

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To prepare for an influenza pandemic, Peel Public Health has worked in partnership with local health care organizations and emergency management partners through the Peel Pandemic Planning Team and the Health Sector Coordinating Committee to develop an overarching pandemic influenza plan for the health sector in the Region of Peel. In total, more than 50 partners representing local governments and health care organizations participated in the planning process and contributed greatly to the development of this plan. The planning process has brought together partners from a variety of organizations from across the health sector, which has served to strengthen health sector planning and preparedness capabilities, as well as, enhancing response coordination at the community level.

This document provides a comprehensive framework for coordinated pandemic planning and response for the health sector in the Region of Peel, and provides information that will guide pandemic planning for the health sector at the local level. This plan is closely aligned with provincial direction in the Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan and the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan.

This is a living document and will be reviewed, and regularly updated, as new information is made available.

Section One – Overview

Section One is divided into four chapters: (1) Overview, (2) Background on Influenza and Pandemics, (3) Key Planning Assumptions, and (4) Health and Social Infrastructure in the Region of Peel.

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the pandemic planning process in the Region of Peel and identifies the plan structure and purpose, ethical framework and core values for pandemic planning and response. These values are based on the goals of OHPIP, which are, firstly, to minimize illness and death, and to reduce social disruption. The ethical framework is transparent and allows decision making to be consistent across jurisdictions.

Chapter 2 provides background information about influenza and pandemics. Pandemic influenza, a novel influenza A virus which circulates the globe three to four times per century, results in a higher rate of illness and death. The World Health Organization is carefully monitoring new influenza viruses, and classifies influenza activity according to six phases. Canada has adopted this same approach.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the key assumptions that are used for pandemic planning. It is expected that up to 70% of the population in the Region of Peel will become infected, and that between 15-35% of those infected will become clinically ill. If there were no effective interventions, such as antiviral drugs or an effective vaccine, up to

10% would need hospitalization and 2% could die. The health sector and businesses should plan for a 20-25% rate of work absenteeism. Disruption of supply chains and critical infrastructure are real risks. The plan assumes that a vaccine would be available in four to six months, would require two doses, and some antiviral drugs would be stockpiled.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the health and social infrastructure in the Region of Peel, the second largest municipality in Canada. The Region has a population of approximately 1.2 million people, which is served by three hospitals, 27 long term care centres, 1,560 physicians, nine coroners, one university, one college, and approximately 380 primary and secondary schools.

Section Two – Concept of Operations

Section Two is divided into three chapters: (5) Roles and Responsibilities, (6) Emergency Response and the Incident Management System, and (7) Authority and Legislation.

Chapter 5 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various sectors serving the Region of Peel, including Peel Public Health, the health care sector, and the municipal sector. Peel Public Health is responsible for the coordination of pandemic planning and response for the health sector, as directed by the province. Peel Public Health will coordinate the Peel Health Emergency Operations Centre, distribute antiviral medications and vaccines, identify public health and infection control measures, conduct local surveillance, and assess the capacity of local health services. The health sector will provide acute and chronic care and the municipal sector will manage natural death surge and coordinate the non-health sector response, including social services.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the emergency activation process and describes the Incident Management System for the health sector emergency response. This system consists of five sections: Command, Planning and Intelligence, Operations, Logistics, and Finance and Administration.

Chapter 7 provides a detailed account of authority for the declaration of a Regional emergency and the legislation that guides emergency management programs.

Section Three – Response Components

Section Three is divided into eight chapters, each a component of the pandemic response: (8) Surveillance, (9) Vaccines, (10) Antiviral Drugs, (11) Public Health Measures, (12) Health Services, (13) Communications, (14) Natural Death Surge, and (15) Health Sector Planning and Response by Pandemic Phase.

Chapter 8 reviews the importance of surveillance information in preparing for, and monitoring, a pandemic. Peel Public Health currently prepares a number of surveillance reports, including the Weekly Institutional Outbreak Report, Weekly Influenza Report, annual Communicable Disease Report, and the Health Professionals Update.

The two major surveillance components to be added during the pandemic include mortality surveillance, and hospital and clinical indicators.

Chapter 9 provides an overview of the Peel Public Health vaccine strategy. The objective of the strategy is to vaccinate the susceptible population with a target uptake of 90% over a four-month period. It is likely that the vaccine will be administered in two doses, separated by at least 21 days.

Chapter 10 provides an overview of the Peel Public Health antiviral drug strategy. Antiviral drugs will play an important role in the treatment of influenza illness during a pandemic, their role in prophylaxis will be determined provincially. The objective of the strategy is to provide antiviral drugs to all persons needing treatment within 48 hours of onset of illness and to monitor the update, safety, and resistance to antiviral drugs.

Chapter 11 outlines the range of possible public health measures. These are non-medical interventions that may be used to reduce the spread of the influenza virus. They include public education, social distancing and school closures, case and contact management, travel restrictions, and infection prevention and control strategies. The type of public health measures used will depend on the epidemiology of the virus and will be aligned with direction from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

Chapter 12 reviews the health services strategy in response to a pandemic in the Region of Peel. In a pandemic, both hospital and community health care services may be overwhelmed by a surge in people requiring medical care. The objective of the strategy is to optimize community and hospital capacity to provide care, maintain key community and institutional health care services, and to support people with influenza who can be cared for at home. The range of services includes self care, community assessment, treatment and referral centres, hospitals, alternate care sites, long term care homes, community care access centres, paramedic and medical transportation services, laboratories, and pharmacists.

Chapter 13 outlines the communication strategy, including objectives, principles, responsibilities, internal and external audiences, and key messages and products in response to a pandemic. Consistent, reliable, transparent, and accurate communications will be essential during a pandemic in order to ensure a coordinated response by the health sector. The Medical Officer of Health and Peel Public Health will have responsibility for the communication strategy during the pandemic alert period. In Phase 6, the Regional Emergency Control Group will assume responsibility, with the Medical Officer of Health remaining a key spokesperson and the public health department providing the key health messages. The Regional Communication Services Division will lead the Regional communications response.

Chapter 14 provides an overview of the natural death surge planning for the Region of Peel. The Province of Ontario is currently reviewing the process for death pronouncement and certification. According to pandemic modeling, the Region may experience between 467 and 1,730 deaths over the duration of the pandemic.

Chapter 15 provides tables which summarize the key planning and response components for each part of the health sector, according to pandemic phase.

Section Four – Planning and Preparedness

Section Four is divided into two chapters: (16) Health Sector Planning and Preparedness, and (17) Training and Exercises.

Chapter 16 provides an overview of continuity of operations planning for the health sector. The basis of continuity of operations planning is to ensure the continued operation of priority program areas and services during an emergency. It uses a risk management approach to ensure the provision of critical functions and services. As identified by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, health sector organizations are required to maintain a four-week stockpile of essential equipment and supplies. Occupational health and safety issues are also identified in this chapter.

Chapter 17 outlines the various types of training and exercises that can be used by the health sector. Training and exercises are essential components in an emergency management program, and are used to evaluate the validity, accuracy, and effectiveness of emergency response plans. The goals of training and exercises are to create an awareness of emergency management principles and to develop the skills necessary to effectively and efficiently manage an emergency. Training and exercises should include the full range of emergency response personnel, including support staff and volunteers.