



Minutes of the Board of Health COVID-19 Information Update
 Tuesday, March 24, 2020
 Teleconference
 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Present:

Doug Malanka, Chair	Doug Struthers
Candace Kaine	Toni Surko
Bill Dobson	Anne Warren
Jeff Earle	Absent: Ray Young
Peter McKenna	Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health
Sherryl Smith	Heather Bruce, Executive Assistant
Michelle Foote, Medical Resident	Jane Lyster, Director - CHP
Shani Gates, Director - QIPS	Jane Hess, Director - HLD

1. Call to Order

Doug Malanka called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Given the Board of Health has an oversight role he requested a special meeting to cover COVID-19 to discuss Dr. Stewart’s perspective, perspectives from program directors and broadly what is foreseen in the near future. After each speaker a role call will be done for questions.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and no items were added.

3. COVID-19 Update and Health Unit Response

Paula Stewart gave an update to the Board:

Paula Stewart advised that she appreciates the opportunity to talk to everyone today. There has been a rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Ontario, predominantly in the GTA area. It has been brought in by travel and local transmission. There are some cases in both Ottawa and Kingston, but no cases here yet. We presume we do have people that have been exposed and are sick now.

Public Health’s role is very specific. She has a role under the HPPA to lead the public health response. The Board’s role is to assist her and she has received advice and support along the way. She would like to acknowledge Jeff Earle for his help in setting up the Brockville Memorial Centre.

Part of Public Health’s role is to review the evidence and help guide our partners. We track information around what is happening internally, regionally and in our surrounding areas. Good

information is provided on the Health Canada website and epidemiologists have been analyzing the data. The Province also provides good information.

The second part of our role is providing information to the public and we are spending a lot of time on our website keeping it up to date. If people call in and need more information or send web messages we follow up with them as well. She has done a lot of media interviews and media releases. We also have public health nurses ready to talk to the public about COVID-19 and we have added capacity to do that on weekends. When we do get an individual who has a confirmed COVID-19 infection case, our nurses are ready to do case and contact follow up. We are responsible for enforcing any of the measures that have come out from the province and our public health inspectors provide education and enforcement. She has been working in collaboration with healthcare providers and working with our EMS group. She has signed their medical directives so that they can test people in long-term care homes. She has also provided information to boards of education. In order to protect our staff and the public we have closed the health unit offices to walk-in clients and identified essential services that continue to be provided by appointment.

Questions:

Bill Dobson - Our Fire Chief had offered Rosedale Hall for testing, but we were told at the emergency management meeting that the offer was denied. Where are the testing centres and why was it declined? Paula Stewart advised that the province is coordinating all of the assessment centres and they have to approve each one. Hospitals are to take the lead on this. Some hospitals have decided to do testing on site but in a different way. It is up to hospitals to decide how they want to do it recognizing we have restricted access to laboratory testing.

Jeff Earle – Brockville is moving ahead on the assessment centre and BGH has approved the plan. The community hall is vacant and at the Memorial Centre where the ice usually is, it is being cleaned right now. We are doing well at acquiring safety equipment - lab suits and contamination suits and working on hand sanitizer. Also found a source for 240,000 gloves.

Toni Surko – Who will be manning the assessment centres? Paula Stewart advised that the Almonte hospital is working with the Valley Family Health Team that are doing drive through testing after assessments by a primary care provider. The Perth/Smiths Falls assessment centre are using their own staff. Brockville have not decided – this is being worked out.

Anne Warren – Will there be an assessment centre in Gananoque? Paula Stewart advised that Gananoque people are going to Kingston and she can advise people of that.

Shani Gates gave an update to the Board:

Public Information Update:

Strategy:

- Susan Healey, as our Public Information Officer, has developed a communication plan, consisting of the following:
 - Daily media releases or interviews (Paula)
 - Daily updates to our website (posting times 10am and 3pm): public and health care professionals
 - Daily social media posts, on both Facebook Page and Twitter

- Paid ads in local newspapers, radio and online (Facebook and Instagram)

Some interesting stats that indicate the public's desire for more information:

- **Website Front Page Tab – 26,079 Unique Visitors (from January to March 20)**
 - January 2020 – 167
 - February 2020 – 545
 - March Week 1 – 2,198
 - March Week 2 – 10,481
 - March Week 3 – 12,688
- **Facebook followers/likes:**
 - Jan 1 to Jan 30, we went from 2,607 followers to 2,662 followers (we gained 55 followers).
 - Feb 1 to Feb 29, we gained 37 followers
 - March 1 to present, we have gained 412 followers.
 - We currently have 3,111 followers.
 - Our latest post about social distancing has reached 38,000 people to date

Administration Update:

Business continuity:

- Reviewed all services and programs and determined if essential or non-essential, and identified alternate process for delivery for essential services if needed when offices close to walk-in public.

Human Resources management/workforce strategy:

- Re-deployed many of our staff not working in essential services to COVID-19 operational activities, including to public phone lines, ID team, enforcement of mandatory closures due to emergency declaration and communications support. Evolving as our operations evolve, re: testing site support. We are meeting weekly to discuss deployment.
- Putting in place telework arrangements for staff that are not supporting COVID-19 activities or another essential client service.
- 4 staff working from home due to childcare issues due to school and daycare issues. Developed a form with criteria (appropriate work assignment available, no dependent children in the home) to guide discussions between staff making request and HR/management.
- 9 employees on self-isolation due to travel, all are able to work from home.
- Established one extension for staff to report absenteeism and HR will do a screen for symptoms. So far have **one staff** person home with symptoms that is self-monitoring. Return to workplace after symptom free for 24 hours.
- Started to put in place telework arrangements for other staff that are not supporting COVID-19 activities or another essential client service.

- Tracking staff time: Using Dayforce and spreadsheet that breaks down the type of activity, as part of tracking for extraordinary costs.

Information Technology and Telecommunications:

- Telephone Lines (to support public information lines): 50 additional SIP telephone lines have been installed in Brockville (from Southeastern), programmed and operational yesterday
- Purchased some Zoom licences, hope to get up and running soon – videoconference from outside of our office sites.

Facilities and Security:

- Effective this past Monday, March 23rd we closed our offices and service sites to the walk-in public. Sent press release sent Friday, social media posts over the weekend, posters for offices and service sites put up Monday morning (may need to be revised), posted on website with list of essential services and how to access them.
- Working with landlords in our other service sites to make arrangements for our staff given the policies that they have put in place.
- Alternate processes for essential client services are being developed by management in light of the office closure.

Health and Safety

- Increased environmental cleaning in Brockville and Smiths Falls, following recommendations put out by PHO
- PHO and Ministry have also put out directives and updated IPAC recommendations for Use of PPE for care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19 – following these, which basically say that surgical masks are sufficient PPE (not N-95)
- Physical Distancing: Putting in place engineering controls in our offices for physical distancing at work for those employees that are still required to come into the office. We are looking at modifying meeting rooms to ensure 2 metres of space between people when face-to-face meetings are necessary. Videoconferencing is available and we have now purchased Zoom licences, so will be able to have videoconferences from workstations. 50 new telephone lines have been installed and are operational now, so the issues we were having about teleconferencing and using the office phones has been resolved. Watch for more information on IT.
- Staff Screening: In order to help protect the health and safety of the employees that need to come into the office, we will be screening all staff at the beginning of their shift for COVID-19 symptoms. We are developing screening protocol this week and aim to begin on Monday, March 30th. More detail will follow at the end of the week. We do urge staff that start to feel unwell during the day to contact their manager and HR (ext. 2300) and go home immediately.

- Organization and point of care **hazard risk assessments** are being developed, and the monthly workplace inspection tool will be modified to include COVID-19 related hazards and recommendations.
- **Infection control practices** are very important during this time. Below is a link to the infection control training that employees completed last year in case anyone needs a refresher. <\\Datashares\lgldhu\Common\Presentations\health and safety training 2019\chain of Transmission.pptx>
- **Individual bottles of hand sanitizer** are in short supply. We are providing the individual containers to our staff that are in the field and working with clients. We would like to recommend to staff that have access to a sink to wash their hands or use a wall mounted hand sanitizer unit, to self-identify and return their individual hand sanitizer to their manager, who will take it down to Property in order to re-deploy to staff working with clients.
- The Multi-workplace Joint Health and Safety Committee is holding weekly meetings (Wednesdays) to discuss any issues that come up for workers during the COVID-19 response.

Questions

Concern was expressed that social distancing is not being adhered to. The Health Unit does not have the authority to force people to comply with social distancing. Staff provide information and people in the community are helping to reinforce it.

Jeff Earle advised that Brockville Council is making it a policy not to make any statements around COVID-19 and are directing everyone to the health unit for one consistent message. He would suggest that board members recommend this to their councils as well.

Doug Malanka advised that regarding screening his public works people have asked the CAO to order digital thermometers to check public works staff at a municipal level, is that reasonable? Paula Stewart advised that the screening questions (cough, shortness of breath or fever, exposed to anyone with COVID-19) are being used by the hospitals and we plan to use them as well. Taking temperatures is not easy to do – screening questions are fine.

Jane Hess gave an update to the Board:

Her role is operations for the internal workforce for HLD and liaison with community partners/social service partners. Needle exchange, NEP and sexual health client services are ongoing by appointment. They will be screened through the door before they come in. If they do screen positive we will still provide services to them. (i.e. naloxone if they have a drug overdose) Signs are posted on all of our doors in case someone comes to the building. We are still seeing Healthy Babies/Healthy Children clients at risk - some hospitals are discharging postpartum moms early so we have had a public health nurse work on the weekend to follow up on those and in rare cases would do a home visit. We will ensure that our at risk clients are well served.

Sexual Health clients can call to speak with a nurse for emergency services only. These include:

- Client tests positive for Syphilis, Gonorrhea or Chlamydia and need treatment
- They are a contact of Syphilis, Gonorrhea or Chlamydia
- Client needs birth control

- Client needs emergency contraception (Plan B)

Smart Works Services and Needle Exchange

- Will continue by appointment only, call 1-800-660-5853. [Check our website for other sites where Smart Works services are available.](#)

Language Express in-person programs and appointments have been cancelled until further notice. If they are already a Language Express client, their service provider is available to provide support by telephone and we encourage them to call their service provider or the Language Express Office if they have any questions. If they are not a client but would like to make a referral or get more information, they can call our central office at 1-888-503-8885 or (613) 283-2742 and leave a message and someone will call them back.

Jane Hess is also responsible for phone lines and there has been a large increase in calls. On March 23, 2020 there were 184 calls, 22 web mails, 1 private Facebook response, 6 responses to Facebook comments and 1 Facebook post drafted. These general calls come to PHN's and if screened for symptoms for COVID-19 go on to the infectious control team. (about 52% of calls)

Jane Hess also works with social services community partners particularly FCSLLG and other social services providing in home services to vulnerable clients and children in need of protection. There is a need for emergency housing for homeless clients.

Jane Lyster gave an update to the Board:

Jane Lyster has been involved in the IMS group and her role is Occupational Health and Safety. Environmental Health has quite a number of essential services and activities regarding the pandemic plan. There may be other emergencies other than COVID-19 such as flooding, boil water advisories etc. that will need to continue.

Food Safety has produced fact sheets for food banks, grocery stores and food stores and a media release was sent out today. CHP staff are working with people returning from the U.S. in RV's and are going into grocery stores to provide education. Campgrounds will offer parking spaces for people that want to isolate at the campground and operators are willing to pick up groceries for people if needed. We have been working with the public health dietician regarding community food programs and have sent media releases out. Calls are handled through the duty desk for dog bites.

PHI's have contacted 1300 food premises by phone to ensure they understand the precautions as well as going out into the field and visiting locations. A sign will be distributed to these locations. Enforcement – the HPPA Section 13 gives us the authority to issue orders is still in effect. The Liquor and Gaming Commission will be doing inspections at night and will advise us if there is any non-compliance to the Premier's order.

Other settings require information regarding infection, prevention and control and we have developed a fact sheet for funeral homes. Personal Service Settings have been deemed a non-essential service. We are working with municipalities to get safe practices out to retail stores.

Regarding safe water, we have made alternate arrangements for courier pickup and drop off since a number of our offices are closed. We are ensuring closure of public pools and spas and continue to

respond to adverse water incidents. Any health hazards are still being responded to. There will be ongoing inspections of food premises that remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that we maintain relationships with municipalities regarding emergencies.

Paula Stewart advised that communicable disease nurses are specialists in understanding symptoms and they are receiving a lot of calls from healthcare providers about who they should test for the virus. They are also fielding calls from people with symptoms. Regular calls have been set up with acute care hospitals and long term care to ensure two way communications during this pandemic.

Questions

Candace Kaine – Has anyone been in contact with our 2 correctional facilities about what preparations they are making? Brockville jail will continue to accept people from the street and jails are a hotbed and are overcrowded.

Action: Jane Lyster will contact Brockville Jail – there is one superintendent for both facilities. (613-341-2870)

Jeff Earle advised that minor offences have been released back into the community at Brockville Jail. Sherryl Smith asked about banks and ATMs and how they are being sanitized? Discussed banks being encouraged to put up a wall hand sanitizer because of the possibility of transmission.

Action: Jane Lyster will look into messaging for banks although they are a federal OH&S responsibly.

Doug Struthers discussed grocery stores advising that most have sanitation stations to clean cart handles. However, people pick up the sanitizer. Would there be value in suggesting that grocery stores have an employee sanitize the cart and making this mandatory.

Action: Jane Lyster to contact grocery stores to discuss sanitizing carts.

4. Update from Municipalities on their COVID-19 Response

Doug Malanka advised that he has seen some very robust and interesting email exchanges that will help keep the Board informed. Paula Stewart has had exchanges with many Mayors and they are doing incredible things. If any board members or their colleagues have any questions please send Paula Stewart an email. Calls should go directly to the Medical Officer of Health and not the Board Chair.

5. Time, Date and Location of Next Meeting:

- Thursday, April 16, 2020

6. Adjournment

Doug Malanka adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

Doug Malanka, Chair

Date

Heather Bruce, Executive Assistant

Date

c: Board members