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National Immunization Awareness Week Begins as Infection Prevention and Control Canada Calls on Provincial Governments to Take Action During Recent Measles Outbreaks

A recent Emergency Resolution of the Board of Directors requests that all provincial Ministers of Health and Ministers of Education work collaboratively to ensure school-aged children have records of vaccination.

April 4, 2019 (Winnipeg, MB) National Immunization Awareness Week (NIAW) strikes as the association representing the nation's infection prevention and control professionals calls on all Canadians to get vaccinated and have their children vaccinated to prevent more outbreaks. The recent outbreak of measles in Western Canada is a stern reminder that technically eliminated diseases remain a serious threat if not actively prevented through vaccines. Receiving a vaccine is not just a personal health choice, it's a public health matter.

Originating as a week to recognize the success and impact that immunization, this year's NIAW compliments efforts from associations like Infection Prevention Control Canada (IPAC Canada) to increase awareness of under-immunized groups where vaccine-preventable diseases can be introduced and spread. Recently, IPAC Canada's #StartWithVaccines campaign made a request to all provincial Ministers of Health and Ministers of Education to work collaboratively to ensure school aged children have records of vaccination.

IPAC Canada endorsed the decision by B.C. Health Minister, Adrian Dix, to require mandatory registration of vaccinations for all students in public and private schools starting in September. "Children are not the ones deciding if they get vaccinated or not, and they are often the most vulnerable to health risks," says Molly Blake, President of IPAC Canada. "Requiring parents and guardians to prove that their child has received necessary vaccinations is a simple step to increase herd immunity to a disease. Herd immunity works when a significant proportion of the community has been vaccinated which protects children who are not immune or unable to receive vaccinations." Centralized mandatory vaccine reporting supports local, regional and national infection prevention and control and public health professionals in managing outbreaks and developing policies and procedures for public safety.

Canadians have successfully reduced preventable infectious diseases in the general population with strong vaccination practices over the past several decades. "We risk losing the safety and cost savings attributed to eliminated diseases if we let unfounded fears about vaccines proliferate," says Blake. "Canada has come far in the pursuit of improved healthcare and child wellbeing and vaccines have been essential in that progress." Lower rates of vaccination may lead to re-emergence and propagation of serious infectious diseases.

IPAC Canada has written to all Provincial Ministers of Health and Ministers of Education asking for their support of the #StartWithVaccines campaign.

IPAC Canada is the national, professional organization for those interested in the prevention and control of infections in all healthcare settings.

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