



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

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2006 Annual Report

We have selected some of the highlights from 2006 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



Smoke-Free Ontario Act has been well accepted in Renfrew County and District

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act came into force on May 31, 2006. This Act is designed to protect the health of Ontarians by:

- prohibiting smoking in almost all enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places,
- strengthening measures to ensure that only those 19 years of age and older can buy cigarettes, and
- phasing out the display of tobacco products in retail outlets.

It aims to reduce preventable disease and death from tobacco use, and builds on previous tobacco control legislation.

Staff at Ontario's public health units have the responsibility of enforcing the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Before the Act came into effect, staff at Renfrew County and District Health Unit worked to ensure that tobacco vendors, employers and employees had the information and resources they needed to be able to comply with the new legislation.

Activities included:

- information sessions;
- inspections (with an educational approach) of all tobacco vendors and restaurants; and
- presentations at municipal council meetings.

Between May 31 and December 31, 2006, Public Health Inspectors completed over 450 inspections at tobacco vendors, restaurants/bars, enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places throughout Renfrew County and District. During this time we received 26 complaints related to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and all of these were investigated.

Up to the end of 2006 there have been 38 warnings, 19 summary offence notices (tickets) and eight court summonses for violations of the Act. This reflects a high rate of compliance, and we are very pleased with the acceptance of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act in Renfrew County and District. Only one establishment has openly defied the Act. As of March 29, 2007, this facility is closed and the case is awaiting trial.

Preparing for an influenza pandemic

Influenza (the flu) is a common virus that is present in our community primarily on a seasonal basis. A pandemic is an unusually high occurrence of an infectious disease that spreads rapidly over a large geographic area – potentially worldwide.

Influenza pandemics have the capacity to cause serious illness and death because people have little or no immunity to the circulating strains of influenza. Historically, influenza pandemics have occurred about every 35 – 40 years. Although there is no way to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur, many health experts believe that it is overdue and planning should take place to deal with such an emergency.

Renfrew County & District Health Unit (RCDHU) began pandemic influenza planning in June 2004, and completed a written plan in 2006. The *Renfrew County and District Pandemic Influenza Plan* is aligned with existing provincial and federal guidelines, regulations and directions. It was developed in accordance with the *Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan*, the *Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan* and other key documents. To plan for an effective local emergency response, we also sought input from local stakeholders in the health, education, emergency planning, social service, volunteer, and community sectors.

Two of the areas addressed in the *Renfrew County and District Pandemic Influenza Plan* are outlined below.

Communication is an important aspect of outbreak and crisis management. Clear, concise and timely messages from a credible source will be critical before, during and after an influenza pandemic. RCDHU will be the lead organization for communications with the public and health professionals within Renfrew County and District. Our communications will be supported by information from provincial, national and international sources as well as local hospitals, long-term care homes and municipal leaders.

Public health measures are non-medical interventions that may be used to reduce the spread of the influenza virus. Public health measures include public education, case and contact management, community-based disease control strategies (e.g. school closures and restriction/cancellation of large public gatherings), and travel restrictions. The type of public health measures used will depend on the characteristics of the virus (e.g. the severity of the illness it causes, how it is transmitted, the proportion of the population in different age groups that fall ill, etc). The Medical Officer of Health, in consultation with other levels of government, will be responsible for decisions regarding the

implementation of community-based disease control strategies in order to protect the public.

The *Renfrew County and District Pandemic Influenza Plan* is available on our website:
<http://rcdhu.com/Pandemic%20Flu%20Plan/Index.htm>.

West Nile virus surveillance and control program continues

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a disease carried by infected mosquitoes. Mosquitoes pick up the virus when they bite an infected bird. Humans who are bitten by an infected mosquito can get sick.

The Ontario government has developed a strategy to fight this disease. As part of the strategy, the Renfrew County and District Health Unit has been mandated to carry out a WNV surveillance and control program since 2002. Two important parts of the surveillance program are bird testing and mosquito trapping.

Bird Testing: Public Health Inspectors with the Renfrew County and District Health Unit collected 27 dead crows, ravens and blue jays in 2006. Twenty-six birds were tested, and results indicated that six birds were infected with WNV.

Mosquito Trapping: Public Health Inspectors set 80 mosquito traps across Renfrew County in 2006. As in previous years, test results showed that no mosquitoes were carrying WNV. However, in 2006 there was an increase in the types of mosquitoes that are known to transmit WNV.

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit is required to investigate and record complaints relating to WNV. In 2006, three complaints about standing water were investigated.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit stresses the importance of prevention and protection against mosquitoes carrying WNV. It is a good idea to clean up areas around the house where mosquitoes like to rest and breed. Remove leaves in eaves troughs, keep drainage ditches open, dump standing water from objects such as wheelbarrows and flowerpots, and change birdbaths weekly. Check that window and door screens fit properly and do not allow mosquitoes to enter indoors. If you have to go outside around dawn or dusk, wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and long pants. For added protection, use an insect repellent containing DEET and follow the directions on the label carefully. (E.g. Do not use repellent containing DEET on children under 6 months of age.)

Rabies control program helps limit the spread of rabies in humans

Rabies is an infectious disease caused by a virus that is spread by infected mammals to other mammals (including humans) through saliva. This can occur by biting, contact with the virus through an open cut, sore or wound, and by contact through mucous membranes (mouth, nasal cavity, eyes). The virus travels through the nervous system to the brain where it reproduces, and then travels through the nerves to other parts of the body.

In humans, early symptoms may include numbness around the site of the bite, fever, headache and malaise. Later symptoms may include muscle spasms and asphyxiation. In animals, symptoms include partial paralysis and either submissive or aggressive behavior. In both humans and animals, once clinical symptoms appear, rabies is always fatal.

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit has a rabies control program to help limit the spread of rabies in humans. Hospitals and physicians are required to report all animal bites and scratches to the Health Unit. The suspect animal is then quarantined for ten days. If the animal is alive and healthy at the end of this period, there is no risk to the person bitten of contracting rabies.

In 2006, we investigated and quarantined 120 animals that were involved in biting or scratching incidents. We did not have any positive cases of rabies during this period. However, 15 people in Renfrew County had to be given anti-rabies vaccine for precautionary purposes. To help spread the message about the importance of rabies, Public Health Inspectors provide presentations to elementary school children.

The best way to protect yourself and your pets from rabies is through prevention. It is mandatory in Renfrew County to have your dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies. Pets should not be allowed to run loose, and all stray animals and wildlife should be avoided. Wear gloves if you need to handle dead or sick animals. If you are bitten or scratched by an animal, the wound should be thoroughly cleansed with soap and water. Medical attention should then be sought to ensure that the incident is reported to the Health Unit.

Use of travel health services has increased

Travel health advice and immunization for travelers is mandated under the Infectious Diseases Program, which states, “The Board of Health shall provide or ensure the availability of travel health advice and immunization for travelers” (*Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, December 1997*).

Travel health advice is available to the public and physicians’ offices by calling the Health Info Line. In 2006, the Renfrew County & District Health Unit received 959 travel calls as compared to 588 calls in 2005. Travel health information calls are the most popular type of calls received by the Health Info Line.

When someone asks for travel health advice, the nurse completes with the traveler a “Pre-travel Questionnaire” which identifies the destination, purpose of the trip, type of accommodation, departure date and medical history.

The nurse determines the traveler’s need for immunization depending on their health situation, previous immunization history and travel itinerary. Information is provided regarding vaccines, including the cost, and recommendations on travel topics such as food and water safety, sun protection and traveler’s diarrhea.

A travel information package is provided which includes the booklet “A Guide to Healthy Travel” and information specific to the travel destination. Travelers can receive their immunizations at the Health Unit’s Travel Health Clinic on Wednesdays in Pembroke, or at immunization clinics in Petawawa, Renfrew, Arnprior, Deep River, Eganville and Cobden.

Early Child Development Initiatives continue to have an impact

Early Child Development Initiatives were funded for a five-year period ending in 2006. The funding was provided to Ontario Health Units by the Early Years Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, to enhance existing programs. Projects were carried out in two areas: “Healthy Pregnancy and Child Development” and “Injury and Family Abuse Prevention.”

Community partners were involved in identifying local needs and priorities, and took part in many project activities. The activities that we will be able to sustain under the present public health mandate are outlined below.

- **Child Health Clinics** were established to increase the early identification of health risks for children up to six years of age. The Clinics will continue to offer health information, immunizations, and consultations and screenings related to growth and development, dental health and speech.
- Public Health Nurses were trained to support new mothers who are experiencing **postpartum depression**. Reference materials, posters and pamphlets were developed or purchased through the funding. Staff will continue to use these resources with prenatal and postpartum families.
- Public Health Nurses and community partners were trained to provide **Make the Connection** workshops, which continue to be implemented in different parts of Renfrew County. Make the Connection teaches parents and caregivers how to establish healthy emotional connections with their babies and children.
- Health Unit staff were trained to carry out **Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening for Woman Abuse**. We will continue to use this screening tool to identify women who are or have been a victim of abuse, in all areas where women are in contact with public health. Training to use the tool is part of the orientation for new staff at the Renfrew County and District Health Unit.
- Resources about **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder** were developed and will continue to be distributed to families planning pregnancies.
- Some high-risk families received safety devices for their homes (e.g. baby gates, drawer locks, plugs for electric receptacles) during the funding period. Education to families related to **home safety** will continue through the Healthy

Babies Healthy Children program.

Community health status report looks at dental health of kindergarten children

Our report on health status in the community for 2006 focused on the dental health of kindergarten children. The results show that dental disease is a concern for some children in Renfrew County and District.

Dental hygienists from the Renfrew County and District Health Unit visited all kindergarten classes in Renfrew County and District during the 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 school years. Hygienists conducted the Dental Indices Survey (DIS) with all children who were present on the day of their visit.

Some key findings from the survey are:

- Almost 10% of five year olds had urgent dental treatment needs. This means that some families are experiencing barriers to dental treatment and good oral hygiene.
- Two thirds of the five year olds had never had a cavity.
- The average number of teeth affected by caries is an indicator of the overall dental health of a group of people. Five year olds in this survey had an average of 1.7 teeth that were affected by caries.

The report recommends that we continue and strengthen efforts to provide oral health education, identify dental diseases early, and advocate for a more accessible public dental care program.

To read the full report see **Community Health Status Report #13: Dental Health of Kindergarten Children** on our web site: www.rcdhu.com/communityhealthstatus/

Accomplishments of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Committee

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the term used to describe the range of mental and physical disabilities that can result from prenatal exposure to alcohol. An estimated 9 in every 1,000 babies born in Canada are affected by FASD. Since 939 babies were born in Renfrew County in 2005, it can be inferred that 9 of these babies are affected by FASD.

FASD puts a heavy social and economic burden on those with FASD, their families, their communities and our society as a whole. FASD is a life-long disability. With the right supports, approaches and services, people with FASD lead happy and productive lives. While there is no cure, the disorder is preventable.

In 2001, the Health Unit spearheaded the formation of the Renfrew County & District FASD Committee. Committee members are workers from the Health Unit, parent support and social service agencies, and private citizens who share an interest in FASD. The Committee works to develop strategies to reduce alcohol consumption during pregnancy and to support families affected by FASD in Renfrew County and District.

The Renfrew County and District FASD Committee has worked on a number of initiatives since 2001:

- Compiled a directory of local services for women identified at risk for alcohol use during pregnancy. This was distributed to all partner organizations on the FASD Committee, family doctors, and at workshops about FASD.
- Recognizes FASD Day on September 9th each year. Advertisements and stories are submitted to local newspapers. In 2005, the Committee worked with STAR 96 FM and Ernie Parson (MPP for Prince Edward – Hastings) to broadcast information about Sandy's Law, an amendment to the Liquor License Act in 2005.
- Distributed posters about Sandy's Law (Bill 43) to all licensed establishments in Renfrew County.
- Shared educational resources with all schools in Renfrew County.
- Made presentations to teachers and school support counsellors in Renfrew County.

- Paid for educational messages on Brum's Dairy's 1% milk cartons.
- Held three workshops to educate to teachers, health and social service workers and interested members of the community.

“Working with FASD” Workshop

On Nov.6 & 7, 2006, the FASD Committee hosted a workshop led by Dr. Kathy Jones and titled *Working with FASD: Supporting families and youth in the community at school and at home*. Dr. Jones is a Specialist for Children with Special Needs for West Region Child and Family Services in Manitoba. She also provides clinical support to the Kenora Association for Community Living and teaches part-time at the University of Manitoba. She is the parent of a child with FASD. There were 130 participants at the workshop from health, social service and education agencies, as well as parents and guardians of children with FASD.

Safer Bars program helps to prevent violence and injuries

The Health Unit carries out the *Safer Bars* program in collaboration with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Renfrew County FOCUS Community Project. *Safer Bars* was developed by CAMH. The purpose of *Safer Bars* is to reduce customer aggression and violence that often occur in licensed drinking venues like bars and at special occasion permit events.

By training bar owners, managers, servers and floor monitors to prevent and intervene in aggressive and violent altercations in bars, the risk of injuries and legal liability is reduced. By reducing problem incidents in bars, there is a reduced risk to the general public as there is less vandalism, property damage, injuries and impaired driving.

The *Safer Bars* program has three components:

1) Safer Bars “Assessing and Reducing Risks of Violence” checklist

This is an easy-to-self-administer checklist that enables a bar owner to determine how safe the bar is from a social and physical perspective.

2) Safer Bars “Do you know the law?” booklet

This is an easy-to-read booklet that describes the legal and legislative environment that bars in Ontario must comply with to avoid legal and financial repercussions of not keeping customer's safe.

3) Safer Bars Training Workshop

The purpose of the training is to increase the ability of bar staff to work as a team to reduce the risk of customers becoming aggressive, violent or injured. CAMH provides a trainer to facilitate this workshop. Each participant receives a workbook, the “Do you know the law” booklet, and a certificate of completion.

Safer Bars Program and Related Activities in 2006

- Five (5) *Safer Bars Program* training workshops were held in Renfrew County and District. A total of 70 people participated.
- As a follow-up to the training, the Health Unit collaborated with FOCUS Community Project partners and the local CAMH consultant to host a “Bar Policy Workshop”. Six (6) representatives from three (3) bars attended. As a result of this workshop, three (3) new bar policies were developed.
- At one of the *Safer Bars Program* workshops, a bar owner indicated that resource

materials in support of checking identification for legal drinking age would be helpful to bar staff. As a result, a “checking I.D.” poster and wallet card were developed. Each licensed establishment in Renfrew County received a poster and enough wallet cards for each staff member. The response has been positive.

- The Renfrew County Rape Drug Committee distributed 20,000 coasters to licensed establishments across Renfrew County and District to increase awareness about the dangers of rape drugs.

Promoting health in workplaces

The Renfrew County & District Health Unit works with workplace personnel and local trade and business associations to improve awareness, skills, and work environments. These initiatives are aimed at:

- reducing the risk of chronic diseases,
- preventing alcohol and other substance abuse, and
- supporting healthy pregnancies and breastfeeding.

The Health Unit offers consultation and assistance with policy development and health promotion programs. Resources are available on the following topics:

- Healthy Eating and Healthy Weights
- Breastfeeding in the Workplace
- Healthy Pregnancy
- Stress Management
- Immunizations
- Physical Activity
- Tobacco-free Living
- Injury and Substance Abuse Prevention

Workplace health activities in 2006 included:

Health for All Workplaces Newsletter - Four editions were produced and distributed to over 100 workplaces in Renfrew County and District. The newsletters are also available on our website: <http://rcdhu.com/health-info/workplace%20health/workplacehealth.htm>

Stress Management Train the Trainer Workshop – Health Unit staff organized and led a one-day workshop for managers and occupational health and safety staff from local workplaces. Twenty-seven participants acquired information, resources and strategies to enable them to provide stress management education for employees. Each workplace represented at the workshop received a training manual developed by Health Unit staff.

Protecting Workers from Tobacco Smoke in Homes Workshop – A one-day workshop was organized and hosted by the Health Unit. A facilitator from the Program Training and Consultation Centre explored the issue of workers' exposure to second-hand smoke during home visits, and shared strategies for reducing harm from second-hand smoke. Thirty-eight people from local workplaces and the Health Unit attended the workshop.

Workplace Alcohol and Drug Use Policy Workshop – A one-day workshop was organized and hosted by the Health Unit. A facilitator from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health explored the impact of substance use problems in the workplace, the development of social occasion event policies for worksites, and alcohol policies for company-sponsored events. Thirty-three people from local workplaces attended.

Smoke-Free Ontario Act Information Sessions – This three-hour information session

was developed by staff from the Health Promotion and Environmental Health Divisions at the Health Unit. The sessions provided information and resources to enable workplaces to comply with the new legislation. The sessions were advertised through local newspapers, the *Health for All Workplaces* newsletter and on the Health Unit website. Sessions were held in Arnprior, Barry's Bay, Deep River, Eganville, Pembroke and Renfrew during the month of May 2006, just before the legislation came into effect. Over sixty people attended.

Quit Smoking Information Sessions – One-hour information sessions were held in Arnprior, Barry's Bay, Deep River, Eganville, Pembroke and Renfrew in November. The session provided smokers, and friends and family members of smokers, with strategies and resources for quitting smoking. We advertised the sessions through newspapers, and by distributing posters in the community and in workplaces. Over twenty-five people attended.

Presentations and Workplace Events – Health Unit staff participated in several events at workplaces during the year. These included presentations and health fairs. Over 400 employees were reached through these activities.

Board of Health members in 2006

Reeve Janice Bush

Ms. Sheila Clarke

Reeve Bill Croshaw

Mayor Jim Etmanski

Ms. Shirley Morris

Councillor Gary Severin, Vice-chair

Warden Bob Sweet

Ms. Marcia Timm

Reeve Jack Wilson, Chair

2006 Approved Budget

Total budget: \$8,411,868

Funding sources:

- Province of Ontario - 62 %
- County of Renfrew, City of Pembroke and Township of South Algonquin - 24 %
- Other sources - 14 %

How the funds are allocated:

- Salaries, benefits and program costs - 77 %
- Occupancy and communications - 5 %
- Rebate to obligated municipalities 13 %
- Other operating costs - 5 %