

## Improving Ontario's Ability To Respond To Public Health Emergencies

November 30, 2010

Ontario is taking action to ensure more effective management of a future pandemic or other public health emergency.

### Legislation

The proposed Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2010 would strengthen the authority of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH).

If passed, the legislation would:

- Create new authority for the CMOH to direct boards of health and medical officers of health (MOHs) to adopt policies or measures in cases of a pandemic, public health event and/or emergency with health impacts. These directives would be made in situations where the CMOH believes that such measures would protect the people of Ontario and are necessary to support a coordinated response to the event.
  - Directives would only be issued on matters related to infectious diseases, environmental health, public health emergency preparedness, or other matters listed in regulation.
  - Any directive would be in force for up to six months, but the CMOH could terminate the directive earlier, or re-issue the directive after the six-month time period, as he/she deems necessary.
  - If the re-issuance of a directive would result in the directive being in force for more than six months, the CMOH would be required to consult with affected local medical officers of health and boards of health before re-issuing the directive.
- Provide that a board of health may not appoint an acting medical officer of health for longer than six months without the approval of the CMOH and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.
  - Approvals for acting medical officer of health appointments would be effective for a period of up to one year and would be subject to renewal.
  - The CMOH and Minister could attach conditions to any such approval.
  - Boards of health that have acting medical officers of health in place at the time that the amendments come into force would also be required to seek CMOH and Ministerial approval within six months as a condition of the continuation of the appointments.
- Expand the Minister's power to take over possession of public premises for public health purposes, on the advice of the CMOH, where the CMOH believes there is or may be an immediate risk either of an outbreak of a communicable disease or to the health of anyone in Ontario. An example of a public health purpose would be an immunization clinic.

## **Panorama**

Ontario will continue to take steps toward implementing Panorama, a pan-Canadian initiative which will improve public health surveillance and enhance the province's capacity to deliver immunization programs.

Once implemented in Ontario, Panorama will enable health care providers to quickly and accurately detect potential outbreaks of communicable disease and control them. The system will enable the public health system to better manage immunizations and vaccine inventories, and will allow health care providers to reallocate vaccines during an outbreak and better respond to a vaccine shortage.

### ***The H1N1 Pandemic – How Ontario Fared, A Report by the Chief Medical Officer of Health***

Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, released a report in June 2010 providing insights into the province's management of the pandemic. Dr. King commended the high level of collaboration among all levels of government during the pandemic response, but noted that significant elements require improvement. Dr. King's recommendations included:

- Reviewing the immunization system for opportunities to enhance its effectiveness;
- Implementing Panorama; and,
- Improving standardization and coordination during a public health emergency to ensure consistent service delivery for all Ontarians.

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