

February 26, 2026

The Honourable Marjorie Michel
Minister of Health
Health Canada
Address Locator 1801B
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9

Re: COVID-19 Vaccine Choices for all Canadians

We are writing to you as concerned interest holders advocating for broader access to diverse COVID-19 vaccine options for Canadians, particularly those beyond the mRNA vaccines currently dominating the public offering. We respectfully urge the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), provincial and territorial governments and immunization providers to address the pressing need for increased availability and access to protein-based vaccines, such as Nuvaxovid, which are currently limited in distribution.

In particular, we wish to highlight the following key issues:

1. **Access Issues:** Many Canadians face significant challenges in accessing the Nuvaxovid COVID-19 vaccine due to systemic barriers, long travel distances, and inconsistent information provided to patients by governments and healthcare providers.
2. **Educational and Awareness Gaps:** There is a significant lack of public awareness regarding the need for ongoing COVID-19 vaccination, particularly additional (booster) doses.
3. **Communication Breakdown:** Effective communication between healthcare providers, public health officials, and the public is crucial. Reports of conflicting advice and misinformation from healthcare providers diminish public trust and impede vaccination efforts.
4. **Trust-Building:** Public skepticism towards vaccines, fueled by mixed messages and perceived politicization, must be addressed through transparent communication and community engagement.

We outline recommendations below to enhance vaccine access, support data generation, boost education and awareness, strengthen communication, and build public trust, informed by real-world experiences and examples. We are open to further discussion and collaboration with all interest holders to enhance the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

Access Issues

Many Canadians face significant challenges in accessing the Nuvaxovid COVID-19 vaccine. Reports from various regions, including Quebec, New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Ontario (see below), highlight systemic barriers, long travel distances, and inconsistent information from government and healthcare providers. These obstacles underscore the geographical and logistical disparities that hinder equitable vaccine access for both healthy individuals and vulnerable, high-risk populations.

I have personally experienced worsening disease flares following each subsequent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, after receiving up to six doses of both Moderna and Pfizer, which required additional treatment to manage. In the fall of 2024, I travelled more than 1.5 hours to access a protein-based vaccine, which did not trigger a flare. This experience underscored the importance of having accessible vaccine alternatives. Unfortunately, the protein-based vaccine (previously known as Novavax) was not available in 2025, and due to concerns about experiencing another flare with an mRNA vaccine, I ultimately contracted COVID-19.

Within the CAPA community, we have heard similar concerns from others. People report experiencing serious side effects that they feel are not being adequately recognized or addressed by healthcare providers. Some individuals have described new diagnoses of immune-mediated arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, following vaccination, while others with established arthritis report severe disease flares requiring treatment changes. These experiences are contributing to vaccine hesitancy among people who are medically vulnerable to infection and otherwise prioritized for vaccination, highlighting the need for better monitoring, validation of patient experiences, and access to alternative vaccine options.

To better understand Canada's commitment to ensuring access to protein-based COVID-19 vaccine options, we request confirmation of the number of doses of Nuvaxovid that will be publicly available for the Fall 2026 immunization season, and **anticipated distribution** for each Canadian province and territory.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and improve vaccine access and public health outcomes, we respectfully urge PHAC, provincial and territorial governments, and all organizations involved in the administration of COVID-19 vaccines to consider the following recommendations:

1. Enhance Vaccine Access:

- Procure sufficient doses for all Canadians who want or need access to a protein based COVID-19 vaccine.
- Increase distribution points for Nuvaxovid, ensuring availability through all channels where mRNA vaccines are offered, across Canada including underserved and rural areas with efficient booking processes.

2. Data Generation:

- Support the generation and dissemination of information about the importance and benefits of protein-based vaccines compared to mRNA vaccines to improve knowledge of and access particularly for patients who require alternative options.
- Capture data to better understand the experiences of immunocompromised populations with regard to current and new COVID-19 vaccines, including adverse events, and their relationship to vaccine uptake, hesitancy, and trust.

3. Boost Education and Awareness:

- Launch comprehensive public health campaigns to educate the public on the importance of COVID-19 vaccination and the availability of non-mRNA options, like Nuvaxovid.
- Provide updated training and resources for healthcare providers to ensure they have accurate information about all available vaccines.

4. Strengthen Communication:

- Develop clear, consistent public health messaging to address common concerns and misconceptions about COVID-19 vaccines.
- Foster better communication channels between public health officials, healthcare providers, and the public to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information.

5. Build Public Trust:

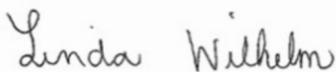
- Engage community leaders and trusted figures to advocate for vaccination and address vaccine hesitancy.
- Ensure transparency in the decision-making process regarding vaccine recommendations and availability, involving community input and feedback.

Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts from public health officials, healthcare providers, patient organizations and the community to ensure equitable vaccine access and improve public confidence in the vaccination process.

We look forward to advancing public health in Canada through immunization and to hearing from you regarding our recommendations and questions above.

Thank you for considering our concerns and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Linda Wilhelm
President, Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance (CAPA)

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