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Hot topics

Public Health Transformation

Many interest groups are providing feedback to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care regarding the Expert Panel Public Health Report on recommendations for structural, organizational and governance changes for Ontario's public health sector within a transformed health system.

Amendments to the Health Promotion and Protection Act (HPPA) 1990

If passed, amendments to the HPPA would permit the regulation of recreational water facilities like splash pads and wading pools to protect the health and safety of children. Changes would also permit the regulation of personal service settings like barber shops, nail salons, tattoo parlours and their aesthetic practices to better prevent infection in these settings. This could result in new inspection requirements for Public Health Inspectors.

Tobacco - Smoke-Free Ontario Modernization

In the spring of 2017, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care established the Executive Steering Committee for the Modernization of Smoke-Free Ontario (SFO) with a mandate to identify levers across all sectors that can have an impact on tobacco and other harmful inhaled substances. The report will be used to consult with stakeholders to inform a new Smoke-free Ontario Strategy. Health units across Ontario currently receive funding to implement aspects of the SFO strategy. The report was released in October and can be found here:

health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/sfo_modernization_esc_2017/

Legalization of Cannabis

Details are evolving and consultation is ongoing regarding Ontario's framework and plan to regulate legalization of cannabis in response to the federal Cannabis Act.

Timiskaming Health Unit In Action

Our people – our stories.

The following section contains some highlights for each program area. Activities related to surveillance, research, evaluation and health equity are included within the program area unless otherwise indicated. Mid-year (Q2) and final reports (Q4) will provide program activity status to date.

General Report

In the third quarter, there is an enhanced focus across the agency, involving all staff, in the systematic collection and analysis of information available to ensure that public health programs and services address local population health needs. This includes identifying priority populations and ensuring that the delivery of programs and services are tailored to meet their needs. This work, as part of our annual planning cycle, supports decision making for effective public health interventions and practice and informs the allocation of resources to address local public health priorities.

Chronic Disease and Injuries Program

Staff have been dedicating time to ensure plans and resources are in place to continue our work in areas that have the greatest impact locally on chronic disease prevention (tobacco, physical activity and healthy eating) as well as injury and substance misuse prevention. Topic areas that are emerging for more in-depth assessment include Mental Health Promotion and the Built Environment (helping the parts of our communities that are built to be done in a way that supports healthy living). Other Q3 highlights include:

Tobacco Enforcement In Q3, THU issued 29 warnings (20 of these were for smoking on hospital property) and 1 charge (for smoking in an enclosed workplace) under the Smoke Free Ontario Act.

Of our required annual **Smoke-Free Ontario Act** inspections, Youth Access 44/46, Secondary schools 5/5 and 47/50 Display and Promotion are complete. For the **Electronic Cigarettes Act**, 21 Youth Access required inspections are on target to be completed.

Of the 34 Timiskaming premises requiring inspection under the **Healthy Menu Choices Act**, 33 had been completed by the end of Q3. Of these, 17 are in compliance and 16 require some follow-up.

Physical Activity & Healthy Eating We know that the food choices around us have large impact on our eating behaviours. The **Healthy Eating in Recreational Settings** project has evolved in partnership with the City of Temiskaming Shores' Healthy Kids Community Challenge. After surveying users of municipal arenas in New Liskeard and Haileybury, [results were distributed widely](#) in preparation for the piloting in fall 2017 of new healthy menu options at these two participating arenas – making healthy choices more widely available in the community.

In partnership with the City of Temiskaming Shore's Healthy Kids Community Challenge, THU hosted *Adventures in Cooking* teaching **healthy eating and food preparation skills** to children. The week long program reached 10 children and included an evaluation to determine if the program met its objectives. In addition to this program, THU staff participated in providing training to approximately 15 **childcare staff** involved in preparing meals and snacks. Information on nutrition recommendations and guidelines was shared along with practical tips for **healthy menu planning** and creating a positive healthy eating environment.

Q3 was a busy time for our work with partners as delivery of two programs to help people across Timiskaming who can particularly benefit from healthy eating and physical activity support adopt healthier behaviours. These include the 6-month [Fresh Start](#) and the 6-week [Food Skills for Families](#)

programs. These are a great example of THU supporting other community organizations and health care providers in delivering preventative programming to those who can benefit.

Family Health Program

Staff have been dedicating time to ensure plans and resources are in place for effective public health practice a topics of interest for enhancing our knowledge on local need to inform effective interventions locally include prenatal education and parenting. Other Q3 highlights for this program area include the following:

In September, staff participated in the **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** day in collaboration with Brighter Futures and North Eastern Ontario Family and Children Services to raise awareness about alcohol during pregnancy. On the ninth day of the ninth month of the year, the world remembers that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol.

THU staff have been working with local Family Health Coalition partners in planning **National Child Day** interactive activities for North Cobalt, Earlton, Englehart, Kirkland Lake and Virginiatown. Since its inception in 1993, [National Child Day](#) (November 20th) has made a commitment to ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity and that children have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

As part of a provincial initiative, local partnership work has been underway between THU and the Temiskaming Hospital to ensure needs of mothers and newborns are met. This initiative enhances the way in which key maternal child screening information moves between hospitals and public health. Public health's **Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC)** program staff use this screening information to prioritize home visits and supportive community care for women and newborns. The BORN-ISCIS integration initiative involves moving from manual data collection to an electronic tool that results in more HBHC screens being completed in a timely fashion and results that are more accurate and complete. Since it was launched, the initiative has demonstrated efficiencies for hospitals and public health and improved screening rates and completion. THU and Temiskaming Hospital staff are working together with the BORN-ISCIS coordinator for a January deployment date.

Healthy Schools Programs

The third quarter for the school team marks a time of reassessing what public health interventions are needed related to the school setting and the health and wellbeing of the school aged population, to guide our work in the new school year.

The team also planned for the implementation of **school immunization clinics**. In September consents went out to all Grade 7 students regarding the school immunization program offering free vaccines protecting against Hepatitis B, Meningococcal disease and Human Papillomavirus.

Staff have been communicating with school boards and schools in preparation for the roll out of the **Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program** in schools. During this first year of the program in Timiskaming, a survey will be done with students in Grade 5 to 8 to collect baseline data as part of an outcome evaluation. This Ministry of Health and Long-Term care funded program involves partnership with the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers, Public Health and School Boards.

THU staff worked to leverage an opportunity for Share the Road funding to have CAN BIKE training for local instructors and provide another bike skills rodeo at a local school reaching 25 Grade 4 and 5 students in September. These students gained cycling skills through a certified instructor and some of our newly-trained local CAN BIKE graduates –promoting **safe, active living**.

THU staff partnered with our local Student Nutrition Program Red Cross Coordinator to provide training to 5 school nutrition program volunteers representing 3 school boards and 4 schools. Information was shared on revised **nutrition guidelines** and practical tips for school breakfast and snack programs.

Infectious Diseases Program



Harm Reduction – Naloxone Distribution Program

In September, Timiskaming Health Unit’s application to be an Ontario Naloxone Program site was accepted. Thus THU staff will be able to dispense Naloxone to clients of the Needle Exchange Program and the general public. Several Health Units, Community Health Centres, and Pharmacies already dispense Naloxone to the general public. Locally, several pharmacies in the Timiskaming District have injectable Naloxone kits available for use.

Naloxone is a short-acting medication that temporarily blocks the effects of opiates on the body for individuals suspected of opioid poisoning (overdose). The kits include: two doses of 4mg of Naloxone inside a pre-filled nasal spray, gloves, a card indicating proof of training, and a poster directing the rescuer on how to administer the medication and provide chest compressions. In 2016, Timiskaming Health Unit gave out 14,000 needles in the needle exchange program; the Naloxone Program is expected to be meeting a need.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC)

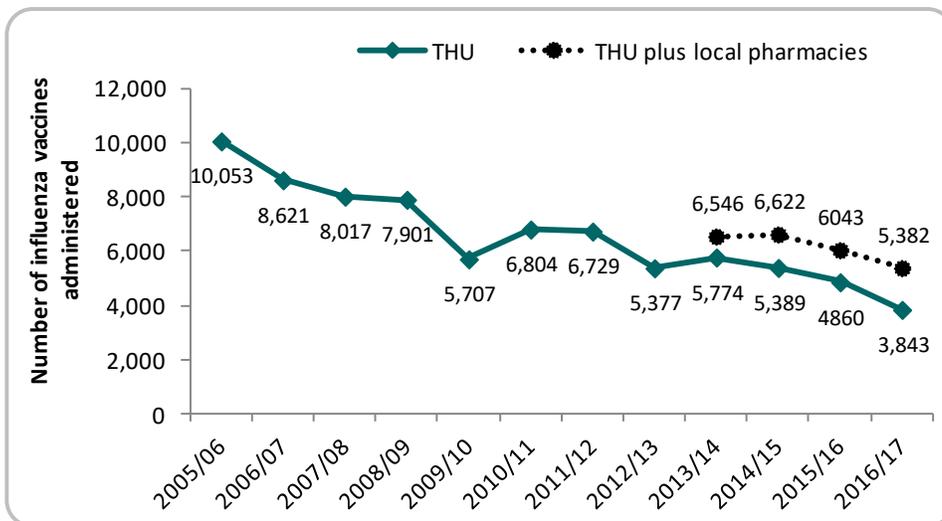
During Q3, the THU IPAC team was busy planning for the local Infection Prevention and Control Conference which is organized jointly with Public Health Ontario’s North East office. The event has a robust agenda including presentations delivered by Public Health Ontario, the Ministry of Labour, and local practitioners to network and discuss shared challenges, and deepen understanding of infection prevention and control practices in health care facilities. Local hospitals, long-term care homes, health unit staff, and retirement homes are invited to attend this local workshop.

Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program Planning

The third quarter involves significant planning at THU, for the 2017-2018 Influenza season to prepare for promoting and delivering community clinics in October.

Pharmacies began administering flu vaccines in 2012. Last year, pharmacies administered 1,000,000 flu vaccines across the province. While flu immunization administered by Ontario health units is decreasing, pharmacies, family health teams, community health centres, and health care facilities all contribute to the efforts. Some health units have stopped administering flu vaccine due to the impact and reach of pharmacies

and other providers, however THU continues to offer community clinics including some more remote and rural areas. New this year, due to a review of actual reach/response and resources required, local school flu clinics will be discontinued. Various options for families to receive the seasonal influenza vaccine in the community will be widely promoted.



Environmental Health & Emergency Preparedness Program

Summertime Priorities for Environmental Health

The past few months for this program is one of the busiest times of the year for our Public Health Inspectors. Numerous inspections related to safe water take place, including Small Drinking Water Systems (SDWS) for seasonal operations and beach water testing. Similarly, Q3 is a busy time for ongoing food safety inspections and temporary food permits as many summer events take place. This time of year also means we are travelling to remote locations for recreational camp inspections, often having to do so by boat. Our mosquito trapping and testing program for West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV) has been in full swing. In Q3 staff also see an increase in tick inquiries and submissions. The team is on track to meet our mandatory targets for the year, which will be reported in Q4.

Other Programs

Land Control – Collaboration at Work

The Land Control Program at the Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) conducts valuable work to ensure the safety of the environment by working with residents on proper septic system planning, approvals, and installation.

In addition to many residential septic systems, there can be other unique projects that require support such as at a trailer park or campground. Recently, THU staff worked with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) and the Town of Kirkland Lake regarding a camp on a local lake. Working collaboratively with the operator, who was eager to comply with any septic system upgrade requirements, THU and MOECC staff reviewed the situation to identify what was

needed for compliance, and who should lead it from a jurisdiction point of view. With support from MOECC the THU team lead the plan and next steps for the camp.

Once the compliance requirements were clear for the operator of the camp they responded quickly with the upgrade project.

This work exemplifies the importance of communication, collaboration and partnerships required in the Land Control Program. The MOECC, THU, Camp Operator, and the Town of Kirkland Lake, worked together for a common goal –protecting the health of our environment and residents.

In the Spotlight Local & Beyond

Public Health Items of Interest



THU Communications and Media Releases – *Keeping the Public Informed*

There are often topics or situations that we need to draw special attention to in order to promote and protect the public’s health. In addition to ongoing communication strategies, the THU issued the following media releases in the third quarter:

- World Hepatitis Day
- Low Risk Lyme Disease in Timiskaming
- West Nile Virus
- Alcohol is Causing More Hospitalizations Than Heart Attacks; It’s Time to Rethink Our Drinking
- Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) Designation

With recent amendments to the *Immunization School Pupils Act*, as of the 2017-18 school year, parents will need to complete an **immunization education session** if they choose to exempt their child from required immunizations for **non-medical** reasons. The THU is preparing to provide this education session to the few parents in our area who choose non-medical exemption. This will become important later in the school year when we begin to consider suspension (per legislation) if children are under-immunized without a valid exemption on file.

Breastfeeding is an important determinant of health and has been associated with health benefits for children and mothers. Due to a lack of data collection in Ontario, the Timiskaming Health Unit began collecting infant feeding data in 2012. This involves staff collecting information from mothers at strategic intervals in the postpartum period and subsequent analysis. This information helps us to identify needs and opportunities for interventions along with community partners, to increase breastfeeding rates, duration and exclusivity. This **data collection** is also a requirement for THU to meet the *Baby Friendly Initiative* designation. More recently, stakeholders from across the province have worked together to develop tools to allow for accurate, standardized and comparable infant feeding surveillance. The Timiskaming Health Units is preparing to join other health units and shift to this provincial data collection tool.

A new provincial requirement for flushing and sampling water for lead in schools is in full swing. This is being administered by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change with minimal involvement from local public health units. ontario.ca/page/flushing-and-sampling-lead



Upcoming Events

The following list contains *some* of the upcoming events and opportunities that THU staff are participating in or supporting.

- **October** – Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Cervical Cancer Awareness Week & National Teen Driver Safety Week
- **October** – Start of seasonal influenza immunization program.
- **October** – Cultural Humility for Effective Public Health Practice training for THU staff - in Timiskaming through a collaboration with the Ontario Public Health Association.
- **November** - Fall Prevention Month with local and Northeast campaign focusing on medication management.

Human Resource Update

The comings and goings of our colleagues



New Staff:

- Community Health Worker/Registered Practical Nurse, KL, Temporary-Maternity Leave Contract (*October 2017-June 2018*)
- Dental Assistant, KL, Casual-Maternity Leave (*September 2017-June 2018*)
- Registered Dietitian, NL, Temporary Contract (*September-December 2017*)
- Practicum (Masters in Public Health) Student Placement – (May to August 2017)

Current Vacancies:

- MOH/CEO

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