

Wrinkles in vaccine plan leave thousands in line

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Thousands of east-end residents waited for hours in long lines to receive the H1N1 vaccine, many lamenting what they called an inconsistent approach by the City of Ottawa for its inoculation program.

"If I was going to put together the worst plan this is how I would do it," said Orléans resident Katherine Smillie, who waited almost four hours outside the Orléans Client Service Centre on Centrum Boulevard to receive a ticket for her H1N1 vaccine Thursday Oct. 29.

That day a line of people stretched from the clinic to the Shenkman Arts Centre a good block down the road. The city could only hand out 700 tickets because the vaccination clinic was short staffed that afternoon. Many of the people waiting in line, who were part of the initial high priority group for the vaccination, were turned away. The group included young children, pregnant women and people under the age of 65 with chronic medical conditions.

Jean-François Claude, president of the Cardinal Creek Community Association, said he was disap-

pointed with the city's inconsistent approach. The Orléans clinic started handing out tickets at 10 a.m. on Wednesday Oct. 28 but the next day people had to wait until 1 p.m.

Orléans Coun. Bob Monette said the city was overwhelmed by a higher demand for the vaccine than it had expected.

"I feel for the residents because it has been a very frustrating time," he said, adding the situation improved every day since the city opened its H1N1 vaccination clinics at the end of October. "This is the biggest immunization effort that we've had in Ottawa's history."

On Friday Oct. 30, Ottawa's Office of Emergency Management took over the administrative duties of the vaccination program from Ottawa Public Health. They switched the ticket system with wristbands that could not be used twice by the same person. They also made pick-up times consistent. Wristbands were distributed at 7:30 a.m. weekends and 9 a.m. weekdays.

The new system helped reduce wait times and gave people a clear idea of when they'd get vaccinated, said Dan Brisebois, the city's manager for emergency reception.