The Public Health Agency of Canada

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: An Overview

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The Public Health Agency of Canada

- Canada is a federal state with health being the primary responsibility of the provinces and territories (P/Ts)
- The Agency works closely with the P/Ts to help prevent and respond to chronic and infectious diseases
- SARS and other issues led to federal focal point for public health
- The Agency was established in September 2004
The History of Pandemic Planning in Canada

- A long term process that continues to evolve
  - 1988: First draft plan
  - 1996: Second draft plan
  - 2001: F/P/T Working Agreement accepted by all provinces and territories
  - 2002: Pandemic Influenza Committee (PIC) established to provide technical advice for pandemic influenza prevention and control
  - 2004: Release of the initial version of the Plan, after extensive consultations
Overall Goal of Pandemic Preparedness and Response

First, to minimize serious illness and overall deaths, and second to minimize societal disruption among Canadians as a result of an influenza pandemic.
Pandemic Influenza Preparedness in Canada

Key Elements

• Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan
• Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Strategy
• Antiviral Strategy
• Other
Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan

National plan: outlines roles and responsibilities of all levels of government
- Developed in consultation with the P/Ts
- Includes: Vaccine and Antiviral Strategies, Emergency Response, Public Health Measures (e.g. social distancing)
- Dynamic or “evergreen” document

Challenges: different level of preparedness across the country; extensive resources required to develop and implement plans

Moving forward: update and continue to implement the plan
Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Strategy

- Nationally coordinated approach; goal to provide a vaccine for all Canadians
- In 2001, a ten year pandemic and annual influenza vaccine contract was signed
- In 2005, a contract was signed with a manufacturer as part of $34 million investment to develop and test a mock pandemic influenza vaccine
- Information sharing and discussions through the Global Health Security Initiative

**Challenges:** capacity to produce vaccine in short time period to vaccinate whole population

**Moving forward:** developing and testing a mock pandemic vaccine; develop a distribution plan
Antiviral Strategy

- Options developed by the Pandemic Influenza Committee
- In February 2005, a national antiviral stockpile of 16 million doses of oseltamivir was announced
  - Since then, an additional 19 million doses have been purchased between various levels of government

*Challenges:* global supply shortage and distribution

*Moving forward:* ongoing evaluation of antiviral needs and options
Other Elements

- **Surveillance** – FluWatch, Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN), the Respiratory Infections Outbreak Response Protocol (RIORP) and the Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network (CPHLN)

- **Emergency Management** – Emergency Operations Centre, quarantine services and National Health Emergency Management and Response Systems (NHEMRS); November 2005 exercise

- **Communications** - Established communication networks and active member of WHO’s Risk Communications Pandemic Steering Committee

- **Research** - Influenza immunization program evaluation and established pandemic influenza research priorities
Work with Other Stakeholders

• Ongoing work with the provinces and territories

• Ongoing coordination and cooperation with other government departments
  – Established Deputy Minister level coordinating committee
  – Cooperation with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to link animal and human health; gather intelligence
  – Ensure emergency preparedness across different government departments, including plan for business continuity

• Engaging other stakeholders
International Engagement

- Canada Asia Regional Emerging Infectious Diseases Project
  - 5 year project in South East Asia and China
  - Recent project mission completed in October 2005

- Provide ongoing support to affected countries
  - Mobile lab sent to South East Asia in Fall 2005
  - Technical support

- Close collaboration with international and regional organizations as well as other governments
Conclusion

• Appreciate the efforts of APEC EINet in organizing this symposium

• Addressing the threat of an influenza pandemic requires effort at all levels – within countries, between countries and among international organizations