

# GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A SPECIFIC EPIDEMIC AND PANDEMIC PLAN FOR MUNICIPALITIES

*Translated from the original French*

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## Note to the reader

The purpose of this guide is to equip municipalities in their planning to deal with different forms of epidemics and pandemics.

This is an adaptation of a document produced in 2007. Since that time, the ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP) has adopted the Règlement sur les procédures d'alerte et de mobilisation et les moyens de secours minimaux pour protéger la sécurité des personnes et des biens en cas de désastre (regulations on alerting and mobilization procedures and minimum means of assistance to protect the safety of persons and property in the event of disaster) and has produced [several tools to support municipalities in preparing for disasters](#). The municipality is therefore invited to use the contents of this guide and to plan measures adapted to epidemics and pandemics in addition to the provisions set out in its Civil Protection Plan (Plan de sécurité civile) established in accordance with the By-law and the recommendations made in the MSP tools. Municipal authorities should therefore adapt their planning based on the most recent measures developed as well as the concepts and terminology used in this context.

In order to be able to adapt their actions to the constant evolution of the current COVID-19 pandemic context, we invite the municipalities to regularly consult:

- [Le site internet dédié à la pandémie; \(The website dedicated to the pandemic\)](#)
- [La section réservée à la COVID-19 sur le site internet du ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation; \(The COVID-19 section on the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation website\)](#)
- The various press releases issued by the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Preparatory Stage for the Development of the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1. Determining the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the development of the plan</b> .....	<b>8</b>
1.1 Municipal authorities .....	8
1.2 The Director General .....	8
1.3 The person responsible for developing the plan .....	8
1.4 The municipal organization of civil security .....	8
1.5 The planning group .....	9
<b>Development of the Specific Pandemic Plan (Plan particulier d'intervention en cas de pandémie)</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>2. The importance of municipal planning in a pandemic</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1 Strategies for coping with a pandemic .....	11
<b>3. Prevention in the workplace</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1 Staff health protection measures for municipalities .....	12
Vaccination in the event of a pandemic .....	12
Collective measures for employees .....	12
Other measures concerning the organization of work .....	13
The purchase of equipment in sufficient quantity to protect the health of the personnel .....	13
3.2 Prevention communication .....	14
Government communication .....	14
Municipal communication .....	14
<b>4. Preparedness in the event of a pandemic</b> .....	<b>14</b>
4.1 Maintaining services to citizens .....	15
The inventory of the municipality's services .....	15
Establishing essential services .....	15
Determining labour requirements .....	15
Preparing scenarios for the redeployment of staff in the event of a pandemic .....	16
Establishing lists of the various resources needed to maintain essential services .....	16
4.2 Actions to minimize the consequences of the pandemic on municipal organization .....	17

Human resources management in a situation of pandemic.....	18
Preparation of suppliers, subcontractors and partners .....	18
Access to a psychological assistance and support program for employees .....	18
Entering into agreements for additional resources .....	19
4.3 Reducing the risk of transmission of infection in municipal operations and services .....	19
Identification of municipal services involving personal contacts .....	19
Identification of municipal activities at risk for the spread of infection .....	20
Identification of high-traffic municipal public places.....	20
4.4 Communications planning in the event of a pandemic .....	20
Designation of the municipality's spokesperson .....	20
Information for staff.....	21
Information for the public .....	21
Information for the media.....	21
<b>5. Pandemic response.....</b>	<b>21</b>
5.1 Employer and Worker Rights and Responsibilities in a Pandemic Situation .....	22
Enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations .....	22
5.2 Compliance with collective agreements and specific agreements in the event of a pandemic.....	23
5.3 Employers' responsibilities to employees related to labour standards .....	23
5.4 Warning and mobilization.....	23
5.5 Communication during the intervention .....	23
<b>6. Recovery during and after the pandemic.....</b>	<b>24</b>
6.1 Recovery at the government level.....	24
6.2 Recovery at the municipal level.....	24
Return-to-normal measures for employees.....	24
Measures to bring the population back to normality .....	24
6.3 Assessment of the event.....	25
6.4 Municipal communication during recovery .....	25
<b>7. The checklist and timeline of actions to be taken and tools to be put in place in the event of a pandemic .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>8. Municipal support to other organizations in a pandemic situation.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>9. Support from municipal associations and the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation.....</b>	<b>26</b>
9.1 Municipal associations .....	26
9.2 The ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation.....	26

**Appendix I : Baseline table for the identification of essential services and redeployment of human resources.....28**

**Appendix II : Checklist and timeline of actions to be taken and tools put in place in the event of a pandemic.....29**

# Introduction

The Guide for the development of a *Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Response (Plan particulier d'intervention en cas d'épidémie et de pandémie)* for municipalities is intended to help all Quebec municipalities adequately plan their response to a pandemic in order to protect the health of their staff and, consequently, to help preserve the functioning of Quebec society as a whole. This document is adapted from the Guide for the development of the *Specific Pandemic Influenza Response Plan (Plan particulier d'intervention en cas de pandémie d'influenza<sup>1</sup>)*.

This guide presents the various measures that municipalities must adopt to ensure effective management in the event of an outbreak or pandemic.

The Guide consists of two parts. The first part sets out the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the development of the plan (municipal authorities, the Director General, members of the municipal emergency preparedness organization, etc.).

The second part describes the steps in developing the plan in the event of an outbreak or pandemic based on the various strategies identified to contain this threat to the extent possible. It then details the measures to be implemented in the four dimensions of emergency preparedness, namely:

- infection control in the workplace: measures to protect the health of personnel (vaccination, individual basic hygiene measures, collective employee measures, etc.) and government and municipal communication on prevention;
- pandemic preparedness: the roles and responsibilities of members of the municipal emergency preparedness organization, maintenance of services to citizens, actions to minimize the consequences of the pandemic, and communications planning in the event of a pandemic;
- pandemic response: the rights and responsibilities of the employer and employee during a pandemic, alerting and mobilization, and communication during the response;
- recovery during and after the pandemic: recovery at the government and municipal levels and event assessment.

Two appendices complete this document: the Reference table for the Identification of essential services and the redeployment of human resources ( Appendix I ) and the Checklist and Timeline for actions to be taken and tools to be put in place in the event of a pandemic ( Appendix II).

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<sup>1</sup> Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions, Guide to developing a Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan for municipalities (Guide pour l'élaboration du Plan particulier d'intervention en cas de pandémie d'influenza à l'intention des municipalités) [On-line], February 2007 [www.mamh.gouv.qc.ca]

# Preparatory Stage for the Development of the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan

## 1. Determining the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the development of the plan

The preparatory stage for the development of the *Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan* is the formation of a lead team whose primary task will be to carry out the plan.

The roles and responsibilities of the municipal government, the Chief Administrative Officer and the planning group must be determined at the outset before planning for a pandemic can begin.

### 1.1 Municipal authorities

It is the responsibility of municipal council to ensure that the municipality has a plan in place to mitigate the consequences of a pandemic to the extent possible. Such a commitment on the part of the municipal council will have a ripple effect since, to be effective, this approach must first obtain the support of elected officials and administrators at various levels of the organization, and then ensure the cooperation of all municipal staff.

The municipal council must also appoint the person who will be responsible for the development of the *Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Response Plan* and entrust the mandate for its implementation to the municipal emergency preparedness organization (OMSC)<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2 The Director General

The Director General of the municipality must make the municipal authorities aware of the risk of a pandemic, the consequences it may have and the importance for the municipality to be well prepared.

### 1.3 The person responsible for developing the plan

The person responsible for overseeing the development of the plan should be the Municipal Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.

### 1.4 The municipal organization of civil security

The municipal emergency preparedness organization is responsible for forming a planning group to develop the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan.

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<sup>2</sup> The municipal organization of civil security (OMSC), established by the municipal council, is headed by the municipal civil protection coordinator, who is appointed by the municipal council. For the risk of a pandemic, he sees to the smooth running of the planning group's work, and in a disaster situation, he acts under the authority of the mayor.

## 1.5 The planning group

The planning group is responsible for the development of the *Specific Outbreak and Pandemic Plan*. This group should include all or some members of the municipal emergency preparedness organization, relevant department heads and external stakeholders, as appropriate.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the various municipal and other resources that should be included in the planning group:

- an elected official, mayor or councillor, for the decision-making aspect at the political level;
- the municipal emergency preparedness coordinator;
- the emergency measures officer;
- a municipal government official;
- the municipality's legal counsel for the interpretation of laws and the preparation of legal opinions;
- an official of the municipal police department or an official of the Sûreté du Québec for the security of persons and premises;
- an official of the fire department for first aid and evacuations;
- etc.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *SPECIFIC OUTBREAK AND PANDEMIC PLAN*<sup>3</sup>.**

#### Municipal authorities

- request the completion of the *Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Response Plan* from the municipal emergency preparedness organization;
- support the planning process and allocate the necessary resources;
- ensure the contribution of municipal departments that can assist the planning group;
- ensure that external collaborators (industries, government departments, agencies, health services) are involved, when required;
- follow up during the planning process;
- approve and adopt the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan.

#### The Director General

- raise awareness among municipal authorities of the risk of a pandemic, its potential consequences, and the importance of municipal preparedness.

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<sup>3</sup> The text is excerpted or adapted from the document of the ministère de la Sécurité publique. Pour planifier la réponse au sinistre – Guide à l'intention des municipalités pour l'élaboration d'un plan de mesures d'urgence en cas de sinistre [On-line], January 2004. [www.msp.gouv.qc.ca]

#### The municipal civil protection organization

- determines the composition of the scenario group;
- establishes a work plan (determination of milestones and deadlines);
- determines the broad directions of the project;
- approves and validates the work carried out by the planning group.

#### The planning group

- sets the framework:
  - by establishing a work schedule;
  - by assigning tasks to members according to their competence and depending on the topics covered;
  - is aware of other municipal plans that can be used as a reference for the development of the specific response plan for epidemics and pandemics (e.g. municipal emergency preparedness plan, specific plans of the various municipal departments, response plans for strategic sites, etc.);
- initiates the planning process and carries out the plan and other pandemic-related work.

# Development of the Specific Pandemic Plan (Plan particulier d'intervention en cas de pandémie)

## 2. The importance of municipal planning in a pandemic <sup>4</sup>

The foreseeable consequence of an anticipated pandemic will be human resource absenteeism in both the private and public sectors. The major challenge in planning for a pandemic is to ensure that the municipality will have sufficient resources to continue to provide services to the population despite the pandemic and that it will be able to maintain essential services at all times.

### 2.1 Strategies for coping with a pandemic

To deal with a pandemic, the gouvernement du Québec has identified three strategies that can be applied to all organizations and, consequently, to municipalities.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH A PANDEMIC**

##### Ensuring the protection of staff health

The municipality will have to ensure an optimum level of protection for its personnel against contagious disease. It will have to implement preventive measures to mitigate the consequences on its employees.

##### Maintaining services to citizens

In a pandemic situation, municipal services should be functional to the extent possible. In the event of a high rate of absenteeism of its human resources, the municipality must plan various measures to maintain its essential services.

##### Minimizing the impact on the organization

The municipality must plan measures to facilitate, during the intervention, the mobilization of its employees and ensure the contribution of its suppliers, subcontractors and partners. It must also support its most affected employees by giving them access to psychosocial assistance programs.

These three strategies will enable the municipality to coherently articulate the various measures adopted in each of the dimensions of civil protection: « prevention », « preparation », « intervention » and « recovery ».

<sup>4</sup> The text is taken from or inspired by the Terms of Reference for Determining and Maintaining Essential Services in the Event of an Influenza Pandemic (*Cadre de référence pour la détermination et le maintien des services essentiels en cas de pandémie d'influenza*), Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, gouvernement du Québec, September 2006

### 3. Prevention in the workplace

In the context of a pandemic, the municipality must adopt infection control measures as a priority to protect the health of its staff. For this reason, basic personal hygiene measures such as hand and respiratory hygiene should be promoted and rigorously enforced in all workplaces. Sanitary maintenance of workplaces and equipment is also an effective measure that should be reinforced. Finally, other complementary measures that promote social distance can be put in place.

#### 3.1 Staff health protection measures for municipalities <sup>5</sup>

In order to ensure the protection of the health of its staff, the municipality must, as a preventive measure, provide for health-related measures: vaccination in the event of a pandemic, individual basic hygiene measures, collective measures for employees and measures concerning the organization of work.

##### *Vaccination in the event of a pandemic*

In the event of a pandemic, the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux will be responsible for the distribution of vaccines when they become available. An order of priority will be established for their administration, taking into consideration the severity of the pandemic, the vulnerability of the population and, in each region, the number of people in the priority groups.

##### *Individual basic hygiene measures for employees*

While waiting for a vaccine against the contagious disease and bearing in mind that its availability will be limited at the outset, the adoption of individual basic hygiene measures helps to protect the health of employees to a certain extent.

It is with this in mind that the municipality should promote the following basic individual hygiene measures, such as:

- promote and encourage handwashing, the most important contagious disease prevention measure to be applied at all times;
- promote and encourage employee respiratory hygiene, which consists of a series of simple gestures to be done at all times when a person coughs, sneezes or blows his or her nose to prevent the transmission of infections;
- inform its employees of the orientation of the Direction générale de la santé publique of the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux concerning the wearing of personal protective equipment, or of any other orientation.

##### *Collective measures for employees*

The municipality must provide for the adoption of collective preventive measures aimed at all its employees.

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<sup>5</sup> Point 3.1 reproduces or adapts the text of the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, September 2006, and integrates information from the site : [urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca)

### *Customer and employee access measures*

- Restrict entry to workplaces for people with cold or flu symptoms by posting notices at municipal access points.

### *Measures concerning sanitary hygiene in workplaces*

- *Ensure that workplaces are properly cleaned:*
  - *all common areas: stair railings, door handles, elevator controls, security gantries, reception counters, kitchenette and all other surfaces where staff and customers regularly lay hands;*
  - *all washroom facilities (toilets and sinks);*
  - *all individual workstations such as work surfaces, computer keyboard, telephone handset, photocopier or fax machine controls, etc.*

### **Other measures concerning the organization of work**

Certain other complementary measures can be used to try to limit transmission.

### *Examples of measures to promote social distance:*

- Limit, if possible, close contacts at work:
  - avoid requesting non-essential face-to-face meetings;
  - cancelling or adjourning non-essential meetings, training sessions and workshops;
  - reduce meeting time;
  - holding meetings in large rooms;
  - use communication and networking technologies and tools to ensure communications with and among employees;
  - avoiding unnecessary travel;
  - allow time between shifts to reduce contact between employees;
  - staggering break times so that all employees are not on break at the same time.
- Develop an attendance at work policy to be applied at the onset of symptoms of illness and inform employees of this policy (e.g., it is recommended that employees do not report to work if they have symptoms of illness).

### **The purchase of equipment in sufficient quantity to protect the health of the personnel**

- To buy the products necessary for the implementation of basic hygiene measures:
  - hand hygiene: soap, paper towels, quick-drying alcohol-based antiseptic disinfectant gel (minimum 60% alcohol), garbage cans, bin bags;
  - respiratory hygiene: tissues, garbage cans, bags, etc.
- Buy the products necessary for the maintenance of workplaces:
  - cleaning products, household bleach (5%) and other products.

### 3.2 Prevention communication

Prevention communication in the event of a pandemic is a shared responsibility between government and municipalities.

#### *Government communication*

To ensure that all employees and the Quebec population in general are well informed about hand and respiratory hygiene, the gouvernement du Québec provides various means of information, such as:

- the publication of a leaflet on hand hygiene, and respiratory hygiene;
- a hand hygiene poster;
- maintaining a website on other pandemic preparedness measures.

Municipalities are invited to use the communication tools developed by the gouvernement du Québec and to disseminate them widely in all places under their jurisdiction.

#### *Municipal communication*

The municipality has a responsibility to raise awareness of prevention measures among its staff and the general public. Faced with the threat of the pandemic, it must inform its employees about prevention measures (hand washing, respiratory hygiene, etc.) to help them protect themselves against the pandemic and combat its effects. To do so, it may call upon external resources, including the following:

- to one or more nearby towns;
- the resources of the regional county municipality (RCM) or metropolitan community (MC).

The municipality must also assume the role of relaying information to its citizens in order to obtain their support for the various prevention measures recommended by the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. It must make health information related to a pandemic (pamphlets and posters from the Quebec government) accessible in municipal public places, libraries, cultural and sports centres, administrative offices, etc.

## 4. Preparedness in the event of a pandemic

The municipal emergency preparedness organization is responsible for the municipality's preparedness in the event of a pandemic.

## 4.1 Maintaining services to citizens <sup>6</sup>

The main objective of municipal planning for the maintenance of essential services is to adopt measures to ensure the continuity of municipal services to citizens and, where human resources are insufficient, to maintain essential services.

### **THE SAME TERMINOLOGY FOR DIFFERENT CONCEPTS**

To avoid confusion, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of "essential services" in emergency preparedness and "essential services" in labour relations.

The determination of essential services in the context of labour relations is legally framed and controlled by the Conseil des services essentiels, whereas the determination of essential services in civil protection favours an approach based on a more flexible, but equally important notion of the needs of a population most often observed during a disaster (health, safety, lodging, food, transportation, etc.).

The Civil Protection Act (Loi sur la sécurité civile) is not explicit about the concept of "essential services". The definition chosen by the government to meet its own needs can be adapted to the municipal context as follows:

- essential services: services, activities, equipment falling under the responsibility of the of a municipality or municipal body, the interruption of which, even for a short period of time, would have serious consequences for the citizen, the community or municipality.

### *The inventory of the municipality's services*

To ensure the maintenance of its services to citizens in a pandemic situation, the municipality must mobilize and involve the managers of the various administrative units - services and departments - of its organization in order to make an inventory of all its services, activities and equipment so that it can then determine the essential services to be maintained during a pandemic.

### *Establishing essential services*

According to a scale of priorities that it establishes, the municipality must classify the services, activities and equipment of the various units of its organization into levels for all the risks that may affect it. This exercise must be carried out taking into account certain seasonal characteristics (e.g. snow removal in winter, more frequent garbage collection in summer, etc.).

### *Determining labour requirements*

In order to plan its manpower requirements for a pandemic response, the municipality will determine, for each level of service, the number of people,

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<sup>6</sup> Much of the text is taken from or inspired by the document of the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, September 2006

according to their skills, that it will need to provide its services. To do so, it will have to know, foresee and identify the labour pools to which it will have recourse.

It will also need to plan for any other disaster situations (flooding, hazardous material spills, collapse of a structure, etc.) that may occur during the pandemic period.

### ***Preparing scenarios for the redeployment of staff in the event of a pandemic***

The objective of offering the maximum number of services to citizens, the possibility of having to intervene to respond to any other disaster situation, the need to ensure essential services and the possibility of high staff absenteeism in the event of a pandemic require the municipality to plan for rapid reorganization scenarios involving the redeployment of some of the available staff identified in the various service levels.

The redeployment scenarios envisaged for the partial or total duration of the possible pandemic must provide for the possibility of staff movements:

- between the administrative units of the municipality (departments and directorates);
- externally, with respect to additional resources such as suppliers, subcontractors, retirees, volunteers, etc;
- to one or more nearby municipalities or to the Regional County Municipality (Municipalité régionale de comté (MRC));
- to the regional civil protection organization for support needs to non-municipal organizations (e.g., health and social services network);
- to other regions of Quebec;
- etc.

### ***Establishing lists of the various resources needed to maintain essential services***

In its succession plan, the municipality must prepare and maintain lists of all its own and external resources with their contact information (office phone numbers, fax numbers, cell phone numbers, e-mail address, etc.) and ensure that these lists are available in easily accessible locations.

The following box outlines the various steps in the process of identifying and maintaining essential services in the event of a pandemic. A reference table is provided in Appendix I to help municipalities identify their essential services and redeploy their human resources in the context of a pandemic, assuming a 35% absenteeism rate among their employees.

**Steps in determining essential services:**

1. To inventory all the services, activities and equipment of the municipality;
2. Evaluate the consequences of an absenteeism rate of 35% per department;
3. Determine the essential services to be maintained and establish their order of priority, and this, for all disaster risks;
4. Determine, for each essential service, the activities to be maintained in the event of an absenteeism rate of 35%;
5. Identify the competencies that correspond to essential services and the minimum resources required to operate them for each workplace and for each function;
6. Prepare and maintain lists of persons required to maintain essential services and designate sufficient replacements at all levels: political and administrative authorities, personnel in each workplace and for each function (police, firefighter, public works, emergency measures personnel, etc.), with their contact information;
7. Provide for special measures (redeployment of staff, recall of non-essential staff, use of retirees, contractors, citizens, etc.) to deal with the shortage of human resources;
8. Prepare and maintain lists of the external human resources required to maintain essential services, taking into account their skills;
9. Communicate with partners, suppliers and subcontractors to assess their readiness and provide alternatives in the event that they are unable to carry out their activities (this is an important consideration for municipalities using outsourcing);
10. Provide the results of this planning process to municipal authorities for approval;
11. Introduce pandemic essential services planning to all staff, partners, suppliers, subcontractors, etc.

## **4.2 Actions to minimize the consequences of the pandemic on municipal organization <sup>7</sup>**

Various measures and actions can help the municipality minimize the consequences of a pandemic on its organization.

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<sup>7</sup> The text is taken from or inspired by the document of the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, September 2006.

### ***Human resources management in a situation of pandemic***

The municipality must foresee human resources management measures for specific working conditions, in compliance with the provisions of collective agreements and laws governing labour relations.

The application of certain working conditions during a pandemic should be discussed with associations and trade unions.

#### **IDENTIFICATION, FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, OF SUBJECTS CONCERNING THE APPLICATION OF CERTAIN WORKING CONDITIONS IN A SITUATION OF PANDEMIC**

- The working hours system
- The distribution of overtime among employees
- Postponement of authorized holidays
- Recall notices and deadlines for seasonal employees and the casual employee
- The different types of leave: parental (maternity, paternity), for family responsibilities for serious, urgent and unforeseeable reasons, leave without pay, study leave, etc.
- Salary insurance
- Occupational health and safety (right of refusal, management of an employee with symptoms, etc.).

### ***Preparation of suppliers, subcontractors and partners***

Services to citizens may depend on contracted suppliers and companies. The municipality should require them to have a specific business continuity plan for the supplier or companies directly related to an essential service.

### ***Access to a psychological assistance and support program for employees***<sup>8</sup>

A pandemic will affect employees both physically and psychosocially<sup>9</sup>. Many will find themselves in a difficult situation and will have to deal with their own needs, those of their family and loved ones, as well as their professional responsibilities. Detecting quickly which people will be particularly affected by the psychosocial impacts of the pandemic will make it possible to take measures likely to prevent these people from withdrawing from their workplace.

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<sup>8</sup> The ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux produced the guide entitled *Prévention des impacts psychosociaux dans un contexte de pandémie d'influenza à l'intention des employeurs et travailleurs* (November 2006).

<sup>9</sup> The "psychosocial dimension" refers to everything that affects a person's thoughts and emotions (the psychological dimension) as well as his or her relationships with family, friends, work and society (the social dimension).).

The municipality must recognize the importance of guidance and support for its employees in such a situation. To prevent psychological distress reactions, it must provide employees who so request with access to a psychological and social assistance and support program. It must review its employee assistance program or, in the absence of such a program, call on other resources - social workers from institutions in the health and social services network, psychologists who are members of the Ordre des psychologues, social workers who are members of the Ordre des travailleurs sociaux and marital and family therapists in Quebec, etc. - to provide support and assistance to employees in such situations. - to cope with an increase in demand.

The social workers of the health and social services network offer various psychosocial assistance services <sup>10</sup> :

- 24/7 telephone psychosocial counselling service (Info-Social 811);
- 24/7 crisis intervention service in the community;
- psychosocial consultation service (individual, family or group interventions, support, etc.);
- specific interventions are added in the context of a pandemic: psychosocial "information" type intervention, "prevention-education" type intervention to prevent the appearance or aggravation of social problems, psychosocial impacts of the situation, etc.

### ***Entering into agreements for additional resources***

If it finds that it does not have sufficient resources to deal with a disaster such as a pandemic, the municipality may agree with other municipalities, the regional county municipality (RCM), the metropolitan community, businesses and public agencies to have access, in such a situation, to the additional resources needed to maintain its essential services.

## **4.3 Reducing the risk of transmission of infection in municipal operations and services**

Some municipal services and activities are meeting places for the population and municipal employees. Identifying these times and places will allow municipalities to adjust the services they provide and take steps to limit the spread of infections.

### ***Identification of municipal services involving personal contacts***

Some services require direct contact between municipal employees and the citizen, and sometimes even between citizens, such as paying taxes, applying for permits, etc. The municipality, as part of its plan, can identify measures to reduce personal contact, such as mandatory appointment scheduling (no waiting room), physical arrangements that reduce contact between people, or electronic service delivery.

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<sup>10</sup> Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, March 2006.

### ***Identification of municipal activities at risk for the spread of infection***

Municipalities also offer activities involving gatherings of its population, such as courses of various kinds, day camps, sports activities and neighbourhood parties. The response plan should contain measures to reduce the risk of spreading infections, or provisions for the cancellation and postponement of these activities.

### ***Identification of high-traffic municipal public places***

Municipal public places can be places where infections can spread (library, arena, public pools, gymnasiums, community halls). Municipalities should provide measures for disinfection of these areas and measures, where appropriate, to limit public access.

## **4.4 Communications planning in the event of a pandemic <sup>11</sup>**

Communications planning is aimed at making the municipality able to react very quickly to ensure an adequate and continuous information service. Consistent information will be used to mobilize human resources and achieve citizen service objectives.

Thus, the municipality should adapt its communication strategy in the event of a pandemic, particularly with regard to the following aspects: designation of a spokesperson and his or her substitutes, and measures relating to information for staff, the public and the media.

### ***Designation of the municipality's spokesperson***

To avoid confusion, it is preferable that only one person be authorized to speak on behalf of the municipality. Usually the mayor is the ideal person to perform this function. As the highest authority in the municipality, the mayor is a credible source of information.

It is important to choose one or two alternate spokespersons in the event of the mayor's absence and, depending on the situation, officials and experts may also be involved, such as the municipal emergency preparedness coordinator or a public health specialist.

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<sup>11</sup> The text is taken from or inspired by the document of the ministère de la Sécurité publique, *Pour planifier la réponse au sinistre – Guide à l'intention des municipalités pour l'élaboration d'un plan de mesures d'urgence en cas de sinistre* [on-line], January 2004. [www.msp.gouv.qc.ca]

### *Information for staff*

The municipality shall establish means of communication for its staff, in the four dimensions of emergency preparedness, " prevention ", " preparedness ", " response " and " recovery ", to convey information to its staff. It must reassure its employees by informing them about the prevention measures to be respected, about the municipality's preparedness measures - maintaining essential services, municipal organization in the event of a pandemic, mobilization of personnel, etc. - and on the status of the situation at all stages, but especially during response and recovery.

To this end, the municipality should provide for the installation of a telephone line reserved for employees. In addition, the municipality should encourage its staff to consult its Web site.

### *Information for the public*

The municipality should set up a general information service for the population. In the event of a pandemic, it should relay requests for information to the various resources concerned.

In order to properly inform its population in the event of a pandemic, the municipality must compile a list of various resources with their contact information (telephone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail address, etc.) and ensure that the list is available in easily accessible locations.

The general information service should be ready to operate as soon as possible.

Where isolation or containment measures are in effect, the municipality may take steps to communicate with vulnerable persons who would be isolated within its territory. This contact may make it possible to inquire about the specific needs of this clientele in order to refer them to the appropriate resources if necessary, or to take steps to meet those needs.

### *Information for the media*

The municipality will need to prepare sample documents to meet the information needs of the media, for example, press releases on the status of the situation.

In the event of a pandemic, it could agree with other municipalities and the regional county municipality or metropolitan community on concerted media information measures.

## **5. Pandemic response**

The government response to a pandemic will consist of implementing the activities set out in the National Civil Security Plan for the Coordination of the Government Response to Epidemics and Pandemics. The response is similar to that in any other disaster and both decision-making and operational instructions will be issued in accordance with the organizational structure of civil protection.

Key elements to be considered during the response phase include: employer and worker rights and responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Loi sur la santé et la sécurité du travail), compliance with collective agreements and special agreements in the event of a pandemic, employers' responsibilities to employees related to labour standards, the alert and mobilization process, and communication.

## 5.1 Employer and Worker Rights and Responsibilities in a Pandemic Situation <sup>12</sup>

### *Enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations* <sup>13</sup>

#### Complaints related to the Occupational Health and Safety Act

Complaints are forwarded by workers to the appropriate regional branches of the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) through the usual channels. They are addressed under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, since the employer has an obligation to ensure that the emission of a contaminant does not adversely affect the health and safety of anyone in a workplace. The employer has an obligation to minimize exposure to microorganisms, which by definition are contaminants. The necessary measures must be put in place to ensure adequate protection of workers.

#### Worker's right to refuse

The worker may exercise his or her right of refusal if he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that the performance of the work exposes him or her to danger to his or her health, safety or physical integrity. However, the exercise of this right must not endanger the life, health and safety or physical integrity of another person.

Necessary measures must be taken by the employer to adequately protect the workers.

The importance of the control measures depends on the extent of contamination in the workplace. For health care workers, it appears that hazards related to the presence of microorganisms are common and that preventive measures are already in place. Gaps in recognized practices (by various national and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the American *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Health Canada, etc.) could justify the right of refusal.

In this type of case, the CNESST representative must be able to establish the existence of a danger justifying the exercise of the right of refusal.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information, visit the following Web sites [www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca)

<sup>13</sup> Occupational Health and Safety Act (Loi sur la santé et la sécurité du travail) (L.R.Q., c. S -2.1).

### The worker's obligations

In particular, the worker must take the necessary measures to protect his health, safety or physical integrity. He must comply with the requirements of the prevention program set up by his employer and, where necessary, wear personal protective equipment.

## 5.2 Compliance with collective agreements and specific agreements in the event of a pandemic

The municipality's collective agreements apply in the event of a pandemic. Negotiated special agreements will take precedence over normal working conditions. However, these agreements must comply with the laws governing labour relations.

## 5.3 Employers' responsibilities to employees related to labour standards

On its website, CNESST has various sections providing information on, in particular:

- the provisions of the Act respecting labour standards that allow people to be absent from work because of illness or to fulfill family obligations;
- the rules that apply if an employer asks employees to work overtime;
- the responsibilities of an employer who has to lay off employees;
- the working conditions that must be respected if employees are required to take training or travel at the request of their employer;
- the provisions concerning, among other things, vacations, child labour and recourse under the Act respecting labour standards.

## 5.4 Warning and mobilization

The ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux will closely monitor the progression of the disease in conjunction with the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization.

In a pandemic situation, the contribution of the "Health" mission will be particularly solicited. It gives legal authority to the ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux to declare, if the situation warrants, a state of health emergency under the Public Health Act<sup>14</sup>.

## 5.5 Communication during the intervention

The government will take responsibility for communication during the intervention, particularly in the area of health. The municipality will inform its employees and the public through the various means it has implemented in its planning: internal communications, the employee information service, the public information service, the Web site, the media, etc.

As a partner in the National Civil Protection Plan, Services Québec will ensure consistent communication during government intervention in a pandemic situation.

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<sup>14</sup> Public Health Act (Loi sur la santé publique) (L.R.Q., c. S -2.2).

## 6. Recovery during and after the pandemic <sup>15</sup>

The measures associated with recovery include the gradual return of employees to their usual occupations and the resumption of normal activities by citizens.

### 6.1 Recovery at the government level

The demobilization of the personnel of the Quebec civil protection organization and regional civil protection organizations will be carried out gradually and in accordance with the procedures set out in the National Civil Protection Plan, the National Civil Protection Plan for the coordination of the Government's response to epidemics and pandemics and the various regional civil protection plans.

Pandemic recovery measures will be grouped into the following thematic areas:

- sanitary field (management of exposed persons, epidemiological monitoring, etc.);
- technical field (management of contaminated waste, etc.);
- social field (psychosocial follow-up, relief of employees unfit for work or deceased, etc.);
- economic field (financial assistance, management of the economic, industrial, commercial, bio-food, forestry, tourism, structural sectors, etc.).

### 6.2 Recovery at the municipal level

The return to normal living conditions is a major component of the municipality's response to the risk of the pandemic.

#### *Return-to-normal measures for employees*

Specific return-to-normalization measures for employees are required, such as:

- the gradual disengagement of the personnel mobilized during the intervention and the return to the usual tasks;
- the relief of personnel mobilized during the intervention;
- the gradual resumption of activities, the redeployment of personnel;
- succession of employees who are unable to work or who have died;
- access to a psychosocial follow-up program;
- the application of certain working conditions (vacation authorization, various types of leave, etc.).

#### *Measures to bring the population back to normality*

Special measures to bring the population back to normal are required, such as:

- the gradual resumption of services to the population;

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<sup>15</sup> The text of this chapter is taken from or inspired by the following two sources: *Plan gouvernemental en cas de pandémie d'influenza* – OSCQ, octobre 2006; ministère de la Sécurité publique, *Pour planifier la réponse au sinistre – Guide à l'intention des municipalités pour l'élaboration d'un plan de mesures d'urgence en cas de sinistre* [en ligne], janvier 2004 [www.msp.gouv.qc.ca]

- the resumption of community activities in municipal public places (libraries, cultural and sports centres, administrative offices, etc.);
- etc.

### 6.3 Assessment of the event

The pandemic experience may highlight some of the gaps in the municipality's risk management. Whether in terms of preventive measures, planning or during the implementation of actions, despite good preparation, the experience of the pandemic may reveal areas that need to be improved for this type of risk.

In order to learn from events and to enable risk reduction, it is important to adopt measures to diagnose and identify solutions.

The main measures to this end are:

- holding operations assessment sessions (or hot and cold debriefings) with the various stakeholders involved;
- analyzing the event to make corrections or improvements in pandemic risk management;
- the drafting of a report on crisis management and the transmission of recommendations to the authorities;
- the development of an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations.

### 6.4 Municipal communication during recovery

As with pandemic prevention, preparedness and response measures, it is critical in the recovery phase to put in place mechanisms to inform staff and the public.

A number of pieces of information will need to be communicated to employees and the general public. These include the status of the situation at the end of the pandemic and the final consequences, decisions made and actions taken, instructions for returning to normal, services offered, assistance programs available and how they will be implemented.

## 7. The checklist and timeline of actions to be taken and tools to be put in place in the event of a pandemic

All of the above translates into actions to be taken and tools to be put in place that will serve as a foundation for successful pandemic planning.

Somewhat like an airplane pilot who systematically verifies the condition of his aircraft before takeoff, it is suggested here to verify the various steps that will allow the officials concerned to ensure the reliability of their planning work, in the four dimensions of civil safety, "prevention," "preparedness," "response" and "recovery."

The checklist and the chronological table of actions to be carried out and the implementation of the tools are presented in Appendix 2.

## 8. Municipal support to other organizations in a pandemic situation

In a pandemic situation, the municipality may be called upon to support the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux in its actions to slow the outbreak or development of a new virus transmissible to humans by applying preventive public health measures adapted to each situation<sup>16</sup>.

It may be called upon to support certain other mission bearers of the organization of the sécurité civile du Québec (e.g.: the ministère des Transports for the "Transport" mission, the ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation for the "Bioalimentaire" mission, etc.).

The municipality may also make available to the Organisation régionale de la sécurité civile or other municipalities:

- its human resources;
- premises (multi-purpose room, gymnasium, etc.);
- other equipment (heavy machinery, road truck, etc.);
- etc.

## 9. Support from municipal associations and the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation

In the event of a pandemic, the municipality can count on the support of municipal associations and the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation.

### 9.1 Municipal associations

The Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM) and the Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) have several communication tools to inform and advise their members. Ongoing links are also established with the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation in order to take stock of the situation and discuss the needs and issues encountered by the municipal community.

### 9.2 The ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation

The ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation is the bearer of the "Support to municipalities" mission of the Plan national de sécurité civile (National Civil Security Plan).

The support it can offer to municipalities is mainly in the form of advice. Whether it is assistance in municipal management or assistance in municipal planning, the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation has the specialists required to be able, at all times, to answer questions and advise municipalities in the exercise of their functions in matters of civil security.

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 3 of this guide: « Prevention in the workplace ».

As a partner in the Plan national de sécurité civile, the Ministère is present within the various government coordination and consultation mechanisms: the Comité de sécurité civile du Québec, the Organisation de la sécurité civile du Québec and the Organisation régionale de la sécurité civile. It is within the framework of this structure that it is responsible for responding to the questions and needs expressed by the municipalities.

However, it must be taken into account that it is the municipality's responsibility, in the case of a pandemic, as for other risks, to apply the Municipal Civil Security Plan (Plan municipal de sécurité civile), the Essential Services Maintenance Plan (Plan de maintien des services essentiels) and the Plan particulier d'intervention en cas d'épidémie et de pandémie (Specific Response Plan for Epidemics and Pandemics). It should be noted that the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation cannot take the place of the municipality in the exercise of this responsibility.



# Appendix II : Checklist and timeline of actions to be taken and tools put in place in the event of a pandemic

## A word of caution

The measures contained in the following lists suggest a number of actions and tools needed in the event of a pandemic in the four dimensions of civil protection, "prevention", "preparedness", "response" and "recovery".

It is suggested that the checklists be updated periodically to modify the measures or add new ones as necessary.

It is also important to note that some of the measures included in the prevention list can be implemented at the same time as those contained in the preparation list.

## The checklist of actions and the implementation of tools

<b>PREPARATORY STAGE MEASURES</b>			
to the development of the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Response Plan (Plan particulier d'intervention en cas d'épidémie et de pandémie)			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not begun</b>
<b>Setting up the committee responsible for the development of the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Response Plan</b>			
- the municipal council makes the decision to endow the municipality with a specific plan to respond to epidemics and pandemics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- the municipal council makes the decision to form a committee responsible for the development of the plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- for the development of the plan, determine roles and responsibilities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o municipal authorities;</li> <li>o the General Manager;</li> <li>o the person responsible for preparing the plan;</li> <li>o the municipal civil protection organization;</li> <li>o the planning group.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>PREVENTIVE MEASURES</b>			
<b>For the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not begun</b>
<b>Protection of staff health</b>			
- Obtain information on the pandemic, hygiene measures and pandemic response plans from local and regional health and social services organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Basic hygiene for employees</i>			
- Sensitize employees to basic personal hygiene measures: hand washing, respiratory hygiene (e.g. coughing and sneezing into the crease of the elbow or into a tissue, dispose of the tissue in the trash and use alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel or wash hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Provide employees with personal protective equipment, if required, and ensure that they know how to use it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



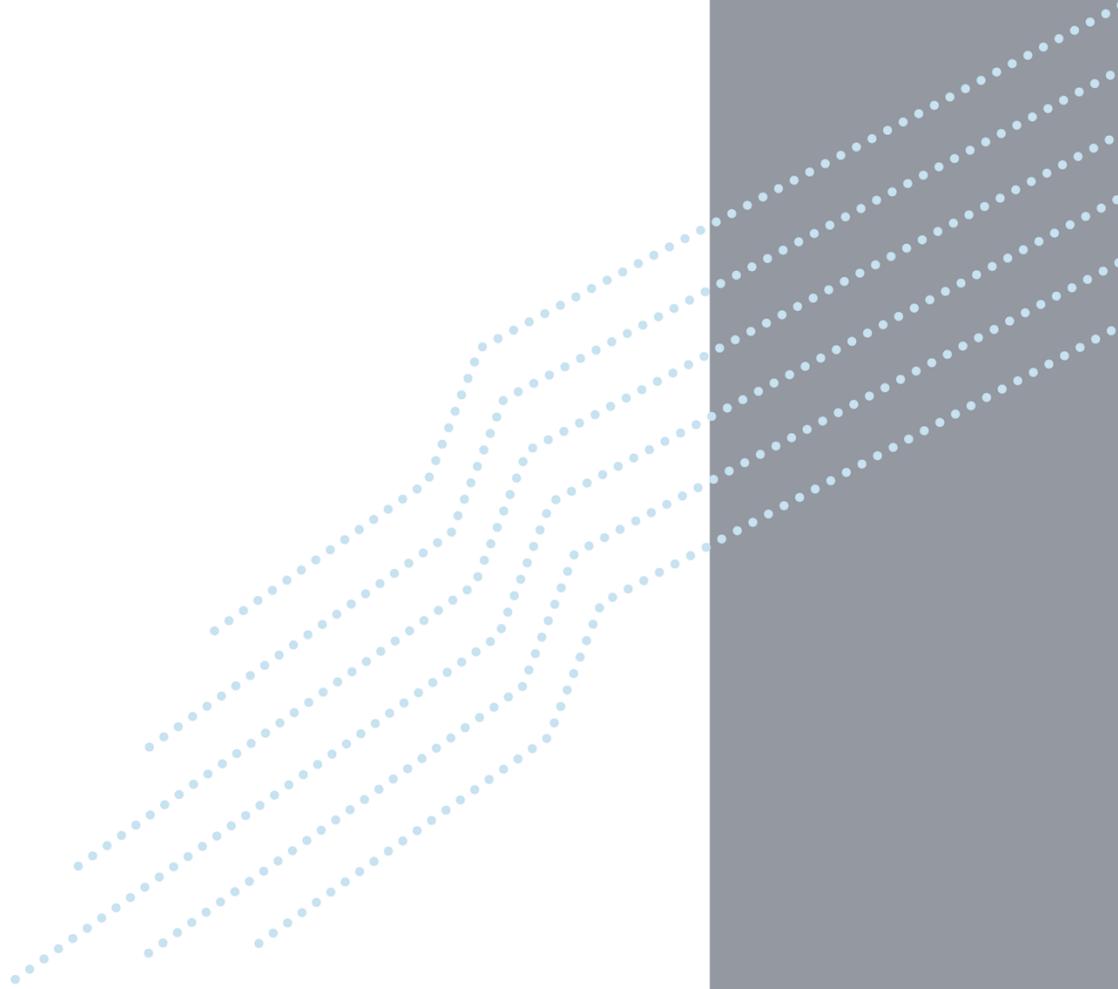
<b>PREPAREDNESS MEASURES</b>			
<b>For the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not begun</b>
<b>Municipal Organization for Civil Security</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of members of the municipal emergency preparedness organization in planning the municipality's response in the event of a pandemic.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Maintaining essential services to citizens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make an inventory of all the municipality's services, activities and equipment.</li> <li>- Determine the essential services, activities and equipment of the municipality.</li> <li>- Establish the list of decision-makers and their replacements.</li> <li>- Determine the essential employees required to maintain essential services;</li> <li>- Identify the essential employees required, by workplace and function, to maintain essential services in the event of a pandemic.</li> <li>- Provide for replacements to maintain essential services.</li> <li>- Prepare scenarios for redeployment of personnel to maintain essential services in the event of a 35% absenteeism rate<sup>17</sup>.</li> <li>- Develop a list of employees who could be redeployed.</li> <li>- Identify essential suppliers and subcontractors needed to maintain essential services in the event of a pandemic and ensure that they have plans to maintain their essential services in the event of a pandemic.</li> <li>- Establish lists of suppliers, subcontractors and other external resources required to maintain essential services with their contact information (telephone, cellular, fax numbers, etc.).</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Human Resources Management in the Event of a Pandemic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decide on labour relations directions regarding the organization of working conditions in the context of a pandemic, taking into account factors such as illness of parents and children, interruption of public transit, etc.</li> <li>- Maintain links and discussions with unions, management associations and employees to obtain flexibility regarding working conditions in the event of a pandemic and provide for agreements where appropriate.</li> <li>- Assess the preparedness of partners, suppliers, subcontractors and provide alternatives in the event that they are unable to operate.</li> <li>- Establish policies regarding work location and scheduling.</li> <li>- Provide access to a psychological assistance and support program for employees who request it.</li> <li>- Develop cooperation and human resources sharing agreements with other municipalities, regional county municipalities and metropolitan communities..</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Communications planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adapt the municipal communications strategy to the pandemic situation and revise it periodically.</li> <li>- Designate a spokesperson for the municipality in the event of a pandemic and one or two alternates</li> <li>- Provide information exchange and decision-making support tools.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



<b>MEASURES IN INTERVENTION of the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not begun</b>
<b>Enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations</b>			
- Take the necessary preventive measures to adequately protect the health of employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Apply the Act respecting labour standards and its regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Apply labour standards and assume responsibilities with respect to employees in the different situations in the event of a pandemic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Alert and mobilization</b>			
- Activate the municipal alert process and open the municipal coordination centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Collaborate with the regional civil security organization throughout the response.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Conduct resource mobilization as outlined in the municipal planning for the maintenance of essential services and the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Implement all prevention and preparedness measures set out in the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Hold regular operational review meetings with the various organizations and stakeholders involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Analyze the results of the evaluation sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Psychosocial support</i>			
- Provide access to psychological counselling and support services to employees who require them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Communication in intervention</b>			
<b>Information for staff</b>			
- Inform employees on an ongoing basis about the evolution of the pandemic, about the response itself using the various means implemented in the Municipal Emergency Plan, the municipal planning for maintaining essential services and the specific plan for responding to epidemics and pandemics.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o internal communications;</li> <li>o Employee Inquiry Service;</li> <li>o use of the telephone chain, if necessary;</li> <li>o Web site;</li> <li>o Government website;</li> <li>o etc.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Information to the public</i>			
- Inform the public about the evolution of the pandemic, the response itself and the elements related to it through the various means implemented in the Municipal Emergency Plan, the municipal planning for the maintenance of essential services and the specific plan for responding to epidemics and pandemics : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o communications to the population;</li> <li>o public information service;</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Web site;</li> <li>○ etc.</li> </ul> <p><i>Information to the media</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform the media on the evolution of the pandemic in the municipality, on the response itself through the various means implemented in the Municipal Emergency Preparedness Plan, the Municipal Planning for the Maintenance of Essential Services and the Specific Plan for Response to Epidemics and Pandemics.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>RECOVERY MEASURES of the Specific Epidemic and Pandemic Plan</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not begun</b>
<p><b>Back to normal life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Put in place measures to return to normal for the personnel who participated in the intervention.</li> <li>- Manage the social impact (psychological impact, relief of employees unfit for work or deceased, etc.) and gradually resume activities to return to normal.</li> <li>- Provide access to psychological counselling and support services.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Assessment of the event</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hold hot and cold operations evaluation sessions (or debriefings) with the various stakeholders and organizations that have been involved.</li> <li>- Analyse the results of the evaluation sessions in order to identify corrections or improvements to be made in the management of the pandemic risk or other risks.</li> <li>- Drawing up the financial balance sheet of the operation with a view to repayment under a government program.</li> <li>- Write a report on the disaster in order to establish the results of the municipal intervention.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Communication in Recovery</b></p> <p><i>Information to staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform staff of the status of the end of the pandemic and the final consequences and instructions for the return to normal.</li> </ul> <p><i>Information to the public and media</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform the public and the media of the situation at the end of the pandemic and the final consequences, the instructions to be followed for a return to normality, the services offered and the assistance programs available and how to apply them.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Affaires municipales  
et Habitation**

**Québec** 