce the burden on the health care system.

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