

Board of Health Meeting Summary – September 20, 2018

Advocacy for the Ontario Basic Income Research Project

Anne Warren, Board Chair, wrote a strong letter to the provincial government advocating that the government reinstate the Ontario Basic Income Research Project. Several reports in recent years have described the extent of poverty and growing income inequality in Ontario and Canada. The relationship between income and health has also been well established; countless analyses have consistently and clearly shown that as income rises, health outcomes improve. In doing so, they also demonstrate that lower income people are at far greater risk from a range of preventable medical conditions, including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and mental illness. Advocating for improved income security policies is supportive of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit's strategic direction on Health Equity, which states that the health unit strives to address the challenges that prevent all residents from having the opportunity to reach their optimal health.

Program Update

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, in partnership with active school travel stakeholders in Brockville, Smiths Falls and Almonte, was successful in receiving \$100,000 over 2 years, through an Ontario Active School Travel Fund grant to pilot the "Walking the Rural Way" Project. This grant is a program of Green Communities Canada with funding from the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Education). Our funded project will operationalize "community tailored" Walking School Bus (WSB) models for LGL elementary students (Grades K–8) using paid and volunteer supervisors to walk with elementary school children, on established routes to and from school. The following six schools will participate in the first year of the "Walking the Rural Way" Project:

- Westminster Public School (Brockville)
- Commonwealth Public School (Brockville)
- Chimo Elementary School (Smiths Falls)
- Duncan J Schouler Public School (Smiths Falls)
- St. Francis de Sales Catholic School (Smiths Falls)
- R. Tait McKenzie Public School (Mississippi Mills)

Parent Information sessions on cannabis and youth are being provided by public health nurses across our region in collaboration with the Upper Canada District School Board and the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario.

The goal of these presentations is to help give parents a better understanding of cannabis use and its effects on the body, and to help prepare parents with strategies to communicate with their children about cannabis use. Our website also includes good resources on cannabis for parents and young people. <https://healthunit.org/cannabis-presentations/>

Dental screening has begun with school children. It will identify low income children and children in need of treatment who can benefit from the provincial Healthy Smiles Program.

The Health Unit's Healthy Communities Municipal Initiative has reviewed the Official Plans of Leeds and the Thousand Islands and Edwardsburg Cardinal, and provided input to each municipality

focussing on active transportation, supporting local healthy food, and healthy environments. We are looking forward to working with other municipalities on their Official Plans.

Low cost community rabies immunization clinics are now taking place across the region. These clinics are a great partnership between the health unit and local veterinarians to decrease the risk of rabies in our communities.

New signage has been provided to food premises to post indicating that they have been inspected by the Health Unit, and where people can access information about the inspection.

The work to respond to the opioid challenge continues. The number of visits to the Emergency Departments related to overdoses continues to increase. We had a spike in overdoses in July, likely associated with an overdose death, related to "purple heroin" which is heroin laced with fentanyl – a trend seen across the province. A recent incident in Gananoque where fire responders were able to reverse an opioid overdose in an unconscious person emphasizes how important the collaboration is among all first responders to respond to opioid overdoses. We are also working with our partners to track where discarded used needles are being found around the region so that strategies can be developed to reduce the problem.