

**DECLARATION OF INTENT TO COORDINATE HEALTH EMERGENCY PUBLIC
COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA, AND THE
SECRETARIAT OF HEALTH OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

The Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Secretariat of Health of the United Mexican States, referred to collectively as the “Participants”,

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the 2012 North American Plan for Animal and Pandemic Influenza, which outlines how all the three countries intend to strengthen and coordinate their emergency response capacities, including public communications, as well as trilateral and cross-sectoral collaborations and capabilities in order to assist each other and ensure a faster and more coordinated response to future outbreaks of animal influenza or an influenza pandemic;

CONSIDERING the geographic proximity of the Participants, coordinated public communications regarding health emergencies would be expected to serve the public health needs of North America;

RECOGNIZING certain health emergency incidents may jointly affect the three countries and may be of such magnitude that the joint coordination of public communications may be beneficial in order to enhance the safety and security of their citizens;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that Canada, the United States of America and the United Mexican States are signatories to the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), which entered into force in 2007; the IHR directs Member States to build, strengthen and maintain core capacities, including risk communications, required under the IHR and to mobilize the resources necessary for that purpose; and the IHR directs Member States to collaborate actively with each other and WHO in accordance with the relevant provisions of the IHR;

MANIFESTING the interest of the three countries to ensure the effective implementation of the IHR;

DECLARING their mutual intention to facilitate efficient sharing of public information and communications products related to health emergencies in a timely and transparent manner to improve coordination of preparedness and response.

INTEND to:

1. Exchange and regularly update contact information of their respective communication officials, including phone, fax, and email through liaisons listed below.

2. Share public communications plans, statements and other communications products related to health emergencies with each other prior to their public release.
3. Hold recurrent meetings, as they may mutually determine, to review and propose amendments to this Declaration of Intent.
4. Conduct an annual short communications exercise, led by a rotating chair, they mutually determine, to test the Declaration of Intent and improve joint coordination.
5. According to the type of health emergency, apprise other appropriate authorities within their respective governments when this Declaration of Intent is employed.
6. Designate the following Liaison institutions:
 - For the Public Health Agency of Canada: Communications and Public Affairs Branch.
 - For the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America: The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs; and
 - For the Secretariat of Health of the United Mexican States: Under-Secretariat for Prevention and Health Promotion.
7. The Participants intend to use all exchanged information to coordinate their public communications activities and do not intend to disclose it to third parties without the prior written consent of the provider Participant, unless required under a Participant's national laws, complying with the principles of reservation, confidentiality and data protection. During a health emergency, and prior to disclosure to the general public, the provider Participant intends to provide the public information and communications products to be disclosed to the recipient Participants for review with as much advance notice as possible.
8. Notwithstanding the provisions of this Declaration of Intent, each Participant may diverge from the advance notice provisions if urgent communication needs require. The Participants understand that coordinating and providing public information and communications products is not intended to require the consent of the other Participants prior to disclosure.
9. This Declaration of Intent serves only as a record of the Participants' intentions and is not intended to be legally binding under international law, the laws of the Participants or any other law.

10. The Participants intend that all activities under this Declaration of Intent be conducted in accordance with their respective national laws and be subject to the availability of personnel, resources, and appropriated funds. Each Participant intends to pay for its own costs associated with carrying out this Declaration of Intent.
11. The Participants may subscribe to other inter-institutional arrangements and establish communications coordination mechanisms with different agencies from the other Participants' governments as needed.
12. The Participants may modify this Declaration of Intent in writing upon their mutual consent, including the need to address the operational requirements of any individual Participant.
13. A Participant may withdraw from the Declaration of Intent by giving a written notice to the other Participants.
14. The activities under this Declaration of Intent may commence as of the date of signature by the Participants.

Signed in triplicate at Geneva, Switzerland, on May 20, 2014, in the English, French and Spanish languages.

**FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH
AGENCY OF CANADA**

/Rona Ambrose/

**RONA AMBROSE
MINISTER**

**FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA**

/Kathleen Sebelius/

**KATHLEEN SEBELIUS
SECRETARY**

**FOR THE SECRETARIAT OF
HEALTH OF THE UNITED
MEXICAN STATES**

/Martha Juan López/

**MARÍA DE LAS MERCEDES
MARTHA JUAN LÓPEZ
SECRETARY**