

Pandemic Alert update: May 06, 2009

For information only, no action required.

It has been one week since the World Health Organization (WHO) moved its pandemic alert from Phase Four to Phase Five. While countries around the world continue to monitor this influenza event, we are reminded of the following;

- Cases continue to rise in number. As of today WHO reports the following confirmed cases of H1N1 flu; Austria (1), Canada (140), China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1), Colombia (1), Costa Rica (1), Denmark (1), El Salvador (2), France (4), Germany (9), Ireland (1), Israel (4), Italy (5), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (6), Portugal (1), Republic of Korea (2), Spain (57), Switzerland (1) and the United Kingdom (27). There now have been 1490 reported cases across 21 countries.
- Ontario reports 36 confirmed cases of H1N1 flu with a regional breakdown as follows; Durham Region:6, Halton:1, City of Ottawa: 1, Oxford County: 1, Peel Region: 3, Simcoe Muskoka: 1, Sudbury and District: 1, Toronto: 10, Windsor Essex: 4, York Region: 8.
- All confirmed cases remain mild in severity except for one situation in Edmonton. Most confirmed cases are young adults with an average age of 22-25 yrs.
- At present person to person spread of the disease seems limited with most cases having a direct link to Mexico. Of the 36 confirmed cases in Ontario, 27 have a travel history to Mexico, two cases have no travel history with Mexico but have had close contact with people who traveled to Mexico and seven cases are still under investigation.

What does this mean for us?

Increasingly there is media debate suggesting that this pandemic event is an over reaction to a relatively minor influenza event. After all the thousands of cases feared by pandemic event planners simply has not materialized. Others suggest that being prepared and diligent is simply being wise. That concern for the well being of society suggests adherence and due diligent to the warning signs and potential implications of a pandemic event.

It may very well be that a “full pandemic event” does not materialize. If this turns out to be the case then we can be genuinely thankful.

Meanwhile, it is important for the Diocese to reinforce the understanding that;

- Pandemic events are not based upon the number of confirmed cases but on the science and geography of the development and spread of new influenza viruses.
- That due diligence is also good stewardship.

- That there are individuals and families who are directly and indirectly impacted by the H1N1 flu and we need to be aware and responsive to their pastoral needs if and when we encounter them.
- That a vital part of mitigating the spread of any influenza virus is adhering to the protocols highlighted in previous website postings, our Diocesan Influenza Pandemic Response Plan and directives issued through provincial public health offices.
- That now is not the time for complacency. In fact, until indicated by WHO, continued vigilance must be our “new norm”.

For your information I have attached an Ontario Public Health Information Update regarding the H1N1 flu virus.

Rev. Canon Douglas Graydon
Coordinator of Chaplaincy Services
Pandemic Planning Resource Coordinator