



**ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO**

**ASSEMBLÉE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DE L'ONTARIO**

***A message to Directors of Education of Catholic School Boards  
and to the Catholic educational community***

In August 2007, the Government of Ontario announced the introduction of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine into the publicly funded immunization program. This means that female students in all grade 8 classrooms in our school system will be offered the vaccine over the course of this year. This is a voluntary program and parents have the final decision on whether their daughters will be vaccinated.

The Bishops affirm that parents have the right and responsibility to decide whether their daughters should be vaccinated. We encourage parents to keep in mind some important considerations.

First, 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. The Bishops note that, at best, a vaccine can only be potentially effective against one of these risks, that to physical health, and may have other unintended and unwanted consequences. Sexuality is a great and powerful gift. Sexual activity is appropriate only within marriage. Outside of marriage, abstinence is not only clearly the choice that leads to spiritual and moral wellbeing, but it is obviously the best protection against risks of disease.

Second, there is no consensus among those involved in public health in Canada that HPV vaccination is the most prudent strategy in terms of allocating health care resources to address the goal of preventing deaths resulting from cervical cancer. Further research is required. The Bishops of Ontario encourage parents to learn the medical facts concerning this vaccination. Although the HPV vaccination program properly leaves the choice of participation to parents, the Bishops of Ontario regret its introduction without further opportunity for thorough study of all of the effects of this program. The best interests of children demands that parents and guardians be fully informed before granting consent.

Parents and educators want to prepare children well for their future in all aspects of their lives. A proper education in chastity helps young people to embrace their sexuality with confidence and joy.

We ask that Catholic school boards include this message in the information package that parents receive concerning the program.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
The Catholic Bishops of Ontario