

Board of Health Meeting June 16, 2022

Summary

COVID-19 UPDATE

Status of Covid Situation in LGL

- The number of new infections continues to decrease since early May. This has been the pattern with the COVID virus for 2020, and 2021. People are outside more, and the virus is less transmissible in warm, humid air.
- The Omicron variant continues to change slightly – BA 2 has taken over from BA 1.1. This means that someone who has been infected with the BA 1.1 could get a new infection with BA 2. The basic message still holds - if you are sick stay home until symptoms are resolving for 24 hours (48 if vomiting and diarrhea) and at least 5 days from symptoms onset and then wear a mask when out for the next 5 days, if vaccinated with three doses of vaccine, and isolate for 10 days if not up to date with vaccine.
- Waste water surveillance trending down in all three sites along with fewer reports of new infections from PCR testing
- Hospitalizations continue to be low along with fewer new outbreaks in congregate care and other joint living settings.

Provincial Mask Mandate

- Dr. Kieran Moore’s provincial mask mandate for health care settings and public transportation ended on June 11, 2022. The COVID situation has changed in the past two months with fewer new infections and fewer outbreaks. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/1002160/most-masking-requirements-to-be-lifted-on-june-11>
“To continue providing an additional layer of protection for the most vulnerable, masks will still be required in long-term care and retirement homes. Masking is recommended in higher-risk congregate living settings, such as shelters and group homes.
Remaining [Directives](#) will also be revoked and replaced with Ministry of Health guidance for health care workers and organizations. This includes guidance on when masks should be worn in hospitals and other health care settings.
While masking requirements are expiring, organizations may implement their own policies. Ontarians should continue to wear a mask if they feel it is right for them, are at high risk for severe illness, recovering from COVID-19, have symptoms of the virus or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.”

Living Well alongside COVID

- Encouraging residents to be active and enjoy all that Lanark Country has to offer this spring and summer. Also to connect with others. If concerned about exposure to the COVID virus in doors then wear a well fitted high quality mask, keep distance from others, and avoid crowded spaces.

COVID Vaccination

- A basic COVID vaccine series for age 12 plus is now considered to be a primary series with two doses 8 weeks apart, and then a booster dose at least 3 months after the second dose (6 months after the second dose for 12 to 17 years old). This gives good protection against symptoms and very good protection against serious disease needing hospitalization or resulting in death.
- For the people who are Immune compromised, the primary series is 3 doses then a 4th booster dose 3 months later.
- Adults 60 and older can now receive a fourth dose of the vaccine 3 to 5 months after the last dose to give added protection against serious disease.
- There are many appointments available at vaccine clinics at the regular sites (Brockville, Almonte, Kemptville and Smiths Falls) and at municipalities around the region.. [A list of upcoming clinics is available on our website](#). Walk ins are available at all clinics. Many pharmacies are still providing COVID vaccine
- Novavax, a different type of vaccine than Pfizer and Moderna has been available at special health unit clinics, and in two weeks will be available at our regular vaccine clinics.
- The new Moderna COVID vaccine for children 6 months to age 6 is currently being reviewed by Health Canada, and if approved, may be approved by the end of the summer,
- We are planning for a fall vaccine program potentially with a COVID Vaccine that has protection from both the current strain and also Omicron.
- It is also important to get the influenza vaccine next fall as we have a many lab reports of influenza in April and May. As provincial precautions are lifted and there is more opportunity for people to be exposed to the influenza virus and other respiratory viruses also.

MONKEYPOX

- The monkeypox virus, which is mainly present in central Africa, is now appearing in several other countries, including Canada and in Ontario. It has generally been mild and self-limiting.
- At this point it is good to know what it is, the symptoms, what to do about it, and how to reduce the risk. The Health Unit Website now has information for the public <https://healthunit.org/health-information/infectious-diseases/fact-sheets/> and health care providers. <https://healthunit.org/for-professionals/health-care-dental/communicable-disease-resources/monkeypox/>
- Only people with **very** close contact with a person with monkeypox virus (skin to skin with active lesions, close face to face exposure to coughing or sneezing, or handling soiled bandages/linens) are at risk of infection.
- The public health role is to provide information to the public, and health care providers, and coordinate case and contact management including use of the vaccine that can be given to close contacts to prevent infection or reduce it severity.

JACK BUTT

We were saddened last week to hear of the passing of Jack Butt, a former Board Member and Board Chair of our Health Unit. Jack worked tirelessly to improve the lives of residents within the community, and with our Health Unit. Jack was active on the Association of Public Health Agencies, the umbrella association for health units across the Province, and from 2010 to 2013 was a member of the Provincial Public Health Funding Review Working Group. Following Jack's time with our Health Unit, he went on to serve a number of years on the Board of the South East Local Health Integration Network. Our heartfelt condolences to his wife and family on their loss.

DR. PAULA STEWART'S RETIREMENT

From Board Chair Doug Malanka: Dr. Stewart was appointed as the, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit's (LGLDHU's) Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer on May 25, 2010 and so will have served this Health Unit for slightly over 12 years at the time of retirement. On behalf of Board members and I'm sure the residents of Leeds and Grenville and Lanark region, I recognize and thank you for all that you have done and wish you a great retirement and continued health in the future.

Dr. Stewart thanked Chair Malanka for his kind comments. She thanked the Board, community, staff and management, and all of our partners for making her job so enjoyable and exciting for the last 12 years.

AUDIT

Katie Mahon from KPNG advised that the public health audit was a great success. As a new auditor they completed incremental one time work and foundations for internal control processes, policies and procedures along with how the components flow together. Her assessment is that all processes were in good order.

ONTARIO WORKS DENTAL PROGRAM

The Health Unit acts as the administrator for the dental program for Ontario Works clients on behalf of the Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Lanark County. The Ministry of Children and Community Services (MCCS) sets the dental fee guide for Ontario Works and it is much lower than the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) fee guide. Even though there is a discrepancy between the two fee guides there had been a large number of dental providers agreeing to provide care for Ontario Works clients. Now however the average discrepancy is about 37 cents on the dollar and the gap has increased. Fewer dentists are now participating in the program such that it is greatly limiting access to dental services. The Board agreed to write a letter to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to request a thorough assessment be done of the current Ontario Works Dental Fee Guide to better align it with the ODA Fee Guide to reduce barriers in access to treatment.

SUBSTANCE USE COMMUNITY RESPONSE

In 2019, the Health Unit was successful in getting a Health Canada grant that provides funding to March 2023 for reducing substance abuse and improving harm reduction and prevention. The grant provides \$100,000 for each year for 3 years for 2 part time peer support workers. They provide direct support and guidance to individuals to support access community and health care resources. They explore the lived and living experience of substance users, and implement a locally driven education and training strategy for service providers. As role models for others, they show that there is an alternative to substance use and opportunity to make improvements to their lives.

The Health Unit staff will reach out to municipalities, including Lanark County and the United Counties of Leeds Grenville, over the summer and fall to explore, if there is interest in collaborating to extend the financial support for the Peer Support Program, currently funded through a Health Canada grant that will finish in March 2023. This fits well within the current Municipal Drug Strategy Initiative.