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Munarhiliqiyikkut Inuuhiriknirmullu

Department of Health and Social Services

Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

Media Update Re: H1N1 Flu Virus June 11, 2009
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## Situation Update – As of June 11<sup>th</sup> - 1:00 PM:

- The Department of Health and Social Services has confirmed 47 more cases of the H1N1 virus in Nunavut bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 143. Approximately 40% are from the Kivalliq Region and 60% from the Kitikmeot Region.
- Several communities in these regions have experienced significant outbreaks of the flu. The Department is supporting affected communities in a number of ways:
  - Health Centres are hiring extra nurses as required
  - Additional doctors are being deployed as required
  - Senior Departmental officials have been, and will continue to be, in close contact with Health Centres and community leaders in the affected communities
- In addition, at the request of the Department of Health and Social Services, the Public Health Agency of Canada has dispatched two field epidemiologists to one of the affected Regions to help with the investigation of the outbreak.
- There have been ten patients with confirmed cases of H1N1 treated in the hospital. Eight of those ten have recovered and are no longer hospitalized.
- There are several other patients hospitalized with flu-like conditions. All of these people have pre-existing medical conditions. We are still waiting for laboratory confirmation to see if they have the H1N1 flu.
- The vast majority of individuals suffering with flu symptoms are recovering at home. As with any influenza, people with chronic medical conditions are at risk of developing more serious illness. This is consistent with seasonal influenza outbreaks.
- In general, Health Centres in the affected communities continue to report that the number of patients they are seeing with flu-like illness is decreasing.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to work closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and our colleagues across the country in monitoring the situation and heightening surveillance for this virus.
- The World Health Organization (W.H.O.) announced today that they are moving to Phase 6 (the pandemic phase) in the WHO Global Influenza Preparedness Plan. The Phase 6 declaration is based on the spread of the virus, and not on the severity of the illness it causes.
- The decision by the W.H.O. to move to Phase 6 does not mean the H1N1 flu virus is of more risk to people in the territory today than it already has been. However, the move to level 6 does highlight the urgency of the work we are doing and the importance of people taking steps to protect themselves from flu-like illnesses.

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- The move by the W.H.O. to Phase 6 also does not change Nunavut's current response to the diagnosis, treatment, infection control or public health measures of the H1N1 flu virus. We will be activating Level 6 of the Department's Pandemic Influenza Plan (PanFlu Plan).
- To date, the Government of Nunavut has undertaken the following actions:
  - o Increased surveillance by frontline health care workers.
  - o Issued Public Health Advisories and public information on how to protect yourself from the flu
  - o Produced public service announcements for use on community radio stations
  - o Provided healthcare workers with updated guidelines based on our current knowledge of the virus.
  - o Communicated with Nunavummiut through local radio stations, newspaper interviews and advertisements.
  - o Ensured protocols and guidelines are in place to address the anticipated impact on the healthcare system

## **Prevention Advice for General Public**

The flu symptoms include: fever and cough, runny nose, sore throat, body aches, tired, don't feel like eating, sick in the stomach, and in some cases throw-up or diarrhea.

People suffering from flu-like symptoms should stay home and drink lots of water and juice, get lots of rest, eat like normal, and treat fever, aches, and pains with Tylenol or Advil and do any visiting by phone. If you think you are getting more sick, call your community health centre.

To stop the spread of the flu:

- Wash your hands often in warm, soapy water or by using hand sanitizer
- Cough and sneeze in your arm
- Stay at home if you experience any of the symptoms of the flu. If you think you are getting worse, CALL your community health centre

All types of the flu should be taken seriously. People need to take the same steps to stop the spread of the flu, no matter where they live, work or visit.

For more information, call your local health centre or visit www.fightflu.ca

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