



The Pandemic Planner

A Monthly Newsletter for Health Care Professionals

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

January 2007

A new year has arrived bringing with it a flurry of activities, including new and exciting developments in building community resilience, breaking new ground in pandemic planning with the addiction and mental health sector, and gearing up for the next meeting of the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic Steering Committee.

The new year also brought to us Justice Archie Campbell's third and final report on the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003. This report reinforces the importance of working together to ensure effective planning, infection control and occupational health and safety measure to safeguard the health care system, professionals, front-line workers and the public.

This month's issue of the Pandemic Planner will highlight new initiatives to build community resilience, collaborative planning and further efforts to protect Ontarians from an infectious disease outbreak including an influenza pandemic.

~ Allison J. Stuart, Director, Emergency Management Unit

What's New!

Influenza Pandemic Planning in the Addiction and Mental Health Community

We are breaking new ground in pandemic planning! Through the Mental Health and Addictions Branch of the ministry, a working group has been struck to develop a guide to pandemic planning for the addiction and mental health sector. The guide will be similar to that which was originally developed for the long term care home community and will address key planning issues such as:

- Planning assumptions;
- Client needs and services;
- Infection control and occupational health and safety for health care workers;
- Health human resources planning;
- Business continuity; and
- Supply and equipment planning

The guide will also help to address some unique planning challenges relating to this sector's diversity of services and the settings in which they are offered.

Both ministry and service organizations are represented on the working group, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and inclusivity for effective pandemic planning and preparedness. It is anticipated that the guide will be available this summer.

Web Site Survey

In our December issue of the *Pandemic Planner* we announced the launch of the web site refresh. We've received a lot positive feedback on the new layout and design from the public, health care professionals and emergency planners across the province.

On Monday, January 28, 2007, we are launching a web-based survey. This survey will help us in future planning for the web site, as well as ensure that the materials and information available are topical, informative and useful in your planning efforts.

All comments and information will be held confidentially and will only be used to assist with developing new materials and support on-going updates and maintenance.

Please take a moment to share your comments by filling out the on-line survey at: www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic ; or www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency .

Community Resilience

Emergencies can be overwhelming, stressful (physically and emotionally), and frightening for both those who are responding to an emergency and the public.

Community resilience is an important factor to consider in emergency planning. In December 2006, the Emergency Management Unit (EMU) hosted an information session with non-government and social service agencies that provide telephone help and support to the public. The purpose of this meeting was to share current resilience building activities and initiatives in communities across Ontario, as well as to discuss new and emerging trends, psychological and social needs in both rural and urban settings and to identify the availability of community response networks.

Representatives from organizations such as Distress Centres of Ontario, Find Help and InformOntario, as well as from Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services participated in the session.

The ministry will continue discussions with this group as well as develop additional initiatives to help support resiliency in other communities including the health care sector. Stay tuned for future updates on our collaborative planning efforts!

You Asked....?

Justice Archie Campbell's Report

On January 9, 2007, Justice Archie Campbell released his final report on the 2003 SARS outbreak. The report is extensive and the recommendations cover a broad spectrum of the health care system including the precautionary principle, a strong public health system, risk communications and outbreak alerts, orderly hospital closures, the role of our front-line workers and joint health and safety committees, surveillance and infection control and pandemic planning.

These are just some of the key areas the report focuses on. If you have not accessed the report and would like to, visit the SARS Commission's web site at: <http://www.sarscommission.ca/>.

If you would like more information on the precautionary principle, please visit the following:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139578e.pdf> ;
<http://www.ajph.org/cgi/reprint/91/9/1358> ; and
<http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/32/4/489> .

Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic

The Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP) Steering Committee is providing oversight on revisions being made to Chapter 7 of the OHPIP: *Infection Prevention and Control and Occupational Health and Safety*.

The revisions to this chapter and supporting tools will reinforce the importance of instituting the **Hierarchy of Infection Prevention and Control Measures** – an occupational health and safety concept.

In addition, members of the OHPIP Steering Committee played an important oversight role in the development of influenza pandemic fact sheets for the public. It is anticipated that the fact sheets will be posted on-line in the next few weeks. Please watch the ministry web site at www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic .

Mark Your Calendars!

Emergency Preparedness Week is May 6-12, 2007. Each year there are week-long activities and awareness events that are coordinated by the province (through the EMO), the federal government and municipalities across Ontario.

This year's theme is "Personal Preparedness" and the EMU is starting to plan a number of activities within the unit, the ministry and with stakeholders. If you are looking for presenters on personal emergency preparedness during this week, please contact us at: emergencymanagement@moh.gov.on.ca . We would be happy to attend your event!

Stay tuned for more information on how your organization can get involved and support personal preparedness!

Event Profile

Inter-professional Disaster and Emergency Action Studies (IDEAS)

Three conferences and disaster exercises are being planned by the IDEAS Network for 2007-08. The conferences and exercises are part of a larger project funded by Health Canada and involve Centennial and George Brown colleges, the Michener Institute, Ryerson University and the University of Toronto.

The events will involve first responders, health care facilities (hospital and community based), psychosocial and social services professionals and communications including the media.

Event Schedule:

- March 23-24, 2007: "The Impact of a Terrorist Attack" - A conference and mass casualty exercise will be held at Centennial College, Toronto. For more information, or to register, please visit: <http://www.ideasnetwork.ca/> .
- November 2007 (dates to be confirmed): "Outbreak!" This exercise looks at how an "unknown" and lethal organism sweeps across the globe to Canada. Centennial College , Toronto

There is also an exercise that will be planned for March 2008. Details of the exercise are under development and will be provided in the coming months. For more information about the IDEAS Network or up-coming activities, please visit: <http://www.ideasnetwork.ca/> .

Important Dates: January 2007

- **February 14, 2007:** The OHPIP Steering Committee Meeting, Toronto.
- **February 21 – 24, 2007:** The Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) Annual Conference will be held in Toronto (EMU will be receiving the OPA's 2006 Public Service Award).
- **May 6 - 12, 2007** is Emergency Preparedness Week. The EMU is developing a number of activities to mark the week and bring about awareness. Stay tuned for more information!

Useful Resources On-Line

A new article from the February issue of **Emerging Infectious Diseases**: "Subclinical Infection with Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus in Cats" can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/13/2/242.htm>

The January issue of **Emerging Infectious Diseases** is also featuring the article: "Interaction Between Humans and Poultry, Rural Cambodia" which can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/13/1/pdfs/130.pdf>

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has released the **Pandemic Planning Tool Kit** for business across Ontario. The kit can be found at: <http://occ.on.ca/private/328>

The United States government has developed a guide to help businesses with overseas operations prepare and implement pandemic business continuity. The guide can serve as a starting point for developing a comprehensive plan, and can be found at: <http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/business/businessesoverseaspdf.pdf>