

**PREPARING  
FOR AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC:**  
A GUIDE FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES  
IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



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## PREFACE

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) will be updating this guide on an ongoing basis so that it continues to reflect current information and decisions taken regarding the planning of essential services in the event of an influenza pandemic. Each new version will be numbered and posted on the MELS Web site at:

<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/pandemieinfluenza>>.

The MELS regional offices will notify civil protection responders in educational institutions of any updates so that they can take the steps required.

In this document, the term “educational institution” refers to school boards, schools (preschool, elementary and secondary), vocational training centres, adult education centres, private schools, private colleges, government schools, college centres for the transfer of technology, CEGEPs and their constituents as well as universities and their constituents.

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## Message from the Minister

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS

For some time now, we have been hearing that an influenza pandemic is on the horizon. Will it occur or not? No one knows for sure, but because a pandemic is a real threat, we must take the necessary measures to be able to deal with it.

Québec must prepare for a potential influenza pandemic in order to ensure a prompt response in the event that one does occur. Government authorities are taking the threat seriously and are strongly encouraging the education, public service, business and municipal sectors to do the same.

All educational institutions are therefore invited to implement a response plan that would help them manage the impacts of an influenza pandemic. I am well aware that such an initiative will require a great deal of time and effort, but rest assured that your efforts will not be in vain. The strategies adopted would be most useful in the event of any disaster or major crisis. Unfortunately, we have seen many such incidents in Québec: floods, ice storms, earthquakes and other disasters have left painful memories and severely affected many people in various regions.

I am therefore counting on your support so that by implementing strategies to ensure that essential services are maintained during a pandemic, you are helping to reassure the public, which is crucial in such circumstances, and you will be in a position to be able to continue to provide the best services possible to staff and students in educational institutions. They will most certainly be very appreciative and will congratulate you on having been proactive in taking steps at the appropriate time.

MICHELLE COURCHESNE

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## FOREWORD

This guide is intended to support educational institutions in preparing a response plan for the measures to be applied in the event of an influenza pandemic.

This response plan, which is part of the Québec government's civil protection initiative, could also be used for any other disasters that might occur in Québec, such as an earthquake, flood or ice storm.

Educational institutions must participate in this civil protection initiative and be prepared to deal with a pandemic. They must first and foremost be made to see the advantages of taking a preventive stance, of being adequately prepared to cope with emergency situations and disasters, and of having clear information on how they should proceed and conduct themselves at such times.

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## ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDE

This guide outlines the elements that educational institutions must address in their respective influenza pandemic response plans in order to ensure that services deemed essential are maintained. It contains concepts, principles and measures that are considered the minimum standard to be met when preparing and adopting a plan for managing the effects of an influenza pandemic.

Chapter 1 provides a definition of “influenza pandemic,” and Chapter 2 explains the roles and responsibilities of the main stakeholders in the health and civil protection sectors.

Chapter 3 deals with the preparedness of educational institutions. The basic concepts associated with managing a pandemic—the strategies selected, the decision-making process and rules of governance—are covered in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 outlines the measures and principles related to each of the strategies selected, such as protecting the health of staff and students, maintaining services for staff and students and minimizing the organizational impact.

Chapter 6 discusses the various aspects involved in planning for civil protection measures that educational institutions may be called upon to participate in during disasters other than an influenza pandemic.

Lastly, the Appendix contains a self-evaluation checklist of the main steps to be taken for each of the three periods of action associated with civil protection.

## CHAPTER 1

### INFLUENZA PANDEMIC<sup>1</sup>

#### THE PANDEMIC'S IMMINENCE

A pandemic is an epidemic that is limited in time but not in space, affecting populations over several continents. Phenomena of this kind can have devastating effects for individuals and communities due to high rates of illness, mortality and major psychosocial impacts associated with it, not to mention repercussions in all sectors of society. It is therefore critical to be adequately prepared to deal with such an event.

The predictable consequence of an influenza pandemic will be a large number of staff and students absent from educational institutions. The major issue therefore consists in ensuring that the parties concerned will be able to continue providing educational services and maintaining essential services at all times so that the institution or board can run smoothly.

Sustained person-to-person transmission could exceptionally result in educational institutions being temporarily closed. Given the expected social and economic impacts involved, such a decision would be made in conjunction with regional public health authorities, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) and the regional civil protection organizations (ORSC) concerned, on the basis of information provided by the monitoring systems implemented by the various government departments.

#### REAL THREAT OF PANDEMIC

Health experts agree that an influenza pandemic is increasingly likely. The four conditions required for the emergence of an influenza pandemic are as follows:

- the H5N1 virus represents a new strain of influenza
- the population has no immunity to this virus
- the virus is sufficiently virulent
- the virus can be transmitted from human to human

Currently, the prerequisite conditions for an influenza pandemic are all present except for the last: the H5N1 virus has not yet developed the ability to be transmitted from human to human.

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1. Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, *Summary—Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*, 2006, <<http://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/acrobat/f/documentation/2005/05-235-06a.pdf>> (16 February 2007).

## **THE EFFECTS OF AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC**

In addition to the impact on the population's physical health, an influenza pandemic has strong potential to cause individual, family, social and psychosocial disruptions. Educational and recreational activities as well as most of society's activities would also be affected to varying degrees. Workplaces would also feel the repercussions of additional costs, higher absenteeism and reduced services.

## **REALISTIC FORECASTS**

For planning purposes, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) has adopted the hypothesis that the first wave of an influenza pandemic would affect 35% of the population, over an eight-week period.

This model, applied to Québec's population of 7.5 million, would result in the following scenario:<sup>2</sup>

- 2.6 million people would be infected
- 1.4 million people would need to consult a healthcare professional
- 34 000 people would be hospitalized
- 8 500 people could die

The first wave could be followed by a second, from three to nine months later. Other successive waves could arise, lasting from a few weeks to a few months.

## **WAITING PERIOD FOR A VACCINE**

Vaccination is the most effective means of preventing influenza and avoiding the complications associated with it, but in a pandemic it may take four to six months, and perhaps longer, to produce the vaccine. The areas of the world exposed to the infection early on will not have a vaccine at their disposal to fight the first wave of the pandemic. In Québec, as well as the rest of Canada, delaying the onset of the pandemic by a few months may enable us to have access to a vaccine. This scenario is possible, at least in theory.

While waiting for a vaccine against the influenza to be developed, and considering that its availability will be restricted in the beginning, educational institutions will educate staff and students and strongly encourage them to adopt basic hygiene measures such as hand washing and respiratory etiquette, as well as other general measures (limiting meetings, handshaking and embraces). These measures will help stem the spread of the virus.

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2. *Idem.*

## CHAPTER 2

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MAIN STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED

#### HEALTH SECTOR

- **World Health Organization**

The World Health Organization (WHO) is monitoring the evolution and imminence of the pandemic throughout the world. It divides this evolution<sup>3</sup> into three periods and six phases:

- The interpandemic period includes the first two phases and implies that no new virus has been detected in humans, despite there being outbreaks of avian influenza that are more or less likely to cause human infection.
- The pandemic alert period is characterized by a new virus being identified in humans. It includes phases three, four and five, which cover the virus's varying ability to adapt to humans and be transmitted from person to person.
- The pandemic period itself (phase six) may occur in several waves before there is a return to the interpandemic period.

- **Health Canada**

Health Canada is monitoring the evolution of the periods and phases established by the WHO as well as the imminence of a pandemic across the country.

- **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux**

The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) is monitoring the evolution of the periods and phases established by the WHO and the imminence of a pandemic in Québec. It is also responsible for the *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*, which details the issues surrounding an influenza pandemic and its potential effects on society as well as on the health and social services network. It sets out the broad lines of the health mission's planning, the basic principles of response, some 20 strategies, and a series of activities to be undertaken at the provincial level. The regional health and social services agencies have

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3. Text extracted from or based upon the document entitled *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*, Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2006, page 17, <<http://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/acrobat/f/documentation/2005/05-235-05a.pdf>> (18 February 2007).

each developed a *Regional Pandemic Influenza Plan* (RPIP) and will also prepare local plans.

## **CIVIL PROTECTION SECTOR**

- **Government of Québec**

The *Civil Protection Act* stipulates that in the event of a major disaster, for example a pandemic, the government may implement the *National Civil Protection Plan* (NCP), which is the management framework for all disasters in Québec. If necessary, it may declare a state of emergency in part or all of Québec in order to protect human life, health or property.

- **Ministère de la Sécurité publique**

The Ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP) is responsible for coordinating the planning of government departments and agencies. Its *Plan gouvernemental en cas de pandémie d'influenza* complements the *National Civil Protection Plan*.

- **Comité de sécurité civile du Québec**

The deputy ministers and heads of the principal government departments and agencies involved in disaster management, as well as the government coordinator for civil protection are members of the Comité de sécurité civile du Québec (CSCQ). Under the government's Secretary General, this committee provides direction for and approves government emergency preparedness planning. During a pandemic, the Secretary General supervises government activities and reports to the Premier of Québec.

- **Organisation de la sécurité civile du Québec**

The Organisation de la sécurité civile du Québec (OSCQ) brings together the civil protection coordinators of each government department and agency concerned. Under the government coordinator for civil protection, the OSCQ plans civil protection measures for all of Québec. In the event of a major disaster, such as a pandemic, it coordinates the operations carried out by each of the mission directors specified in the *National Civil Protection Plan*.

The MELS civil protection coordinator is a member of the OSCQ.

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- **Organisation régionale de la sécurité civile**

The Organisation régionale de la sécurité civile (ORSC) brings together representatives of Québec government departments and agencies from the regions. The regional director for civil protection of the Ministère de la Sécurité publique coordinates government measures in a region in the event of a disaster.

The MELS regional directors are members of the ORSC.

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## CHAPTER 3

### PREPAREDNESS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

#### ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The wide and rapid spread of influenza across Québec will pose a considerable challenge for the education system in terms of maintaining services for students.

Because of staff and student absenteeism, the main challenge will lie in maintaining school daycare services, quality educational services and administrative services to ensure that the educational institution will continue to run smoothly.

#### PERIODS OF ACTION ASSOCIATED WITH CIVIL PROTECTION

Civil protection is divided into four periods of action: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The education sector must adopt specific measures or carry out specific activities during each of these periods. The influenza pandemic response plan must include these four periods. Prevention and preparedness will be covered together in the document because there may be overlap in the activities. The plan must also stipulate the actions that will be undertaken for each period.

The periods of action can be defined as follows:

- **Prevention** covers the measures adopted and the activities carried out on an ongoing basis that are designed to reduce or eliminate the risks associated with dreaded phenomena or events or to mitigate their potential impact.
- **Preparedness** involves activities and measures designed to strengthen the community's ability to respond effectively to disaster situations.
- **Response** includes the measures adopted immediately before, during and immediately after a disaster in order to protect human life, meet individuals' essential needs and safeguard property.
- **Recovery** consists of the decisions and activities undertaken following a disaster in order to restore the community's social, economic, physical and environmental conditions as well as to reduce the risk of disaster.

The following table shows how these periods of action relate to those established by the WHO.

WHO periods*	Phases	Description	Civil protection periods of action
Interpandemic	Phase 1	No new influenza virus subtypes detected in humans.	Prevention + preparedness
	Phase 2	A circulating animal virus poses a substantial risk of human disease.	
Pandemic alert	Phase 3	Human infection with a new subtype, but no human-to-human transmission or, at most, rare instances due to close and prolonged contact with infected birds.	Preparedness + response
	Phase 4	Limited and highly localized human-to-human transmission. Evidence of growing human-to-human spread.	
	Phase 5	Clusters of human-to-human transmission.	
Pandemic	Phase 6	Sustained human-to-human transmission in the population.	Response
Postpandemic	Return to the interpandemic period.		Recovery

\* Source: Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*, page 18.

For educational institutions, the preparedness period could involve, for example, activities to raise awareness of general and personal hygiene measures.

During the response period, they could set up a monitoring system to track the number of students and staff in each educational institution who become infected and to communicate information to the MELS regional office.

The recovery period could focus on ways of making up lost days so as to comply with the basic school regulations and training regulations, if applicable.

The following table presents the OSCQ's response actions according to the WHO phases for a pandemic breaking out elsewhere in the world. The degree of the OSCQ's involvement depends on both these phases and on the OSCQ's assessment of the situation in Québec.

WHO PHASES		OSCQ–RESPONSE ACTIONS
<b>Interpandemic period</b>		
1	Possibility of the presence of the virus in animals; low risk for humans	<b>OSCQ MONITORING</b>
2	A substantial risk of human disease posed by circulating animal virus	
<b>Pandemic alert period</b>		
3	Human infection but no human-to-human transmission, or rare and limited instances	Context of <b>VIGILANCE</b> and potential risk:  OSCQ <u>prepares</u> for the risk of an influenza pandemic.
4	Limited and highly localized human-to-human transmission	
5	High risk of pandemic: clusters of human-to-human transmission	<b>POTENTIAL RISK</b> with confirmation of human-to-human transmission, but no cases of infection with the new virus declared in Québec:
<b>Pandemic period</b>		OSCQ <u>identifies</u> emerging issues and updates the strategy in the government's <i>National Civil Protection Plan</i> (NCP).  The pandemic breaks out in Québec – <b>RISK PRESENT</b> in the province: declared cases of infection with the new virus Measures recommended by the MSSS and the OSCQ are <u>implemented</u> .
6	Sustained human-to-human transmission in the population	
<b>Postpandemic period</b>		<b>RECOVERY:</b> Measures for the return to normal activities are planned and carried out.
Return to the interpandemic period		

\* Source: Ministère de la Sécurité publique, *Plan gouvernemental en cas de pandémie d'influenza (PGPI-OSCQ)*, Version 1.0.

## CHAPTER 4

# BASIC CONCEPTS IN MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

## RULES OF GOVERNANCE

Three rules of governance should guide the conduct of all stakeholders during an influenza pandemic. These rules are outlined in the *Plan gouvernemental en cas de pandémie d'influenza* and in the *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*. These rules are interdependent and have the common condition that everyone be vigilant as to their own state and the state of others and act accordingly. These rules are in accordance with the emergency preparedness philosophy advocated by the Québec government, within the framework of the *Civil Protection Act*, among others.

### **Protection<sup>4</sup>**

The first concern is protection: faced with a risk, stakeholders must protect themselves and encourage others to do the same.

### **Solidarity**

The second concern is solidarity: in an emergency situation, stakeholders must assist others, ask for help if the situation requires it and encourage others to help, for the purposes of the common good.

### **Responsibility**

The third concern is that of responsibility: in the event of an emergency, stakeholders continue in their essential activities or try to find another solution, seek out information on the status of the situation as it relates to them, and follow instructions and advisories that concern them. Administrative procedures, such as those ensuing from collective agreements, will continue to apply.

The stakeholders' compliance with these three rules of governance as well as the sound management of the impacts of the pandemic will allow educational institutions to effectively fulfill their mission.

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4. Text extracted from or based upon the document entitled *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*, page 30.

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## STRATEGIES IN LINE WITH THE EDUCATION SECTOR'S MISSION

Educational institutions are first and foremost responsible for the organization and provision of educational services. In the event of an influenza pandemic, they will focus primarily on the following three strategies:

- **Protect the health of staff and students**

Preventive measures must be implemented to limit the spread of influenza. Workplaces and premises used for teaching and daycare services should provide maximum protection against infection. Vaccination clinics could be planned, if applicable. In accordance with health service advisories, educational institutions should apply measures that reduce the risk of contamination by staff and students with flu symptoms (see the Québec government's "Influenza Pandemic" Web site at: <<http://pandemiequebec.ca/en/news/news.aspx>>, under the heading "What should I do?").

- **Maintain services for staff and students**

Educational institutions offer school daycare services as well as educational services. As much as possible, all educational, administrative and daycare services will be offered according to staff availability.

In the event of significant staff shortages, those services deemed essential should be maintained. Measures for dealing with absenteeism will be applied and certain individuals with flu symptoms will go to work, as the situation requires.

- **Minimize the organizational impacts**

Information concerning the influenza pandemic should be reliable and comply with guidelines issued by the government and transmitted by the ORCQ, MSSS or MELS. Suppliers, subcontractors and various partners (school bus companies, catering services, etc.) should be involved.

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## **THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: THE CHALLENGE OF BEING EFFECTIVE**

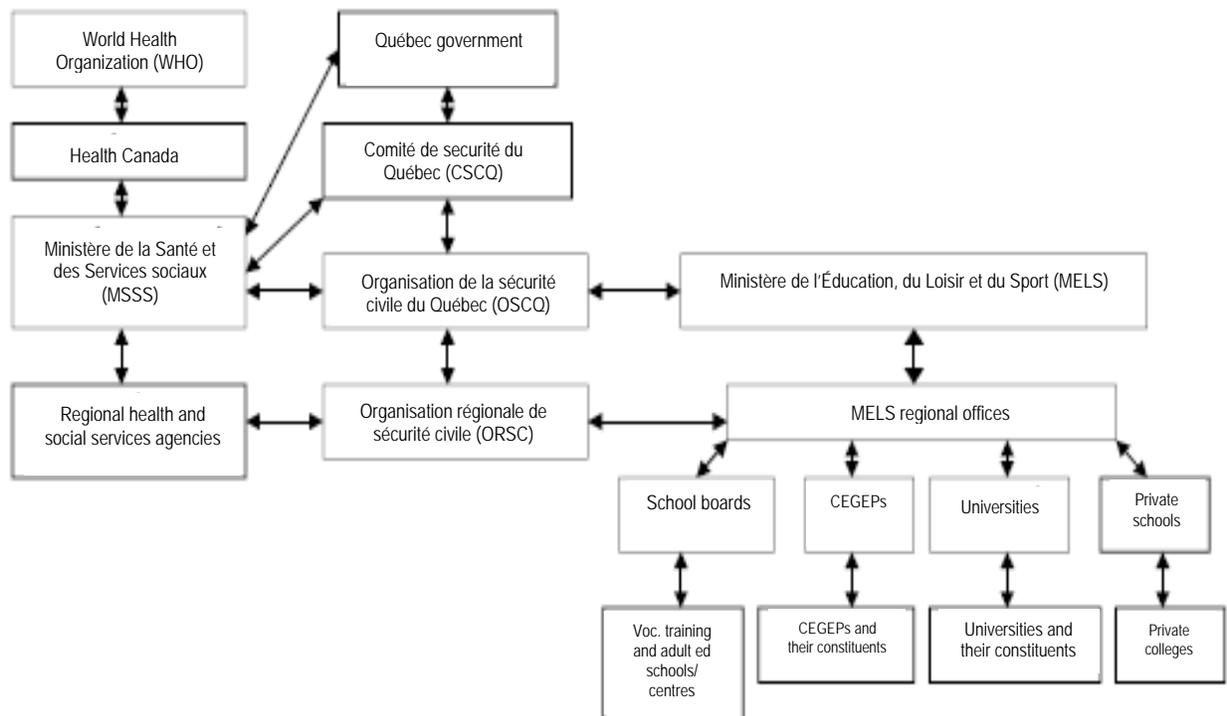
During a pandemic, decisions must be made quickly and result in concrete and effective measures for which each unit will be responsible. These measures will be key for educational institutions to pursue their activities in accordance with the three strategies established. This is a major issue.

Each educational institution is responsible for implementing the measures specified in their respective response plans, according to the predetermined decision-making process.

Should there be a high incidence of person-to-person transmission, educational institutions could exceptionally be temporarily closed. Given the expected social and economic impacts involved, this decision would be made in conjunction with regional public health authorities, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) and the regional civil protection organizations (ORSC) concerned.

The MELS recommends that school boards adopt a centralized decision-making process. A decision made centrally would then be communicated to all levels, until even those service points farthest from the decision-making centre are reached. This process could also include the delegation of responsibilities within a chain of authority in order to ensure maximum effectiveness of decisions and measures during an influenza pandemic.

- **The chain of coordination and communication in the education sector**



- **The governance committee**

The MELS recommends that a governance committee be set up to coordinate the response plan. This committee could be made up of a civil protection responder at the educational institution or school board as well as representatives of educational services, human resources, material resources and communications.

The decisions of the governance committee would be binding and communicated according to the process set in place.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

Stakeholders in the influenza pandemic are the decision makers, employees and associations. All contribute to protecting the health of staff and students, maintaining services for them, and minimizing organizational impacts.

Decision makers are individuals with authority in these circumstances. They plan the measures that will be implemented in line with the education sector's three strategies. They are also employees.

Employees are individuals who work at educational institutions. They perform their regular duties, that is, those defined as essential in the response plan.

Associations are groups of people, for example, unions. They participate in implementing the response plan's measures according to their level of involvement.

Each well-prepared stakeholder will be in a position to offer the maximum services to staff and students at the educational institution and thus significantly participate in the success of the response plan.

## **COMMUNICATION: AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT**

Services Québec has developed a government communications management plan, the *Plan de communication du gouvernement du Québec en cas de pandémie d'influenza* (PCG-Qc). The PCG-Qc outlines the general strategy for communication during an influenza pandemic as provided for under the *National Civil Protection Plan's* "Communication" mission.

Each of the government departments and educational institutions are also required to prepare a sectorial communications plan aimed at the general public, their respective clienteles and staff.

- **Communications within the education sector**

The MELS is responsible for developing a communications plan that outlines strategies for its partners as well as the staff and students at educational institutions. The MELS regional offices will communicate all relevant information.

- **Communications on a regional level**

The MELS regional offices, in conjunction with the ORSC, are responsible for disseminating information in the regions by means of their civil protection responders. These individuals, and their replacements, will have been appointed by the educational institutions; these institutions will provide the names of their responders to their respective regional office.

Information will thus be transmitted to the various responders in the region, who will then communicate it to their educational institution or school board.

- **Communications within the school system**

Each institution will be responsible for communicating information to its schools, training centres or constituents.

Each school board will prepare a communications plan aimed at its staff, students or parents of preschool students. This plan will take into account the strategies outlined in the MELS communications plan.

## **MONITORING: AN INVALUABLE TOOL**

In the event of an influenza pandemic, the level of student and staff absenteeism will serve as an indicator of the spread of the virus. Absent students and staff could, in the short term, become potential patients in the health care system. Armed with this information, the health sector will be able to make the necessary adjustments, for example, by increasing its resources.

A monitoring system will be implemented in school boards. Each board should be able to indicate the number of staff members and students who are absent.

The MELS will develop the monitoring system in cooperation with educational institutions in order to ensure that consistent information is easily transmitted.

At the request of government authorities, educational institutions will communicate their attendance information to the MELS, within the time limit established.

The MELS will ensure regional and provincewide monitoring of the situation.

## CHAPTER 5

### STRATEGY-BASED MEASURES

#### STRATEGY 1: PROTECT THE HEALTH OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

- **Reduced contact with infected individuals**

As indicated in health service advisories, educational institutions will apply measures that reduce the risk of contamination by staff and students with flu symptoms (see the Québec government's "Influenza Pandemic" Web site at: <http://pandemiequebec.ca/en/news/news.aspx>), under the heading "What should I do?").

- **Vaccination and distribution of antivirals**

Vaccination and, if applicable, the distribution of antivirals<sup>5</sup> fall under the responsibility of the MSSS. Civil protection responders in educational institutions should, however, organize or, if applicable, participate in implementing these measures. More specifically, during the response period, responders will provide a list of the staff members assigned to essential services as it may be decided that these individuals would receive the vaccine as a priority.

- **General and personal hygiene measures**

Educational institutions must educate their staff and students as to the importance of hand washing and respiratory etiquette. They must encourage everyone to apply these hygiene measures at all times, as they are critical to preventing the spread of influenza.

Hand hygiene means thoroughly washing hands with hot water and soap or disinfecting hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol.

Respiratory etiquette includes these simple actions to be performed at all times when a person coughs or sneezes in order to avoid transmission of infection:

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5. At this time, the MSSS is not planning on distributing antivirals as a preventive measure. Text extracted from or based upon the document entitled *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan—Health Mission*.

- Always cover your mouth with a disposable tissue, when coughing or sneezing, and thoroughly wash your hands afterward.
- If you do not have a disposable tissue, cough in the fold of your elbow or upper arm because these areas will not come into contact with other persons or objects.
- Always spit into a disposable tissue.
- Discard used tissues in a garbage bag in a closed wastebasket and keep it out of young children's reach. When full, the garbage bag should be tightly closed and put in the trash. Thoroughly wash your hands immediately afterwards.

Educational institutions must ensure that they have an adequate supply of disinfecting products, liquid hand soap and paper towels on hand. In areas where running water is not available, hand sanitizer dispensers or individual bottles (minimum 60 per cent alcohol) should be used.

During the response period, certain surfaces are to be cleaned more often than usual. Some common areas should be cleaned between each workday and at least once during the workday, preferably midday, especially stair handrails, door handles, elevator buttons, security scanning stations and all other surfaces that people regularly touch with their hands. Staff members will clean their personal workstations, including work surfaces such as computer keyboards, telephone handsets and photocopier controls. Educational institutions will provide the necessary products.

The influenza virus is spread by infectious droplets that are coughed or sneezed into the air. These droplets can land on the mucous membranes of the eyes or mouth or be inhaled into the lungs of another person. Infection can also occur from contact with surfaces contaminated with infectious droplets. Because the droplets do not remain suspended, additional measures related to air ventilation and filtration are not useful. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems should be operated and maintained as usual.

Because of the way in which the virus is transmitted, staff and students do not need to wear personal protective equipment (facemasks).<sup>6</sup> However, if persons are required to be within one metre of an infected person for a prolonged period, specific personal protective equipment should be worn. A mask should be used as follows:

- A mask should be used only once and replaced if:
  - o it becomes damp or wet

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6. The Direction générale de la santé publique of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux uses the term "facemask" to refer to a surgical or procedure facemask.

- o it makes breathing difficult
- o it is damaged or visibly dirty
  
- A used mask must be placed in a garbage bag in a closed wastebasket or kept out of children's reach; the bag should be tightly closed and put in the trash.
  
- Hands should be thoroughly washed immediately after removing a mask.

Educational institutions must plan to have an adequate supply of facemasks on hand. A facemask is not an air purifying respirator (APR).

If employees ask to wear a facemask in the workplace, in spite of information indicating that this is not necessary, educational institutions will concede to their request and will allot two masks per day per employee. The MELS prefers to adopt this approach rather than deal with potentially higher absenteeism. The rigorous measures and discomfort associated with wearing a mask will likely not result in employees volunteering to wear one.

- **Other measures**

During the response period, measures promoting social distancing and the limiting of gatherings should be applied. Staff could also be encouraged not to shake hands or embrace.

## STRATEGY 2: MAINTAIN SERVICES FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

- **Inventory, evaluate and select the services, activities and facilities considered essential**

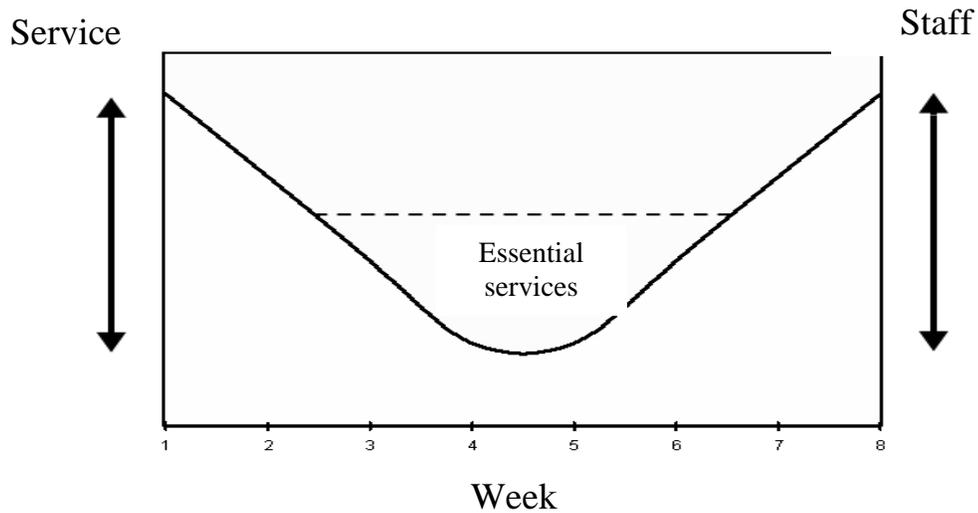
For planning purposes, each educational institution will involve administrators at all levels in inventorying, evaluating and selecting the services, activities and facilities required to maintain essential services offered to staff and students during an influenza pandemic.

- **Prioritize essential services**

The services, activities and facilities will be classified in order of importance according to a scale of priorities, thus identifying the essential services that will be maintained during an influenza pandemic.

Essential services are those services, activities and facilities that cannot be interrupted, even for a short time, without having serious consequences on staff and students as well as on the operation of educational institutions.<sup>7</sup>

The following diagram illustrates the impact of influenza on staff and on services for students during a pandemic; the area below the dotted line indicates the level of essential services that will be maintained during a pandemic.



Educational institutions would provide the following essential services during a pandemic:

- management of human resources, financial resources (e.g. payroll) and material resources (e.g. the safety of premises)
- school daycare services, educational services and instructional services offered without interruption
- maintenance of communications and smooth operation of computer and telecommunications infrastructures

After a pandemic, educational institutions will set priorities for resuming regular services, activities, and so forth that were interrupted or affected by the pandemic.

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7. This definition implicitly includes the concept of “essential goods” in section 60 of the *Civil Protection Act* (R.S.Q., c. S-2.3).

- **Determine and plan workforce requirements**

In order to plan its workforce requirements for the response period, each educational institution will determine the number of employees required to continue providing its services and activities. To do so, it must know, foresee and identify the pools of labour it will be able to call upon. It will also need a plan for replacements in the event that a large number of teachers are absent.

- **Manage absenteeism and attendance in the workplace**

Relying on the participation and solidarity of all stakeholders (employees, decision makers and associations) during the influenza pandemic, educational institutions must plan measures to help them manage staff absenteeism that comply with collective agreements and labour laws. During the preparedness period, educational institutions should enlist the cooperation of unions in order to develop such measures. The MELS will establish guidelines to facilitate this process.

Those in charge of managing workplace attendance should be concerned not only with offering staff and students the maximum services possible, but also with dealing with the psychosocial impacts of the pandemic on staff. The presence of individuals with flu symptoms in the workplace will also need to be managed.

- **List the essential services responders**

For each essential service identified in their plans, educational institutions must prepare a list of designated responders and their replacements as well as their work and home contact information. This list must be updated at least twice a year. However, if a pandemic is imminent, it should be updated monthly or weekly, as the situation warrants. This list could also be used in the event of a crisis or disaster other than an influenza pandemic.

- **Train replacement staff**

Educational institutions must provide training for replacement staff in charge of dispensing the essential services that their response plan indicates will be maintained in the event of an influenza pandemic.

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### STRATEGY 3: MINIMIZE THE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACTS

- **Quality of information**

Consistent, coordinated and quality information will help organize all stakeholders and achieve the service objectives for staff and students identified in the response plan.

- **Involvement of suppliers, subcontractors and partners**

Services are sometimes entrusted to subcontractors (e.g. janitorial and food services). To avoid a drop in the quality of essential services, educational institutions should require their subcontractors to prepare a plan for maintaining these services in the event of a pandemic, especially those subcontractors involved in activities directly related to an essential service in the educational institution. This plan could also be used in the event of other major disasters.

- **Assistance to staff and students**

An influenza pandemic would have repercussions on both the physical and psychological health of individuals (see the document entitled *Prevention of psychosocial impacts in the context of an influenza pandemic: for employers and workers in Québec* on the Québec government's "Influenza Pandemic" Web site at: <http://pandemiequebec.ca/en/news/news.aspx>, under the heading "Government Action" and then under "Sectorial plans, Guides and Checklist").

Staff and student assistance services in educational institutions should plan on receiving more requests for assistance and should adapt their services to the situation. This measure applies throughout the three periods of action, but especially during response and recovery. To facilitate work in the field, the MSSS has developed psychosocial response tools, which educational institutions should disseminate to their assistance services staff.

- **Compliance with legislation**

Educational institutions, in conjunction with the MELS, are responsible for establishing measures for making up missed school days, in compliance with the basic school regulations and training regulations, if applicable. Administrative procedures will also continue to apply, for example, those

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ensuing from collective agreements (Employers with employees not covered by a collective agreement may consult the document entitled *Memorandum on the labour standards that employers should consider* on the Commission des normes du travail Web site at: <<http://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/pandemie/index.asp>>).

- **Specific costs associated with a pandemic**

The MELS will reimburse specific costs associated with a pandemic under a special government program. Educational institutions must submit invoices accompanied by appropriate supporting documents in order to demonstrate that their expenses are eligible for reimbursement.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO CIVIL PROTECTION DURING OTHER DISASTERS

The influenza pandemic response plan for maintaining essential services prepared by educational institutions is comprised of the same elements as response plans for other major disasters (e.g. earthquake, flood, ice storm) that could occur in Québec.

### CIVIL PROTECTION IN QUÉBEC

In the event of an emergency or disaster, citizens are first and foremost responsible for ensuring their own safety and that of their loved ones as well as for safeguarding their personal belongings.

Next comes the first level of public responsibility, the municipality, which when overwhelmed can call upon regional authorities, who, in turn, can have recourse to provincial government resources.

The Québec government therefore regularly updates the general framework for managing all types of risks entitled the *National Civil Protection Plan* (NCP). This plan contains the measures that government departments and agencies will implement in order to support municipalities when their resources can no longer provide citizens with assistance during a major disaster.

The MELS, a member of the Organisation de la sécurité civile du Québec (OSCQ), cooperates in government management of the effects of disasters on individuals and property by participating in the NCP.

### MISSIONS ESTABLISHED IN THE NATIONAL CIVIL PROTECTION PLAN (NCP)

The Québec government has organized its civil protection actions on the basis of fifteen needs likely to arise in the event of a disaster. The needs laid out in the NCP are referred to as “missions.” Each mission falls under the direction of a government department or agency, which has activities similar to those set forth in the mission, or which has the expertise necessary to successfully accomplish the task at hand.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Ministère de la Sécurité publique, Québec's *National Civil Protection Plan*, <[http://www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/secivile/secivile\\_en.asp?txtSection=oscq&txtNomAutreFichier=pnsc\\_en.htm](http://www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/secivile/secivile_en.asp?txtSection=oscq&txtNomAutreFichier=pnsc_en.htm)> (20 February 2007)

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## **SUPPORT OF NCPP MISSIONS BY THE MELS AND THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY**

During major disasters other than a pandemic, educational institutions could be called upon as reinforcements to support the following civil protection missions:

- “Housing”: use of educational institutions as emergency shelters
- “Support services for disaster victims”:
  - use of educational institutions as service centres for disaster victims
  - resumption of educational services for students in the event of a lengthy evacuation
- “Transportation”: cooperation of school bus companies to transport disaster victims

## **SUPPORT OF NCPP MISSIONS BY THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY**

Each school board is responsible for its educational institutions during civil protection measures.

When educational institutions are used to support a civil protection mission, school boards must provide the following essential services:

- ensure the safety of buildings
- ensure access to buildings
- ensure the cleaning of premises

Each school board is responsible for ascertaining if its buildings have been identified in the municipality’s civil protection plan for possible use during a disaster.

School boards must also notify the administrators of their educational institutions regarding the civil protection activities that they may be called upon to participate in.

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## **PLANNING THE SUPPORT OF NCPP MISSIONS BY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

Support of civil protection missions must be planned and integrated into the educational institution's response plan. The plan must also identify the essential services that will be maintained in the event of an influenza pandemic.

This involves:

- a plan for maintaining the following essential services in support of certain missions:
  - ensure the safety of buildings
  - ensure access to buildings
  - ensure the cleaning of premises
- the contact information of a responder and his or her replacement for each essential service as well as the contact information for school bus companies
- the list of buildings used in support of the "Housing" and "Support services for disaster victims" missions

Municipalities often use schools as shelters and service centres in the first hours of a disaster. Agreements should therefore be concluded for the use of school facilities. The emergency measures that both municipalities and educational institutions will apply must therefore be planned.

However, in the event of a pandemic and so as not to interfere with educational services, the MSSS does not intend to use educational institutions as nontraditional health care sites.

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## References

For more information on preparing educational institutions for a potential influenza pandemic, please contact the regional office of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in your region.

Additional information on the influenza pandemic is available on the Québec government's "Influenza Pandemic" Web site at <http://www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/news/news.aspx>.

Additional information on the organization of civil protection in Québec is available on the Web site of the Ministère de la Sécurité publique at [http://www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/secivile/index\\_en.asp](http://www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/secivile/index_en.asp).

## Appendix

### SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST OF THE MAIN STEPS TO BE TAKEN FOR THE THREE PERIODS OF ACTION ASSOCIATED WITH CIVIL PROTECTION

#### Prevention and preparedness

A		Designate a civil protection responder as well as a replacement in each school board and forward the names to the MELS regional office.	
B		Set up a governance committee in the event of an influenza pandemic.	
C		Develop a plan for maintaining essential services during a pandemic that:	
C	1	▪ identifies the essential services required for the board to run smoothly	
C	2	▪ establishes a list of essential services responders and their replacements	
C	3	▪ provides training for staff replacing personnel involved in dispensing essential services	
C	4	▪ provides for a plan for replacements in the event that a large number of teachers are absent	
C	5	▪ requests union cooperation in managing workplace absenteeism and attendance	
C	6	▪ adapts staff and student assistance services	
C	7	▪ implements a monitoring system to track the situation in educational institutions	
C	8	▪ organizes how support of NCPP civil protection missions as well as essential services, as applicable, will be planned	
D		Develop agreements with different suppliers in order to maintain services (e.g. janitorial or food services).	
E		Develop a communications plan for educational institutions, staff, students and parents that:	
E	1	▪ educates staff, students and parents on the prevention methods to adopt in educational institutions	
E	2	▪ disseminates information on the influenza pandemic to staff, students and parents	

## Response period

A	Apply the response strategy determined by the Organisation de la sécurité civile du Québec (OSCQ) or the Organisation régionale de sécurité civile (ORSC).	
B	Implement the influenza pandemic response plan, in particular to ensure the continuity of school daycare services, as well as educational and instructional services.	
C	Implement communications plans intended for educational institutions, staff and students (or for parents in the case of minor children).	
D	Hold frequent meetings of the school board's governance committee.	
E	Implement a monitoring system to track the evolution of the pandemic (e.g. number of absent students and staff members) in each educational institution.	
F	Adjust assistance services for staff and students in order to accommodate for a potential increase in requests.	

## Recovery period

A	Ensure that school boards support their educational institutions so that educational and instructional services can resume normally.	
B	Establish priorities for resuming services, activities, and so forth that were interrupted or affected by the pandemic.	
C	Establish conditions for making up school days so as to comply with the basic school regulations or training regulations, if applicable.	
D	Adapt assistance services for staff and students in educational institutions by taking into account the repercussions of the influenza pandemic.	



[www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca)

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