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On Our Radar

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) 2017 came into effect on October 17. THU is working with stakeholders across Timiskaming to support understanding of the new legislation, changes where needed and encourage those who would like to take further initiative to reduce harm related to exposure of smoke and vapour from tobacco or cannabis. Staff are updating the THU website with resources and reaching out to key stakeholders with related information.

Timiskaming Health Unit in Action

Our people – our stories.

We know the food that is around us has a large impact on what we eat. Timiskaming Health Unit staff are partnering with local recreation centres to enhance healthy food options available through the [Healthy Eating in Recreation Settings](#) initiative. With active support from municipal councils, staff and concession operators, arena users have greater opportunity to eat well where they play.

Everyone has a role to play in helping our communities be healthy. Leading up to the recent municipal elections and leveraging work done by the Association of Local Health Units, THU staff supported a [district-wide awareness campaign](#) about the role that local governments play in affecting the health of their communities, and to encourage community members to *Make Health a Priority* and vote in the election.

General Highlights

The third quarter report highlights some of the many programs and service activities of the Timiskaming Health Unit. In addition to these activities staff are significantly invested in ongoing assessment, planning and evaluation to ensure that local public health is responsive to current and emerging needs and that our practices emphasize continuous quality improvement.

Foundational Standards

Population Health Assessment

In Q3 staff began the process of determining which of the many health data information gaps THU should address with our one-time funding to conduct local data surveillance. A local population health survey will be conducted by the [Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) beginning in January 2019.

Health Equity

Staff prepared a letter from the Timiskaming Board of Health to the premier, ministers of children, community, social services and health and long-term care advocating for them to reconsider cancelling the basic income pilot, maintaining the planned social assistance rate increases, and act on the recommendations from the [Income Security Roadmap](#).

Research, Knowledge Exchange, Communication, Quality and Transparency

Staff worked with Public Health Ontario and an Ethics Review Board for ethics approval for local research on *Lived Experience of Opioid Use in Timiskaming*. The process for ethics approval for such research is significant and staff were pleased to receive final approval in Q3.

Emergency Preparedness – Health Hazards

It is never known when an emergency situation or a health hazard may occur. Unfortunately, in September a transport crash in the Temagami area caused an emergency response, and put local residents and cottage owners at potential risk. Diesel fuel leaking from the transport prompted a call to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC). In this process, the local public health system is also notified and works in partnership with the MOECC to determine if there are any potential human health hazards. In this situation, some of the diesel fuel had spilled into a local water body. Although undetermined initially, if there were people who used the water source as drinking water, a notification was given to all home and cottage owners in regards to the situation and the Timiskaming Health Unit issued a “Do Not Drink” advisory. As further investigation took place, it was verified that fortunately nobody had used the water for drinking. The MOECC took water samples and continued to do so until the situation was clear and the “Do Not Drink” order was lifted.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being

This quarter saw promotion of [Active Outdoor Play](#) for children and youth. The campaign includes messaging for both warm and wintry weather, earned media and social media, as well as direct supports to childcare centres, parents and schools. The campaign continues into fall and winter this year.

The [Fresh Start](#) lifestyle balance program is being implemented for the second time in partnership with local family health teams, CMHA, municipalities, and hospitals as part of our work to prevent type 2 diabetes and lower risk for heart disease.

After its success in Temiskaming Shores, Q3 saw the launch of the [Healthy Eating in Recreation Settings](#) project in partnership with the Town of Kirkland Lake and Carter’s Canteen. They will be working

together through the fall and winter to promote healthy options at the canteen and explore the feasibility of making them a permanent feature.

In collaboration with “Le Centre des petits explorateurs” childcare agency and the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, THU supported the delivery of *You’re the Chef!* During the month of August 15 childcare attendees participated in this 6 session food literacy program. The aim of the program is to help develop the skills and confidence necessary for children, youth and adults to prepare healthy and tasty recipes emphasizing vegetables and fruit.

Substance Use and Injury Prevention

Now that cannabis has been legalized in Canada, THU staff continue their work to promote awareness of Canada’s [Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#) and to support parents in talking to children and youth about cannabis and other substance use. Work will continue into Q4 to support community partners in doing their part to minimize harms related to all substance use.

Road safety continues to be an important area of collaborative work that focused in Q3 on school bus safety with the annual implementation of [Young Rider Day](#) in Kirkland Lake and Temiskaming Shores. Work also continues in the area of highway safety with [social media sharing of highway closures and delays](#), learning and discussion about highway safety issues. THU staff have joined the St. Michel School’s traffic committee to provide public health support to discussions about road safety around the school.

Healthy Growth and Development

Staff have been working on planning to ensure effective local interventions related to family health which includes work on communication campaigns for topics within reproductive health, child health and Healthy Babies Healthy Children. 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 EarlyON centres and will be participating in the **Baby Bump parties** across the district. These celebrations are a great opportunity for expectant mothers and their supports to learn about THU services.

Preparations are underway with local partners in planning **National Child Day** interactive activities across the district. 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 community initiative, local partnership work has been underway between **Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC)** program staff, the Temiskaming Hospital, the Temiskaming Midwifery practice as well as local physicians to improve breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity rates. The group is working together to ensure that information is provided to families so that they can make informed decisions related to infant feeding.

School Health

General School Health

Q3 marks a phase of rapid assessment and planning for the 2018-19 school year and the 2019 calendar year for the Ministry. Staff worked to gather and review best available evidence toward establishing local priority areas for student health and wellbeing and interventions for a school setting. During this time, staff also created a discussion guide to implement with local school communities. The aim of the discussion is to identify opportunities for mutual benefit considering alignment of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care health and wellbeing goals. Two school discussions were held in Q3. Staff also monitored for the impact of the Ontario government pause on the revised school health and physical education curriculum. Many sectors and organizations were calling for this to be reinstated considering the evidence behind the revisions.

In September, initiatives resumed in schools with THU staff as lead or support. Initiatives include Roots of Empathy Program, Youth Mental Health Program (Jack Chapters), Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Healthy Relationship Clinics, Healthy Eating programs and readiness for the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program.

Youth Tobacco Prevention Program

In Q3 and linking with the regional tobacco area network plan, the youth tobacco team worked on the development of a contest to engage youth in understanding marketing tactics targeting youth used by the tobacco, cannabis and alcohol industry. This contest aims to increase youth media literacy skills to contribute to preventing or delaying substance (tobacco) use. Staff also worked to create a report outlining many of the local youth tobacco champion initiatives over the 2017-18 school year.

School Immunization Program

In Q3 staff prepared for implementation of the grade 7 school immunization program with clinics to be held in all schools in October. To help increase immunization consent response and positive consent for the 3 vaccines offered in Grade 7, school nurses delivered presentations to grade 7 classes. Also over Q3, staff worked to implement the Ministry's mobile immunization clinic model which supports nursing staff to utilize iPads for efficient and effective assessment and recording of immunizations given in school clinics. Staff also promoted awareness of student immunization requirements and provide sources for credible immunization information through print and social media.

School Oral Health Screening

As a new school year approached, THU's oral health team was busy planning for oral health screening which is supported by the Ontario Healthy Smiles Program. Coordinating with school partners and communicating with parents prior to implementation is a key program success factor. The new Ministry protocol changed the

screening target standard of JK, SK, and grade 2 students, to a method based on the intensity or need of a given school. As per protocol, the screening intensity level of a school is calculated by using the grade 2 screening results (decay rates) for the current school year. If it is not possible to use the current year, the previous year is used. The breakdown is shown in the chart below.

THU will also be doing more to reach students who may have limited access to community oral health services. For example when we are in a rural or remote area of our district where oral health services are not available, the screening program might be extended to more students irrespective of the school intensity level.

STUDENT SCREENINGS	SCHOOL INTENSITY LEVEL
JK, SK, grade 2	Low intensity school
JK, SK, grade 2, 7	Medium intensity schools
JK, SK, grade 2, 4, 7	High intensity schools

School Vision Screening

New in 2018 is the implementation of a school vision screening program as required in the modernized Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). Public health is to ensure vision screening of all SK students to identify risk factors for amblyopia, stereopsis and/or strabismus, and refractive vision disorder. If risks are identified, staff will follow up with parents recommending a comprehensive eye examination with an optometrist.

The vision screening protocol, process and system supports are very similar to the oral health screening program. Staff have been planning for full implementation of this new program in 100% of local SK schools in the 2018-19 school year. In Q3 this involved planning for training, communications, and scheduling to begin implementation in Q4. THU has advantage of school-based vision screening experience due to our recent support of a vision screening research project conducted by McMaster University and The Hospital for Sick Children in Kirkland Lake school.

Infectious and Communicable Disease Prevention and Control

Harm Reduction

The harm reduction program enhancement team had a busy summer! Our community sharps disposals are seeing frequent use from individuals safely disposing of their needles. We have also expanded the availability of naloxone in the community to two additional fire departments (Cobalt and Earleton) and are soon going to be training Kirkland Lake, Englehart, and Harley fire departments. Clients continue to receive naloxone kits from our sexual health team at our health unit offices. We have also expanded the availability of Naloxone to Bear Island, which now has 12 Naloxone kits in their health centre. We have also expanded the availability of harm reduction supplies in the community by providing training and supplies to both of the Pavilion locations and to Northern Treatment Centre in Kirkland Lake.

Another exciting project undertaken by the harm reduction team was the implementation of Naloxone availability in all DSBONE schools. We were approached to support the development of training materials, communications, and stakeholder presentations in conjunction with Porcupine

Health Unit. This has been a valuable collaborative opportunity and will come to a head in October, when train-the-trainer sessions will take place in Kirkland Lake.

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, Work Safety North, and Clorox. Infection Control Practitioners are expected to attend from Parry Sound to Kirkland Lake to network and discuss shared challenges, and to deepen their understanding of infection prevention and control practices in health care facilities. Local hospitals, long-term care homes, health unit staff, EMS, and retirement homes are invited to attend this local workshop.

The IPAC team has also been busy implementing the Designated Officer training program. Health unit staff will be training select EMS, OPP, and firefighters on basic infection prevention and control practices to ensure that any exposures are properly managed. Public Health is mandated to provide 24/7 availability to support Designated Officers in managing reported exposures. EMS, OPP, and firefighters are also mandated to instate selected staff to be Designated Officers. We look forward to this continued collaboration with these community partners.

Sexual Health

It has been a busy summer in our sexual health clinic with staff undergoing continuing professional development in harm reduction and women's health. Staff took part in courses lead by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, the Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program, the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, and CATIE.

Immunization

Seasonal Influenza Immunization Program Planning

The third quarter involves significant planning at THU for the 2018-2019 Influenza season to prepare for promoting and delivering community clinics in November. This year, there are 3 publically-funded products available. A new product, called Fluzone High-Dose, has received some media attention recently. Our allocation and inventory are limited and the health unit has been instructed to prioritize this product for hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes, and physicians' offices. Pharmacies will not be provided with this product this year but continue to deliver vaccines to anyone in the general public over five years of age. Pharmacies will have FluMist available this year, which is the flu vaccine in a nasal spray form for those from 2-17 years of age.

Our community clinics will continue to be offered with some staffing and time adjustments based on demand trends. Some health units have stopped administering flu vaccine due to the impact and reach of pharmacies and other providers. THU continues to monitor flu clinic visits and will be conducting a survey on our clinic accessibility this year. Flu shots are still available by appointment in our offices after community clinics are over.

Immunization Update

The Timiskaming Health Unit is pleased to now offer Shingrix. Shingrix is a Herpes Zoster vaccine similar to Zostavax, which is publicly-funded for those 65-70 years of age. Shingrix is not publicly-funded at this time but can be

purchased at the health unit (two doses are required for full immunity). Shingrix is thought to be superior to Zostavax as the efficacy of Zostavax wanes over time at a much faster rate than Shingrix. Shingrix is recommended for anyone over the age of 50.

Safe Water and Food Safety

Safe Water

The highlights of our Safe Water Program are often focused around the safe drinking water portion of our mandate. In Q3, there were two items from our Recreational Water Program that deserve mention. First, our annual beach surveillance and monitoring work came to a close for the season. Although this program is not new, the highlight this year was that we only had one beach posting in our district. This means that our routine beach water testing only showed bacteria levels unsuited for beach water use only one time. While this does not necessarily mean this trend will continue in the future, it was great to have our beaches available almost continuously during this past summer's hot weather.

Other work completed in Q3 was unique in the sense that it does not occur very often. The opening of a brand new swimming pool, in the municipality of Kirkland Lake, took place. Working with them, our role was to ensure they comply not only from a water safety point of view in regards to water chemistry, but also with respect to health hazards, proper signage, and other requirements set out in the Ontario public pools regulation. A Public Health Inspector worked closely with the municipality as the project moved along through to completion. Residents can now access this new facility and enjoy it as a routine physical activity.

Food Safety

There are many different aspects to our Food Safety Program. A large portion is of course focused on the inspection of our public food premises (restaurants) throughout the district. During the summer months there is also a unique seasonal inspection requirement that takes place. Public Health Inspectors visit remote lodges and camps to conduct various inspections, including food safety within their kitchen facilities. Although similar to food premise inspections that take place in more urban areas, the uniqueness of this part of the program is the logistics. Most of these remote locations are accessed by boat only, making planning and travel more of a challenge. Working with local companies to arrange boat transportation, and the lodge/camp owners for scheduling details, we were able to visit and complete all necessary inspections of these remote areas.

Healthy Environments

With the launch of the new Healthy Environments and Climate Change Guideline from the ministry in 2018, public health units in Ontario began to review how they could best approach this work. In Northern Ontario, it was found that much of the work that would need to be done would be similar for the seven northern health units, although each would have some local interests to address.

With this in mind, the seven northern agencies formed a partnership which began with a goal of developing a letter of intent (LOI) for resource funding from Health Canada's *Climate Change and Health Adaptation Capacity*

Building Contribution Program. If the LOI is accepted, a full proposal will be submitted. This collaborative work would bring efficiencies to the efforts that all public health units need to address, while capturing the unique requirements that Northern Ontario has.

Note: As of the time of writing this report the collaborative group had just been informed that their LOI has been accepted. Work will now continue on a complete proposal.

Other Programs

Land Control

Our Land Control Program was in full swing during the last quarter with the July-September period being one of the busiest times of year. A highlight came when a large scale project came to completion. Working with the owners of a multi cottage, shared ownership property, we set out a plan to upgrade their septic systems for each unit on the site. This plan was to be done over a set period of time and last quarter it was completed. Working with the owners to ensure compliance, while offering them guidance throughout the process proved to be a successful approach.

Nursing Stations

The Manager of the Nursing Stations, the Nurse Practitioner of the Elk Lake Nursing Station and the Executive Director of Englehart Family Health Team attended an Elk Lake council meeting in September to review the services and potential divestment plan and to discuss opportunities for collaboration. The opportunity was welcomed as there is a need to provide awareness to the community of Elk Lake regarding the nursing station services and programs. There are no further updates regarding timelines or confirmation of the divestment.



Upcoming Events

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

- **November 15:** Food Handler Course
- **November 27:** [Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation Workshop](#) for primary care providers

Human Resource Update

The comings and goings of our colleagues



New Staff:

- Public Health Nurse – Kirkland Lake – Permanent (July 2018)
- Research, Planning, Policy Analyst – New Liskeard – Mat. Leave Contract (July 2018)
- Public Health Nurse – New Liskeard – Permanent (August 2018)
- MOH(A)/CEO – New Liskeard (September 2018)

Resignation:

- Public Health Nurse – New Liskeard (September 2018)
- Public Health Nurse – New Liskeard (October 2018)

Retirement:

- Registered Nurse – Matachewan Nursing Station (September 2018)

Current Vacancies:

- Public Health Nurse (2) – New Liskeard - Permanent



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