



May 23, 2025

To: The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
College Park, 5th floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Re: Increasing Access to Publicly Funded Vaccines for Lupus Patients and Other Immunocompromised Persons: A Call for Action

Dear Deputy Premier and Minister Jones,

Congratulations on being re-elected. Your continued dedication and service to Ontario is commendable, and we wish you great success in the term ahead. I am writing to you on behalf of the [Canadian Immunocompromised Advocacy Network \(CIAN\)](#), and all Ontarians battling lupus. CIAN is a national network of patient organizations and individual patient advocates who are dedicated to improving the overall quality of life for immunocompromised people living in Canada. In our membership is Lupus Ontario along with ~25 other patient organizations focused on supporting people living with lupus and other immune weakening health conditions.

Our Call to Action:

We are asking that the Province of Ontario expand eligibility for publicly funded RSV, shingles, and HPV vaccines to lupus patients and other immunocompromised persons.

Further, we are requesting a meeting with you and your staff to provide further information and collaborate on this initiative.

Ontarians living with lupus and other immunocompromising conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, Sjögren's Syndrome, arteritis, and polymyositis face a high risk of severe illness, complications, and hospitalizations from vaccine preventable infections such as:

- **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)** – a major cause of severe respiratory complications, especially for moderately or severely immunocompromised persons;
- **Shingles** – a painful and often debilitating condition that occurs most frequently among older adults and immunocompromised persons (affecting 30.5% of lupus patients, as shown in a study by the Toronto Lupus Clinic);¹ and
- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** – the virus puts immunocompromised persons at a higher risk for recurring infections, various cancers, and non-cancerous lesions.

Despite heightened vulnerability to these infections, many immunocompromised persons, including Lupus patients, do not qualify for Ontario's publicly funded immunizations unless they meet other, narrow eligibility criteria (see Appendix B for more information). Though lupus patients are often advised to receive essential immunizations against RSV, shingles,

¹ Kwan A, Rayes HA, Lazova T, et al. Herpes zoster in SLE: prevalence, incidence and risk factors. *Lupus Science & Medicine* 2022;9: e000574. doi:10.1136/lupus-2021-000574.





and HPV, the financial burden of paying out-of-pocket is upwards of \$1,245 for the three immunization schedules. This is a significant barrier to access to care for many immunocompromised persons.²

A 2024 [landmark study](#) commissioned by the Adult Vaccine Alliance, a group of immunization experts in support of better funding, increased awareness, and better access to NACI-recommended adult vaccines in Canada, demonstrated the significant value of increasing adult vaccination rates against six infections – COVID-19, seasonal influenza, shingles, RSV, pneumonia, and HPV – to Canada’s healthcare system and economy. The study revealed:

- Every dollar invested in adult vaccines returns, on average, more than three times its value (341%) in averted healthcare costs and productivity;
- Each year, the six vaccines generate \$514 million in savings for the Canadian healthcare system.³

Immunization programs are an important foundation of Ontario’s healthcare system as they prevent illnesses and deaths related to vaccine preventable diseases.⁴ By expanding access to these publicly-funded immunization programs, Ontario can help reduce strain on Ontario’s healthcare system and the economy, by avoiding unnecessary hospital visits, and ensure the health and productivity of working-age Ontarians, which is more important now than ever.

We have consulted with the clinical heads of all Lupus Clinics in Ontario, all of whom have endorsed this request (see Appendix C).

Lupus Ontario is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing vital support, education, awareness, advocacy and research – through fundraising efforts of our staff and volunteer community – to help those with lupus live longer, healthier and productive lives. Our Vision is **Life Without Lupus**. For facts about Ontarians living with lupus, see Appendix A.

Together, we can ensure that Ontarians living with lupus have access to the preventative care they need.

(continued on next page)

²The RSV vaccine can cost up to \$300 (1 required dose). The shingles vaccine costs \$300 (2 required doses at \$150 each), and the HPV vaccine can cost up to \$645 (for three doses, approximately \$215 each). Prices range due to varied pharmacy costs and injection fees.

³ Adult Vaccine Alliance, IQVIA Solutions Canada Inc. (2024, October 8). *The Unmet Value of Vaccines in Canada*. [Adult+Vaccine+Alliance+-+The+Unmet+Value+of+Vaccines+in+Canada+-+Oct+2024+-+English.pdf](#)

⁴ Public Health Ontario (last updated 2025). Immunizations (Vaccines). <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Immunization>



Sincerely,



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Appendices

Appendix A: Lupus fact sheet

Appendix B: Eligibility gap analysis of Ontario's publicly funded immunization programs for lupus patients and immunocompromised persons

Appendix C: Ontario Rheumatologists supporting publicly-funded immunization programs for lupus patients and other immunocompromised persons

