

Health Unit Media Release

May 31, 2011



Health Unit Board Meeting Summary

Board Liability: A new Duty of Care Report will be completed by the CEO, Dr. Paula Stewart, for every Board meeting to allow the Board to meet its responsibility to ensure financial and administrative obligations of the organization are being met.

Healthy Babies/Healthy Children Budget: The 2011 budget for the 100% funded Healthy Babies/Healthy Children Program was passed by the Board. The provincial government has not provided an increase in funding for the program for several years. This means the program is not able to provide all the services included in the program to all eligible women and babies.

Strategic Planning and Organizational Review: The Board approved the development of a new Strategic Plan at the April 2011 Board meeting. The members from the Board who will participate in the Strategic Planning Steering Committee are Jack Butt, David Beatty and Ken Graham. Part of the work to develop the new Health Unit Strategic Plan will involve doing an Organizational Review to study our service delivery model, our organizational structure, and will include an assessment of outer offices' location and use. Consultants from Western Management Group have been hired using funds from the reserve to assist with the Organizational Review which will be completed in October.

Accountability Agreements: The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has released the draft Accountability Agreement for Ontario Boards of Health. It has 31 articles on performance, governance, and administration. This accountability agreement will replace the Grants Terms and Conditions that the Board currently signs each year in order to receive the provincial grant for both cost-shared and 100% program funding. It will also include program performance indicators.

Healthy Smiles Ontario: A presentation was made on the new Healthy Smiles Ontario Program for low income children (family income less than \$20,000) under age 18. This program provides preventive and treatment services. New dental offices have been set up in the Portland Community Health Centre and the North Lanark Community Health Centre and the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre. A portable unit has been set up in the CPHC (Community and Primary Health Care) offices in Prescott and Gananoque. The current dental unit in the Brockville Health Unit office will also be used for the program. The child and parents will receive education, care and treatment from these clinics. Children can also receive dental care from local dentists. To date, 115 children have been approved for the program. The program is working with other local organizations through the Every Kid in Our Communities Coalition to provide transportation assistance where needed.

Noxious Weeds: Staff will continue last year's collaboration with the Lanark and Leeds-Grenville Weed Inspectors to raise awareness about the dangers of noxious weeds like wild parsnip and giant hogweed. After skin contact with the plant a photodermatitis or burning of the skin may develop when the skin is exposed to sunlight. The Health Unit's contribution will be to highlight prevention information through a media campaign, a letter sent home to parents of students, and information on our website. Information to physicians in Emergency Departments will also be sent so they have the latest information on how to treat the skin rash.

Lyme Disease: The Health Unit has done a media blitz in the last couple of weeks to get the information out to people on how to reduce the risk of getting Lyme disease from a tick bite when in long grass or the forest, and what to do if you do get a tick bite. A newsletter will also be sent to health care providers to remind them of the signs, symptoms and treatment for Lyme disease. The area bordering the St. Lawrence River and its islands has been identified as an endemic area for Lyme disease and last year we also identified infected ticks in Murphy's Point Park near Perth. So everyone in our region needs to be vigilant. The Health Unit will be sending the 2010 report on the monitoring of Lyme disease and West Nile virus to all municipalities. Monitoring for West Nile virus did not identify any positive mosquitoes in 2010.

Climate Adaptation: Patricia Larkin, a PhD student in the Population Health Program at the University of Ottawa is working with the Health Unit to identify how climate change is influencing health problems in our area and how we need to adapt our response to it. Lyme disease is one example of this as the milder winter results in less mortality among the deer mice that carry the tick so it is able to move further north from where it was initially diagnosed in Connecticut. Another example is extreme heat waves similar to the ones last summer that affect all of us but is particularly a challenge for infants, the elderly and those with chronic diseases.

For more information on these and other health topics, contact the Health Unit's Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org.