

Upper Grand school board plans for fight against H1N1 virus

By DAN PELTON & WES KELLER

The onslaught of

"swine flu" globally has been so swift that the World Health Organization is now

describing it as something of an unstoppable pandemic. "In past pandemics,

influenza viruses have needed more than six months to spread as widely as the new H1N1 virus has spread in less than six weeks," WHO says in a briefing note released July 16.

Wellington Dufferin Guelph Health Unit had not returned calls with specifics of its "pandemic protocol" but in general terms a spokesperson said the health unit obtains and distributes vaccines. As the effective vaccine would likely be in short supply, one of the unit's roles would be to prioritize recipients.

There is a widespread fear that the "swine flu," which thus far has been relatively mild, will strike with a vengeance in the

fall as schools reopen, as did the 1918 variety which killed 50 million people worldwide.

Upper Grand District School Board has been preparing for a possible onslaught.

"We are not panicking, but we are taking this issue seriously. Parents entrust their children to us and we take that trust seriously," said Education Director Martha Rogers.

The board and the health unit are meeting today.

They will discuss strategy with a focus on stronger communication between the two on issues such as the health unit keeping the schools informed on what areas are the most prevalent and

when to seriously consider closing schools.

Dr. Rogers says the board is working on a plan called The Sentinel School Project.

It involves the principal sending attendance records to the health unit with the absences put into various categories. The unit then studies the data and determines if there are any disturbing trends.

Anne Augustin, Infection Prevention & Control Coordinator at Headwaters Health Care Centre says the hospital implemented an Influenza Pandemic Plan in 2006, which is regularly updated.

"The plan is based on and reflects the global

pandemic phases identified by the World Health Organization (WHO), the federal Canadian pandemic plan, the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHP) and utilizes the Incident Management System (IMS).

"Prior to alerts (pre-pandemic), Headwaters has prepared itself by ensuring ample supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) are available and that all staff are properly educated as to how to properly use the PPE.

"Updates to staff are provided and information is available on the hospital website for the public with a link to Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. When the WHO

issues an alert, Headwaters receives Important Health Notices from the province, the guidance provided in the IHNs is easily implemented," Ms. Augustin said in an e-mailed response.

There are increasing numbers of deaths globally attributed to the "novel H1N1" virus, mainly of younger persons and persons with prior illnesses.

There have been 3,804 reported cases of the flu in Canada, and about 40,000 in the U.S., but estimates of unreported instances range from tenfold to 100-fold.

Based on those numbers, the pandemic might bear watching but there is, as of yet, no cause for panic.



MP Tilson met GG Michaëlle Jean

Following Royal Assent of Bill C-33, An Act to Amend the War Veterans Allowance Act on June 18, David Tilson, MP for Dufferin-Caledon, met Governor General Michaëlle Jean as Her Excellency gave Royal Assent to the legislation in the Senate.

The new law enables Veterans Affairs Canada to extend benefits to low-

income Allied Veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War.

Mr. Tilson was invited to attend the Senate proceedings and to the reception for Allied Veterans who were on hand to watch the Bill receive Royal Assent.

"It was truly an honour and privilege to meet Her Excellency and many Allied Veterans on this

significant and very special day," said Mr. Tilson. "I have strongly supported this legislation because we owe those who've served us a debt of gratitude for the sacrifices they've made for our freedoms. We have several Allied Veterans in Dufferin-Caledon and it's wonderful that we're providing the support they rightly deserve."

CDRC to host Ahmadiyyah Muslim seminar

Shelburne's Centre Dufferin Recreation Centre will be the scene next week of an unusual free seminar.

The arena has been booked by the Canadian wing of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim movement, a break-away sect whose members believe Jesus Christ's second coming has already occurred in the person of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), who established the

movement in 1889 in the small and remote village of Qadian, India.

Today, the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in scope, with members in over 190 countries.

Billing itself as "the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history, with worldwide membership exceeding tens of millions," it has been hold-

ing interfaith symposia and conferences across Canada promoting its slogan, "Love for All, Hatred for None."

Ahmad claimed to be the returning Messiah, the Awaited One of the world community of religions. The Ahmadiyyah community subscribes to a "benevolent message of Islam — peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God — in its pris-

tine purity." It rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

The community is led by the Khalifatul Masih ("successor of the Messiah"), currently Khalifatul Masih V, as the spiritual leader of the community and the successor to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

Ahmad's claims of being several prophets converged into one person were a symbolic, rather

than literal, fulfillment of the messianic and eschatological prophecies found in the literature of the major religions.

As with Jesus, he faced opposition, and his followers were persecuted, the movement being outlawed today in Pakistan.

The seminar at CDRC is to run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., and those wishing more information can call 647-407-6299.

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