



# The Pandemic Planner

## A Monthly Newsletter for Health Care Professionals

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

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As part of the planning process, we know that special care and consideration must be taken to ensure that plans incorporate strategies which support the health system in making the best use of its resources – whether human resources, supplies and equipment or facilities. We know that one way to help achieve this goal is through developing community-based influenza assessment, treatment and referral centres, or “flu centres”.

Flu centres will serve as a primary access point for Ontarians who fear they have the flu so that other health services and health workers can continue during a pandemic. The centres will also serve as a “triage base” so that hospitals can focus resources on treating critically ill patients (affected by influenza or other illness).

This issue of the *Pandemic Planner* will feature updates on flu centre planning and guidelines. It will also feature new initiatives and opportunities at the federal, provincial and local levels. By highlighting flu centre planning activities we hope to inform your community-based planning across the province.

~ Allison J. Stuart, Director, Emergency Management Unit

### What's New?

#### ***Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP)***

As we know, the OHPIP Steering Committee has been working hard over the last several months on the next iteration of the Ontario plan. In addition to including new chapters and tools for health sector areas such as emergency medical services and mental health and addictions, the Committee has been working on updating key chapters in the plan. This includes chapter 11, “Community-based Influenza Assessment, Treatment and Referral Centres” – or flu centres.

The update is quite extensive in that the revised chapter will offer further support, guidance and assistance to local planners in identifying, planning for and setting up flu centres. Human resources planning will be a core feature of the revised chapter with a flu centre staffing model included.

The staffing model is based on assessing 900 patients per day, 15 minutes per patient visit (on average), over an 18-hour time period. It will provide guidance on staffing structure and will help planners incorporate the core-competency based approach to health human resource (HHR) planning. It is also a scalable model designed to address local needs.

The chapter will feature important information regarding minimum requirements for medical, administrative and I&IT supplies and equipment, as well as funding roles and responsibilities. Stay tuned for more details in the 2007 iteration of the OHPIP.

In the meantime, remember to refer to chapter 8 and 8A of the 2006 plan for guidance on all your HHR planning. Please visit: [www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic).

#### ***First Nations Communities and Alternate Care Sites***

The release of the Guidelines for First Nations Communities (chapter 20 of the OHPIP) in December 2006 has provided important information and support for First Nations pandemic planning in Ontario. Many communities have undertaken planning activities and are working closely to identify and share resources.

In addition to chapter 20 of the OHPIP, the federal government department of First Nations Inuit Health (FNIH) Health Canada - Ontario Region has been working with First Nations organizations (including the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, Union of Ontario, Independent First Nation, Nishbe-Aski Nation, Chiefs of Ontario, Grand Treaty #3), as well as First Nations communities across Ontario on the Ontario Region FNIH Pandemic Plan.

This plan includes a section on alternate care/flu sites and has been a tremendous support to First Nations communities and their pandemic planning efforts. In the plan there are criteria for selecting sites, human resources planning, checklists and patient assessment tools.

The site selection criteria encourage community planners to use facilities that have existing administrative and I&IT infrastructure (i.e., telephone access, computers, and public announcement systems). Recommended sites include local schools, community centres, churches or band halls.

Like flu centres planned for cities, towns and regions across Ontario, First Nation alternative care/flu sites will provide individual influenza assessment, treatment and referral.

The First Nations alternative care/flu sites will be staffed by community health professionals, personal care attendants, support workers and community volunteers. Site supplies and equipment have been provided by FNIH and include thermometers, sharp containers, cots, disposable pillow cases, blankets, identification bracelets, basins and more.

As part of pandemic preparedness, the FNIH has also provided stocks of personal protective equipment (gloves, gowns, goggles and masks) for all health care personnel, first responders, paramedics, community health support staff and mental health workers within the communities.

Many First Nations including the Akwesasne, Constance Lake, Six Nations and the Oneida, Fort Hope, Wikwemikong communities and Wabun Tribal Council are championing pandemic planning. More information on their planning efforts will be featured in upcoming issues of the *Pandemic Planner*. Stay tuned for future profiles!

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## You Asked....?

- The results of the May 2007 *Survey of Community Pandemic Planning* will be posted online in June 2007. Since January, the survey was revised to also capture the status of community flu centre planning. Watch for the latest survey results at: [www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic).
- The OHPIP Steering Committee will meet June 25, 2007. This meeting will focus on reviewing the 'penultimate' draft of OHPIP 2007! Stay tuned for details on the plan's release date!

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## Local Profile

In 2002, the Durham Region Health Department completed its first-ever influenza pandemic plan! At the time, the plan was based on the information and guidelines set out by the World Health Organization.

Since then, the plan has been revised and updated, not only to meet the needs of an ever-growing community, but also to align with both the federal and provincial influenza pandemic plans.

The Durham Region Health Department Influenza Pandemic Plan 2006 outlines roles and responsibilities for health care agencies and responders within the Region. Durham Region also has a separate pandemic plan that provides direction and assigns responsibilities to regional departments and local municipalities. Both plans identify the Health Department as the lead agency.

Currently, the Health Department is working collaboratively with its inter-agency planning team (which includes representation from the local health care sector) to develop an assessment centre annex for the Health Department plan.

The annex is based on the Peterborough County-City Health Unit Assessment Centre plan (supporting the overall goal of horizontal planning and information sharing), and Durham Region's inter-agency committee has selected potential locations for assessment centre set-up across the Region.

In the coming weeks, the inter-agency committee will undertake site visits to ensure that the potential locations to be selected have the infrastructure necessary to support assessment centres. This includes telecommunications capabilities, large spaces/rooms to support public/patient intake, security and parking facilities.

The ideal sites would also be in close proximity to acute care facilities within the region.

Durham Region is collaborating with local acute care facilities to address HHR planning needs and requirements; as well as identify options to open additional assessment centres as required and based upon the impact of influenza on the population.

Once the sites have been selected, the inter-agency committee will develop logistical requirements and put in place agreements with facilities and agencies as needed. The inter-agency committee expects to have the assessment centre annex drafted by early summer 2007.

Another important note to share about the Durham Region Health Department is that it is also a founding member of the Central Ontario Pandemic Planners for Public Health Response Committee.

This committee was set up in 2004 as a collaborative planning effort between Durham and York regions' health departments. It continues to serve as a forum for pandemic influenza planning and preparedness information and resource sharing for health units and other agencies!

In addition to the planning efforts and activities being lead by the Durham Region Health Department, an influenza pandemic table-top exercise is being planned for November 2007. The exercise will test the region's plans and response readiness. Over 200 stakeholders are expected to participate.

For more information on the Durham Region Health Department Influenza Pandemic plan and related activities please visit: <http://www.region.durham.on.ca/default.asp> (search for "Pandemic Influenza" under A-Z listing).

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## Important Dates: June 2007

- **June 13-15, 2007** – Great Lakes Boarder Health Initiative Conference will be held in Niagara Falls, New York. The conference will focus on enhanced early warning infectious disease surveillance. For more information, please visit: [www.michigan.gov/borderhealth](http://www.michigan.gov/borderhealth).
- **June 17-23, 2007** – The international Options for the Control of Influenza VI Conference will be held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. For more information, please visit: <http://www.optionsvconference.com/>.

## Useful Resources

**"Community-based approach to influenza assessment and treatment during a pandemic"** – This is a feature article in Health Care Management magazine. This article speaks to the importance of flu clinics and is authored by the Emergency Management Unit's Mark Breen, and co-authored by Allison J. Stuart and Phil Graham.

**"Pandemic Checklist"** – This article speaks to the importance of security planning for health care environments during a pandemic. Visit: <http://www.canadiansecuritymag.com/> (The article is in the current issue. Use the search function if you need assistance in accessing the article).

**"Supermap of Avian Flu Yields New Info on Source and Spread"** - A new and interactive map on the spread of the avian flu virus (H5N1) that incorporates genetic, geographic and evolutionary information. Visit: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/04/070430102031.htm> (Please note that the article takes time to load).