



August 8, 2012

HPV Calgary  
Attn Ms. Juliet Guichon  
2708 8<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Calgary, AB  
T2T 3AZ

[Calgaryhpv@gmail.com](mailto:Calgaryhpv@gmail.com)

Dear Ms. Guichon,

Thank you for the inquiry received by email and post dated July 27, 2012, from you and seven others asking for “clarification on Canadian Catholic teaching regarding the permissibility of in-school vaccination programs in publicly funded Catholic Schools, and in particular, public health vaccinations against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV)”.

First of all, I wish to point out that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is the assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Canada. It is not the function of this Conference, as you so request, “to intervene” with Catholic Bishops, Catholic dioceses, or Catholic school boards. The CCCB does not have hierarchical responsibilities over Canadian Bishops and their dioceses.

Secondly, the basic principle involved in this question is Catholic teaching that parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare and education of their children. As explained in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, *The family has a completely original and irreplaceable role in raising children* (see no. 239); *Parents are the first educators, not the only educators, of their children; it belongs to them, therefore, to exercise with responsibility their educational activity in close and vigilant cooperation with civil and ecclesial agencies* (see no. 240); *The family has the responsibility to provide an integral education* (see no. 242); *Parents have, then, a particular responsibility in the area of sexual education* (see no. 243). “Education”, of course, is understood to include the full development of the whole person. For Catholics, this involves not simply the instruction of children by parents but also “creating a home”; apprenticeship in the virtues, and good example; initiation into solidarity and responsibility; and providing for the physical and spiritual needs of children and young people (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2223, 2224, 2228).

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Thus, when questions began circulating some years ago about in-school vaccination programs against HPV, the Executive Committee of our Conference reaffirmed it was the responsibility and prerogative of parents to decide on whether children or adolescents in their care should receive the vaccine. Catholic school board policies are consequently based on ensuring respect for the rights and responsibilities of the parents of those children who attend the schools involved. Furthermore, since schools in Canada come under provincial legislation, it is the Bishops of each province who interact with that province's school boards and schools. For example, the Bishops of Ontario in the fall of 2007 reminded Ontario Catholic school boards and educators that "parents have the right and responsibility to decide" in the matter of HPV vaccinations. As the Ontario Bishops also noted at the time, Catholic parents will have a number of important considerations in mind when deciding on vaccinations against HPV. Among these, is that "infection with HPV or other sexually transmitted diseases can occur only through sexual activity, which carries with it profound risks to a young person's spiritual, emotional, moral, and physical health", and "that, at best, a vaccine can only be potentially effective against one of these risks, that to physical health...."

Since you are writing from Calgary, I am copying the Catholic Bishop of that Diocese, the Most Reverend Fred Henry, whose offices can assist you, should you so wish, in contacting the Catholic dioceses and school boards in Alberta to obtain information on specific policies in place for Catholic schools in the various regions of your province. In addition, I also wish to assure you that I am bringing your letter to the attention of our Conference's Executive Committee for its information when it meets later this month.

With every good and prayerful wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Msgr. Patrick Powers". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

(Rev.) Msgr. Patrick Powers, P.H.  
General Secretary

CC The Most Reverend Fred Henry, Bishop of Calgary