

Health Unit Media Release

April 29, 2011



Health Unit Board Meeting Summary

Fluoride: The Board of Health had a discussion on water fluoridation as some regions within the province have been lobbied by anti-fluoride groups to eliminate water fluoridation. The Health Unit has prepared a fact sheet on water fluoridation that outlines the benefits of water fluoridation as part of a comprehensive approach to promoting dental health. The fact sheet lists all the organizations that support fluoridation. The Fact Sheet and information on fluoride in drinking water can be obtained from the Health Unit website at http://www.healthunit.org/dental/decay_prevention/flouride.htm.

Preschool Speech and Language Budget: The provincial government has not increased the budget for the preschool speech and language program for several years. This has resulted in delays in treatment for children. The Board agreed to write a letter to the provincial government to express its concern about the impact of this budget decision on the children in our community. The preschool speech and language program helps children under age 5 who are delayed in their speech development develop communication skills including speech.

Program Review Update: The Health Unit has completed a comprehensive review of programs and services which began in 2009. Director of Quality Improvement, Shani Gates, presented an update to the Board of Health last night outlining the outcomes from the process. The review identified \$335,685 in program efficiencies and minor changes that will be made to programs and services to have the maximum impact on the health of the community with existing resources. A comprehensive final report and public communication strategy will be prepared and distributed to the community in June.

Strategic Planning: The Health Unit will begin work on their strategic plan in May with a completion date planned for January 2012. Jack Butt (Chair), David Beatty (Brockville) and Aubrey Churchill (Lanark County) or Ken Graham (Smiths Falls) will be the Board representatives on the Steering Committee. The Strategic Plan will look at the role of outer offices, the organizational structure and the service delivery model of the health unit to best meet the public health needs of the community.

Healthy Communities Partnership: Healthy Eating is one of the six priority areas the Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) is addressing in its efforts to promote a healthy Lanark, Leeds and Grenville. One of the recommended actions identified for Healthy Eating is to 'provide supportive environments for healthy food choices'. The HCP has purchased 3000 cucumber, lettuce and carrot seed packets and developed info cards with information on how to grow them 'locally' even if residents don't have a garden. The Food Matters coalition is assisting the HCP to distribute the seeds to: our Municipalities, youth centers, community gardens as well as other community organizations. Check out the information card that accompanies the seed package: http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition/foodmatters/HCP_Seed_Instructions.pdf.

Healthy Smiles Ontario - As of March 31, 2011 there are 91 children enrolled in the Healthy Smiles dental program that provides preventive and treatment dental services for low income children and youth. Clinics have opened in Gananoque, Prescott, Brockville, North Lanark and

Smiths Falls. The launch at the Lanark Community Health Centre took place on April 15 and was attended by Board of Health member, Aubrey Churchill and Randy Hillier, the MPP for Lanark, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington. The last clinic site is planned for Friday at the Country Roads Community Health Centre in Portland. For more information on this project, visit: <http://www.healthunit.org/dental/healthysmilesontario.html>. The Health Unit has received used dental equipment from the Brockville Mental Health Centre because they are closing down. This includes a dental chair, compressor and suction machine and they will be installed in the Smiths Falls office. The dental instruments and supplies will be sent to the Smiths Falls Healthy Smiles Clinic.

Safe Water Programs - Several initiatives are being supported by the additional 100% funding received from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for Safe Water programs. All Health Units have been asked by the province to complete the assessment of 100% of their small drinking water systems by December 2011. This is a 100% funded program currently but will likely move to a cost-shared program after 2011. Additional staff have been put onto this program over the spring/summer. A letter has gone out to Municipalities that have bathing beaches sampled by the Health Unit, advising them of the new brochure about beach water safety, and the availability of the permanent beach signs. For more information on the beach sampling program, visit: <http://www.healthunit.org/water/test/beaches.htm>. Two Pool Operators Courses were held this week in Brockville and Smiths Falls. Courses were offered to the owners/managers of all our inspected pools.

Tobacco Update - On April 4, 2011, Bill 176 was introduced and passed first reading in the Ontario Legislature. Bill 176 is an Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to certain tobacco products. This Act is very simple and proactive stating that no person shall sell or distribute flavoured tobacco products, whether it is new tobacco products or smokeless tobacco products. This Act aims to prevent the next generation from becoming addicted to nicotine and to curb the rise in cancer rates across Ontario.

On April 21, 2011, the Ontario government announced new contraband prevention measures, and the Minister of Revenue, Sophia Aggelonitis, introduced Bill 186, the Supporting Smoke-Free Ontario by Reducing Contraband Tobacco Act, 2011. This legislation is intended to cut the supply of contraband tobacco - focusing on tougher controls over raw leaf products, new fines for possession, and stronger seizure powers for police.

The Ontario Government has also announced an increase of \$5 million to invest in new cessation programming initiatives. Smokers will get more help to quit through a series of either new or enhanced supports.

With the hiring of the Health Unit Tobacco Youth Engagement Officer, there will be an increased effort to work with educators and young people to keep schools smoke-free and to develop youth-led strategies focused on prevention.

For more information on Health Unit programs and services, call the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 or visit www.healthunit.org