



# Renfrew County and District Health Unit

*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*

## **MOH Report to the Board**

Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### **Update on Transition to MOH Role**

I am very excited to be here at RCDHU as the new medical officer of health. Since arriving on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, I have appreciated the warm welcome from management, staff, and members of the board. Thank you to everyone for helping to make the transition as seamless as possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Gemmill for staying at RCDHU throughout the month of April to aid in the transition. It has been very helpful and is much appreciated.

My primary focus at the outset has been to listen and learn, so that I can better understand Renfrew County and District communities, RCDHU as an organization, and the full breadth of local public health programming. Getting to know staff and our community partners are key parts of this, all of which will be foundational as I look to support our work, protecting and promoting the health of Renfrew County and District residents.

Some first steps have included: meeting staff at the office and virtually, arranging an introductory all-staff meeting for the first week of May, introductions with partners (hospitals, paramedics, VTAC, East Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) members), and going into the field with our public health inspectors. In the coming weeks and months, I will look to continue these types of activities, including upcoming community visits that are being planned with some members of the board.

In these first weeks, I have been impressed by the dedication and skill of RCDHU staff and management. They have been doing excellent work to optimize our capacity as the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic have lessened, quickly pivoting to much needed recovery work. I am looking forward to continuing to work closely with RCDHU staff in this period of transition and getting to know more of our community partners.

### **Health Protection Highlights**

#### *Immunization*

RCDHU continues to assess immunization records for all students across Renfrew County and District. As a result of active surveillance and vaccination efforts, the number of students who are not up to date with their vaccines has decreased from 4250 to 2253 as of April 6, 2023.

Throughout March and April 2023, RCDHU mailed 1080 notices to students in the Petawawa, Barry's Bay, and Deep River areas. To support access to immunization services, high school-based immunization clinics and community-based immunization clinics will be occurring in Petawawa, Barry's Bay, and Deep River until the end of May 2023.

The second round of school-based grade 7 immunization clinics started at the end of March 2023. Students attending these clinics will be vaccinated with their second dose of Hepatitis B and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccines. As of April 13, 2023, approximately 17 of 41 school-based clinics have occurred. It is anticipated that all 41 school-based clinics will be completed by the end of May 2023.

### *Healthy Environments*

Food and Water Safety: Public Health Inspectors continue to carry out food safety, recreational water (pools and spas), and personal service inspections in 2023. RCDHU is striving to meet the accountability indicator agreements to inspect high risk food facilities once every 4 months, moderate risk food facilities once every 6 months, and low risk food facilities once per year. We are also inspecting year-round recreational water facilities once every quarter, while personal services settings (PSS) get inspected once per year.

Number of Inspections Undertaken in 2023			
	Food	Rec Water	PSS
High	144		
Moderate	116		
Low	99		
		21	
			81

Vector-borne: As the weather warms up, there is increased contact with ticks. Ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease, which continues to spread northward. A meeting was recently held with colleagues at Public Health Ontario and the Public Health Agency of Canada to discuss the best way to monitor the evolution of Lyme disease in RCD. These colleagues made some helpful suggestions that will improve the surveillance programme and the monitoring of the spread of infected ticks in the area. We have engaged our health care providers, providing them with resources to assist in diagnosing and treating Lyme disease. Further education for care providers and the public is planned for this spring.

Emergency Management: In preparation for the spring thaw, public health inspector staff working with the Emergency Management Coordinator have updated the flooding factsheets that are currently on the RCDHU website for public use. RCDHU staff also attend the weekly Renfrew County freshet meeting to monitor the spring flood conditions.

## **Respiratory Infections**

Over the past 1-2 months, COVID-19 and other respiratory virus activity was relatively stable at low levels. Within the last week, there has been some indication of increased COVID-19 activity, with local percent positivity increasing from approximately 5% to 8%. The number of local COVID-19 outbreaks have also increased somewhat relative to recent weeks, with 5 current COVID-19 outbreaks and 1 other respiratory virus outbreak. Influenza activity locally remains low.

At the provincial level, indicators of COVID-19 and other respiratory virus activity have remained stable. Regionally, there have been some increases in wastewater signal. Flu activity has remained low.

A one-week increase in COVID-19 activity is not necessarily indicative of a larger trend. However, it does demonstrate the importance of ongoing surveillance and general preventive measures. Up-to-date vaccination is our most effective means of preventing COVID-19 infection, and clinics continue to be offered throughout Renfrew County and District. Residents can also be vaccinated at participating pharmacies.

## **Health Promotion Highlights**

### *Student Nutrition Ontario Conference in Ottawa*

RCDHU's Registered Dietitian Sophie Brule was invited to be a speaker at the 2023 Student Nutrition Ontario Conference which was held in Ottawa on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. She presented two one-hour workshops on the topic of 'Building Culturally Inclusive Menus in the Student Nutrition Program (SNP)'. Both sessions were well attended and received positive feedback from delegates. The topic of culturally inclusive food comes at a relevant time as many SNPs are looking to diversify their offerings either due to an increasingly diverse student population or an increase in demand for cultural competency and sensitivity. Offering culturally diverse food options to all students, regardless of background, is beneficial. It helps students feel a sense of belonging, it offers a safe space for food exploration, it gives students the opportunity to learn from their peers and adds more nutritional diversity to their diets. All together this helps create a positive relationship with food which will instill healthy eating habits and general well-being.

Submitted by: Dr. Jason Morgenstern

Acting Medical Officer of Health

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