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Comments on Bill 283, Advancing Oversight and Planning in Ontario's Health System Act, 2021

Introduction

I will be limiting my comments to Schedule 1 of this bill, the Covid-19 Vaccination Reporting Act, 2021.

Analysis

- The COVID 19 pandemic has selectively hit different Ontario communities. Higher income neighbourhoods with mainly white populations have had low rates of COVID and high rates of vaccination. Poorer neighbourhoods with mainly non-white populations have had high rates of COVID and low rates of vaccination.
- For many years, health policy experts and advocates have pushed for mandatory collection of socio-demographic data including data on race and ethnicity. This data is crucial for understanding health disparities and planning for their amelioration.
- The first positive report of the Moderna vaccine came in May 2020. The province has been vaccinating since December. On March 5, 2021 the Premier announced that socio demographic data would be collected from those vaccinated. Yet Bill 283 which permits the transfer on information from vaccinators is just now being debated. And there is no mandate for the collection of this data.
- All health data is given voluntarily and protected by privacy.
- Telling people it is voluntary frustrates data collection. I am advised that 87% of people who are asked, actually do provide socio-demographic information.
- By and large it is providers who are reluctant to ask these questions. Community members do wish to answer the questions.
- Collecting socio-demographic data is just good medical practice.

Conclusions

- Health policy experts note that collecting socio-demographic data including ethno racial identity are crucial for effective health care.
- COVID has hit different communities differently. We must understand who is getting sick, who is getting tested , and who is getting vaccinated to understand and end this pandemic.

Recommendations

- Bill 283 Schedule 1 should be amended to require vaccinators to ask those they are vaccinating to provide key socio-demographic data including race and ethnic origin.
- The Ministry of Health should require health care providers to ask questions about socio-demographic data as part of routine health care.