

## FW: Trump haste for vaccine worries Canadian expert group (La Voix de l'Est)

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Just flagging the article below, given quotes from co-chair. Have flagged for MINO Comms as well.

Working right now with NRC on a few media requests re: VTF.

Begin forwarded message:

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**Subject:** Trump haste for vaccine worries Canadian expert group (La Voix de l'Est)

## Trump haste for vaccine worries Canadian expert group

***Members of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force established by the federal government worry about political pressure the Trump administration may exert prior to November vote.***

Group co-chair Dr. Joanne Langley is concerned about vaccine hesitancy. That feeling is shared by committee member Alan Bernstein.

Dr. Langley says governments and health professionals should organize a vigorous educational campaign to counter this hesitancy when a COVID-19 vaccine is available.

Recent statements by outgoing American president Donald Trump that a vaccine could be available as early as October have raised concerns.

The hurry to approve a vaccine for electoral purposes could later dissuade people from being inoculated, worries the task force, made up of 18 health experts including Professor Gary Kobinger of Laval University and André Veillette of the Université de Montréal.

One of the task force missions is “prioritizing vaccine projects seeking support for activities in Canada”.

Last week, Donald Trump rebuked the director of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention for stating before a Senate committee that a safe and effective vaccine would not be ready before the election.

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“As a scientist and a citizen that worries me, because regulatory agencies are designed to be independent of any political influence,” notes Dr. Langley. “All decisions are based on scientific evidence, including the immune response, the degree of protection provided by the vaccine, and any adverse effects. And really, politicians have nothing to do with that.”

Mr. Bernstein fears that if politicians manage to push regulatory agencies to prematurely approve a vaccine, it could undermine public trust and encourage people not to be vaccinated.

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“That would be a huge mistake. What a disaster if we develop an excellent vaccine, but people don’t trust it because the decision on whether to go ahead was influenced by politics,” he says.

In Canada, the federal government has concluded advance purchasing agreements with a handful of international biotechnology companies for tens of millions of vaccine doses if they prove to be safe and effective.

Canadian politicians and public health officials have said that widespread vaccine uptake is critical to eradicating the novel coronavirus.

Mr. Bernstein says that the government’s purchasing decisions are based on recommendations that came out of painstaking research conducted by its advisory group. The task force reports to Minister of Health Patty Hajdu and Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains.

“Both ministers have been very conscientious in listening to us, visiting us, and speaking with us,” says Mr. Bernstein. “Science is guiding the decisions.”

Dr. Langley says it is up to governments and health professionals to tell Canadians about the benefits of receiving a safe vaccine when it is approved for use.

“We want to ensure that the Canadian public has the opportunity to learn about the very high standards that will have to be met for these vaccines. The public has to be convinced that this vaccine will be chosen in their best interests.”

Both task force co-chairs, Dr. Langley and Mark Lievonen, spent half a day briefing federal ministers during their two-day retreat in Ottawa last week.

“It was all about the health impacts of COVID-19 on the health of Canadians, about what we know today and what we might be able to do, and what the future will look like,” said Dr. Langley.

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