



The Pandemic Planner

A Monthly Newsletter for Health Care Professionals

Emergency Management Unit, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

March 2007

Spring is here and the seeds have been planted to ensure a very productive year for pandemic planning! The Emergency Management Unit, as well as many community organizations and health care professionals have been busy with developing planning tools, information, training and resources to further support effective pandemic planning and response readiness. Many of these activities focus on ways to harness best practices, promote horizontal planning and support community participation. They are also designed to encourage inclusivity, strengthen relationships and reduce health risks.

This edition of the *Pandemic Planner* will highlight some of the activities underway, and will showcase how they further support our on-going planning and preparedness efforts. We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Pandemic Planner* and that the information will help spring your planning activities forward in 2007!

~ Allison J. Stuart, Director, Emergency Management Unit

What's New?

First Nations Community Pandemic Planning

The Mohawk Community of Tyendinaga has completed its first-ever pandemic plan: *The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Pandemic Influenza Plan*, 2006. The plan was three-years in the making and includes 31 chapters that focus on pandemic preparedness and response activities specifically tailored to the unique aspects of the community, culture and people.

The work was led by Cindy Thompson, the community's Health Services Manager, with support from Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health. In addition, Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit provided support, input and guidance on the plan's development.

The plan is well researched, based on evidence and features self-care guidelines, a communications plan, and community education and awareness strategies. It is currently with the Band Council for approval and is expected to be released in the near future. Once approved, it will be made available to communities across Ontario and Canada.

Congratulations to the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte-Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health and Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit on their collaborative planning efforts!

Survey: Community Pandemic Planning

Although each health care organization is responsible for preparing its own influenza pandemic plan, an effective local response depends on partnerships and collaborative planning by health and community officials.

In 2005, local health units were identified to lead the coordination of health response plans in the community - engaging all aspects of the health care system in planning activities, including stakeholders from

hospitals, long-term care homes, emergency medical services, community-based service providers, medical laboratories and, of course, public health units.

To assess planning progress at the local level, health units complete a survey three times a year. Based on feedback from health units, a revised survey tool was released in January 2007. The results demonstrate that continuous progress is being made in pandemic planning, and that processes are in place to ensure planning activities are inclusive across the province.

The next survey will be conducted in May 2007. Until then, the results of the January 2007 survey are posted at: www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic. Please take the opportunity to view the accomplishments of health units and their community partners. Congratulations on continuing the preparedness process!

Pandemic Preparedness Planning Portal Project = P5

In early 2004-05, answering a request for proposals by the Change Foundation, the Pandemic Preparedness Planning Portal Project was born! The objective of this initiative is to assist the health care sector, namely hospitals, with preparing for large scale infectious disease outbreaks including an influenza pandemic.

The major focus of the project, commonly referred to as P5, is to act as an on-line "meeting place" to facilitate dialogue amongst health care organizations and service providers. Its overall goal is to promote best practices in planning, provide the latest in information, tools and resources and support opportunities that address the unique planning needs of smaller and rural health care organizations.

Resources and services that would be featured through P5 will include:

- Profiling and showcasing best practices and planning across Ontario;

- Information on developing, planning and implementing pandemic and/or infectious diseases exercises;
- How to integrate hospital plans;
- Planning modules (the principles and practices) on all aspects of planning; and
- Planning and preparedness quizzes.

The project is being developed by a team at Queen's University, with Dr. Dick Zoutman as the Principle Investigator, Dr. Brian Schwartz as the Co-Investigator, Matt Melinshyn as Project Manager and B. Douglas Ford as Project Consultant. The team is aware of existing collaborative planning activities and will look to ensuring P5 enhances the work currently underway, including supporting those planning efforts being led by health units.

The project is expected to be completed by summer 2008, and is initially being piloted through selected hospitals. Stay tuned for more updates on this exciting resource in the coming months!

Reducing Potential Health Risks During Times of Emergencies

Recent disasters in Canada and around the world have demonstrated the need to ensure emergency planning incorporates the goal of community resilience, and includes measures that address the unique and diverse needs of our population.

A planning tool such as a checklist can serve as a valuable resource for emergency planners, first responders, service organizations and individuals (and their personal networks, such as family and friends) in reducing potential health risks that may be influenced by an emergency – including an influenza pandemic.

On March 12, 2007, the EMU, together with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), organized a one-day workshop on community resilience in Toronto. The goal of the workshop was to inform the development of an emergency planning checklist for specific health-related communities, including mental health and rehabilitation services for children and adults; as well as independent living services and supports for persons with developmental and physical disabilities.

A broad range of organizations and emergency planners participated in the day's activities, and the discussions generated will help PHAC develop resources that promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities into health and emergency planning activities, enhance opportunities to build community resilience and support horizontal, collaborative and effective planning measures. Stay tuned for more information on this community resilience initiative and others in the coming months!

You Asked....?

- To help build information sharing at the local and community levels, the EMU has created the new Local Pandemic Planning section on the web site. The resource will be available on April 2, 2007 at: www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic. Thanks to everyone for submitting your links! To add a health unit web site, please email us at: emergencymanagement@moh.gov.on.ca.
- Emergency Preparedness (EP) Week runs May 6-12 across Ontario and Canada. The EMU has created the ***EP Week Virtual Kit for Health Care Organizations***, which will be available on-line on April 2, 2007. The kit will help health care organizations and professionals plan preparedness activities, and includes the following resources:

- An "Ideas List" on how you can promote EP Week in your organization, amongst staff, colleagues, members and stakeholders;
- Articles you can include in newsletters or post on-line and on bulletin boards;
- Personal preparedness tip sheet for health care professionals;
- Be Prepared: Making a Plan; and
- Personal Emergency Checklist

Be sure to visit www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency and download these helpful resources as you plan EP week events in your organization!

Local Profile

The Region of Waterloo Public Health, in consultation with community stakeholders, is in the final stages of completing the second phase of its local interagency plan: "Community Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan".

By recognizing the importance of collaboration and partnerships, the health unit brought together over 100 individuals representing more than 50 organizations to support the development of this plan. Membership on the Steering Committee and sub-committees include health care organizations and professionals, first responders, local school boards, universities, area municipalities, and social service organizations such as the local food banks and Meals on Wheels.

The interagency plan will help ensure response and recovery efforts are both coordinated and effective, and it is expected to be released in April 2007. At that time, the plan will be posted on the health unit's pandemic-specific web site at: www.waterlooregionpandemic.ca and through the Local Planning section of the EMU site.

Congratulations to the health unit and all the community stakeholders that provided input and support to the development of this comprehensive plan.

Important Dates: April – May 2007

- **April 3-4, 2007** – "National Emergency Stockpile System (NESS) Emergency Hospital Set Up Course" will be hosted by the EMU in Gravenhurst, Ontario. Registration is complete for this course. To register for fall courses, visit: www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency.
- **May 9, 2007** – "Emergency Preparedness Day London 2007: Partnered and Prepared". To obtain a copy of the event information package email: London.EmergencyPrep@ontario.ca.
- **May 15, 24 & 31, 2007** – "Advancing Emergency Preparedness Through a Safety Culture". The Incident Management Committee of the Health Care Network of Southeastern Ontario is hosting three one-day workshops, which will include a pandemic table-top exercise. For more information or to register, please visit <http://seohealthnet.com>.

Useful Resources On-Line

"Factors that make infectious disease controllable" – this article features general properties of emerging infectious agents that determine the likely success of public health measures in controlling outbreaks. It can be found at: <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/reprint/101/16/6146>.

"Effectiveness of Interventions to Reduce Contact Rates during a Simulated Influenza Pandemic" – this article highlights interventions and public health measures that may reduce contacts among residents of Long-Term Care facilities, overall illness attack rates, hospitalization rates, and mortality rates. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/13/4/581.htm>.