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Hot topics

NE LHIN Nipissing/Temiskaming Sub-Region Health Leadership Council

Efforts to move forward with a sub-region council was communicated in February. The goal of the Council is to help move the local health care system to one that includes more effective integration of services and greater equity. The Council will bring the system together on a regular basis to discuss, strategize, make recommendations, and implement solutions aimed at creating a more patient-focused and integrated system of care for people living here. This follows work on sub-region planning sessions (May and December 2016) and a draft Sub-Region Strategy (Fall of 2016). Information can be found at www.nelhin.on.ca/subregions. The THU will have representation on this council and the first meeting was indicated to occur in mid-April.

Tobacco – ‘Canada’s Tobacco Endgame’

The Government of Canada is consulting with stakeholders and the public to inform a bold new federal Tobacco Control Strategy driven by an aggressive target. The Health Canada document [Seizing the opportunity: the future of tobacco control in Canada](#) provides a history of tobacco control and presents a series of possible options, measures and questions for future tobacco control. The document references Bill S-5 which is an Act to amend the *Tobacco Act* and the *Non-Smokers’ Health Act* and to make related amendments to other Acts in relation to vaping products in Canada. These changes support preventing youth access and limiting marketing of vaping products. Bill S-5 also supports the establishment of plain and standardized packaging of tobacco products as well as standardized cigarettes to reduce the impact that appearance and style can have on tobacco use. The issues above are being opposed by the tobacco industry and Public Health Units are encouraged to show their support.

Mumps Activity

Many cases of mumps have been reported in the Greater Toronto Area since January 1st with the majority of transmission occurring in individuals aged 18 to 35. THU has shared information on mumps on social media and continues to consult with clients on their vaccination status. Individuals born before 1970 are considered immune due to natural infection but those born in the early 1990s may be under immunized. More information on mumps can be found [here](#) and information on the vaccine can be found [here](#).

Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV)

EEEV is one of the most severe mosquito-transmitted diseases in the United States. It begins with the sudden onset of headache, high fever, chills, and vomiting and it can progress into disorientation, seizures,

or coma, and can be fatal. It is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. However, it is very rare in humans. There has only been one recent case reported in Canada and only a few in the United States. The term “equine” in its name comes from the fact that the virus is often found in horses, although humans do not contract it from a horse.

The virus is only carried in a specific type of mosquito. One which needs a certain environment to survive, including a high temperature range for a continued length of time. In Timiskaming we have not reached the required criteria for these mosquitos nor have we seen any of these mosquitos in our annual West Nile Virus surveillance trapping program. However, having a case of EEEV in Canada, specifically in Ontario, *we will be adding EEEV to the program as a precautionary measure.*

Rabies in Ontario - Year to date for 2017, Ontario has submitted 205 samples for rabies testing of these, 27 have tested positive in the following sources; Bovine (2) Cat (1) Raccoon (15) Skunk (9). None are in the Timiskaming District.

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

Revised Standards for Ontario Public Health Programs and Services. In February the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care released updated *Standards for Public Health Programs and Services* for consultation as part of public health transformation. THU staff have been contributing to consultations and submitting feedback through various networks. Our Board of Health Chair (BOH), Acting Medical Officer of Health and staff attended a consultation session held by the Ministry at the Sudbury and District Health Unit. The Ministry is open to feedback on areas needing clarification, operational challenges as well as suggestions for potential accountability/performance indicators.

Public Health Funding and Accountability Agreement Indicators Reporting. In Q1 staff submitted and verified data for the health protection and health promotion indicators as part of the Ministry process. Finalized 2016 year-end data summary tables became available mid-March. Summary tables will be provided to the BOH in the April Board package.

THU Goes for Gold –Pledging to promote water and not sugary drinks. In alignment with our Healthy Workplace Policy and Healthy Eating Guidelines, and inspired by the Healthy Kids Community Challenge THU took the gold level organization pledge with **WaterDoesWonders.ca** .



Reporting. Activity reports and plans required for Q1 submission with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, or Ministry of Child and Youth Services have been completed (R = reporting only) :

- Tobacco - Prevention, Protection & Enforcement, Cessation
- Enhanced Safe Food Program
- Vector Borne Disease Program
- Healthy Smiles Ontario (R)
- Healthy Babies Healthy Children (R)
- Stay on Your Feet – Older Adult Fall Prevention (Northeast LHIN reporting)
- Diabetes Prevention Project
- Enhanced Safe Water Program
- Needle Exchange Program (R)
- Pre and Post Nurse Practitioner Program (R)

Board of Health Activity. Staff presented on the Healthy Menu Choices Act and supported the BOH with a resolution related to Bill S-228, An Act to Amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibiting food and beverage marketing directed at children). Information was provided regarding cannabis legalization and regulation and the Ontario tobacco control context in response to a query related to a resolution put forth from another health unit.

Baby Friendly Initiative Designation. In January, the THU had the on-site assessment component of the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) designation process. During this time, three assessors conducted staff and mother interviews (over 57 staff were interviewed and more than 50 moms were contacted). An assessor also accompanied staff on hospital and home visits and visited THU offices across the district. We had the opportunity to highlight our work with the community as well as with parents on infant feeding.



On March 24, 2017, THU received official BFI designation from the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC). The BCC is the National Authority for the WHO/UNICEF BFI in Canada. They congratulated THU on the steady commitment of supporting families in the district of Timiskaming as well as the collaboration with community partners. The designation process occurs every 5 years.

Chronic Disease and Injuries Program

Stay on Your Feet (SOYF), is a project funded by the NE LHIN and matched in-kind by public health units to reduce falls among older adults across Ontario's northeast. Now entering its last of three funded years, the project is looking to ensure its main strategies are implemented and consider its future beyond March 2018.

Two municipal **Age Friendly Committee** initiatives add to the work being done in our district to promote healthy aging. Temiskaming Shores's Age Friendly Committee is working to implement the municipality's Age Friendly Plan. The Town of Kirkland Lake has also recently formed an Age Friendly Committee to pursue the municipal designation as well. THU staff support the various stages of this work in many ways including providing evidence to guide plans and helping to ensure health equity is considered.

Active Transportation. THU is working with community partners to make it easier for people to be active in their daily lives. With the Temiskaming District Road Safety Coalition, the Bicycle Safety Program will run in local schools with high percentages of students who are not bussed. This program includes in-class curriculum, a two-hour skills event and parent information, all designed to help families feel more confident cycling. THU is also a member of

Temiskaming Shores` Bicycle Friendly Community Committee and continues to promote and explore a variety of district-wide opportunities for education and promotion of cycling.

Tobacco Enforcement. In Q1, 21 warnings were issued related to the Smoke Free Ontario Act and one charge was laid for selling tobacco to a minor. There were 46 youth access inspections conducted (3 warnings, 1 charge) 31 display and promotion inspections (12 warnings) and 13 enclosed workplace/public place inspections (6 warnings).

Family Health Program

Child Health – Breastfeeding. THU launched a *new Facebook Breastfeeding Peer Support Page* in February. The page provides a safe, non-judgemental place for moms to ask questions and share information.

Healthy Pregnancies - Online Prenatal Classes. With a change to purchasing a licence with a Canadian company, online prenatal classes are now available to expectant parents in our district in both official languages.

Oral Health: Staff are piloting a new program ... a Fluoride Varnish Program. Fluoride varnish is a coating of resin that is applied (painted) on the tooth surface. It is a safe and easy procedure to prevent, delay and reverse the process of dental decay formation in children’s teeth. As research indicates that early application brings a significant benefit to children, THU staff will pilot a fluoride varnish program at local licenced childcare centres. Parents will receive information about the program and active consent will be required before children receive the fluoride varnish application.

Timiskaming’s Post Partum Mood Disorder Program. Locally, partners have been collaborating for over a decade on *Timiskaming’s Post Partum Mood Disorder (PPMD) Program*. This program includes awareness, screening, referral and treatment. Funding provided to THU from Timiskaming Best Start to support PPMD work (including offering treatment and intervention) ended in March of 2017. THU continues to offer the same services however management and staff are finalizing a second report for Timiskaming’s PPMD Program (2011-2015) which will help inform THU and community partners on next steps for this program.

Infectious Disease Program

Influenza/Vaccine Preventable Diseases. Staff have been wrapping up influenza season and began to return unused flu vaccines and anticipate wastage numbers. An evaluation of our community flu clinics was completed to examine how we can adapt our program in a changing environment with pharmacy involvement of flu vaccine immunization. THU’s IPAC nurse was selected to join a Ministry of Health and Long Term Care consultation group to provide feedback on current influenza surveillance activities in Ontario.

Outbreaks. THU staff have been busy supporting the annual winter spike of institutional outbreaks and beginning the work of creating tools to support institutions in managing and mitigating outbreaks. In Q1 there were five *enteric* outbreaks in total. There was one in a daycare and one in a school and both were of unknown causal agent, and three in long-term care homes (two were caused by norovirus and one was due to an unknown causative agent). There were three *respiratory* outbreaks, all of which were in long-term care homes.

Influenza A was the causal agent of one of the outbreaks and the other two were due to metapneumovirus.

Sexual Health. Staff are working on a manual to support THU peer nurses in providing sexual health services. The team is also finalizing indicators for the program to track and measure successes and areas of need.

Environmental Health & Emergency Preparedness Program

Emergency Preparedness – Advanced James Bay Coast Flooding Planning: The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s (MOHLTC) Emergency Management Branch has started its annual advanced planning process for possible flooding along the James Bay Coast. At this time of year representatives from various agencies participate in routine calls to plan for the potential flooding and evacuation of James Bay residents. The THU is part of this team to ensure any public health concerns are part of the planning process. One step in the process is that the MOHLTC works with and pre-identifies potential host communities. Kirkland Lake is on the list this year, and should there be an evacuation to that area the municipality will lead it, and THU we will work with them from a public health perspective.

Healthy Schools Programs



The school team continues to support a variety of health and wellbeing initiatives in schools. Q1 involves preparing for sending immunization notices and holding school clinics to support compliance with the Immunization School Pupils Act.

Local students participating in Sip Smart™ and enjoying their new water refill station. See Healthy Kids Community Challenge information below.

Other Programs

Nursing Stations: The end of Q1 at THU marks the end of the fiscal year for the Nursing Stations. Staff are preparing for year-end budgets and end of year reporting.

In the Spotlight Local & Beyond

Public Health Items of Interest



THU Communications and Media Releases for Q1

In Q1 staff have been working on THU’s Annual Report. The following THU media releases were issued locally; Nutrition Month (March 2, 2017), The Cost of Eating Well in Timiskaming (March 22, 2017), Rethink Your Drinking (sent In December but for Jan-April campaign).

THU Now Offering The ‘Nobody’s Perfect’ Parenting Program. THU now has staff trained to facilitate this community-based parenting program for parents of children from birth to age six. This group program helps parents recognize and build on their strengths and find positive ways to raise healthy and happy children. We will be hosting our first session in Q2 with mentoring support from Brighter Futures.

THU Supporting Research: Vision Screening in Schools

In 2016 the THU agreed to participate in a vision screening research project led by researchers from McMaster and Sick Kids. They specify that in Ontario, 5000 children needlessly lose the use of an eye because they were not treated promptly for a problem and 10,000 children have trouble learning to read just because they need glasses. The components of the program include:

1. During junior and senior kindergarten, every child takes some quick vision tests at school.
2. Each child who may have an eye problem sees an optometrist *at school*, at a time convenient for a parent.
3. Every child who is prescribed glasses receives them at no cost and *at school*.



The researchers asked THU to support the project implementation in four schools in Kirkland Lake. Four THU staff assist at each school to carry out one of the vision tests.

Vision screening in schools is a particularly hot topic as it was recently added to the Standards for Public Health Programs and Services generating debate about the evidence behind such a program and the capacity of health units to implement. For more information about this research visit visionscreening.ca

Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC) City of Temiskaming Shores and Area -Water Does Wonders

The second HKCC provincial theme ran from September 2016 to March 2017 and focused on promoting water and healthy drink choices. Locally this initiative included a program called Sip Smart™ Ontario which is a classroom educational program that helps teach children about sugary drinks and how to make healthy drink choices. All elementary schools (12) in the local HKCC catchment area participated. A Sip Smart™ toolkit was provided and participating schools were offered a free water refill station. THU staff worked with the local HKCC Project Manager on this themes activities the class, school & community.

Centralized Water Sample Data

Sampling well water is a something many residents do to help ensure they have safe drinking water. Having the sample bottles and information available for residents to pick up at the THU is convenient for them. Once they take a sample and return it to us we send it out for testing. In the past the results of these tests were sent to us periodically via a basic spreadsheet and we then have to integrate it with past files.

To streamline this process, the Ministry recently launched a province wide, on line SharePoint site for all public health units to use. This tool reduces the administration time required to handle the water sample data and gives more timely access to the information.



Upcoming Events

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

- **April** – Oral Health Month
- **April 4-5** - ON Healthy School Conference
- **April 11-12** - Ontario Bike Summit
- **April 18** - IPAC Northeastern ON Chapter Meeting and Networking
- **April 30-May 2** - ON Harm Reduction Distribution Program Conference
- **May 8-12** - Nurses Week
- **May 11** - Alpha Fitness Challenge
- **May 1-7** - Mental Health Week
- **May 7-13** - Emergency Preparedness Week
- **May 1-2** - Ontario Injury Prevention Forum
- **May 25** - Northern ON Health Equity Summit
- **June** - Bike Month in Temiskaming Shores

Human Resource Update

The comings and goings of our colleagues



New Staff:

- TDSS Co-op Placement Student - *(February - June 2017)*
- Analyst-Research-Planning-Policy – Permanent – Full Time *(January 2017)*

Return From Maternity Leave

- Secretary 1 – New Liskeard (March 2017)

Resignation:

- Secretary 1 – New Liskeard *(February 2017)*

Current Vacancies:

- MOH/CEO
- Practicum Placement

Report contributors: Randy Winters –Acting Chief Executive Officer/Director of Corporate Services , Kerry Schubert-Mackey – Director of Community Health, Program Managers; Ryan Peters , Angie Manners, Erin Cowan (CNO), Amanda Mongeon. Executive Assistant: Rachelle Cote.