

## OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TO: The Honourable Danielle Smith, Premier of Alberta  
The Honourable Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Health  
The Honourable Rachel Notley, Leader of the Opposition  
Dr. Luanne Metz, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Calgary-Varsity and the Official Opposition Critic for Health (Emergency & Surgical Care)

The board of the United Conservative Party is reportedly urging Premier Danielle Smith to reform COVID vaccine policy because the directors are worried about the safety of mRNA vaccines for kids. Asked what the change would look like in practice, Rob Smith, UCP President, said it would see Alberta Health Services "doing a better job of sharing information about the vaccine that they are offering." He wants AHS to disclose "the science behind the vaccine, and the potential repercussions," as well as the research and the testing methodology behind it.

We all want our children to grow up healthy and safe, and we want other families' children to grow up healthy and safe. Childhood vaccines are universally supported as one of the most cost-effective ways to do this. In Alberta, over the past 100 years, vaccination has reduced the rate of children dying before their first birthday by over 94%, from 82.4 per 10,000 live births in 1924 to 4.6 per 10,000 live births in 2022. In other words, children in 1924 were 18 times more likely to die in their first year than they are now.

Millions of doses of COVID-19 mRNA vaccine have been given to children in this province. Alberta's government Health Ministry (Alberta Health) and Alberta Health Services (AHS), along with Canadian and internationally recognized scientific and medical experts, reviewed the vaccine effectiveness for preventing COVID-19 and the safety of that vaccine prior to its use across all age groups. As a matter of routine due diligence, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services have monitored, and are continuing to monitor, the effectiveness and particularly the safety of the vaccine. The Chief Medical Officer of Health at Alberta Health and the Senior Medical Officer of Health at Alberta Health Services are the most appropriate individuals to speak to Albertans about the continuing safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. In fact, it is their professional duty to do so.

Setting public health policy by recruiting discredited and unlicensed doctors and spokespersons who cater to an anti-science agenda is dangerous. The upcoming UCP-sponsored event ("An Injection of Truth" Town Hall) is an example of the fear-mongering by anti-vaccination proponents transmitting fringe opinions informed by hearsay and innuendo. Providing a rigorous analysis of the current Alberta evidence about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine is a better way to serve all Albertans and their children.

<https://www.unitedconservative.ca/events/an-injection-of-truth-town-hall/>

These anti-science proponents are requesting that government remove COVID-19 mRNA vaccines from the childhood vaccine program in Alberta, a move that would actually reduce the freedom of choice of parents wanting to protect their children. A potentially life-threatening consequence of this fear-mongering is spillover of misinformed anti-vaccine concerns causing hesitancy about all childhood vaccines. To combat this fear-mongering, those responsible for the health of our children must ensure that parents have the best evidence possible about how they can protect their children from COVID-19.

Childhood vaccination has provided the single greatest contribution to improved infant survival over the past 50 years. Giving credence to conspiracy and misinformation, and ignoring scientific evidence, actively jeopardizes the health of our children while vaccine-preventable diseases are on the rise.

We ask that the Premier and Minister of Health permit Alberta's public health leaders (CMOH at Alberta Health, SMOH at Alberta Health Services) to make publicly available the evidence on COVID-19 mRNA vaccine safety and effectiveness in children, and address any concerns the public has raised. Albertans deserve accuracy and transparency about these important disease and prevention issues so that we have the freedom to make safe and informed choices about the health of our children.

This letter contains 129 signatories and is endorsed by the Board of the Alberta Public Health Association and the Community Health Nurses of Canada – Alberta Branch.