

Swine flu reaches York Region

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Swine flu, the potentially deadly flu pandemic that has infected over 500 citizens in Mexico, has reached the GTA.

As of this past Tuesday morning, over 140 cases had been confirmed in Canada, 36 in



Community



Heritage Day.

Vaughan celebrated South Asian Heritage Day this past weekend.

Pg. 8

Sports

Ontario, 10 in Toronto and eight cases in York Region.

The Swine flu, or H1N1 Influenza A, has also touched 15 other countries, but the World Health Organization has yet to declare a pandemic.

The virus has forced travel postponements and cancellation of flights to Mexico.

Swine flu has been described as a respiratory infection that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Human infections are usually caused by direct exposure to pigs.

Symptoms associated with the illness are fever, fatigue, coughing, sore throat and in more severe cases, vomiting and diarrhea. Individuals can become infected by airborne travel of the virus through coughing or sneezing, or by touching contaminated surfaces.

Late last week, a student at Vaughan Road Academy in Toronto reported flu-like symptoms and was sent home from school. Test results from that case have yet to be confirmed as the H1N1 flu virus.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Thrill seekers took a ride through the skies aboard the Flight Deck ride at Canada's Wonderland on opening day this past Sunday morning. In its 29th season, the Vaughan-based theme park offers over 200 attractions, 66 rides, 15 roller coasters and two new shows.

photo by Michael McClymont



On the road again

Team Autotecnica opens the Formula BMW season with a fresh new face. **Pg. 10**

Community

Seeking Shelter

Plans move forward for a new womens' shelter in the City of Vaughan. **Pg. 3**

2 - THE WEEKLY - Wednesday, May 6, 2009

York Central steps up its flu outbreak services

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

York's first confirmed case was a 27-year-old male from Georgina who had recently returned from Mexico yet did not require hospitalization. A second case turned out to be a Markham resident who had recently returned from Mexico and was diagnosed with swine flu at Southlake Hospital in Newmarket. Soon thereafter she returned home from hospital and her progress is currently being monitored from home.

in the younger population.

"We've had most of our cases to healthy young adults," said Williams.

However, he said drastic measures still need not be taken.

"I would like to recommend that people who have come in contact with someone with the virus do not exclude themselves from community events but monitor themselves. At this time there are no special precautions to take. There is no scientific evidence supporting school closures."

While further cases are expected within

*"It still has the potential to be very severe.
It's not over yet."*

- Dr. Danny Chen
Infectious Disease Specialist
at York Central Hospital

As of this past Friday, all of the confirmed cases in Ontario had a travel history to Mexico and all cases had been deemed mild by health practitioners.

"We have not, in Ontario or Canada, experienced the severe consequences noted in the Mexico situation but we will continue to monitor the situation," said Dr. Dave Williams, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health, in a conference call with Health Care professionals this past Friday.

"It has not yet caused severity but it's still in its early days."

On Monday, a severe case of swine flu had been confirmed in western Canada.

Williams said there is no need to panic.

"The Public Health System is reacting to

the next few days, the Ministry of Health suggests that the public wash their hands frequently and thoroughly, stay clear of people coughing or sneezing, cough or sneeze into your sleeve and stay home if you find yourself ill.

"If everybody going to Mexico had gotten sick, we'd be in the thousands (of confirmed cases) so obviously not everyone is catching it," said Williams.

Dr. Danny Chen, infectious disease specialist at York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill said the local hospital has responded to the H1N1 virus.

The hospital has established an Incident Management System (IMS) Task Force which includes hospital directors, managers



In light of the swine flu pandemic, York Central Hospital has upgraded its screening process, and its Emergency Department nursing staff has been uniformed in full personal protection equipment.

photo by Michael McClymont

directing patients to see their family doctors or to proceed to the Emergency Department. Upon arriving at Emerge, 24-hour screening is being conducted on all patients and family members by nursing staff uniformed in full personal protection equipment.

Despite these protective measures, Chen said 'this isn't anything more severe than seasonal flu,' at least outside of Mexico.

"In many respects, what we're dealing

not say how this situation may end.

"That's the million dollar question. There isn't an answer, it's really just wait and see. The influenza virus is unpredictable."

He did say however that there is a possibility that the airborne virus may just 'peter out.'

"Flu season doesn't happen in Canada in the summertime, so it might just peter out because of the season and because it's been awhile now and there hasn't been a large