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On Our Radar

Hot Topics

With the April 11, 2019 Ontario Government budget came plans to significantly restructure [Ontario's public health system](#) (page 119), including a replacement of its 35 health units with 10 new regional public health entities with new boards under a common governance model and adjustments to the provincial-municipal cost sharing. Also announced was new funding for seniors oral health. Responses from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA), its member public health units and other partners are available [here](#).

The Northeast Public Health Unit collaboration that formed in 2017 to identify opportunities for efficiencies and effective quality public health work has evolved given the new provincial direction.

Also on our radar is the transformation of Ontario's Health Care System and the creation of local [Ontario Health Teams](#). Further details on all of these areas will be provided at the Board meeting on May 29th.

Climate change has been making headlines. Environment and Climate Change Canada released a new report (April, 2019) as part of the national assessment [Canada in a Changing Climate: Advancing our Knowledge for Action](#). The [report](#) provides the foundation for future reports addressing climate change impacts including the Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate Report (planned release 2021). An infographic depicting what to expect re: climate change is available [here](#). THU is part of a group of 7 public health units in northern Ontario (announced May 1, 2019) who will be working together on climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation reports over the next 2 years with funding support from Health Canada. More information can be found [here](#).

A National Suicide Prevention Action Plan (M-174) was unanimously supported by parliamentarians on May 8, 2019. M-174 includes a commitment to surveillance and monitoring and culturally appropriate community-based suicide prevention programs. THU provided a letter of support to local MPs. Still before the Senate and needing Royal Assent is Bill S-228, Child Health Protection Act, which, when passed, would ban food and beverage marketing to children under 13 years of age.

The 2017 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario was released February 2019. The report, entitled [Connected Communities: Healthier Together](#), details how social connection and sense of community are important measures of our health and well-being. The report provides recommendations to address the growing public health issue of social isolation, stress and loss of community. Recommendations include community-friendly governments, public health units as community enablers and all organizations and individuals to be community-centred and community-driven.

Timiskaming Health Unit in Action

Our people – our stories.

General Report

The following are Q1 highlights of program work that crosses over many program areas:

Annual Service Plan and Budget Request: substantive work was done in Q1 to prepare the Annual Service Plan and budget due to the Ministry on March 30. This work was well informed by the ongoing work of staff related to foundational standards work; assessing need, planning, monitoring and continuous improvement of programs and services.

THU Strategic Plan: THU completed its draft strategic plan which was acknowledged by the Board at its April 24th meeting. Work is continuing to incorporate what was learned through the process into current activities and future planning.

Ministry Program/Performance Activity Reporting: 2017 Public Health Performance Management outstanding year-end indicator final validation was completed. We also received the 2018 Q4 Program Activity Reporting (process level indicators and narrative statements) instructions in February. Staff prepared for this reporting (deadline was extended to April). The instructions also included future reporting requirements to phase in for 2019. Separate reporting also occurred for the 2018 Needle Exchange Program and the Harm Reduction Program Enhancement. The annual monitoring report (2018) for the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program was also submitted in Q1.

Foundational Standards

Population Health Assessment

In Q1 media communications were developed and implemented to promote the local RRFSS (Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System) survey. This survey will collect information about the beliefs, health and behaviours of Timiskaming residents to help improve the health of our communities. The campaign included a media release, updating THUs' [website](#), Facebook posts, and print ads.

Apart from that, data was analyzed and updated on many socio-behavioural and environmental factors. Information was shared for use by staff internally and in collaboration with stakeholders. Also responded to external requests for data.

Health Equity

Staff participated in focus groups to inform an assessment on organizational capacity for health equity work per the Ontario Public Health Standards. A profile of social determinants of health in Timiskaming was also created.

An organizational Health Equity committee has been created.

Research, Knowledge Exchange,

THU staff participated in a focus group for a Locally-Driven Research Project: Healthy Built Environments – A Provincial Framework for Healthy Community Design.

Staff continued to work on an ethics policy and procedure for THU evidence generating activities. Staff also connected with a local NOSM Family Medicine Resident to support a case study write-up related to a local Trichinosis outbreak.

Staff attended a local partner research event related to evaluating *Nurturing the Seed: A Developmental Support Planning Model for Working with Indigenous Infants, Children and Families*. This initiative supports the infant and early mental health of Indigenous children. THU has offered to participate in or support the research steering committee.

Communication, Quality and Transparency

One of the many ways we communicate is through our agency website timiskaminghu.com. Being able to use the knowledge of how our website is being used will assist with evaluating its effectiveness for certain campaigns or topics. In Q1, we worked with our website developer to create a routine monthly traffic report, which will show which pages are accessed and how often. The report will be available for use starting in mid Q2.

Another way we reach out is through specific media releases. These releases highlight a given topic and often provide specific new information or data relative to our district. In Q1, we issued four media releases, ranging in topics from national non-smoking week, healthy eating in recreational settings, the new Canada Food Guide, and the announcement of a local health survey.

Emergency Preparedness

Being prepared for any emergency situation is a responsibility everyone has. In Q1, we took a closer look at potential flooding situations due to the increased amount of snowfall our area had this year. A review of our emergency preparedness section of our website took place to ensure it contained proper information and links to accredited sources regarding not only flooding hazards but numerous other public health risks as well, such as severe storms, power outages, and forest fires.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being

Plans including quarterly timeline estimates exist for all areas of work within CDPWB. In some cases, activities planned for Q1 of 2019 were postponed because of community partners' readiness or schedules. Otherwise, all work is moving ahead as planned. Activities completed within Q1 of 2019 include:

Healthy Eating

- Hosted a Dietetic Intern for a 6 week public health placement. The intern assisted with conducting food affordability surveillance for 2019, created a communications plan for the [local and charitable food map](#) and carried out research and knowledge sharing with THU staff on the topics of climate change and food systems, and cannabis edibles.
- Provided community and staff education about the new Canada's Food Guide including staff presentation, [earned media](#) and a series of 5 free grocery store tours for the public.

Diabetes Prevention Project Timiskaming (100% Ministry Funded)

- In collaboration with community partners, the [Fresh Start](#) diabetes prevention program was implemented in both Kirkland Lake and Temiskaming Shores with over 30 participants. Evaluation results and research on effective ways to sustain behaviour change will inform future implementation of this program.



Physical Activity

- Initiated work with a local Kirkland Lake childcare to develop an Active Outdoor Play policy.
- With Bicycle Friendly Community Committee, presented proposal for development of municipal cycling infrastructure to City of Temiskaming Shores council.
- In partnership with Temiskaming KidSport, secured grant of \$1K from Temiskaming Foundation to purchase supplies needed to implement [Bicycle Exchange](#) in June 2019.
- Submitted letter to Town of Kirkland Lake to support informed decision-making related to changes in downtown road design.

Substance Use and Injury Prevention

Plans including quarterly timeline estimates exist for all areas of work within IPSU. In some cases, activities planned for Q1 of 2019 were postponed because of community partners' readiness or schedules. Otherwise, all work is moving ahead as planned. Activities completed within Q1 of 2019 include:

Prevention Substance Use, Injury related to Substance Use

- Finalized THU policy and procedures re: nurses offering Brief Contact Intervention for tobacco use to clients and policy and procedures for dispensing free Nicotine Replacement Therapy to clients who face barriers to access.
- Carried out 3 community presentations about legal substances (alcohol, cannabis, tobacco).

Prevention of Injuries

- Worked with local youth soccer clubs to integrate concussion prevention, recognition and follow-up information.
- In partnership with Temiskaming District Road Safety Coalition, adopted [Vision Zero](#) approach to road safety and continued promoting [/Stop you Stop](#) campaign for schools bus safety.

Promotion of Mental Health

- Adopted positive mental health in the workplace campaign [Not Myself Today](#) to promote positive mental health in the workplace prior to promoting in other workplaces.

Tobacco Use Prevention, Protection and Enforcement (100% funded)

- Provided [updates and information](#) about amended *Smoke-Free Ontario Act (2017)* to school boards, schools, municipalities, residential care facilities, hospitals, vape shops and campuses.
- Distributed signage and additional resources related to enforcement of smoking and vaping of tobacco or cannabis, and educational resources about vaping for schools, parents and youth.

- Issued 2 charges (supplying tobacco to a minor, failure to ensure no ashtray in a workplace) and 17 warnings (mostly related to display/promotion or failure of employer to meet obligations) under *Smoke-Free Ontario Act (2017)*.
- Responded to [Health Canada's Consultation](#) "Potential measures to reduce the impact of vaping products advertising on youth and non-users of tobacco products".

Older Adult Falls Prevention (Stay on Your Feet)

- Participated in NE LHIN-Timiskaming Service Providers Collaborative Transportation Working Group to work towards reducing transportation barriers for older adults within Timiskaming.
- Reconnected with Town of Kirkland Lake Age Friendly Community efforts, supported development of KL [Community Services Guide](#).
- Facilitated adaptation of "Exercises at the Kitchen Sink" guide for use by older adults.
- Developed Guide to Living Independently for Older Adults.

Healthy Growth and Development

During Q1, staff have been maintaining and fostering working relationships with partners. Q1 activities included:

- Connecting with our Indigenous partners at Kunuwanimano and Temiskaming First Nations to discuss car seat safety and training of staff.
- Enhancing our collaboration with Temiskaming Hospital to ensure the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC) screen is completed and entered into BORN as per the provincial mandate. This allows for families to receive timely and appropriate services, including the HBHC Blended Home Visiting program.
- Connecting with Sages-Femmes Temiskaming Midwifery to discuss requests for services received from the Anabaptist community, specifically the Amish community.
- Re-invigorating the local Breastfeeding Peer Support Program with training of peer volunteers to occur in June 2019.
- Co-chaired the Timiskaming Children Services Planning Table meeting.
- Reviewed and renewed our commitment to uphold THU's Baby-Friendly designation.
- Connected with the local health care provider Breastfeeding Working Group to address breastfeeding rates, current practices and resources. This group meets on a quarterly basis.

School Health

While planning for the calendar year is a focus in the first quarter of 2019, staff continue to deliver programs and services that are aligned with the school year. The following are Q1 activity highlights:

- Mental Health Promotion and Resiliency: supported youth mental health champions and related initiatives. Received \$20K in funding to work in partnership with secondary schools re: youth mental

health champion project through RAO. Consulted with schools, school boards and students to develop work plans.

- Roots of Empathy Program: delivery ongoing in 2 schools.
- Tobacco Use Including Vaping: worked with youth champions to implement education and awareness activities (3 schools). Information distributed to schools and school boards as noted above.
- Healthy Eating and Physical Activity: prompted and supported schools delivering Playground Activity Leaders (PALS), Nutrition Month, and related school initiatives.
- Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (100% funded): supported fruit and vegetable delivery phase which runs January-June. In late March we learned the program would be paused for Timiskaming schools due to Provincial budget uncertainty. Staff advocated for program with Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and prepared communications for school boards and schools.
- Sexual Health – Healthy Sexuality: offered healthy relationship clinics at 4 schools, provided co-teaching upon request.
- Immunization: prepared for next round of Grade 7 and 8 to 12 school clinics and ongoing assessment of records.
- Other: JK Registration Packages prepared and disseminated.
- Vision Screening: another 74 SK students were screened in the first quarter, with 35 of those receiving a recommendation for a full eye exam. This positive screening rate aligns with related Ontario research which demonstrated a 40% referral rate.
- Oral Health Screening: Q1 is a busy time for the oral health program. Along with ongoing screening, the staff planned for Oral Health Month (April). The team worked with a local school to plan and host an educational event at the health unit. The JK class from St. Pats school in Cobalt enjoyed learning from staff and getting a tour of the THU oral health facilities.

Additional initiatives related to school health are described under other program updates.

Childcare program emphasis on assessing immunization records some programming captured under other program updates.

Infectious and Communicable Disease Prevention and Control

Influenza/Immunizations

Staff wrapped up the seasonal influenza immunization program which included an analysis of over 600 surveys completed by attendees of the community flu clinics. The data provides valuable information on communication modalities, satisfaction with location and time of clinics, and some demographic information. Responses to the survey were overwhelmingly positive.

Timiskaming took part in a consultation and feedback session on this year's influenza program with the ministry of health and long term care, providing feedback from a local and rural perspective. THU also managed several vaccine shortages for both paid and publicly-funded immunizations in the last quarter. Staff demonstrated great teamwork to ensure that vaccines were appropriately prioritized, wastage was minimized, and inventory management best practices were maintained.

Infection Prevention and Control

THU staff have been busy supporting the annual winter spike of institutional outbreaks and continuing to improve the tools that support institutions in managing and mitigating outbreaks. In Q1, there were ten institutional

outbreaks: five enteric and five respiratory. Additionally, staff have been busy managing reports of sporadic cases of diseases of public health significance.

Sexual Health/Harm Reduction

The needle exchange program continues to grow, as well as the naloxone dispensing activities. THU recently signed agreements with two additional health agencies to distribute harm reduction supplies and naloxone: CMHA New Liskeard and Kirkland Lake and Mino M'shki-ki in New Liskeard. Active promotion of Naloxone to fire departments program wrapped up with 9/23 volunteer fire departments receiving training to date. Training will continue upon request and promotion will occur annually. Priorities in the next quarter include: launching an opioid surveillance snapshot and a regular surveillance bulletin by engaging partners in data collection and completing interviews in the narrative inquiry qualitative research project. The Sexual Health team has also been busy with managing sexually transmitted and blood borne infections in partnership with the methadone clinics in Haileybury and Kirkland Lake.

Environmental Health

The first quarter of every year sees a lot of preparation for the upcoming spring and summer periods, which are traditionally a very heavy time of year for the environmental health team. This year, a specific software program upgrade is taking place, with the final planning completed in Q1. For all programs in the Environmental Health portfolio the software program Hedgehog is used for all data management. This upgrade will ensure we are utilizing the most current tools and features the program has to offer, which will allow for enhanced data collection and management.

In the safe water program the creation of the [Spring Newsletter for Small Drinking Water Systems](#) (SDWS) takes place. This newsletter is sent to owners/operators of SDWS and is a reminder of what they need to know prior to operating their system and the ongoing requirements associated with it. This year we also include a piece on enforcement, including what potential fines could take place should compliance not be met.

Planning in the safe food area also begins to ramp up as our Public Health Inspectors plan out their yearly inspection schedules. Also, safe food handling courses are planned for the year, and an early look at what seasonal food premises will be opening occurs.



Upcoming Events

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

- **June** – alPha [AGM and Conference](#)
- **June 21** – [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)
- **June 6** – Grand Opening Mino M’shki-ki Indigenous Health Team New Liskeard
- **November 13th** OPHA Fall Forum on health and climate change.

Human Resource Update

The comings and goings of our colleagues



New Staff:

- *Public Health Nurse, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (April 2019)*

Resignation:

- *Research-Policy-Planning-Analyst, New Liskeard – Permanent (May 2019)*
- *Nurse Practitioner, Elk Lake, Permanent (June 2019)*

Current Vacancies:

- *Public Health Nurse – School Team – Kirkland Lake (Maternity Leave)*
- *Public Health Inspector Student – District Wide*
- *Research-Policy-Planning Analyst – New Liskeard – Permanent*
- *Dental Assistant – Kirkland Lake - Permanent*



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