

WHO yet to take Canada's experimental Ebola vaccine

9 October 2014

Doses of a prototype Ebola vaccine developed by Canada remain in the country even though they were offered to the World Health Organization nearly two months ago, the health minister said Thursday.

On August 12, the Canadian government said it would donate up to 1,000 doses of the experimental Ebola vaccine, known as VSV-EBOV, to the WHO.

In parliament on Thursday, a member of the opposition accused the government of reneging on its pledge to help contain the Ebola outbreak in west Africa, because the vaccine remains in a Winnipeg laboratory.

"The WHO has not decided when and if it will distribute it," Health Minister Rona Ambrose said. "We hope they are able to use it."

The vaccine has not been tested on humans but has shown promise in animal research, Ambrose said in August.

It is one of two vaccines considered promising by the WHO for [clinical trials](#) ahead of commercialization.

In response to another question, Ambrose denied the delay had anything to do with the vaccine's commercialization.

"The doses that we have given to the WHO are owned by us," she said, noting that the [intellectual property rights](#) for the vaccine remained with the Canadian government.

As for the distribution rights, they belong to the US firm NewLink Genetics, based in Iowa.

"That company is working very hard to have clinical trials speeded up," Ambrose said.

"And they hope to see the vaccine commercialized by December."

The world's largest outbreak of Ebola has killed 3,865 people out of 8,033 infected so far this year, mainly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, according to the WHO's latest count.

No cure or vaccine is currently approved for the virus, though several experimental treatments are being fast-tracked through testing.

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