



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

2005 Annual Report

We have selected some of the highlights from 2005 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 at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 extension 666.

Dr. Michael Corriveau, Medical Officer of Health



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

"Promoting Healthy People in a Healthy Environment"

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Planning for an Influenza Pandemic

Experts predict that a widespread influenza (flu) pandemic will happen some time over the next 30 years. A pandemic is an unusually high occurrence of an infectious disease that spreads rapidly over a large geographic area – potentially worldwide. The effects of a pandemic on everyday life could be devastating.

Renfrew County & District Health Unit has provided leadership in developing the Renfrew County & District Pandemic Influenza Plan. The purpose of the plan is:

- a. To establish procedures and identify roles and responsibilities for Renfrew County and District Health Unit staff and other stakeholders in the community for the effective management of an influenza pandemic;
- b. To set up a communication system with federal, provincial, and municipal governments and various local agencies for use during an influenza pandemic.

The Health Unit has been actively involved in the following activities related to preparing for an influenza pandemic:

- a. Identifying groups with the greatest need for antiviral medication and vaccine;
- b. Making plans for mass immunization clinics;
- c. Educating health unit staff, key people in the community and the public about pandemic influenza;
- d. Helping staff at hospitals, long-term care facilities and municipalities to develop their own plans for dealing with an influenza pandemic;
- e. Keeping track of all reportable diseases;
- f. Deciding who will do what, when a pandemic comes;
- g. Setting up a communication system for use during a pandemic.

New Publicly Funded Vaccine - Meningococcal C-conjugate

On January 1, 2005, Meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine became publicly funded for all Ontario youth age 12 and age 15 to 19. One-year-old children and high-risk people of all ages are also eligible for this vaccine.

Meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine protects against infections caused by the bacteria, *Neisseria meningitidis*. This bacteria causes infections of the bloodstream (meningococemia) and the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

In February and March 2005, Renfrew County and District Health Unit provided community immunization clinics at all nine Renfrew County high schools. All eligible students were invited to attend. Health Unit staff gave 3,150 doses of Meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine. In addition, this vaccine was available at Health Unit immunization clinics and through family physicians' offices throughout Renfrew County.

The introduction of Meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine to the provincial immunization program will ensure that youth and young adults are protected from the serious and sometimes fatal effects of invasive meningococcal disease.

Results from the Evaluation of Prenatal Classes

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit provides prenatal classes for pregnant women and their partners. The classes help expectant parents:

- understand how to have a healthy baby,
- prepare for labour and birth, and
- learn how to care for their new baby.

In 2005, we held 22 series of prenatal classes in six locations. At the last class in each series, participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form. The evaluation forms were analyzed, and the results were used in updating the contents of the classes.

Participants at the prenatal classes told us that they felt “informed and prepared” about most topics that were covered. However, they wanted more information on some topics. In response, we have purchased new teaching resources on caring for mom and baby after delivery, and Caesarean delivery. Also, we made sure that good information on infant nutrition and immunization is included in a new post-natal series, called Transition to Parenting, that will be offered starting in September 2006.

When asked about changes they had made because of attending prenatal classes, 64 percent of respondents reported making at least one change, and 45 percent reported making two or more changes. Thirty-six percent reported making no changes. The most popular changes were in the areas of eating habits, dealing with discomfort, and relaxation.

Seventy percent of respondents reported that the prenatal classes increased their confidence about labour and birth, and 62 percent said that the classes increased their confidence in becoming a parent.

We will continue to offer prenatal classes across Renfrew County and District, and to collect feedback from participants in our ongoing effort to meet the needs of pregnant women and their partners.

Child Health Clinics Continue in Renfrew County

Child Health Clinics were held across Renfrew County & District throughout 2005. The clinics offered health information, childhood immunizations, and consultations or screenings related to growth and development, dental health and speech.

From January to December 2005, 83 Child Health Clinics were held.

- 1051 children attended;
- 319 received immunization;
- 576 were assessed for growth and development;
- 330 were screened by a Dental Hygienist;
- 72 were screened by a Speech & Language Pathologist;
- 414 families attended the parenting information sessions (Family Circle). They received information on the following topics:
 - o Parent-child attachment
 - o Toilet training
 - o Car seat safety
 - o Prevention of childhood injuries
 - o Healthy sexuality
 - o Childhood nutrition
 - o Preventing childhood infections
 - o Speech and language development
 - o How to discipline with love

Car Seat Safety Coalition Supports Bill 73 – “*An act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario’s roads*”

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and serious injury among children and youth (Canadian Institute of Child Health). Starting September 1 2005, the Highway Traffic Act requires booster seats for children who have outgrown child car seats but are still too small to be properly protected by seatbelts alone.

A booster seat is a positioning device that raises the child so that the seat belt (designed to fit an adult) fits a child correctly. **Booster seats provide 60 per cent more protection than seat belts alone, and substantially reduce the risk of serious injury.**

The Renfrew County Car Seat Safety Coalition is working to raise awareness about this valuable injury prevention legislation. The following public awareness initiatives were implemented in 2005:

- Renfrew County & District Health Unit developed four booster seat displays for use across Renfrew County. These displays were used at two fairs and eight Child Health Clinics in September.
- Monthly draws for a booster seat were held at the Child Health Clinics from January to September 2005. Ten families won booster seats.
- A poster was developed collaboratively with two other health units in eastern Ontario. These posters were distributed to key locations in Renfrew County.

Communicating about Healthy Eating and Regular Physical Activity

Health Unit staff and Healthy Living Partnership partners organized two communication campaigns in 2005 to promote healthy eating and regular physical activity.

“Unlock your colours”

One way that Ontario Health Units work to prevent chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease is to get people eating more vegetables and fruits. In 2005 we used materials from the **5 to 10 a day** campaign by the Canadian Cancer Society and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. This campaign talks about why and how to eat five to ten servings of vegetables and fruits each day.

The communication campaign involved radio and newspaper advertisements, and distributing magnetized pads of shopping lists and the booklet, Unlock Your Colours. We distributed 5,000 pads and booklets with the help of grocery stores throughout Renfrew County. Many people commented that they enjoyed and used the **5 to 10 a day** materials.

Explore the Ottawa Valley

Health Units are mandated to work with recreation departments and other organizations to promote and increase access to regular physical activity. This includes assisting community partners to increase the availability of recreational opportunities such as walking trails and cycling routes.

<http://www.valleyexplore.com/> is a web site with descriptions of walking, biking and cross country ski trails, canoeing routes and waterfall walks. The Health Unit assisted with publishing a book with all of the routes from the web site. We distributed the book to municipal recreation committees, libraries, schools, community events and by request.

Provincial Quit Smoking Contest

The 2005 Quit Smoking Contest invited Ontario smokers to quit by February 1 and to stay smoke-free until at least March 1. Participants had to be at least 19 years old, and enlist the support of a non-smoking “buddy.”

Participants who were successful in quitting for the month had a chance to win a new Ford Mustang and seven ‘surround-sound’ home theatre systems.

In Renfrew County and District, the Quit Smoking contest was promoted through posters, newspaper ads, newspaper articles and radio public service announcements. It was also promoted in the winter edition of the Health Unit’s newsletter for workplaces. Contest brochures were sent to health care providers, pharmacies, resource centers, workplaces, social service agencies, libraries and other places in the community. “Quit Kits” were distributed to people as requested.

- 19,009 people from across Ontario entered the contest.
- Their average age was 37 years; half were male and half were female.
- On average, participants had been smoking 18 cigarettes a day for about 20 years.
- 274 people in Renfrew County and District entered the contest.

A survey of previous contest participants found that 30 percent of those who stayed smoke free for the quit month were still smoke free one year later. We wish all the participants success with staying smoke-free.

Stay Safe Committee for Older Adults

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit works with community groups to prevent fall-related injuries among older adults. We work together through the Renfrew County Stay Safe Committee. This committee promotes safe practices that help to prevent falls.

Initiatives in 2005 included:

“Stay Happy Stay Healthy” kit for older adults – Committee members distributed 1000 Alcohol and Depression kits to seniors living in their own homes. The kit contained a fact sheet on alcohol and depression, a pill dossier, the Low Risk Drinking Guidelines, and a fridge magnet from the Community Mental Health Crisis Line.

Medicine Clean Out Campaign – This campaign encouraged people to dispose safely of their medications that are expired or no longer needed. People were encouraged to bring their medication to a participating pharmacy or a household hazardous waste depot. During the month of May we used posters, newspaper ads, presentations and displays to get the message out. Over 270 bags of medicine were dropped off at pharmacies.

“Stay Happy Stay Healthy” community event – This free one day festival for older adults was held in Arnprior on Monday, November 7, 2005. Many health care providers were available to answer questions and promote seniors’ safety through interactive displays and presentations. About 100 people attended.

Stay Safe Calendar: A Safety Guide for Older Adults – This calendar has a safety message for each month. Three thousand 2006 calendars were distributed to older adults across Renfrew County during November and December 2005.

Preventing Food Poisoning in our Homes and Restaurants

According to the Ontario Ministry of Health's Mandatory Programs and Services Guidelines, the Renfrew County and District Health Unit is required to deliver a food safety program that improves the health of the population by reducing the incidence of food poisonings.

To carry out this mandate, the Health Unit regularly inspects all facilities and special events in Renfrew County and District that offer food for human consumption. Inspections are meant to identify and correct potential health hazards that may cause food poisoning. In 2005, the Health Unit performed 679 inspections.

One strategy used during inspections is called the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point program (HACCP). HACCP focuses on food preparation practices, and identifies any point in the process where the food may be subjected to improper storage temperatures or a potential for contamination. It is used in food premises that are considered "high risk."

During the course of food inspections, Public Health Inspectors have been required to take corrective action from time to time in order to alleviate potential situations that may lead to food poisonings. In 2005, the Health Unit issued 13 legal orders, eight provincial offence notices (tickets), and two summonses to appear in court. Legal proceedings are considered a last, yet necessary step to achieve compliance with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation.

The Health Unit also offers Safe Food Handler Training courses as an education tool for the prevention of food poisonings at home and in commercial food premises. People who successfully complete the program receive a certificate in safe food handling. 436 certificates were awarded in 2005.

Safe Water Program

The new Safe Drinking Water regulations introduced higher standards for public drinking water supplies. In 2005 the Renfrew County and District Health Unit responded to 134 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 2005 the Health Unit issued fourteen 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 647 persons regarding their private wells. Many of these conversations dealt with how to correct structural problems with wells, method of disinfecting water supplies, and how to interpret water sample results. The Health Unit also provided over 1000 copies of the Keeping Your Well Water Safe to Drink kit. This kit provides advice and information about construction, testing and disinfecting procedures for private wells.

Over 7800 private water samples were submitted through the Health Unit for laboratory analysis in 2005. A total of 2169 samples (27%) were reported as unacceptable based on the Ontario drinking water standards.

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.

West Nile Virus Program

West Nile Virus is a mosquito borne disease that can have a negative impact on human health. In 2005 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 the type of mosquitoes found in a particular location;
- Ø Monitoring and reporting any human cases;
- Ø Public awareness – “Fight the Bite” media campaign.

The Health Unit submitted a total of 31 dead birds to the laboratory for analysis. Of these, one bird was 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 found to be carrying the disease. There were no human cases within our jurisdiction in 2005.

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

Top Six Reasons for Calling the Health Info Line

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit offers telephone health information through the Health Info Line: 1-800-267-1097 or 735-8666. A registered nurse provides information to callers from the public and health professionals on a variety of health topics, ranging from infant feeding to communicable disease.

The Health Info Line is open from 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 she will respond as soon as possible. All information shared with the nurse is confidential.

The top 6 reasons why community members called the Health Info Line in 2005 were:

1. Immunization and communicable diseases (699 calls)
2. Travel health information requests (588 calls)
3. Community resource information requests (412 calls)
4. Child health and breastfeeding (34 calls)
5. Medical inquiries (96 calls)
6. Other (997 calls)

Total calls for 2005 – 3,133

Board of Health members in 2005

Reeve Janice Bush, Vice-chair
Ms. Sheila Clarke, Member
Reeve Bill Croshaw, Member
Mayor Jim Etmanski, Member
Ms. Shirley Morris, Member
Councillor Gary Severin, Member
Warden Bob Sweet, Member
Ms. Marcia Timm, Member
Reeve Jack Wilson, Chair

2005 Approved Budget

Total budget: \$6,914,426

Funding sources:

- Province of Ontario – 55%
- County of Renfrew, City of Pembroke and Township of South Algonquin – 29%
- Other sources – 16%

How the funds are allocated:

- Salaries, benefits and program costs – 85%
- Occupancy and communications – 6%
- Other operating costs – 9%