



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

2004 Annual Report

We have selected some of the highlights from 2004 for this year's annual report.

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For more information about Renfrew County and District Health Unit programs and services, see other sections of this web site or call the Health Info Line: 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 ext. 666.



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

"Promoting Healthy People in a Healthy Environment"

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Message from the Medical Officer of Health

This year's annual report provides greater detail than previous reports on some of the many services provided by health unit staff.

The Health Unit endeavors to deliver mandated programs in the most efficient and effective way possible. This required dedicated staff and motivated community partners. A sincere thank you to all those individuals and organizations involved in the health promotion and protection of the residents of Renfrew County and District.

Dr. Michael Corriveau
Medical Officer of Health

What is The Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program?

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children is a free program in Ontario for pregnant women and families with children up to the age of 6 years. The program's goals are to help build healthier families by encouraging children's best growth, increasing parent's confidence and helping to connect families to services in their community.

In the prenatal period, the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program will assist parents who want support with getting ready for a new baby. In the postpartum period, a Public Health Nurse will call to see how parents and baby are doing and answer any questions that they may have. The Public Health Nurse will also provide a home visit to weigh the baby, offer feeding support, and inform parents about available community resources.

Later on, some families may receive supportive home visiting from a Public Health Nurse and a trained, caring Home Visitor. Together they can assist families with learning how to help their children grow up as healthy as possible developmentally, socially, physically and psychologically.

In 2004:

- Ø 260 pregnant women accessed public health staff for information about having a healthy pregnancy.
- Ø 934 families were contacted by a Public Health Nurse after the birth of their babies.
- Ø Public Health Nurses made 1177 visits to families in the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, and Home Visitors made 1542 visits to these families.

Child Health Clinics are growing!

Child Health Clinics began in 2002 as a “one stop shopping” opportunity for families with young children. The goals of the clinics are to increase parental awareness of childhood health issues and ensure access to screening and early identification of problems. In 2004, Child Health Clinics were offered at 13 community locations across Renfrew County and District.

Parents who visited a Child Health Clinic with their child discussed questions and concerns regarding **child growth and development, breastfeeding, immunization and dental health** with public health staff on a one-to-one basis. Infant **weighing, immunizations, dental screening** and **educational sessions** on child health and parenting issues were also available. **Speech and language assessments** were conducted by staff of the Community Care Access Centre at some locations. **Infant hearing screening** was available at some sites courtesy of the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre. To raise awareness about the need for **booster seats**, a monthly draw was held for a free booster seat.

Seventy-six Child Health Clinics were held in 2004. They were attended by over 1100 parents and children, who accessed over 1,700 services at the Clinics. Attendance increased compared to 2003 at most locations. About 50% of attendees were there for the first time, confirming that we have been attracting new families. The feedback we have received from participants and community partners has been positive and encouraging!

Influenza immunizations in 2003/04 up 25 percent over previous flu season

Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North America where the influenza (flu) vaccine is available free to all residents. This program enables individuals to protect themselves and those around them against the flu and, at the same time, reduces the impact on the health care system during the flu season.

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit's flu immunization campaign was launched on October 24, 2003. A total of 27 community clinics were offered at various sites throughout the County. Clinic sites included the Health Unit offices in Pembroke, Renfrew, Arnprior, Deep River and Barry's Bay and other community settings in Petawawa, Cobden, Eganville and Killaloe. Additional sites this year included the VON Civic Complex in Pembroke, and the Whitewater Medical Centre in Beachburg.

In late November we experienced the early outbreak of influenza in Ontario. Due to increased interest from the public and a request from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, additional clinics were scheduled and additional staff were assigned to some clinics.

Over 7,500 flu shots were given to Renfrew County residents during the 2003/04 flu season compared to 5,900 in 2002/03, an increase of over 25 percent. In addition to flu shots being offered by the Health Unit and physician's offices, they were also available at local pharmacies and through employers.

Pandemic Influenza Response Plan initiated

The 20th Century saw three influenza pandemics (epidemics that occurred over a wide geographic area and affected a large proportion of the population). The most deadly, the “Spanish Flu” of 1918, killed an estimated 20 million people worldwide. Public health officials have warned that a global influenza pandemic is overdue.

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit established the Pandemic Influenza Steering Committee in June 2004. The purpose of this committee is to develop a local Pandemic Influenza Response Plan in advance of a pandemic, to ensure a coordinated response when/if pandemic influenza strikes. The members of the committee currently include representatives from acute care, long-term care, community health care, and emergency services.

The Pandemic Influenza Response Plan will provide guidelines for the management of an influenza pandemic in Renfrew County and District. It is intended to complement the existing Renfrew County and District Health Unit Emergency Response Plan as well as complement and integrate with the existing municipal emergency response plans.

The Renfrew County and District Pandemic Influenza Response Plan will focus on preparedness, response and recovery. Goals of the Plan are:

- 1) To minimize serious illness and overall deaths through appropriate management of health care services.
- 2) To minimize societal disruption.

Expansions to Ontario's publicly funded immunization program

On June 9, 2004, three new publicly funded vaccines were announced by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The Renfrew County and District Health Unit began the phased-in introduction of these vaccines on July 1. As of January 1, 2005, the new vaccines were added to the recommended schedule of immunizations for all children.

One of the vaccines provided under the new funding is Pneumococcal Conjugate. This vaccine protects children against invasive pneumococcal infections such as pneumonia, bacteremia (infection of the blood) and meningitis (infection of the brain).

The Meningococcal Conjugate C vaccine is also available free of charge. This vaccine protects children against invasive meningococcal disease including meningitis and infection of the blood.

The third new vaccine to be funded is Varicella. This vaccine protects children from chickenpox, a common childhood disease, and its complications such as bacterial skin infections.

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit provides information about these vaccines, makes them available at immunization clinics, and distributes the vaccines to physicians' offices.

Immunization of children is one of the most important aspects of maintaining health. The introduction of these three new vaccines to the provincial immunization program will ensure that children no longer suffer the serious or fatal effects of these vaccine preventable diseases.

Average cost of healthy groceries decreased in 2004

Many families with low incomes cannot afford to purchase enough healthy foods every week. Because of this reality, health units in Ontario are mandated to work with community agencies and groups to promote access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and personally acceptable food for people of all ages.

Part of this work is the annual monitoring of the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket (NFB). The NFB is a list of foods that can be priced in local grocery stores to estimate the cost of a week's supply of healthy groceries. The list is based on nutrition recommendations and consumer food buying patterns. Because higher priced foods, snack foods and foods of little nutritional value are not included in the NFB, its cost is lower than the weekly food budget for many people. Pricing is done in six grocery stores across Renfrew County, and an average cost is calculated for each item on the list.

The cost of the NFB for a family of four¹ in June 2004 was \$124.07. The cost decreased by 6% from 2003, but has increased by 18% since the first local pricing of the NFB was conducted in 1998.

For instructions on how to calculate the cost of healthy groceries for a week for your family or group,

See [The Cost of Healthy Eating in Renfrew County June 2004](#).

¹ The reference family of four consists of a man and a woman between the ages of 25 and 49; a boy age 13 – 15 and a girl 7 – 9 years of age.

Healthy Living Awards recognize local efforts to create a healthier community

The Healthy Living Awards are a celebration in support of local people working to create a healthier community through smoke-free living, regular physical activity and healthy eating. There are four award categories: Workplaces, Restaurants, Community at Large, and Schools. The Schools category was divided into two categories to recognize both healthy eating initiatives and physical activity initiatives.

Information about the award program and nomination forms were distributed through local newspapers in March. Nominations were judged by a panel of three judges, and the results were published in newspapers throughout Renfrew County in September.

The County of Renfrew received the **Workplace** award for its dedication to promoting a healthier and safer workplace.

Sister's Place was the winner in the **Restaurant** category, for providing a healthy choices menu and a smoke-free atmosphere.

Arnprior Town Council received the **Community at Large** award for its groundbreaking efforts in becoming the first municipality in Renfrew County to pass a 100% smoke-free public places bylaw.

Freddie's Café, the cafeteria at Fellowes High School was presented a **School** award for developing unique and creative strategies to promote healthy food choices.

Highview Public School and Keys Public School shared the honours in the **Schools** category for promoting and providing a variety of enjoyable physical activities for students of different abilities.

Low Risk Drinking Guidelines promoted across Renfrew County

The Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines were developed in Ontario to help healthy people of legal drinking age to make informed decisions about the amount of alcoholic beverages they consume. The Guidelines describe daily and weekly levels of drinking and drinking practices which provide the health benefits of alcohol while minimizing the risk of problems such as injuries and certain chronic diseases. They also describe population groups and situations where alcohol consumption should be avoided. The Low Risk Drinking Guidelines do not advise anyone to start drinking or to raise current consumption levels.

To inform people in Renfrew County about the Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines, a communication campaign was developed by the Renfrew County and District Health Unit and the Renfrew County FOCUS Community Project.

- Ø A display accompanied by pamphlets describing the Guidelines was used at three workplaces and one community event, viewed by about 1500 people.
- Ø 3000 bookmarks were distributed at local libraries.
- Ø The Guidelines were printed in local newspapers.
- Ø A presentation about the Guidelines was developed.

For a copy of the Guidelines, visit www.camh.net/pdf/lowrisk_drinking.pdf

The Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines were developed by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Ontario Public Health Association and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.

Rape Drug Committee working to prevent drug-related sexual assault

The Renfrew County Rape Drug Committee was formed in January 2003 after 12 cases of drug-related sexual assault were reported in Renfrew County in 2002, and it was suspected that many more incidents are not reported.

In 2004, the Renfrew County Rape Drug Committee, in partnership with the Renfrew County and District Health Unit and Renfrew County FOCUS Community Project continued its efforts to increase awareness about drug-facilitated sexual assault and to educate the public about prevention strategies. Our communication campaign included the following activities:

Ø A manual for training bar staff was developed. It includes a short presentation for bar servers about the main types of rape drugs (Rohypnol, GHB and alcohol), how they are used to facilitate sexual assault, how to prevent the use of these drugs and intervention strategies. Bar staff at three licensed establishments received the training. Feedback was positive, and the training will continue to be offered.

Ø Three posters were developed, to increase awareness of the dangers of drug-related sexual assault. The posters were launched at six licensed establishments during the week of January 26 – 30, 2004. At the launch events the posters were unveiled, and the bar staff training was promoted. In conjunction with the launches, posters were distributed to licensed establishments, high schools, fitness centers and a variety of community locations throughout Renfrew County.

Ø A sticker was developed, with the message “Rape drugs are invisible.” Five thousand stickers were distributed through high schools, sexual assault centres, clothing stores for young women and community events. A pamphlet about drug facilitated sexual assault was available at locations distributing the stickers.

Ø In December, a news release was distributed to local newspapers reminding of the dangers of drug related sexual assault.

Activities aim to reduce tobacco related illness and death

The use of tobacco causes more death and serious illness in Ontario than any other health hazard. In 2004 Health Unit staff carried out many activities related to smoking prevention, smoking cessation and protection from second hand smoke in homes, workplaces and community locations. Highlights from 2004 were as follows:

Protection from second-hand smoke

- Ø Provided support to the Arnprior Clean Air Team in their advocacy efforts for a 100 percent smoke-free public places bylaw. The Town of Arnprior began implementation of the bylaw on October 1, 2004.
- Ø Provided leadership for the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Renfrew County in its efforts to promote smoke free living.
- Ø Networked with the Ontario Tobacco Free Network, The Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, the Media Network and the Eastern Ontario Tobacco Use Prevention Network.
- Ø Promoted smoke-free living through the mass media (radio, newspapers, posters, pamphlets and billboards).
- Ø Organized a “Clearing the Air in Workplaces” workshop to encourage the development of policies that would protect workers from exposure to second hand smoke.

Quit smoking support

- Ø Promoted the Ontario Quit Smoking 2004 Contest.
- Ø Hosted a Clinical Tobacco Intervention workshop, where pharmacists, doctors, dentists and their staff received training to support their patients with quitting smoking.
- Ø Provided counseling at Sexual Health Clinics, Student Health Centres and other Health Unit events.
- Ø Offered smoking cessation programs in the community and at workplaces.

Smoking prevention in schools

Ø Provided teacher consultations, teaching resources, teacher training, support for student events and information for parents.

West Nile Virus is in Renfrew County, but no human cases in 2004

West Nile Virus is a mosquito borne disease that can have an adverse impact on human health. In 2004 the Renfrew County & District Health Unit activities regarding West Nile Virus control consisted of:

- Ø Recording the details of dead bird sightings reported by members of the public
- Ø Submitting dead birds (crows, ravens and blue jays) to the laboratory for analysis
- Ø Mosquito trapping to determine type of mosquitoes found in a particular location
- Ø Human surveillance – there were no human cases within our jurisdiction in 2004
- Ø Public Awareness – “fight the bite” media campaign.

The Health Unit submitted a total of 50 dead birds to the laboratory for analysis. Of these, nine birds were identified as having the West Nile Virus. A total of 80 traps were set by the Health Unit to collect mosquitoes. Trapped mosquitoes were identified by type, and the types of mosquitoes that are known to carry West Nile Virus were analyzed. None of the mosquitoes analyzed were identified as carriers of this disease.

The Health Unit continued its main message to the public of removing standing water on your property, and personal protection when outdoors.

Ensuring that our drinking water is safe

The new Safe Drinking Water regulations introduced higher standards for drinking water for the public. An increase in the number of routine tests has resulted in a corresponding increased number of adverse test results. In 2004 the Renfrew County and District Health Unit responded to 191 adverse water notifications. Most of these came from smaller facilities such as municipal halls, rural schools and restaurants. In most instances once remedial work was completed on the water system, the water was found to be safe for human consumption.

In 2004 the Health Unit issued seven boil water orders to the owner or operator of a water system supplying water to members of the public. An order is issued if test results indicate a potential to impact the health of the people who consume the water.

The Health Unit provided advice to 642 persons regarding their private wells, which provide their drinking water supply. Many of these conversations dealt with how to correct structural problems with their wells, method of disinfecting their water supplies, as well as how to interpret their water sample results.

Twenty-four bathing beaches were tested on a weekly basis over the summer months. One beach was closed for a period of time due to high bacteria counts.

Top six reasons why people called the Health Info Line

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit offers a Health Information Line (HIL), which is staffed by a registered nurse. Information is provided to the public and to professionals on a variety of health topics, ranging from infant feeding to communicable diseases.

The HIL hours of operations are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. If the nurse is responding to a call a message may be left on voice mail and the call will be returned as soon as possible. All information shared with the nurse is confidential.

In 2004, 2254 calls were placed to the Health Info Line. The top 6 reasons why community members contacted HIL were:

1. Travel health information requests – 531 calls
2. Communicable diseases and immunization related inquiries – 394 calls
3. Community resource information requests – 315 calls
4. Child health and breastfeeding inquiries – 243 calls
5. Influenza related questions – 140 calls
6. Medical inquiries – 118 calls

Board of Health Members in 2004

Reeve Janice Bush, County of Renfrew (Vice-chair)
Ms. Sheila Clarke, Provincial Appointee
Reeve Bill Croshaw, County of Renfrew
Mayor Jim Etmanski, Township of South Algonquin
The Honourable Lawrence Foran, Provincial Appointee
Ms. Shirley Morris, Provincial Appointee
Councillor Gary Severin, City of Pembroke
Warden Bob Sweet, County of Renfrew
Ms. Marcia Timm, Provincial Appointee
Reeve Jack Wilson, County of Renfrew (Chair)

2004 Approved Budget

Total budget: \$6,344,512

Funding sources:

- Province of Ontario – 54%
- County of Renfrew, City of Pembroke and Township of South Algonquin – 31%
- Other sources – 15%

How the funds are allocated:

- Salaries, benefits and program costs – 84%
- Occupancy and communications – 7%
- Other operating costs – 9%