



PRESS RELEASE

To Better Cope with Influenza A (H1N1) in Daily Life

The Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé Encourages the Population to Practice Mutual Aid among Neighbours

QUEBEC, November 10, 2009 – People living in the neighbourhood may become precious allies when dealing with problems that Influenza A (H1N1) could cause in daily life. That is the meaning of the message conveyed by the Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé (Quebec Network of Healthy Communities) which encourages the population to practice mutual aid among neighbours during the pandemic. Moreover, the organization has devised a kit entitled **Mes voisins et la pandémie** (My neighbours and the pandemic) to make contacts between neighbours easier.

The Network, instigator of the Fête des voisins (Neighbours' Day), which aims at developing neighbourhood solidarity, believes that it is important to heighten citizens' awareness in terms of their neighbours' well-being in the face of the H1N1 pandemic. People more vulnerable in particular (elderly, alone, handicapped, and single-parent families) could need help.

Ways to Help Each Other among Neighbours

There are several ways of helping neighbours: share babysitting responsibilities, pick up the prescription of the elderly couple who lives on the second floor, cook for the single-parent family next door, run errands for the neighbour across the street who lives alone, reassure the isolated person who is worried about the pandemic. By talking with their neighbours, citizens will be able to identify the type of support that could be most helpful.

Helping Each Other without Getting Infected

The Network reminds people that it is possible to help each other without getting infected. As mentioned on the website of Pandémie Québec: "Preventive measures should be employed when in contact with someone who is sick. However, they do not prohibit showing solidarity, quite the opposite." During contacts with a sick neighbour or one that could be contagious, the main recommended measures are to keep a safe distance of one to two meters, avoid touching personal objects, and wear a mask or a scarf (to clean after use).

“Complementary to institutional and family solidarities is the neighbourhood solidarity. The A (H1N1) flu epidemic offers a great opportunity to stoke this type of solidarity,” said **Denis Lapointe**, president of the network. “Everyone can do something to help not only relatives, but neighbours as well, to get through the next few months more easily.”

Nadine Maltais, liaison agent for the network and coordinator of Neighbours’ Day, considers that the stakes are very high: “We must support people in their daily lives, reach the vulnerable people, and avoid the every-man-for-himself practice that could generate the pandemic.”

The “Mes voisins et la pandémie” (My neighbours and the pandemic) kit, prepared by the network, includes a **poster** to encourage neighbours to help each other, a neighbours **directory** to record everyone’s address and phone number, and a **bulletin board** to offer a service or express a need. The poster, directory, and bulletin board can be downloaded or printed from the www.rqvvs.qc.ca website, which also provides information concerning this campaign to mobilize neighbours in the face of the pandemic.

The Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé is a non-profit-making organization uniting almost 200 towns that care about citizens’ health and the development of healthy and sustainable environments. It initiated Neighbours’ Day (www.fetedesvoisins.qc.ca), a provincial event that has become increasingly popular for almost five years and that aims at developing mutual aid and solidarity among neighbours.

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Source : Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé

Médias Contact: Roch Bilodeau – Phare Communications
819 347-7622