



Submission on Bill 283 to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

RE: Advancing Oversight and Planning in Ontario's Health System Act, 2021

Schedule 1, Covid-19 Vaccination Reporting Act, 2021

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Summary

COVID-19 has impacted Ontario's diverse communities differently. We must understand who is getting sick, who is getting tested, and who is getting vaccinated to understand and end this pandemic. Health policy experts note that collecting socio-demographic data including ethno-racial identity are crucial for effective and equitable health care.

Therefore Schedule 1 of Bill 283 should be amended to include wording that requires those administering vaccination programs to ask those they are vaccinating to provide key socio-demographic data including race and ethnic origin. The Ministry of Health should require health care providers and vaccine administrators to ask questions about socio-demographic data as part of routine health care.

Rationale

Race, ethnic origin, income, language and dis/ability impact communities in all areas of life. For example, in Ontario, neighbourhoods with higher ethnic diversity have a higher percentage of confirmed positive COVID-19 tests and over twice the hospitalization rate compared to those with lower ethnic diversity. With more data, health planners and decision makers will be able to better understand population needs and plan responsive programs, services, and supports.

Collecting socio-demographic data including data on race and ethnicity is crucial for understanding health disparities and planning for their amelioration. On March 5, 2021 Premier Ford announced that socio-demographic data would be collected from those vaccinated. Yet Bill 283 which permits the transfer of information from vaccinators is just now being debated and it does not include a mandate for the collection of such data.

All health data is given voluntarily and is protected by privacy. Experience in a Canadian health setting suggests that people are open to answering socio-demographic questions if they understand why the data are being collected and that providing the information will not negatively impact treatment or access to services.

Collecting socio-demographic data is effective clinical practice. This information will allow health planners to look at who is able to access available vaccines for COVID-19 and whether that is related to factors such as race, income and/or disability. This information will also help health planners and decision makers put services and supports where they are needed most and work on addressing the inequities in accessing the vaccine. Ultimately, we can look at whether certain services make it easier for people to get vaccinated (e.g. language services).

Public Health Ontario's tool, [Collecting Information on Race, Ethnic Origin, Income, Household Size, and Language Data: A Resource for Data Collectors](#) provides information to support data collectors' use of new COVax data fields for the collection of socio-demographic data from individuals who receive a vaccine for COVID-19, including race, ethnic origin, income, household size, and language. The resource includes a sample script that can be used for data collection, tips for data collectors, frequently asked questions, as well as background information.

This tool provides evidence of the readiness to efficiently and consistently gather socio-demographic data including ethno-racial identity at COVID-19 vaccination sites in Ontario. By directing health care providers and vaccine administrators to collect such data through the addition of wording to Schedule 1 of Bill 283, your committee will be sending a signal about the importance of such data collection and your committee's commitment to reducing health inequities in Ontario.

About the Ontario Public Health Association

Created in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that brings together a broad spectrum of groups and individuals concerned about people's health. OPHA's members come from various backgrounds and sectors - from the various disciplines in public health, health care, academic, non-profit to the private sector. They are united by OPHA's mission of providing leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthening the impact of people, who are active in public and

community health throughout Ontario. This mission is achieved through professional development, information and analysis on issues effecting community and public health, access to multidisciplinary networks, advocacy on health public policy and the provision of expertise and consultation. OPHA members have been leading change in their communities on a wide range of issues - tobacco control, poverty reduction, diabetes prevention, increased access to oral health care, immunization, supporting children and families, food security, climate change and designing walkable communities, among others. www.opha.on.ca
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