



## Board of Health Meeting Summary

October 9, 2024

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### **Stewardship Committee Report: 2025 Budget Preparation**

Larry Stinson, Director of Central Service provided an overview of the projected 2025 budget. Early this year, Peterborough Public Health (PPH) and Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPR) submitted a business case to the province for funding to merge entities effective January 1, 2025. In the absence of a provincial decision, PPH's Stewardship Committee shared a projected 2025 budget based on the annual 1% base budget increase that the provincial government implemented effective January 1, 2024. With this prediction, Peterborough Public Health (PPH) would only see an increase of \$82,990 from the province leading to a budget shortfall of \$1.2 million that would need to be funded by local municipalities, a 42% increase to their 2024 contributions. Stinson explained that the lack of sustainable funding from the province to achieve the provincial mandate has been an ongoing issue that was offset for the past few years by one-time COVID-19 response funding. Matthew Graham, Chair of Stewardship Committee, explained that the merger funding would alleviate pressures on the base budget and reduce the impact on municipalities and First Nations significantly. Board members were asked to bring the proposed budget back to their municipal and First Nations councils to support advocacy to the province for a final decision on the potential 2025 merger.

### **Health Care Worker Influenza Immunization Coverage 2023-24**

The Board of Health received a staff report from the Immunization Program detailing influenza vaccination coverage rates for local health care settings, including Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) and long-term care homes (LTCH). According to the report, there were 809 lab-confirmed influenza cases in the 2023-2024 surveillance season and 19 outbreaks. A decrease in immunization rates was observed in 2023-2024 among healthcare workers in high-risk settings compared to the previous year. Specifically, in 2023-2024, 66.3% of PRHC staff and 57.0% of LTCH staff received influenza immunizations, compared to 69% and 64.8% the previous year. These declines may be attributable to immunization fatigue, which may have influenced staff decisions to not pursue immunization. Low rates of immunization in the LTCH sector were exacerbated by health human resource challenges observed during the pandemic, including loss of staff during the influenza surveillance season.

### **2024-25 Respiratory Season Update**

Gillian Pacey, Infectious Diseases Manager, and Carolyn Pigeau, Epidemiologist, and Patti Fitzgerald, Clinical Service Manager delivered a presentation outlining local data and anticipated trends heading into the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season. Local data shows that outbreaks of COVID and other respiratory viruses have remained steady over the summer despite typical seasonal declines. Pacey also shared that the number of outbreaks appear to be trending higher in 2024 compared to previous years.

Pacey outlined efforts to prepare for the upcoming respiratory virus season. During the summer, PPH and community partners completed outbreak and surge management planning to ensure readiness and a robust response should there

be a sudden increase in cases locally. This effort is complemented by an internal respiratory virus surge plan to ensure adequate resources are in place in the event of a sudden increase in outbreaks locally.

With respect to vaccination, Fitzgerald noted that residents can begin to receive their COVID-19 and Influenza vaccine starting next week for high-risk residents, opening to all residents over the age of 6 months later in the month. New this year is the availability of an RSV vaccine for newborns and children with high-risk medical needs under the age of 2 years. These vaccines will be administered at the hospital for newborns or by a healthcare provider. Residents may continue to visit PPH's COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Index for weekly updates to risk levels and relevant data based on local data.

#### **Food For Kids Student Nutrition Program Annual Report 2023-24**

Luisa Magalhaes, Registered Dietitian, and Angela Fuchs, Community Development Coordinator with Peterborough Child Family Centres provided an update on local student nutrition programs (SNP). 51 schools in Peterborough City and County benefit from SNPs serving over 19,000 students. SNPs are universally run allowing every student to access nutritious food for free to support learning, healthy eating habits, and academic success. Magalhaes shared that Ontario invests \$.10 per student, the lowest funding in the country, leading to barriers in adequately funding local programs as food prices are rising. Recently, the Federal government promised financial support for school food programs pending an agreement with Provincial governments. The Board of Health agreed to communicate with provincial and local stakeholders the importance of negotiating and signing an agreement that will see federal funding to support provincial student nutrition programs. Along with asking the province to increase their funding contribution by 29 cents per student to match the national median of 39 cents per student.