

## 2007 Emergency Preparedness Conference Session Summary

### **Session: C4**

### **Title: Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness**

#### **Abstract:**

To better appreciate the role community service agencies might play in mitigating some of the potential societal impact of a major disease outbreak; this session will focus on community partners who routinely support special interest population groups. The session included a facilitated discussion of the opportunities and challenges of community service agencies in ensuring the continuity of routine services during an emergency/disaster.

#### **Background:**

The Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness session was intended to build on a similar event co-sponsored by the Ministry of Health Emergency Management Branch and the Public Health Agency of Canada (BC & Yukon Region) in January 2007.

#### **Participants:**

Session participants included representation from local, provincial and federal government agencies, health authorities, non-government organizations (NGOs), first responders, private/business sector and academia. Participating organizations are listed at Annex A.

#### **Discussion:**

Following a short introduction and discussion of the session objective, participants were divided into five discussion groups and were challenged to:

1. identify capabilities that community service and volunteer sector agencies can contribute in an emergency or disaster event, such as a pandemic;
2. identify potential barriers to assuming a disaster response role;
3. discuss interagency collaboration and potential for capacity building partnerships; and
4. discuss expectations of government in supporting community agencies in emergency/disaster preparedness, response and recovery

A summary the discussion groups' product is provided at Annex B.

## Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness

Generally the majority of participants felt that:

- a communication gap exists between health authorities, local governments and NGOs/other community organizations
- most volunteer organizations do not have an understanding of what to do or what role they could play in a pandemic. A significant concern was how non-profits would be able to continue their regular roles as well as meet increased and/or different demands. They also recognized the need for organizations to identify what they're not going to be able to do.
- many community service and volunteer sector agencies are unaware of the liability indemnification and compensation/benefits available to persons designated "emergency service workers" during response and training activities. Governments need to support capacity building in order for organizations to become involved.
- funding is another issues that was seen as needing to be addressed, the concern here was will sponsors continue to provide funding to organizations despite reduction in normal services and deliverables.
- organizations need to assess how they will handle staff shortages and deal with fears that people may have around losing their jobs
- organizations need more than just-in-time training in emergency preparedness and response, templates or guides should be available so that they are not starting from scratch
- there is a range of human resources already well positioned in the non-profit sector that can be factored into pandemic planning. Similarly, there are numerous sites and physical assets that should be incorporated, such as church kitchens, day care centres and community centres.
- greater emphasis on public awareness and education with respect to, including the need to begin building capacity through inclusion of emergency preparedness in school curriculum.

It appears that the majority, particularly the volunteer sector, see their key role as an information base and communication conduit to their member organizations and through those organizations to the clients that they serve. Essentially, conduits for providing templates or guides that would assist member organizations in working through a process for their organization that would allow them to be ready in the case of pandemic planning

## **Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness**

Several organizations talked about the need for a supply of masks, gloves, anti-viral medication, etc. Are there enough supplies currently available? How are they accessed? Do they need to worry about this now?

Guides or templates that organizations could use to develop their own plan and their own role in preparing and responding to a pandemic event. Simple and easy to use

### **Conclusion:**

While all levels of government recognize the “Big Five” non-government organizations as partners in emergency preparedness, response and recovery, it appears that few recognize the potential incumbent in the wide range of community service agencies, faith-based organizations and service clubs. In this regard, higher level of governments (federal/provincial) need to engage the larger organizations from the top so they are primed and expecting local government/health authorities to contact them at the ground level.

Communities need to implement discussions with all service provider agencies/ organization so that organizations can identify what role they can play and how they can work with other organizations in their community both to prepare and to respond in the case of a pandemic or other extreme event - what roles they can play and how they can prepare for those roles plus what’s needed for them to respond effectively.

Last but certainly not least, groups need assurance regarding liability protection and disability compensation and benefits and to be advised if assistance will be available to cover the cost of overtime, sick leave, extraordinary supplies and replacement costs.

### **Recommendations:**

Session participants were unanimous in recommending that:

- Local government entities, including health authorities, engage community service and volunteer sector agencies as partners in all-hazard emergency planning.
- Local government work with community service and volunteers sector agencies to ensure “emergency service workers” have an awareness of the liability indemnification and compensation/benefits available during an emergency/disaster response or training.
- Emergency preparedness be included in school curriculum at all levels.
- Community service and volunteer sector agencies undertake appropriate business continuity planning to ensure continuity of operations in an emergency/disaster.

## **Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness**

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## Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness

### Annex A

#### Participating Organizations

<b>Federal Government</b>	<b>Provincial Government</b>
Indian and Northern Affairs Joint Task Force Pacific HQ Health Canada/First Nations and Inuit Health	Ministry of Labour and Citizens Services Ministry of Attorney General Provincial Emergency Program Ministry of Health
<b>Local Government</b>	<b>Health Authority</b>
District of Shuswap Town of Comox District of Taylor City of Sidney City of Peterborough City of Airdrie City of Victoria Comox Strathcona RD City of Calgary City of Coquitlam Regional District Nanaimo	Northern Health Vancouver Coastal Health Interior Health
<b>Non-Government Organizations</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>
Emergency Social Services Assn Canadian Red Cross 72 Alive St John Ambulance	Vancouver Port Authority Madrona Point Consultants Global Consulting Pacific Emprints Menno Place
<b>Education</b>	<b>First Nations</b>
Simon Fraser Univ Univ of British Columbia	Heitsuk Tribal Council

## **Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness**

Annex B

### **2007 Emergency Preparedness Conference Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness Session Group Discussion Report**

**Task #1:** Identify capabilities that community service and volunteer sector agencies can contribute in an emergency or disaster event, such as a pandemic;

#### **Response**

Discussion groups identified the following capabilities:

- Critical supply assistance
- Food preparation and/or delivery
- Transportation
- Visitation
- Community mental health
- Provide shelter
- Assist funeral service providers/morgues
- Community patrol
- First aid
- Housekeeping assistance
- Media/communication support
- Public education
- Donation management
- Volunteer management
- Child/elder care assistance
- Pet management
- Good neighbors program
- Handyman/emergency repair services

## Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness

**Task #2:** Identify potential barriers to assuming a disaster response role

### Response

Discussion groups identified the following potential barriers:

- Shortage of personnel
- Logistics
- Organizational resilience
- Demographics of volunteers (vulnerable)
- Knowledge of community needs and resources
- Child care if schools closed
- Resources – fuel, supplies
- Human reliability screening
- Personnel safety and security
- Liability protection
- Compensation/benefits (income loss)
- Personal preparedness
- Impact of multiple complex emergencies (storms and pandemic)
- Staff attrition
- Training
- Scope of practice
- Cultural issues
- Financial – who pays?
- Lack of internal leadership
- Need for just-in-time learning
- Lack of advance planning and coordination
- Fear of unknown

## **Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness**

**Task #3:** Discuss interagency collaboration and potential for capacity building partnerships

NOTE: Each community's needs and capabilities will be different

### **Response**

Discussion groups identified the following as agencies of interest for potential collaboration:

- Communication (Amateur Radio)
- Faith based organizations (shelters, food preparations, visitation)
- Meals-on-Wheels
- Cancer and HIV/AIDS organizations (medicine, food delivery)
- Assisted living facilities (shelter)
- Local clubs, such as snowmobile (medicine and food delivery)
- Block Watch
- Virtual Networks
- ECE Program (Child care for people who are ill)
- Corporate Programs (Home Depot, Canadian Tire)
- Transport providers
- Age and gender support groups

## **Community Partners in Pandemic Preparedness**

**Task #4:** Discuss expectations of government in supporting community agencies in emergency/disaster preparedness, response and recovery

### **Response**

Discussion groups identified the following expectations:

- Provide leadership in engaging community partners
- Funding assistance for training and supplies
- Local Government – integrate and coordinate local planning
- Provincial/Federal Government – focus effort on high risk of the day (flood and wildfires vs. CBRNE)
- Emergency preparedness focused policies, such as increased emphasis on emergency/disaster awareness and preparedness in schools (first aid training)
- Leadership and coordination
- Define accountability