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PUBLIC HEALTH H1N1 RESPONSE UPDATE

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated November 11, 2009 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report is prepared for Regional Council in order for it to carry out its legislative duties and responsibilities as the Board of Health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. It provides an overview of Regional response measures to the pandemic H1N1 influenza outbreak as of November 10, 2009.

3. BACKGROUND

We are currently experiencing the second wave of H1N1 pandemic influenza

The new H1N1 influenza virus was first detected in Mexico last spring. In June 2009, the World Health Organization declared the first global influenza pandemic in 41 years because of evidence of widespread transmission of the H1N1 virus in several countries and cases of severe illness in previously healthy young adults. Influenza activity levels remained higher than typical in Canada during the summer, and increased in several parts of the country in October. On October 23, 2009, the federal Minister of Health announced that Canada had officially entered the second wave of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.

As directed by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Public Health Branch is responsible for coordinating the local distribution of the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine and administering it to York Region residents through immunization clinics, and for operating influenza assessment centres for residents who do not have a family doctor or are unable to get an appointment, in order to relieve pressure on hospital emergency departments.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

H1N1 immunizations are being offered at five community clinics based on GIS mapping of priority populations

York Region immunization clinic locations were selected based on Regional GIS mapping of priority populations.

- Vaughan—Vellore Village Community Centre
- Newmarket—Ray Twinney Recreation Complex
- Georgina (Sutton)—Kin Community Hall
- Richmond Hill—Rouge Woods Community Centre
- Markham—former Markham Hydro building

York Region Public Health began offering the H1N1 vaccine on October 28, 2009, at the Vellore Village clinic in Vaughan and the Ray Twinney clinic in Newmarket. Clinics in Sutton, Richmond Hill and Markham opened on November 2.

In order to mitigate wait times at immunization clinics, staff began to enforce prioritization as of October 31, 2009

The H1N1 vaccine was first offered to individuals who most need it:

- People under age 65 with chronic health conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, cancer or a condition that affects the heart, liver, lung, or immune system).
- Pregnant women.
- Healthy children aged six months to less than five years.
- People living in remote and isolated settings or communities.
- Health care workers.
- Household contacts and care providers of infants under six months or persons who may not respond to vaccines.

When clinics were first opened on October 28, 2009, public demand for the vaccine resulted in long wait lines. As of October 31, 2009, more stringent enforcement of the policy to immunize priority groups resulted in substantial reductions in wait times.

York Region's H1N1 vaccine supply is dependent on the vaccine supply chain

The Government of Canada is overseeing the distribution of the H1N1 influenza vaccine from the vaccine manufacturer to provinces and territories. York Region's supply depends on vaccine becoming available from the province.

Initially, the only vaccine available in Canada was one with an adjuvant (a substance that boosts an individual's immune system and increases response to a vaccine). An unadjuvanted vaccine, recommended for pregnant women, became available later. Over

the November 7 weekend, York Region Public Health began immunizing pregnant women with unadjuvanted vaccine.

York Region will work with school boards to immunize school age children

It is expected that the province will identify 5- to 18-year olds as the next priority group to be immunized with H1N1 vaccine. Regional staff are currently working to finalize a strategy to immunize this group. The goal is to complete the immunization of 200,000 students at 400 schools in the Region within a four-week period. This will entail opening school-based clinics in addition to Public Health's established H1N1 immunization clinics, which will require six additional teams of immunizers to be hired, each team having the same capacity as an established clinic. Working with school boards will help to optimize speed and reach.

Community physicians are also acting as vaccine delivery agents

Of approximately 650 community physicians in York Region, 301 are acting as vaccine delivery agents. Many physicians have received 50 or 100 dose packages of the H1N1 vaccine from York Region. Regional staff will be repackaging the vaccine into an even smaller quantity and will distribute the doses to physicians who request them.

Arrangements were made to have ten primary care sites where local primary care physicians, their staff and other health care workers could get immunized. Employee clinics were also held for Public Health, Emergency Medical Services, and Long Term Care staff.

Table 1 summarizes the number of vaccines administered and distributed by York Region Public Health as of November 10, 2009.

Table 1
Pandemic H1N1 Vaccine Administered and Distributed by
York Region Public Health as of November 10, 2009

	Numbers
Vaccines administered through public health immunization clinics	33,833
Doses provided to hospitals	12,250
Doses provided to community physicians	94,860
Doses provided to other health care providers	5,501

Community Flu Assessment Centres provide surge capacity to relieve pressures on local hospitals

York Region opened its first Community Flu Assessment Centre in the City of Vaughan on November 3, 2009.

Table 2 summarizes Community Flu Assessment Centre activity up to November 9, 2009.

Table 2
Community Flu Assessment Centre Activity
as of November 9, 2009

	Number
Number of patients referred home	164
Number of patients referred to primary care physicians	19
Number of patients referred to urgent care physicians	69
Number of patients referred to hospital*	14
Total number of patients seen	266
Number of prescriptions for antivirals given	58

*Initial protocols were modified so that patients are now seen by urgent care physicians onsite first.

Two more Community Flu Assessment Centres are to be opened, one the week of November 9, 2009, and the other the week of November 16, 2009.

It is uncertain how long the H1N1 pandemic will last

There are differing views on whether the H1N1 influenza pandemic has reached its peak. Mathematical models from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control suggest that the H1N1 influenza pandemic will reach its peak in late November or early December, 2009. However, some medical officers of health in eastern Ontario are of the opinion that the peak of the outbreak occurred the last week of October.

A total of 32 York Region residents have been hospitalized with H1N1 since September 1, 2009. There has been one death associated with H1N1 in York Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Payroll and other costs relating to the Region's H1N1 response are being tracked. Necessary applications for funding to recover eligible H1N1-related costs will be made. Details of eligible costs and funding request formats will be clarified by the province (see *Attachment 1*).

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

York Region staff worked collaboratively with local municipalities, as outlined in the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic, to open and operate immunization clinics and Community Flu Assessment Centres.

The opening of one Community Flu Assessment Centre has helped to relieve pressure on the emergency departments of local hospitals. It is anticipated that local hospitals will continue to benefit once two more assessment centres are opened.

7. CONCLUSION

As of November 9, 2009, York Region is operating five H1N1 immunization clinics for priority groups identified by the province. If the province expands priority groups to include 5- to 18-year olds, as is expected, the Region will set up school-based clinics in addition to established immunization clinics. To complete the immunization of students at all 400 schools in the Region within a four-week period, the Region will have to hire six additional teams of immunizers, each team having the same capacity as an established clinic. York Region is also operating one Community Flu Assessment Centre, with two more assessment centres set to open soon.

All costs relating to H1N1 response measures are being tracked in anticipation of some funding reimbursement from the province.

For more information on this report, please contact Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health, at Ext. 4012.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is included with this report.)



**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

Assistant Deputy Minister

Public Health Division
Room M2-61, 2nd Floor,
Macdonald Block
Toronto ON M7A 1R3

Telephone: (416) 325-8411
Facsimile: (416) 325-4670

**Ministère de la Santé
et des Soins de longue durée**

Sous-ministère adjoint

Division de la santé publique
Salle M2-61, 2^e étage
Édifice Macdonald
Toronto ON M7A 1R3

Téléphone : (416) 325-8411
Télécopieur : (416) 325-4670

October 30, 2009

MEMORANDUM TO: Public Health Business Administrators

RE: Reimbursement for increased activity related to H1N1

Dear all,

As a follow-up to my email dated September 23, 2009, I am now writing to provide further information regarding reimbursement for increased activity related to H1N1. We recognize and value the significant response to date by public health units.

As previously stated, public health units are expected to take all necessary measures to respond to H1N1 in their catchment areas while continuing to maintain critical public health programs and services as identified in their pandemic plan. Given the impact of H1N1, we anticipate that public health units may experience extraordinary costs over and above their mandatory program funding allocation. Consistent with the minister's direction, it is the ministry's intention to reimburse public health units for those approved costs.

If you have any questions, please contact Brent Feeney, Lead Program Advisor, Public Health Practice Branch, at (416) 212-6497 or by email at Brent.Feeney@ontario.ca.

Thank you,

Allison J. Stuart
Assistant Deputy Minister (A)

Attachment

- c: Medical Officers of Health, Public Health Units
Chief Executive Officers, Boards of Health
Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Division, MOHLTC
Monika Turner, Director, Public Health Practice Branch, MOHLTC
Brent Feeney, Lead, Program Advisor, Public Health Practice Branch, MOHLTC