

Media advisory

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Pandemic plans need to recognize not everyone is affected equally

Toronto: Everybody is affected by a pandemic, but not everyone is affected equally. That's the sobering conclusion of a new research and policy paper released today by the Wellesley Institute. As the world braces for a possible swine flu pandemic, the need for proper pandemic planning and effective emergency responses is drawn into sharp focus. "Bridging the Preparedness Divide" by emergency management consultant Thomas Appleyard notes that Ontario's current health disaster plans recognize the need to address inequities and inequalities, but fail to deliver the funding or resources to meet the requirements of all Ontarians.

"Encouraging people to develop a 72-hour stockpile of food, or warning people to maintain a 'modified quarantine', that is, stay close to their home, are both sensible and necessary measures," notes Appleyard. "But many Ontarians, including lower-income people and people who are homeless, will find these measures practically impossible to follow."

"When it comes to pandemics, no one can be left out," says Rick Blickstead, President and CEO of the Wellesley Institute in a policy brief that accompanies the pandemic planning paper. "With a possible swine flu epidemic looming larger, emergency plans need to include an equity lens – which means that dollars and other resources need to flow to measures that will meet the special requirements of disadvantaged communities."

"Bridging the Preparedness Divide" by Thomas Appleyard, and the accompanying policy brief by Blickstead and Michael Shapcott, the Wellesley Institute's Director, Affordable Housing and Social Innovation, is available on the Wellesley Institute web site at www.wellesleyinstitute.com

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