December 14, 2020

Regulated Health Professionals:

As you have heard, Canada will be implementing a COVID-19 immunization strategy beginning in December. The Government of Canada has multiple Advance Purchase Agreements in place with COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers. Several vaccines are currently undergoing Health Canada review and you will have seen that Health Canada recently approved the Pfizer vaccine. Small quantities of the Pfizer product and potentially one other (pending approval) will be available starting next week with limited additional supply for the first quarter of 2021. Each product has very specific indications on storage and handling and will require significant planning and logistics to facilitate usage.

The approach of Nova Scotia’s immunization plan is to provide vaccine to the priority populations/groups aligning with the National Advisory Committee on Immunizations recommendations (COVID-19: Preliminary guidance on key populations for early immunization - Canada.ca). With the limited supply and the specific storage requirements by manufacturers, further prioritization will be necessary. Nova Scotia will be using the first doses to immunize front-line healthcare workers in the Central Zone who are directly involved in patient care beginning with:

--people working with patients in intensive care units and emergency departments
--people who work in the Covid units in our hospitals...
--and staff at the new long-term care regional care units here in central zone.

As the supply of vaccine increases during the first quarter of 2021, immunization will expand to those at higher risk of severe disease starting with LTC residents and then community living seniors. We expect that we will be able to offer vaccine to other health care workers and essential workers by spring 2021. This approach will be phased as new products and supply become available, but it is unlikely that the general public will receive vaccine until summer 2021.

Angela Purcell, Executive Director, Health Workforce Branch, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, will be in touch to set a meeting to further discuss.

DHW is working with many partners in developing logistical and program planning for this immunization program and I will provide you with updates as more information is available.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Strang, MD,MHSc., FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Department of Health and Wellness

c: Deputy Minister Kevin Orrell; ADM Tracey Barbrick; Craig Beaton; Angela Purcell