



MINISTER OF HEALTH

Room 302
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

December 20, 2006

Will Johnston, MD
President
Canadian Physicians for Life
PO Box 1289
Ottawa ON K0A 2Z0

Dear Dr. Johnston:

Thank you for your letter regarding vaccines developed from aborted fetuses. I appreciate that this matter has been brought to my attention, and I am pleased to respond.

The provincial, territorial and federal governments do not manufacture drugs and vaccines. Manitoba, along with other Canadian provinces and territories, purchases vaccines and drugs via a bulk purchasing process. This is done with the assistance of federal government agencies, such as the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Public Works Government Services Canada (PWGSC), and Health Canada's drug regulator, the Biologics and Genetics Therapeutics Directorate (BGTD) of Canada. The bulk purchasing program was initiated in the early 1970s to minimize the duplication of efforts related to tendering and the purchase of products needed for Canadians. It was also initiated to optimize the security of the supply of vaccines in Canada.

The vaccines purchased are recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), a group of public health and infectious diseases experts responsible for providing scientific recommendation on licensed vaccine use in Canada. The use and sale of vaccines in Canada are approved by the BGTD of Canada. This federal agency is accountable to the Canadian government and to the public for ensuring that the drugs and vaccines sold and used in Canada are safe.

The Vaccine Supply Working Group (VSWG) is represented by the PHAC, provinces, territories, the Department of National Defense, the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, and the BGTD of Canada representatives. The VSWG recommends to the Canadian Immunization Committee and the PHAC mechanisms for accessing a high quality and secure supply of vaccine at the best international prices.

A major role of the VSWG is to ensure that there are two suppliers of each vaccine in vaccine contracts. Significant program and communication disruptions, as well as public health risks, can occur when only one supplier is contracted and this supplier encounters vaccine shortages, as recent experience has shown. The benefits of using two suppliers for various vaccines (with and without human tissue ingredients) far outweigh using a sole source supplier for vaccines with no human tissues.

Currently, Manitoba has over 20 contracts obtained via the bulk purchasing contract process, including vaccines from fetal and non-fetal sources. The products made with cells originating from fetal tissues were from legal abortions in the 1960s. These human origin cells are stored and are highly regulated by federal authorities for manufacturing drugs and vaccines. They undergo strict inspections and testing by the BGTD.

Vaccination with approved vaccines in Canada is highly recommended and should continue to protect the public's health. Individuals advocating not to immunize with approved vaccines in Canada pose a public health risk to themselves, their children and their communities.

Thank you again for bringing this matter to my attention. I commend you and the members of the Canadian Physicians for Life for caring about the health and well-being of Manitobans.

Regards,



Theresa Oswald
Minister of Health