

# 4 KEY WAYS

## Local Governments can Prepare for a Pandemic

*Pandemic influenza will pose unique challenges. B.C. could see up to three waves of illness before it is done, and these waves may affect individual communities for weeks at a time. Since it takes time to implement strategies, local governments are encouraged to start planning now for continuity of essential services during a pandemic.*

### 1. Intragovernmental Cooperation

- Check that existing contingency plans are applicable to a pandemic and core local government functions, such as sanitation, water, fire, police and power, can be sustained over a number of weeks with higher rates of absenteeism due to illness or caregiving.
- Identify essential functions and the people who perform them. Build in the cross training redundancy necessary to ensure work can continue for all essential services.
- Work with health authorities to understand the nature of an influenza pandemic and to coordinate planning, including the use of municipal buildings if required, to support people who are sick in the community and do not need hospitalization.
- Review procedures with first responders to ensure there is a process in place for worker safety, and training for procedures that will be used during a pandemic.

### 2. Community Involvement

- Encourage community groups, including service clubs, schools, businesses, and non-profits to partner with you to support people in your community who are sick or grieving.
- Network with health authorities, and community and volunteer organizations to build volunteer participation for events outside the norm, including a pandemic.
- Work with the local Chamber of Commerce to assess potential impacts to business, and include local business in planning so that community services, such as grocery delivery, are maintained.

### 3. Employee Health

- Maintain a healthy work environment by ensuring fresh air circulation and posting tips on how to stop the spread of illness at work.
- Encourage employees to stay home when ill, and update sick leave, and caregiver, family and medical leave policies. Concern about lost wages is the largest deterrent to self-quarantine.
- Promote hand washing, and coughing and sneezing etiquette among employees. Ensure wide and easy availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizer products.
- Establish or expand policies and tools where possible that enable employees to work from home with appropriate security and network access.

### 4. Financial Planning

- Assess the potential financial impact of a pandemic on the local government, and plan for the possibility of short-term decrease in revenue.
- Set up effective systems to track expenses directly related to an influenza pandemic. The Province assists local governments facing substantial financial expenditures caused by an emergency or disaster through legislation and policies that guide response and recovery.