

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Half of Canadian businesses with more than 500 employees have no plan to manage pandemic flu

Even companies with a plan have failed to consider critical elements

MISSISSAUGA, ON (December 9, 2008) – Even though more than 80 per cent of Canadian companies with 500+ employees are concerned about the impact of a flu pandemic on their business, half of them have no pandemic plan. According to the results of a national survey released today, roughly 40 per cent of companies without a plan do intend to create one. However, one third (33 per cent) of all companies are not even thinking about pandemic planning.

Of those companies with a plan, only 1% of them have accounted for the 15 key components authorities and experts generally recommend for a complete pandemic plan. These components - recommended by agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, and the B.C. Ministry of Health – include minimization of direct interaction between employees; identification of key employees and critical functions; extra stock of critical supplies; a diversified stockpile of antiviral medications for employees; and factoring in school/daycare closure and transportation disruptions into absenteeism projections. Of the companies included in the survey, on average only eight of the 15 key components were addressed in their plans.

Of those Canadian businesses that have attempted to project employee absenteeism, they estimate an average absentee level of 36 per cent during an outbreak. However, a 2007 survey of employees in critical industries indicated that 54 per cent would be uncomfortable going to work if several people in their city or town were diagnosed with pandemic influenza, suggesting that Canadian companies have underestimated the toll a pandemic could have on their business based on absenteeism alone.

“Business leaders have certainly begun to appreciate the potential scope of pandemic flu as a business disruption, but developing a complete and comprehensive plan requires a great deal of consideration and foresight,” says Len Crispino, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. “This data indicates that there’s still work to be done to make sure companies are prepared to manage all aspects of an outbreak.”

To help member companies develop a realistic and thorough pandemic plan, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has created a Pandemic Planning Tool Kit, available at www.occ.on.ca

In 2007, Professor Guy Holburn of the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business estimated that absenteeism amongst critical industry workers during a pandemic flu outbreak could cost the Canadian economy \$9 billion.

"A pandemic flu outbreak would create an immediate negative impact on the economy, caused by high levels of absenteeism," said Professor Holburn. "In fact, \$9 billion is likely a conservative estimate because economic activity in all industries depends on the reliable functioning of critical infrastructure sectors such as electricity, telecommunications and transportation. Without them the whole economy could grind to a stand-still."

The 2008 survey data, collected between August 20 and September 26, included companies with 500 employees or more, and represents key sectors of the Canadian economy such as manufacturing, utilities/energy, finance/banking/insurance, telecommunications, transportation, consumer packaged goods, education, healthcare, government, construction, real estate, and accommodation and food service. Ninety three per cent of companies surveyed have been in business for more than 10 years.

The national telephone survey was conducted by Leger Marketing and sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline. Survey demographics are included at the end of the release under "Note to the Editor."

About GlaxoSmithKline

GlaxoSmithKline – one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and health-care companies – is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. GSK is Canada's largest biopharmaceutical employer, and has been consistently recognized as one of the 50 Best Employers in Canada. GSK is an Imagine Caring Company and is among the top 15 investors in Canadian research and development, investing more than \$178 million in 2007 alone. For company information, please visit www.gsk.ca.

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For additional information or an interview, please contact:

Tiffany Shiu
NATIONAL Public Relations
(416) 848-1702
tshiu@national.ca

NOTES TO EDITOR – Flu Pandemic Survey, conducted by Leger Marketing

About the Survey

- The telephone survey was carried out between August 20th & September 26th, 2008.
- With a national sample size of 418 respondents, results can be considered accurate to within $\pm 4.8\%$
- Respondents qualified to participate in this study if they were:
 - Owners, operators, decision makers or human resource decision-makers
 - Working for a company with at least 500 employees
 - Worked for one of the following sectors: Manufacturing, Utilities/Energy, Finance/Banking/Insurance, Telecommunications, Transportation, Consumer Packaged Goods/Merchant and others (Education, Healthcare, Government, Construction, Real Estate and Leasing, Accommodation and Food Services, Building, Business and other Support Services)

Regional Variations

- Companies in the West (meaning British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) and Ontario are more likely than those in the East (Quebec and Atlantic Canada) to have senior executives responsible for deciding to put the pandemic plan into action
- Companies in the West and Ontario are much more likely to have already communicated their pandemic plans to their employees
- Companies based in Ontario and Eastern Canada are more likely to have third-party help in creating their plan