

Foreword from the Chair of the IHERPTF

Planning for an influenza pandemic is identified as an emergency management priority for Interior Health. As a result, our *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan* (PIPP) has been updated to provide stakeholders across the health authority with a range of information to help them prepare for, and respond to, an influenza outbreak of pandemic proportion. Under the leadership of the IH Infectious Hazards Emergency Response Planning Task Force (IHERPTF), the plan has been revised to include updated tools for clinical care planning, the administration of antivirals and vaccine, communication dissemination, ethical decision-making and emergency management. This focused preparation will assist health care providers and the public-at-large to limit the spread of the virus, reduce morbidity and mortality, and mitigate anticipated socio-economic disruptions during the next influenza pandemic.

Following from our previous efforts, the IHERPTF has updated the PIPP as part of the overall Interior Health Emergency Response Management System (ERMS), which follows the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) approach to “all hazards.” This being said, the PIPP recognizes the unique nature of pandemic influenza, particularly its duration and estimated impacts across the whole of society. As a result, the following planning and response activities have been designed to be carried out with community partners such as provincial government ministries, local government authorities, other health authorities, and private industry stakeholders. Formal operational planning and testing with our partners will be a focus of ongoing planning efforts over the coming months and years.

The IH PIPP is largely consistent with the *British Columbia Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan: Guidelines for Planning, Response and Recovery* (2005). However, as updates to the provincial plan are still in development, elements of the IH PIPP have looked to other plans and best practices across Canada, particularly new guidelines issued from the updated federal plan (2006), and the latest provincial plan from Ontario (2007).

Planning for an influenza pandemic holds many challenges, as the impact of the event will be unpredictable. The actual response must correspond to the need at the time. Information from previous pandemics has allowed for better planning, as have recent research and best practices following from analysis of the effects of H5N1 avian influenza. Throughout this document, updated planning assumptions are presented that will guide the planning process. Nevertheless, the Interior Health Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan is a “living” document that will change, as required, to meet the needs of health authority stakeholders as new information becomes available. Through the ongoing development of the PIPP, Interior Health is doing its part to be as prepared as possible for the next pandemic.

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Chair, IHERPTF
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