

Plan for Change takes Ontario from "Bottom to top" in free vaccinations for children

Vaccinations For Chicken Pox, Meningitis And Pneumococcal Disease Will Save Families More Than \$600 Per Child

TORONTO, May 19 /CNW/ - The Plan for Change will keep Ontario children healthy by covering the cost of children's vaccinations for chicken pox, meningitis and pneumococcal disease, a leading cause of pneumonia, Premier Dalton McGuinty said today.

"Up until now, families that couldn't afford to pay more than \$600 per child for these vaccinations had to do without," Premier McGuinty said during a roundtable discussion with doctors and nurses at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

"That's a risk no family should be forced to take. It's a risk Ontario will take no longer." By covering the latest three vaccinations for these illnesses, The Plan for Change will save Ontario parents more than \$600 per child in a child's first year.

"I want to thank the Premier for this positive change to include the meningococcal and pneumococcal meningitis vaccines on the province's routine immunization schedule," said Kathryn Blain, chair of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada, who lost her son Michael Longo in 1995 to Meningococcal Septicemia.

"Ontario has shown real leadership and taken a very important step by deciding that no more children should suffer when there are safe and effective vaccines to protect them. We're hopeful that the remaining provinces will now follow."

This change takes Ontario from having one of the worst records in Canada on immunization to being a leader on immunization. Ontario becomes only the second province to offer all necessary vaccinations to children.

"These vaccines will help keep our children healthy by preventing disease, and they'll save precious health care dollars by keeping our youngest Ontarians out of hospital," Premier McGuinty said. "Our plan delivers the health care results Ontarians want and need. This is the brand of change we're delivering for Ontarians, with their help, and on their behalf."