

PHOTO BY STEPHEN BAKER

Ticket to Ride

Mayor Gord Krantz helps Mrs Grace Munnings of Milton draw prize-winning tickets, at the conclusion of a day of free bus rides offered to all members of the public. Looking on in anticipation is fellow passenger, Charlie Restivo.

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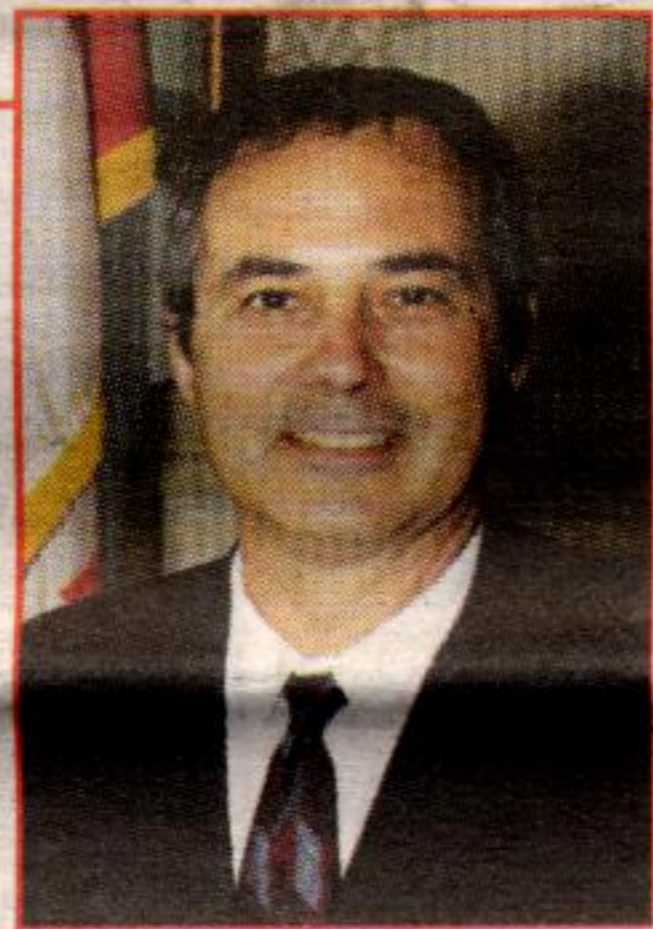
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Gary Carr Report

International Health Ministers Meeting in Ottawa to Discuss Flu Pandemic



Canada hosted an international meeting of health ministers and non-government organizations (NGOs) on October 24-25 to enhance global collaboration and coordination in advance of a possible influenza pandemic.

Having had direct experience with the tragic SARS outbreak, Canada is aware of the dangers posed by emerging infectious diseases and of the required actions to minimize the risk and to combat the danger. We don't know when the next pandemic will be, but we do know we have to be prepared. An influenza pandemic would be an international crisis with health, social and economic impacts.

We have been working closely with our provincial partners, but it is also clear that all nations must participate in a policy of forward defense beyond their borders to protect against pandemic. The time has come to accelerate international cooperation. In order to reduce the risk of future regional epidemics and potential pandemics, there is a critical and urgent need to improve the regional and national capacity of public health systems. This will help to prevent, recognize, identify, investigate, and control outbreaks, particularly in high-risk countries where resources are scarce and/or stretched.

This meeting demonstrated Canada's commitment to reduce the threat of emerging infectious diseases both in Canada and internationally.

Officials representing both developed and developing countries-including South East Asia nations affected by the current avian influenza outbreak-attended the meeting. The meeting addressed a range of policy issues to support the work of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza announced by the United States to increase global collaboration and coordi-

nation on this issue. It focused on issues such as how to enhance international coordination among sectors, including the importance of the animal and human health issues related to avian influenza; capacity-building in affected countries; improved surveillance and testing; risk communication; the health policy aspects of international travel; and vaccine development and access.

Canada's Pandemic Influenza Plan, developed collaboratively with the provinces and territories and key health partners, and is recognized internationally as among the most comprehensive. Canada strongly supports revisions to the World Health Organizations International Health Regulations which provide a global framework for determining and responding to public health emergencies of international concern.

Last month, our Government committed \$15 million to build public health capacity in South East Asia related to emerging infectious diseases. Over five years, this money will go to the Canada Asia Regional Emerging Infectious Disease (CAREID) initiative to improve surveillance, monitoring and risk communication related to emerging infectious diseases in Southeast Asia and China. This initiative funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has the goal of reducing the threat of emerging infectious diseases to human security, regional stability, and sustainable development in the Southeast Asia Region and China. It is in line with the Canadian International Policy Statement and supports Canada's public health security priorities to protect Canadians from infectious diseases.

For more information visit:
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Remembrance Day is a time to thank all of our veterans and peacekeepers for their dedication, commitment and courage. You are all much appreciated.

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