

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

TOOL KIT HELPS INOCULATE BUSINESSES AGAINST EFFECTS OF INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

AJAX/PICKERING – A Pandemic Planning Tool Kit released today to businesses across the province will help them prepare for an influenza pandemic. Prepared by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the kit will be made available to 57,000 businesses across Ontario in an effort to minimize disruption to the province's economy should a pandemic occur.

"This is not about being alarmist. It is about being ready," says **Len Crispino, President & CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce**. "Although we hope that scientific warnings of an influenza pandemic will never be realized we have a responsibility to our employees and our customers to be prepared with a plan that will enable us to continue operating as best as possible during a widespread emergency of this kind."

Scientists predict an influenza pandemic could occur within the next few years and yet statistics show that few small and medium businesses have plans in place to contend with this eventuality.

"Our local economy and individual businesses were impacted by the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003 and the blackout later that same year," explains **Wayne Hoth, from Pickering Audio Visual and Chair of the Emergency Planning Task Force** for the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade. "The Pandemic Planning Tool Kit will help local businesses prepare themselves for the next catastrophic event, ultimately reducing the impact on business owners and their employees."

The toolkit includes the following:

- Estimates of potential staff absences
- Legislative requirements governing staff absences during an emergency and subsequent return to work
- List of possible effects to services and business operations
- Prevention techniques to limit the spread of disease
- Business continuity checklist
- Additional resources

"We urge all businesses to take the threat of a pandemic seriously," emphasizes Crispino. "Careful planning and preparation will help businesses protect themselves from such things as staff absences, energy supply disruptions and trade interruptions."

The Pandemic Planning Tool Kit is available online at apboardoftrade.com.

*The **Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade** is the voice of the business community in Ajax and Pickering. Established in 1955, the 450+ members represent an array of business sectors ranging from the service industry to manufacturers and distributors. The group's advocacy and policy initiatives focus on issues relating to such things as economic development, healthcare, education, transportation issues, community and social development, environment, and energy.*

*The **Ontario Chamber of Commerce** represents over 57,000 businesses through 160 local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, and has been Ontario's business advocate since 1911. Its advocacy and policy initiatives focus on six areas key to the economic well-being of the province: health; education; energy; finance & taxation; transportation & infrastructure; and border issues.*

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