

# The OPS PANDEMIC PLANNING MANAGER'S WORKBOOK



MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT AND CONSUMER SERVICES  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY BRANCH



# INTRODUCTION

## What's the Purpose of a Workbook for Ministry Managers?

Similar to the Workbook for Ministry Planning Teams, the Workbook for Ministry Managers is a companion piece to the Pandemic Planning Guide for the Ontario Public Service (OPS). As a companion piece, the Workbook is similar in style to the Guide and is meant to be concise and easy to follow. The Workbook is not a substitute for reading the Guide. The assumption made in designing the Workbook is that you have read the Guide and are familiar with its contents. The Guide is available at [EMSB website address].

The purpose of the Workbook is to provide ministry managers with a tool to assist them in understanding their responsibilities in their ministry's pandemic planning process.

As it is impossible to predict when a pandemic may arrive, the planning process may continue over a significant period of time. As people come and go in the planning process it will be critical to keep an accurate record of the decisions taken, tasks completed and work to be done. In addition to recording this information electronically, the Workbook can serve as a hardcopy record of the decisions and progress you've achieved in your unit or branch.

## **How is the material in the Workbook organized?**

The first part of the Workbook contains a brief summary of the important issues explored in all 20 chapters of the Guide. The focus of the Workbook, however, is the detailed planning checklist or action plan for ministry managers. Activities have been organized into Preparedness (pre-pandemic period), Response (pandemic period) and Recovery (post-pandemic). The recovery period refers to the period between waves and to the end of the entire pandemic event.

## **How should I use the action plan?**

Managers can use the action plan and checklists to guide planning and they are encouraged to add to the list or delete activities, depending on the specific needs of the ministry, branch or program area. If Qs & As arise that haven't been addressed in the Pandemic Planning Guide for the Ontario Public Service, managers should share them with their Ministry Planning Team, who in turn, can send them to MGCS, for inclusion in future versions of the Guide. Blank pages have been inserted at the end of each chapter for managers to write their own notes and observations.

## **Do managers have to plan according to the order in which the activities are listed?**

No. An attempt has been made to list the activities sequentially, but the sequence may change depending on a number of factors, including: the amount of work ministries have already done; the fact that some activities should be carried out concurrently; and the fact that some activities will have to await corporate approval and direction from MGCS. It should also be noted that some activities should occur throughout the planning process, e.g. communication with local bargaining agent representatives. Ultimately it's up to the Ministry Planning Team to organize its activities to meet the needs of the ministry.

At some point managers may have to go back and review some activities that they think have been already been completed in their ministry. For example, if there is reorganization, there may be a need to review the prioritization of time-critical services. The list of ministry time-critical services is also reviewed and updated as part of the business continuity process. If a pandemic does not occur for some time, there may be a need for a ministry to conduct a wider review of planning activities.

## **When should planning begin?**

In fact, ministries have already started planning as part of the BCP program. The Ministry Planning Team should start to meet as soon as possible. Managers will be asked to attend pandemic training or information sessions.

## **How long should it take to implement all of the activities in the Workbook?**

It is anticipated that in large ministries it will take approximately two (2) years to reach a satisfactory level of preparedness, assuming work starts now and is spread over the two (2) years. This timeframe may change, depending on world events, e.g. if a pandemic occurs in the near future.

The best possible scenario is for us to be prepared and for a pandemic not to occur. If this is the situation, then Ministry Planning Teams will have to reconvene for a few meetings on at least an annual basis to update the pandemic elements or components of their ministry's BCP.

Through practical step-by-step suggestions, the key issues of the Pandemic Planning Guide for the Ontario Public Service are covered in this Workbook. Managers can work with Ministry Planning Teams to put into operation the components necessary to strengthen the business continuity plan to be resilient enough to withstand the effects of a flu pandemic.

*Ministry of Government  
and Consumer Services*

*Emergency Management  
and Security Branch*

## OPS PANDEMIC PLANNING GUIDE: CHAPTER SUMMARIES

### Chapter 1: Who Does What

The role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in a pandemic is outlined in chapter 1. In addition, an overview is provided as to how the Guide is positioned relative to the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector, the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic and Emergency Management Ontario's (EMO's) Provincial Coordination Plan for Influenza Pandemic. In this way, the chapter summarizes the key roles and responsibilities of each level of government in pandemic planning.

### Chapter 2: Open for Business but not Business as Usual

Open for Business but not Business as Usual explores the potential impact of a pandemic on the delivery of government services. Since the pandemic may affect different parts of the province at different times, there will likely be no reason to suspend any services in an unaffected area. Through the business continuity planning process, ministries have identified and are updating and prioritizing their list of time-critical services.

As staffing levels are affected during the pandemic wave(s), ministries will likely have to suspend non time-critical services and shift their resources to keep time-critical services operating.

### Chapter 3: Communicating Through a Pandemic Crisis

Timely, consistent, and accurate communication is vital during any emergency, especially during a pandemic. The flow of information is discussed as well as roles and responsibilities of MGCS and ministries in pandemic communications before, during and after the pandemic. While ministries will be asked to submit information to the MGCS Corporate Response Centre (CRC), this information will be rolled up and shared across the OPS so all ministries will have an accurate picture of what is happening at that time.

MGCS will ensure that all communications products are consistent with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) messaging. MGCS will rely on MOHLTC to ensure the accuracy of health-related information.

### Chapter 4: Carrying On

This chapter deals with the reassignment of employees during a pandemic and the hiring of retirees and consultants on fixed term contracts to maintain continued delivery of time-critical services. While the preferred approach is to move ministry employees within a pre-determined geographic area, it may become necessary to expand reassignments to move employees across the province and between ministries. MGCS discuss with OPS bargaining agents proposals regarding reassignments and attempt to arrive at agreements.

## **Chapter 5: Alternate Workplace Arrangements**

Alternate workplace arrangements are defined as a work arrangement for employees to conduct all or some of their work away from the primary workplace (also known as telecommuting, flexiwork, flexiplace, telework and virtual work).

This arrangement, while not suitable for every type of OPS work, could help reduce the risk of infection to employees, their families and others and also allow the employer to continue delivering time-critical services during the pandemic.

## **Chapter 6: Inevitability of a Pandemic**

The inevitability of a pandemic is explored in this chapter, as well as the role of hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette (as reflected in the Pandemic Stay Healthy Strategy) in reducing the spread of infection and improving employee health and wellness.

## **Chapter 7: No Magic Bullet**

No Magic Bullet describes how antivirals can be used for both prophylaxis and treatment during a pandemic. An OPS workplace policy on prophylactic use has not yet been considered. If prophylactic use were approved, then the OPS would consider whether to provide antivirals on a prophylactic basis to senior decision-makers, employees in time-critical positions, and their families.

The chapter also notes that a vaccine against a new strain of virus would not be available until at least four to six months after the identification of the pandemic strain. Once available the vaccine would likely be in short supply.

## **Chapter 8: Desperate Times, Desperate Measures**

The theme of this chapter is the use of government facilities as vaccination centres during a pandemic and the use of unoccupied facilities for vaccination, triage or treatment. Working with ministries, MGCS and the Ontario Realty Corporation will compile an inventory of vacant facilities.

There are many issues that still need to be addressed, including: the criteria that facilities must meet to be a vaccination and/or treatment centre; whether the facility will be open to the public or for OPS employees only; and storage and security of the vaccine and other supplies.

## **Chapter 9: Some Little Flu Bug**

Various aspects of infection prevention and control in the workplace are explored in chapter 9, including: social distancing; personal hygiene; enhanced cleaning; screening and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The employer has retained infection control specialists to recommend infection prevention and control measures and practices to use before, during and after a pandemic in a variety of workplaces. Recommendations will be based on scientific evidence and in consultation with MOHLTC, the Provincial Physician in the Ministry of Labour (MOL) and the JHSCs or Health and Safety Representatives.

## **Chapter 10: Where's the Money?**

Where's the Money deals with the compensation provisions that the employer will review to determine what the overall compensation package for employees should be during a pandemic.

Key principles are that the provisions of current collective agreements will

continue unless there is a compelling reason to review and attempt to renegotiate them with bargaining agents. For non-bargaining employees, current provisions will apply unless they do not address the needs of the employer during the pandemic.

### **Chapter 11: Working Expenses**

The reimbursement of work-related expenses to employees during a pandemic is an important factor in the reassignment process. All reasonable expenses will be reimbursed and the government will allow all expenses to be covered by P-cards and Travel Cards. The government will enable the cash advance function on Travel Cards for the pandemic period. In addition, a recommendation will be made to government to directly pay Travel Cards account balances for the pandemic period, as is the practice with P-cards.

### **Chapter 12: Summer Wages**

Since students are considered to be a distinct group, this chapter deals with how the employer will treat this group of employees during a pandemic. Age will be the determining factor in the OPS's strategy for the treatment of students.

Students over the age of 18 will be given the option of continuing to work or not working during the pandemic. Students under the age of 18 will be given a form for their parents or guardians to sign to confirm that they can continue to work.

In the event that students want to continue working but their original business service is not being delivered for a time (due to the pandemic), the employer will help students find another placement.

### **Chapter 13: A Duty of Care**

The first topic in this chapter is implementation of enhanced corporate attendance monitoring and reporting when there is sustained human-to-human transmission in Canada.

The chapter also references the Attendance Support Program (ASP) which is part of the Injury, Illness and Employment Accommodation Program. The ASP will continue during the pandemic but it may be adjusted, if required, as attendance is continually monitored.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is the last topic covered in the chapter. It is anticipated that during the pandemic there will likely be an increased demand for EAP counselling and other similar services. MGCS is consulting with the current EAP provider to determine its capacity to deliver services during a pandemic. As a back-up plan, MGCS is looking at establishing a peer-to-peer counselling program.

### **Chapter 14: Family Aid**

A program will be developed by MGCS to provide direct support to OPS employees, their families and other Ontarians during a pandemic. During a pandemic it is likely that assistance such as help with dependant care, transportation, and securing supplies of food and water may be required by OPSers and others. MGCS will develop and implement a selection and training process for its prospective employee support providers.

### **Chapter 15: Grievance Management**

The issue discussed in this chapter is managing the grievance process in a pandemic, during a period of high absenteeism. There may be an increase

in the number of disputes that will need to be resolved.

In order to manage the grievance process, the government will seek agreement with the bargaining agents to negotiate an expedited grievance management protocol to be implemented after the pandemic for pandemic-related grievances.

### **Chapter 16: Right to Refuse**

This chapter explores the issue of managing work refusals during a pandemic. The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) gives employees and their bargaining agents rights to protection from anything that may affect an employee's health and safety. Even during a pandemic, the provisions of the OHSA apply to employers and employees. The employer will work with the MOL to discuss the approach to resolving work refusals during a pandemic. Any proposed approaches will be discussed with the bargaining agents and JHSCs or Health and Safety Representatives.

### **Chapter 17: Making the Transition**

There will be a transition back to 'business as usual' after each influenza wave and at the end of the pandemic as a whole. Ministries will transition to business as usual depending on staff strength in each of their geographic locations. Triggers to end special, pandemic work provisions and entitlements will likely also depend on whether the pandemic wave is over in a particular geographic area.

### **Chapter 18: Welcome Back to Work**

Welcome Back to Work focuses on return to work for employees who were ill during the pandemic. The employer will enhance the Employment Accommodation and Return to Work Operating Policy, as required, and apply it consistently across the OPS after each pandemic wave and at the end of the entire pandemic. Employees will be screened before they return to work to confirm they are no longer ill.

### **Chapter 19: A Brief Guide to Business Continuity Planning in the OPS**

This chapter describes the purpose and goals of business continuity planning and provides a description of the key steps in building a business continuity plan (BCP).

A good foundation in business continuity planning is key to pandemic planning, since pandemic preparedness involves strengthening the BCP to withstand the unique characteristics of a pandemic.

### **Chapter 20: What You Need to Know: Personal and Family Preparedness for an Influenza Pandemic**

Although not specifically tied to workplace pandemic planning, this chapter is designed to assist employees and their families to prepare for a pandemic. Included in this chapter are personal and family preparedness checklists and information on preventing the flu, treating the flu and on the signs indicating the need to seek medical assistance.



## Spreading the Word...

### (Preparedness is everybody's business)

- Conduct information sessions for your employees; you can use the template presentation provided by MGCS and/or the MGCS-produced pandemic information video.
- Discuss OPS and ministry pandemic planning at your branch/unit meetings.
- Contact your local public health office or hospital to invite a qualified individual to branch or unit meetings to speak about the pandemic and its likely effects.
- Advise/provide direction to employees regarding the preparations for a pandemic.
- Work with JHSCs to deal with ministry issues.
- Ensure that your staff has received the various documents comprising the Pandemic Stay Healthy Strategy.
- Assist facility staff and the Ministry Planning Team by identifying locations to post Pandemic Stay Healthy information.
- Review your program area's BCP to confirm the time-critical ranking of your business services.
- Work with ministry planners to review and finalize the list of time-critical services and the employees required for delivering these services in your program area.
- Identify the knowledge and skill sets required to deliver the time-critical business services. Identify any special credentials or certification that might be required.
- Discuss with each employee his or her skill sets and experience acquired during current or past employment.
- Identify two alternates, if possible, for staff required to deliver time-critical services. Ensure that alternates are also identified for managerial positions.
- Identify staffing needs to ministry planners in the event suitable alternates cannot be found; discuss the possibility of using retirees and/or consultants to assist in delivering time-critical services.
- Develop and deliver appropriate training and orientation to alternate staff.
- Document workplace protocols and prepare pandemic transition binders as directed by the Ministry Planning Team and in consultation with employees.
- Ensure back ups and transition materials have been prepared for employees who may request leave to assist family members who become ill.
- Discuss with your ministry HR consultant any questions you might have regarding the terms and conditions of reassignments.



## Alternate Workplace Arrangements...

- Determine if there are services that can be delivered effectively using alternate workplace arrangements. Identify services and the related positions and employees appropriate for alternate workplace arrangements.
- Select appropriate alternate workplace locations for employees. An alternate workplace arrangement can include a work at home arrangement.
- Explain to your local bargaining agent representatives the need for the alternate workplace strategy and assure them that all employee and employment rights will continue to be respected and protected.
- Decide upon, and acquire if necessary, the equipment, furniture and furnishings needed for the alternate workplaces.
- In order to minimize the need to move to alternate work locations, encourage employees to look into the feasibility of travelling to work by means other than public transit, such as car-pooling, cycling, or walking.
- Adapt the alternate workplace protocol to include your work and performance expectations.
- Develop and deliver the training necessary for successful implementation of alternate workplace arrangements (e.g. IT, attendance reporting, communication requirements, and performance issues).
- Test the alternate workplace arrangements, including communications between manager and employee.

## PLANNING NOTES

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## Infection Prevention and Control

- Ensure that your employees know where hand sanitizers are located in the workplace.
- Identify secure areas with controlled access where personal protective equipment (PPE) can be safely stored. Prepare for future storage, if necessary.
- Identify the type and quantity of PPE required for your employees in accordance with established criteria. Order the equipment and supplies, once you receive direction to do so from senior management.
- Inform bargaining agent representatives about the types of PPE that employees will be required to use. Explain the process that was used to determine what PPE was found appropriate for OPS employees in different workplaces.
- Speak to employees after meeting with their union/association representatives and tell them about PPE and address, where possible, any concerns or questions they may have. Convey the same information to non-bargaining employees and convey their concerns as well.
- Ensure that your employees have all communications regarding infection prevention and control measures and procedures.
- Because of potential challenges in getting to and from work, and as an infection prevention and control measure, allow your staff flexibility with their work hours and try to maintain staggered work schedules.
- Advise your employees that you are available to discuss any questions or concerns they may have about any of the recommended infection prevention and control measures and procedures.
- Ensure that cleaning materials and instructions on their use are provided to your employees.
- Ensure that your employees receive training they require regarding infection prevention and control measures and procedures specific to their workplace and type of work.
- Attend training provided by your ministry on notification protocols during a pandemic.
- Consult with the JHSC or Health and Safety Representative on issues related to PPE for the workplace.
- Work with ministry planners to plan for the purchase of any approved PPE for staff required to assist at the vaccination or treatment centres.







**Antivirals and Vaccines...**

- Ensure that approved communications materials regarding antivirals and vaccines are distributed to all affected ministry employ.

**PLANNING NOTES**

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**Returning to Work...**

- Familiarize yourself with the OPS pandemic strategy for employees returning to work.
- Identify and train the employees and their backups who will screen employees returning to work.

**PLANNING NOTES**

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