



Thunder Bay
Chamber
of Commerce

MEDIA RELEASE

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TOOLKIT HELPS INOCULATE BUSINESSES AGAINST EFFECTS OF INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

A Pandemic Planning Tool Kit has been re-released today to businesses across the province to help them prepare for an influenza pandemic. Prepared by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the kit has been made available to 57,000 businesses across Ontario in an effort to minimize disruption to the province's economy should a pandemic occur.

"The quick reaction to the situation occurring in Mexico shows us that we have learned a great deal from past experiences, and yet, research continues to show that while many businesses are aware of the possible impacts of a pandemic, few have made preparations so that they can deal with this possibility," explains Len Crispino, President & CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The Pandemic Planning Tool Kit was first released in January 2007 to businesses across the province in an effort to minimize disruption to the province's economy in the case of a pandemic or other widespread emergency. A national survey confirmed in 2008 that half of Canadian businesses over 500 employees still have no plan to manage a pandemic.

The tool kit includes the following:

- Estimates of potential staff absences
- Legislative requirements governing staff absences during an emergency and subsequent return to work
- List of possible effects to services and business operations
- Prevention techniques to limit the spread of disease
- Business continuity checklist
- Additional resources

"We've been caught unawares in the past and the impact on the economy has been significant," emphasizes Crispino. "We urge all businesses to carefully plan so that they may cope during widespread emergencies which may involve such things as staff absences, energy supply disruptions and trade interruptions."

Scientists predict an influenza pandemic could occur within the next few years and yet statistics show that few small and medium businesses have plans in place to contend with this eventuality.

"Our local economy and individual businesses were impacted by the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003," explains Lisa Sticca, Chair of the Board. "The Pandemic Planning Tool Kit will help local businesses prepare themselves for the next catastrophic event, ultimately reducing the impact on business owners and their employees."

"The Pandemic Planning Tool Kit is available electronically or in hard copy from the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce or online at www.tb-chamber.on.ca.

-30-

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