



**Restaurants  
Canada**

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

# Crisis Preparedness and Business Continuity

A Guide for Foodservice Operators

Updated: March 2020

# IT PAYS TO BE PREPARED

The foodservice industry is diverse, dynamic and far-reaching. We employ more than a million people and serve millions more across Canada every day. As a foodservice operator, you have a lot on your plate. We all hope a crisis never happens, but experience shows that it pays to be prepared.

From flu pandemic and foodborne illness, to natural disasters and supply chain disruption, our industry is vulnerable to many different crises that could lead to significant traffic declines, staffing shortages and business closures. You can mitigate the damage to your business by having contingency plans in place before a crisis hits.

Restaurants Canada has prepared this guide to meet the specific needs of foodservice operators before, during and after a crisis. We will continue to update and expand the content as new issues emerge.

The information provided is generic and must be customized to the needs of individual companies. You are encouraged to check this document and the sources we cite for the latest information and updates.

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# WHY YOU NEED A PLAN

It's impossible to predict the next crisis, but since the beginning of this century, foodservice operators in Canada have faced business interruptions due to a number of situations. For example:

## **Animal Disease Outbreaks**

- [BSE](#) (mad cow disease)
- [Avian influenza](#) (H5N1 and H7N9)

## **Food-Borne Illness**

- Salmonella
- Norovirus
- E.coli

## **Human Disease Outbreaks**

- [Pandemic Influenza](#) (note: this is not the same as seasonal influenza)
  - o H1N1
- [Coronavirus](#)
  - o SARS CoV (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)
  - o MERS CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
  - o COVID-19 (caused by SARS-CoV2)

## **Natural Disasters**

- Snowstorms
- Ice storms
- Floods
- Wildfires
- Hurricanes

## **Infrastructure Issues**

- Power blackouts
- Boil-water advisories

This guide is not intended to address each scenario, but to provide general information and broad recommendations to help you think about how a crisis could impact your business, and what you can do to mitigate the damage, manage through the crisis, and resume normal operations as quickly as possible.

# UNDERSTANDING PANDEMICS

When the level of disease rises above expected (endemic) levels, the following definitions apply:

**Epidemic:** an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area.

**Outbreak:** similar to an epidemic, but is often used for a more limited geographic area.

**Cluster:** an aggregation of cases grouped in place and time that are suspected to be greater than the number expected.

**Pandemic:** an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.

**Source:** [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#)

During a pandemic, public health officials will advise the public to avoid crowds and stay at home as much as possible. They may impose quarantines, including requiring people who may have been exposed to the virus to stay home. Regional Medical Officers of Health will have the authority to close public and private facilities and events in the interest of public safety.

For the foodservice industry, it's likely that demand for full-service dining and catering services will decline, while demand for take-out and delivery services may increase. Regardless, all foodservice businesses will be challenged by employee absenteeism and supply chain disruptions. Cancelled events will be an added concern for full-service restaurants, contract caterers and social caterers. Your revenue may decrease significantly, while operating costs remain constant or even increase during a pandemic.

In addition to the general guidance provided in this kit, you'll find specific tools for managing during a pandemic.

# 5 STEPS FOR CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY

If you take some time now to create your plan, you'll save time and worry later, when a crisis happens. Many of these steps can and should be completed well before you need to put them into action. Click on each category below for details.

## **1. GOVERNANCE**

Identify a crisis co-ordinator or team, and assign roles and responsibilities.

## **2. BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS**

Do a business impact analysis to determine if you should stay open or shut down temporarily during a crisis situation.

## **3. BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

- **Operations**  
Consider delivery and other channels for serving your customers if they can't come to your restaurant.
- **Finances**  
Secure access to emergency financing to meet shortfalls during a crisis.
- **Products and Supplies**  
Identify critical inputs (e.g. food supplies, hydro, fuel) you will need to keep your business running; make plans to ensure availability of essential supplies.
- **Human Resources**  
Set up a system to protect, monitor and track the health and safety of staff.
- **Communications**  
Have emergency communication mechanisms to stay in touch with employees, suppliers, customers, health authorities, media, etc.

## **4. READINESS**

Prepare and train your staff to implement your crisis plan.

## **5. RECOVERY**

As the crisis subsides, assess the impact on your staff, customers, supply chain and business, and formulate a plan to move forward.

# BUILD YOUR PLAN

Wondering how to get started? Here are some guidelines and best practices, along with links to resources, to help you build a crisis preparedness and business continuity plan for your business. The more you can do ahead of time, the better your chances of mitigating the effects of a pandemic or other crisis on your company, customers, and employees.

Business continuity planning is very specific to each unique foodservice operation. The degree of risk and the scope of responses will vary by concept, by market and by location. Ideally your plan is tailored for each location that you operate.

Follow these five steps to build your plan:

1. Governance
2. Business Impact Analysis
3. Business Continuity (operations; finances; products and supplies; human resources; communications)
4. Readiness
5. Recovery

## 1. GOVERNANCE

Governance defines the structure and key roles within your organization in the event of a crisis—who makes strategic decisions and who communicates to whom within and outside your organization.

### Recommended Action:

Identify an emergency preparedness coordinator and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning.

This team must have senior management commitment and support, and the preparedness program should be communicated as an organizational priority.

The coordinator/team has ownership of the plan and its maintenance. They ensure all necessary actions are implemented before, during and after a crisis. They will:

- Determine planning objectives
- Assign responsibility for tasks needed to develop the plan
- Create a planning schedule with deadlines for each task, as well as for reporting to management and getting approval on the plan

The team must have a clear chain of command, so that leadership is well understood should someone on the team be unavailable when a crisis hits.

## 2. BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS

A financial analysis is a key component of a business continuity plan. You need to identify your company's critical services and vulnerabilities during a crisis. Here are the steps to follow:

- Undertake a company-wide analysis of “essential” and “non-essential” functions during a crisis.
- Identify critical functions and services—the ones that would create restaurant vulnerabilities if disrupted.
- Determine minimum acceptable service levels for your business, and the maximum period of time that service can be down before the business faces severe financial damage.
- Examine employee-related costs during a crisis such as paid sick leave, overtime, meeting special needs of employees.
- Identify the core people required to keep the essential part of the business running.
- Identify the core skills required to keep the essential part of the business running.
- Identify threshold/tolerance for guest-count decline.
- Identify additional expenses that could be incurred in the case of a crisis (i.e., inventory losses, breaches of contracts).
- Factor in possible intangible costs that would result from a crisis, such as the loss of consumer or investor confidence.
- Identify threshold/tolerance for staffing decline.
- Identify threshold/tolerance for supply disruptions. (Product shortages may occur because of disruptions in transportation systems, border closures or inability of suppliers to meet demands because of their own staff shortages.)
- Identify the critical vendors and utilities that could impact your ability to function.
- Identify other internal dependencies such as equipment, computer applications, data, vehicles, and support services such as finance, human resources, security, and information technology.
- Identify other external dependencies such as facility management, utilities, communications, transportation, credit card companies, insurance providers, government agencies, legal service, health and safety services.

### 3. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

To mitigate the threats and risks you identified in the business impact analysis, you need business continuity plans covering five main areas: Operations, Finances, Products and Supplies, Human Resources, and Communications.

The goal is to ensure that critical services and products are delivered at or above minimum service levels, within tolerable down times. Plans should include trigger points for activating different stages of your company's response plan.

#### **Operations**

The challenge for foodservice operators will be to reinvent the business so that customers' need for food can be met under crisis circumstances (such as "social distancing" during an epidemic or pandemic). The best time to develop creative solutions to keep your business operational is in advance of a crisis.

#### Recommended Actions:

- Have a plan to introduce or rapidly scale up take-out and home delivery service.
- Consider an app or online order system for delivery or customer pick-up. Consider a third-party delivery service.
- Develop a contact and meal distribution system for regular customers.
- Develop relationship with taxi or ride-share service.
- If your restaurant has excess capacity due to a drop in demand, you may be able to serve the increased demand in areas such as health care. Consider scenarios for preparing and distributing meals.
- Develop a relationship with organizations such as Red Cross and determine how restaurants may be able to help them carry out their emergency duties.

#### **Finances**

Your business may experience a temporary but dramatic drop in sales during a crisis situation. If you have a plan in place to manage through financial shortfalls, your business is more likely to survive until business returns to previous levels.

#### Recommended Actions:

- Develop a plan to maintain or increase borrowing capacity in order to survive the crisis.
- Negotiate a large enough line of credit—well in advance.
- Discuss business interruption insurance with your insurance broker.



- Explore alternative sources to access emergency funding.
- Make a list of cost-cutting measures to be activated at various stages of the crisis.
- Have a strategy to deal with potential disruptions to the credit/debit card networks.
- Consider potential lawsuits that could result from emergency actions and implement reasonable steps to protect the company from litigation.

## **Products and Supplies**

Product shortages are highly likely during a crisis. They could be caused by below-normal staffing levels, travel restrictions, fuel shortages, damaged infrastructure and other critical issues. Advance planning will help you ensure that essential supplies are available.

### Recommended Actions:

- Identify priority products to sustain your business.
- Create emergency purchase orders for “core” items that can be quickly executed when appropriate trigger point is pulled.
- To the extent possible, negotiate with vendors to obtain appropriate commitments.
- Develop relaxed product substitution rules so that product continues to flow.
- In the event of epidemic or pandemic, have emergency check-in and receiving procedures to minimize human contact between drivers and receiving personnel.
- Develop other back up strategies to address product shortages, such as restricting restaurant hours or consolidating restaurant operations.

## **Human Resources**

You are responsible for the health and safety of your employees, and to ensure that the actions or inactions of your employees do not cause harm to others. Even if your restaurant can weather the economic impact of a crisis, you must also consider the level of risk to employees and customers of keeping your business open.

Continuity planning must consider the employer’s responsibilities under provincial occupational health and safety regulations. If your restaurant stays open during a crisis situation, provincial employment standards legislation continues to apply.

## Recommended Actions:

### Employee Availability and Tracking

Employee response during a crisis will be inconsistent. There will likely be shortages in some positions and surpluses in others. It is important to forecast and allow for employee absences during a pandemic or other crisis, due to factors such as personal illness, family member illness, community containment measures and quarantines, school and/or business closures, public transportation closures and even employees abandoning their jobs as they perceive the risk as being greater than the compensation.

## Recommended Actions:

- Design and develop an employee database to track key information about employees and their families during a crisis.
- In an epidemic or pandemic situation, set up a system to monitor and track staff who may have been exposed to or contracted the virus. [Click here](#) for templates.
- Identify employees who may need additional assistance, and incorporate their requirements into your preparedness plan.
- Set up a process to facilitate/encourage the return of staff once they fully recover or complete a quarantine period.

### Employee Surplus

- Develop an emergency plan for reallocating employees to other functions if possible.
- In preparation for a shift in resources, consider appropriate cross-training.
- Develop a plan for assisting excess employees and hourly workers who may need special help when laid off.
  - To make up for lost income, you may wish to set up a reverse time bank whereby you continue to pay the employee but agree in writing that the employee will work extra hours to make up the time once they are back on the job. Be sure that any such arrangements are compliant with provincial employment standards legislation.
  - Or, if you cannot afford to continue paying an employee, offer to schedule them for extra shifts when they return to work, to make up the lost income.

### Employee Policies and Procedures

Some human resource policies and procedures may become obsolete during a crisis situation. In the case of an epidemic or pandemic, there are emergency employee procedures and policies that you can set up in advance.

## Recommended Actions:

- Establish policies to minimize illness among staff members and to prevent the spread of viruses at the worksite. Examples:
  - promote respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette.
  - promptly exclude people with symptoms of illness.
  - modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact (e.g. hand-shaking) among employees and between employees and customers.
- Establish policies for employees who have been exposed to the virus, are suspected to be ill, or become ill at the worksite (e.g. infection control response, immediate mandatory sick leave).
- Set up a process to ensure that ill employees have completed any required quarantine period and are healthy before allowing them to return to work. Public Health Departments provide expert guidance in this area.
- Establish policies for restricting travel to affected geographic areas, evacuating employees working in or near an affected area when an outbreak begins, and guidance for employees returning from affected areas. Travel advisories are regularly updated on the Government of Canada website.
- Establish policies for employee compensation and sick-leave absences unique to a crisis situation, including time-off policy, emergency employee assistance policy, death in family policy, short-term disability policy and policies on when a previously ill person is no longer infectious and can return to work after illness.
- Develop plans specific to drivers and policies to deal with drivers who refuse routes into certain areas.
- Develop a plan to provide appropriate/additional security for employees. For example, drivers and store personnel could be placed at risk during a crisis situation.

## Availability of Supplies and Services for Employees

- Determine how many protective materials to stockpile and who should get them.
- Develop a plan to ensure sufficient and accessible infection control supplies, (e.g. masks, protective gloves, hand-hygiene products, cleaning supplies, tissues and receptacles for their disposal).
- Inventory available mental health and social services that employees might access during a crisis, including corporate, community and faith-based resources.
- If your company has a health plan, work with the plan administrators to develop emergency health care procedures.
- Share availability of flu shot clinics. Encourage and track annual influenza vaccination for your employees.

## Employee Communication and Training

Communication with your employees has two distinct purposes: first, to alleviate worry by providing clear and timely updates, dispelling rumours and correcting misinformation; and second, to train employees in appropriate response measures.

### Recommended Actions:

- Where possible, familiarize employees with the crisis issue well in advance and provide open, transparent and clear messaging that makes it clear their health and safety is your priority.
- In the case of an epidemic or pandemic, share useful programs and materials to encourage proper hygiene and sanitation. Here are some examples from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#), Diversey and the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#):
  - [Stop the Spread of Flu \(poster\)](#)
  - [Cold or Flu: Know the Difference \(poster\)](#)
  - [It's Flu Season \(poster\)](#)
  - [How to Wash Your Hands \(place close to sinks and washrooms\)](#)
  - [How to Disinfect Your Hands \(place next to hand sanitizers\)](#)
  - [Hand Hygiene \(internal staff poster\)](#)
  - [Prevention of Coronavirus \(internal staff poster\)](#)
  - [Sick Worker Internal Staff Poster](#)
  - [Prevent the Spread \(poster\)](#)

(NOTE: Individual crises, outbreaks etc., may have their own specific materials created by public health authorities. Visit your local health authority for information specific to the crisis you are preparing for)

- Conduct staff training on preparedness initiatives and response plans. Practise applicable response measures, e.g. proper fit and wearing of protective equipment.
- Communicate to employees that in a crisis situation their duties may shift, and you expect that everyone will pull together to get through the crisis.
- If applicable, you should discuss with your staff the possibility of the business closing during the crisis, and the mechanism that will be used to communicate this information. Advance notice of partial or full shutdowns will allow employees to make appropriate arrangements in advance.
- In activating your plan, provide clear, timely and proactive updates to staff.
- Develop a plan for communicating with employees both at work and at home. In the case of epidemic or pandemic, ensure they have accurate information for care of themselves and/or family members.
- Consider setting up an emergency hotline number/call centre or intranet that employees can contact for information and special requirements.
- Ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

## Communications

Consumer behaviour during a crisis will be influenced by real and perceived risk, and knowledge of how to protect themselves and their families. Consistent messaging from multiple sources, including the private sector, and dialogue on how to deal with the crisis, will help to instill consumer trust and confidence.

### Recommended Actions:

- Have an emergency communications plan and review/update regularly. The plan should identify key internal and external contacts (with backups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and process for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
- Develop emergency communications mechanisms that will be needed during a crisis.
  - Consider the use of e-mail, intranet, dedicated website, apps, hotlines, conference calling, messaging, etc. to simplify the task of communicating status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers and customers inside and outside the worksite in a consistent and timely way.
- With any noticeable action step, consider the need to educate consumers on why the change is appropriate.
- During the crisis, establish a daily process to stay abreast of most recent developments with trusted sources of information.
- Identify the key government contacts/agencies in each municipality who make decisions regarding schools, hospitals, etc.
- Bookmark reliable information sources such as community public health, emergency management and other sources.
- Prepare a media point person.
- Develop a procedure to respond to media calls. Review the procedure with all employees.
- Communicate to non-employees (vendors, etc.) who may be approached by the media that they must not speak on behalf of your company.

## 4. READINESS

Your plan is only as good as your team's ability to execute it. Be sure everyone is informed and equipped for success.

### Recommended Actions:

- Have the entire plan reviewed by the planning team and approved by management.
- Once approved, print and distribute the plan to all key personnel and their backups identified in the plan.
- Brief staff on the contents of the plan and ensure they are aware of their individual responsibilities.
- Train employees with direct responsibility for tasks they will be required to perform during a crisis.
- Regularly review plan to maintain accuracy, relevance and effectiveness.
- Collaborate with insurers, health plans, and major healthcare facilities to share your plan and understand their capabilities and plans.

## 5. RECOVERY

You've weathered the storm, and now it's time to focus on resuming normal operations. Depending on the crisis, this may happen quickly, or it may take some time.

Your plan will need to consider the following:

- Psychological stress, low morale and temporary loss of productivity related to the experiences of co-workers, family and friends.
- Loss of institutional knowledge due to possible death of some employees.
- The need to recruit and train replacement workers and to reassign workers.
- Communication with customers and suppliers to let them know about the status of your business and when they can expect services to be completely restored.
- Compiling necessary information to take part in any financial recovery programs.

# **TOOLS FOR PANDEMIC PLANNING**

# TOOLS FOR PANDEMIC PLANNING

## EMPLOYEE CONTACT LIST

NAME	POSITION	HOME PHONE	CELL PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS	EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME/ RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYEE/ PHONE / EMAIL (PARENT OR GUARDIAN, SPOUSE, FRIEND)



# TOOLS FOR PANDEMIC PLANNING

## PANDEMIC TRACKING LIST

NAME	POSITION	ILL (DATE SYMPTOMS FIRST NOTED)	SUSPECTED ILL (DATE)	ABSENT FROM WORK (DATE)	RECUPERATED & RETURNED TO WORK (DATE)	HAS LOST FAMILY MEMBER (SPECIFY)	MAY NEED ASSISTANCE WITH (SPECIFY)

## SAMPLE NOTICE

# INFLUENZA NOTIFICATION

Influenza is a contagious disease. There is currently an increase in the number of people in Canada with influenza. In order to reduce the spread of influenza in this workplace; the following is required of everybody:

## **DO NOT COME TO WORK** if you have:

- Chills, shivering and a fever (temperature >38oC)
- Onset of muscle aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Dry cough
- Trouble breathing
- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Tiredness

If some of the above apply to you, please go home and wait until you have recovered before returning to work.

**If you have recently arrived from overseas or returned from overseas, please ask to speak to the Influenza Manager (see below)**

If you start to feel ill at work, DO NOT leave your work area

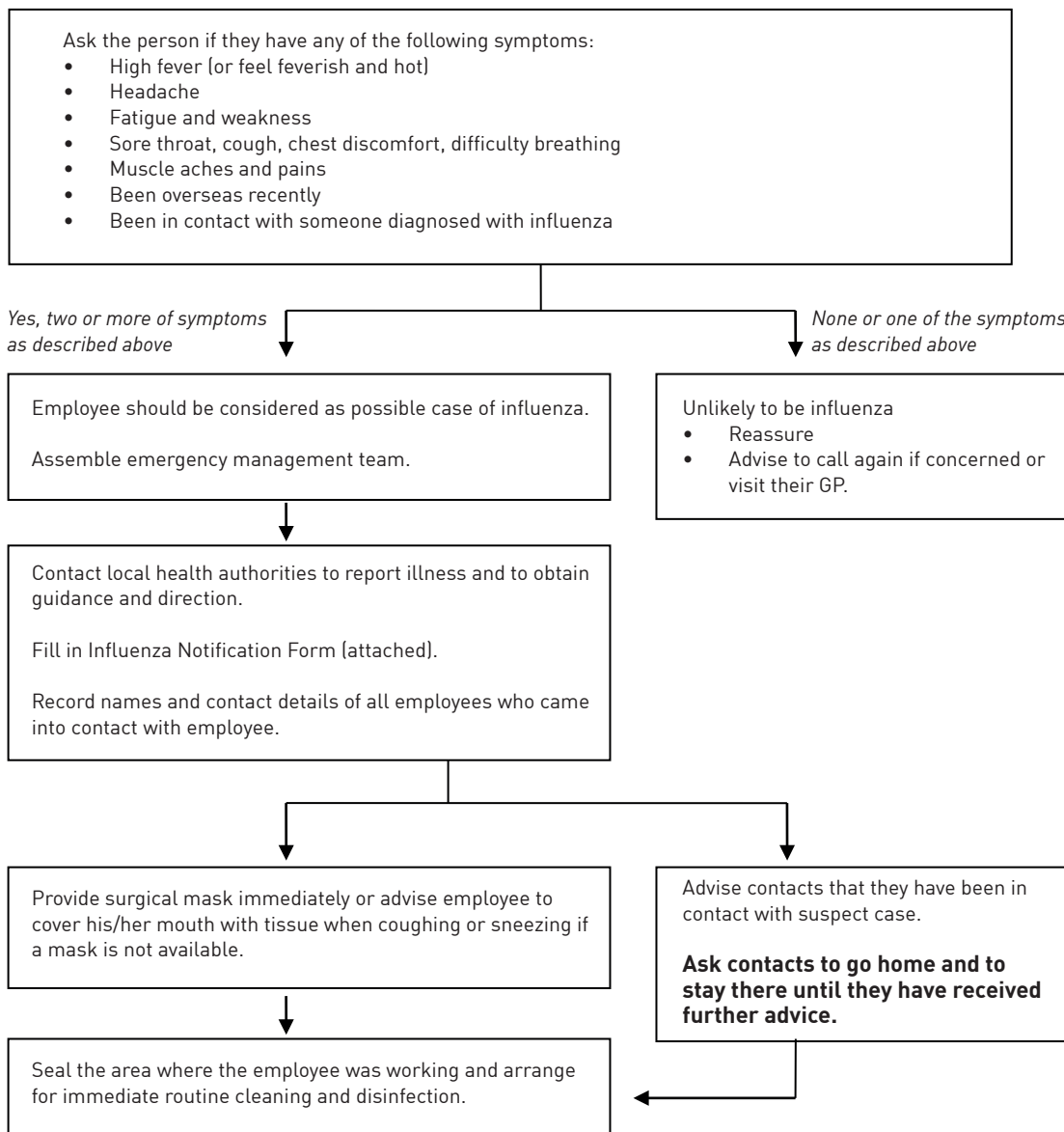
Call your Influenza Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Ext \_\_\_\_\_

# TOOLS FOR PANDEMIC PLANNING

## SAMPLE

### SCREENING CHECKLIST FOR DETECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF SUSPECTED PANDEMIC INFLUENZA CASES

1. Avoid direct contact with the person if possible (manage the process over the telephone).
2. Immediately isolate the person (have person move to a room away from other employees).



Source: Adapted from Government of New Zealand, *Influenza Pandemic Planning: Business Continuity Planning Guide*, October 2005

# TOOLS FOR PANDEMIC PLANNING

## NOTIFICATION FORM: SUSPECTED INFLUENZA CASE AT WORK

### Details of Affected Staff

Name	Worksite	Location of Isolation:
Job Title:	Date of Birth:	
Address:		
Telephone No: _____ (W) _____ (H) _____ (M)		
<b>Symptoms noticed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fever <input type="checkbox"/> Body aches <input type="checkbox"/> Headache <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> Dry cough <input type="checkbox"/> Others, details: <input type="checkbox"/> Cold		
Time of fever on-set: _____		
Time of isolation: _____		
Travel history over the last 14 days: Countries visited: _____ Flights taken: _____		
Where referred:		
Contract List <i>(See separate page)</i>		

### Details of Reporter

Name	Job Title:
Telephone No: _____ (W) _____ (H) _____ (M)	

# TOOLS FOR PANDEMIC PLANNING

## **SAMPLE**

### **CONTACT LIST OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO INFECTED PERSON**

List everyone the infected staff member has interacted with since displaying symptoms			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Telephone No.</b>	<b>Address</b>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			

**PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS RESOURCES**  
**PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL**  
**GOVERNMENTS**



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PROCESS

NATURAL

## FILTER NO 2

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