April 21, 2016

Dear colleagues,

As you know, our government is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child.

Today, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) announced changes to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) immunization program beginning in September 2016.

There are two main changes to the HPV immunization program. The first involves moving vaccinations a year earlier — from Grade 8 to Grade 7. And the second change is that we will include Grade 7 boys next year as well as girls.

HPV is one of the most common viruses in Canada and around the world and can lead to different kinds of cancer in females and males. The HPV vaccine can best prevent HPV-related diseases and cancers.

These changes are supported by scientific recommendations provided by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and better align Ontario with other jurisdictions in Canada.

By shifting the program to Grade 7, we are ensuring that students will receive their HPV immunization during the recommended ages of 9 to 13. This will also help to harmonize with other school-based immunization programs delivered in Grade 7, including Meningococcal C and Hepatitis B.

For the transitional 2016-17 school year, female Grade 8 students will still be able to receive the HPV vaccine in school-based clinics to ensure they do not miss the opportunity to be immunized.

This is a voluntary school-based immunization program, like the Hepatitis B and Meningococcal C immunization programs, and will continue to be administered by local public health units.

To support school boards and schools with implementation, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has developed a fact sheet for parents available at www.ontario.ca/hpv.

If you have any questions about the updated immunization program, I encourage you to contact your Regional Office or your local health unit or the MOHLTC at 1-866-532-3161.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Liz Sandals
Minister