

Improving Ontario's Response To Public Health Emergencies

McGuinty Government Proposes Expanding Chief Medical Officer Of Health's Powers

NEWS

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Ontario is taking action to strengthen and better coordinate the province's response to future public health emergencies or events, like a pandemic.

Later today, the province will introduce the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2010. The proposed Act, if passed, would give the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) new authority to direct boards of health and medical officers of health to adopt measures during a pandemic or other public health emergency. The CMOH would only issue directives if there is an imminent public health-related risk and a coordinated response is necessary to protect the health of Ontarians.

The legislation would also expand the Minister's authority to use publicly owned spaces, on the advice of the CMOH, for public health purposes, such as holding immunization clinics.

QUOTES

"I'm proud of the way Ontario handled the H1N1 pandemic; we learned a lot of lessons. What we are doing today is making sure that Ontario is better prepared for the next pandemic. If passed, this legislation would benefit Ontarians through a more coordinated response to health emergencies."

– Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"In a pandemic or other health emergency, the health system needs to accommodate the kind of strong central oversight and management that currently doesn't exist. The legislation proposed by the government would give the Chief Medical Officer of Health the power to ensure a consistent response to these events."

– Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health

QUICK FACTS

- The proposed Act would also require that an appointment of an acting medical officer of health be approved by the Minister and the CMOH.
- Ontario is continuing to take steps toward implementing Panorama, a pan-Canadian initiative to improve public health surveillance and delivery of immunization programs.

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Read the CMOH's report, [The H1N1 Pandemic – How Ontario Fared](#), which was released in June 2010.