

# Medical Officer of Health: Report to The Board of Health

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*Your lifetime partner in healthy living.*  
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# Medical Officer of Health Update

## Measles

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit continues to respond to the measles outbreak in a variety of ways. Please see individual sections of this report (Communicable Disease Control, Vaccine Preventable Diseases, Communication, Population Health Assessment & Surveillance) to learn about the status of the outbreak and steps we are taking to minimize the spread of measles. Internal services such as Information Technology, Human Resources and Finance continue to support these efforts.

## Public Health and Ontario Health Teams

The current focus for Ontario Health Teams (OHT) is increasing primary care access and attachment as per [Ontario's Primary Care Action Plan](#). This plan will impact the way public health delivers services.

Currently, many health units provide clinical services simply to address community needs, so primary care expansion presents an opportunity for public health and primary care to co-design a more comprehensive community approach to health equity and primary prevention of chronic disease. Collaborations between public health and primary care can also advance the prevention and management of diseases of public health significance, particularly in priority populations. To achieve these goals, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is intensifying its collaboration with OHTs.

# Programs and Services Updates

## Corporate Services

### *Facilities Operations*

- A new Facilities policy was issued to all staff.
- Annual maintenance of the vaccine fridge has been completed.
- A certified contractor completed the cleaning of the Stormceptor separator drain. This stormwater treatment device, installed at the Ministry of Environment's request prior to construction of the North Bay office, helps remove pollutants, such as oil, sediment, and debris from stormwater runoff.
- Gardening maintenance and lawn cutting services have been secured for the 2025 season.
- Currently obtaining quotes for exterior painting of the fence, pergola, and wood benches.

### *Information Technology*

- A mobile phone refresh occurred to replace select end of life devices.
- Ongoing planning is underway to support the organization's migration to Windows 11.
- Planning for changes to organizational Identity and Access Management (IAM) to include biometrics and single sign on.
- Installed new Logitech Tap video conferencing equipment in the teaching kitchen to enhance virtual meeting functionality.

### *Human Resources*

#### **Employee and Labour Relations**

Negotiations with the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) have taken place May 21-22 and June 24-25, 2025. Negotiations with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) are scheduled for September 15-17, 2025.

#### **Occupational Health and Safety**

In May, Human Resources promoted Mental Health Week through a variety of activities and educational materials. This initiative supports the strategic goal of fostering a psychologically healthy and safe workplace and was met with strong staff engagement.

Following changes implemented by the Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI), we have updated our De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations™ curriculum to include a trauma-informed approach. The primary focus of the de-escalation training is to offer participants information on the influence trauma can play in one's ability to effectively interpret and react to a situation. A trauma-informed approach ultimately reduces the risk of violence.

## **Professional Development**

Recent Learning Together Circles peer-to-peer learning sessions:

- Creating SharePoint Pages – 4 participants

Other internal professional development or compliance training offerings:

- De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations - 7 participants

Upcoming sessions in June:

- Learn how to use Outlook refresher
- Indigenous Foodways – Learning about Indigenous foodways, the revised Canada Food Guide and sharing a meal with colleagues. One session will be held in North Bay and one in Parry Sound.
- Biigiiweyan Cultural Safety Training – External training that focuses on the training of health care professionals with a focus on Indigenous peoples and their health care journeys.

## **Staffing**

In addition to filling temporary positions, the following permanent positions were recently filled:

- Manager, Finance (1.00 FTE), effective March 31, 2025.
- Public Health Inspector, Communicable Disease Control (1.00 FTE), effective April 1, 2025\*
- Public Health Nurse, Sexual Health & Harm Reduction Services (1.00 FTE), effective May 5, 2025
- (2) Health Promotion Planners, Foundational Services (1.00 FTE), effective July 1, 2025
- Public Health Inspector, Environmental Health (1.00 FTE), start date to be determined.

\*There has been a 1.00 FTE net increase in FTE, created through IPAC Provincial HUB Funding.

## **Finance**

The Finance Team has submitted the following documents:

- 2024 Annual Report
- 2024 Revenue Canada Charity Return
- 2024-2025 Infection Prevention and Control Hub year-end report
- 2025-2026 Infection Prevention and Control Hub budget
- 2024-2025 Stay on Your Feet year-end report
- 2024-2025 Planet Youth year-end report

The following documents were sent to municipalities:

- 2024 Municipal Financial Information Return
- 2024 North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Audited Financial Statements

## Clinical Services

### *Communicable Disease Control*

#### **Multi-Jurisdictional Measles Outbreak**

Historically, measles has been rare in Ontario, with most cases linked with travel. Due to a global increase in measles activity in 2024, Ontario began to experience a rise in measles cases. Presently, Ontario is part of a multi-jurisdictional measles outbreak affecting several provinces.

On October 18, 2024, exposure to a travel-related case in New Brunswick led to measles cases in Ontario. While New Brunswick declared their outbreak over on January 7, 2025, Ontario and other provinces have continued to report measles cases linked to this outbreak. Ontario's first outbreak cases were reported the week of October 28, 2024. As of June 12, 2025, Ontario has reported a total of 2083 measles cases associated with the outbreak occurring in 21 public health units. This month, the province also reported its first measles outbreak-related death.

In early March 2025, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit confirmed its first case of measles since 1995. The infected individual was an unvaccinated adult who had been exposed to a confirmed case outside the district. As of June 18, 2025, 38 measles cases (12 confirmed, 26 probable) have been identified.

### *Professional Practice*

Professional Practice facilitated the placement of 66 students at the health unit during the 2024–2025 academic year, in partnership with academic institutions across a range of disciplines including nursing, education, administration, and graduate-level programs. The program now serves as a representative on the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) Employee Reference Group (ERG), which provides feedback and insight to inform the development, revision, and implementation of CNO standards and resources. The ERG also functions as a forum to identify and discuss emerging issues in nursing practice, incorporating real-world perspectives from diverse sectors across the province. The health unit's participation brings both a Northern Ontario and public health lens to these discussions. In addition, Professional Practice is participating on the review panel for the updated Intimate Partner Violence Best Practice Guideline from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, contributing input related to the context and needs of public health practice and clientele, alongside representatives from nursing sectors across Ontario.

## *Oral Health*

In support of the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit's Strategic Plan, and its focus on advancing health equity and strengthening collaborative partnerships, the Oral Health team is partnering with Foundational Services to co-develop targeted oral health promotion strategies. These efforts will prioritize Indigenous communities and external partners who serve equity-deserving populations, ensuring culturally appropriate and accessible approaches that promote better oral health outcomes throughout the district.

## *Sexual Health*

The HIV urgent response group continues to plan and implement activities to address increased rates of HIV in the Parry Sound area. We have identified the need to mobilize cross-program collaboration with the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) team to coordinate infection prevention efforts for populations at risk for both HIV and invasive Group A Streptococcal disease (iGAS). The Health Unit, in collaboration with the AIDS committee of North Bay & Area (ACNBA) and Parry Sound Community Paramedicine, organized a community health event in Parry Sound in response to the iGAS and HIV risk. The event will include education on several topics (e.g., Wound Care 101) and the provision of free HIV testing (with pre-test counselling), harm reduction supplies, wound care kits, and snacks.

Sexual Health collaborated with Healthy Families programs to share important messaging with healthcare providers about syphilis in pregnancy and the latest recommendations for prenatal screening. In April, an updated public health bulletin on syphilis among women of childbearing age was included in packages that were distributed to all local healthcare providers.

## *Harm Reduction Services*

Implementation of the Our North Bay Healthbox (ONBHB) vending machine, located at our 345 Oak Street West location in North Bay, was officially launched on June 11, 2025. The ONBHB offers low-barrier, stigma-free access to health and wellness items, as well as community health and social service information. Individuals can anonymously access take-home HIV self-testing kits, naloxone, hygiene products (e.g., toothbrushes, soap, menstrual products), socks, and condoms. It will also serve as a vehicle for health promotion messaging, drug alerts, and an interactive service navigation map.

## *Vaccine Preventable Diseases*

May marked the conclusion of the Grade 7 Hepatitis B (HB) and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) provincially funded vaccine program for the 2024/2025 school year. For the first time, parents were given the option to provide consent electronically. This new format allowed consents to be submitted directly to the Health Unit electronically after being signed, resulting in increased return rates and, consequently, a higher number of students vaccinated. In June, the Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) team completed the annual Childcare Assessment process, reviewing immunization records for all children and staff in childcare settings to ensure

compliance. Considering the recent increase in measles cases across Ontario, the team also implemented a targeted local strategy to address immunity gaps. Specifically, outreach was conducted to families of children with no measles-containing vaccines on record. Letters were sent to encourage timely immunization as children become eligible. A similar proactive initiative will be carried out over the summer months to address immunity gaps among school-aged students. These efforts aim to increase measles vaccine coverage and reduce the risk of potential outbreaks within the district.

## Community Services

### *Environmental Health*

Environmental Health presented at an information session focused on harmful algal blooms (HAB) in Callander, alongside representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), Nipissing University, Ontario Clean Water Agency, and municipal leaders. The event was well attended, reflecting strong community interest in environmental health concerns. The presentation covered the potential health effects of HAB events, the responsibilities of various stakeholders, and practical advice for residents on minimizing exposure and associated risks.

The first round of high-risk food facility inspections was completed by the April 30 deadline, with all open facilities successfully inspected. These high-risk establishments, identified under the Operational Approaches for Food Safety Guideline, have a heightened potential for foodborne illness outbreaks. Given this increased risk, public health inspectors conduct inspections every four months to ensure compliance. This achievement underscores the Environmental Health team's dedication to maintaining rigorous food safety standards and protecting public health.

### *Healthy Families*

On May 12, 2025, the Healthy Families program launched The Basics which consisted of a news release and a social media campaign. The Basics Movement is a community-wide positive parenting promotion initiative based on five Basics Principles for parents/caregivers of children 0-5 years old. This approach is rooted in child development research, with a focus on brain development, because 80% of brain growth happens in the first 3 years. Next steps include engaging and collaborating with community partners interested in participating in [the Basics Movement](#).

In November 2024, the program launched a new free online prenatal program, called 'InJoy' for pregnant clients and their supports. InJoy is an interactive program offered in English, French, and 7 other languages. It can be accessed from a cell phone, computer, or tablet and includes the following topics: understanding your pregnancy, labour and birth, breastfeeding and caring for your newborn. To date, utilization of the program is positive with the number of clients who

have accessed the program in the first 5 months of this year higher compared to the same duration last year using a different online platform (76 versus 51). Evaluation of the program will be completed at the end of the year.

### *Community Health*

Community Health is supporting the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience Working Group of the Child and Youth Planning Table to share foundational knowledge on brain development, early adversity, and resilience with professionals and decision-makers across sectors. Launching this fall, the *Community Resilience Learning Movement* will engage member organizations of the Muskoka, Nipissing, and Parry Sound Child and Youth Planning Table through presentations, events, and online learning. This effort is intended to spark community action across sectors to collectively build resilience, prevent early adversity, and mitigate the effects of adversity on lifelong health.

This collaboration aligns with the newly released [Ontario Early Adversity and Resilience Framework](#), which calls for cross-sectoral action to prevent adversity, strengthen protective factors, build resilience, and support healing in communities.

## **Organizational Effectiveness**

### *Communications*

- Worked with Sexual Health and Harm Reduction services to organize a press conference in marking the official launch of Our North Bay Healthbox, which will help to close gaps to equitable access of harm reduction supplies, personal health, wellness items, and connect people to support services in the community.
- On track to revamp the Health Unit's presence on Instagram, which will allow the organization to better keep up with the fast-changing pace of social media trends and tailor public health messaging to young adults.
- Worked with the Medical Officer of Health in preparing for the Health Unit's first appearance on a podcast, "Echo Essentials," a North Bay media outlet that takes a conversational approach to local news.
- Secured media coverage in both English and French after sharing a news release to mark the official launch of The Basics, an initiative led by Healthy Families.
- Early conversations are taking place with communication leads at other Northern Ontario Health Units, with the intent to work together on raising awareness about the value and impact of public health in the context of current government priorities.
- The Health Unit has launched their 2024 Public Annual Report, highlighting the organization's successes over the course of the year.

## *Foundational Services*

### **Population Health Assessment & Surveillance**

- A presentation entitled 'COVID-19 outbreak at a residential apartment building in Northern Ontario, Canada' was delivered at the 2025 Association for Public Health Epidemiologists of Ontario (APHEO) conference in early May.
- Nutritious food basket data collection was completed this month at 12 local grocery stores to support 2025 food affordability reporting. This year, infant formula is also being included in response to concerning trends related to early childhood food insecurity and [associated provincial advocacy efforts](#).
- Reports on measles vaccination rates for children attending schools and children attending childcare within the Health Unit region were prepared to inform the measles Incident Management System group and to assist in planning for vaccination efforts.

### **Effective Public Health Practice**

- Foundational Services has been endorsed by the Health Equity Hive Committee and approved by the Executive Team to develop a core set of sociodemographic data (SDD) elements for the Health Unit and update our organizational guidance documents on data collection. This will include a review of data governance frameworks, best practice resources, and other guidelines related to SDD collection. The intended outcome is to create an intentional approach to collecting and using SDD in a way that is transparent, responsible, and beneficial. It will support multiple areas of the Health Unit's strategic plan as well as the ongoing commitment to our requirements under the Foundational Standards. This project will include implementation of SDD recommendations across the organization, informing and supporting the process through staff consultations, staff training to build comfort and confidence, and knowledge translation to staff and clients, as needed.

### **Health Equity**

- The Health Equity Hive Committee has implemented a process to respond to internal requests for support from organizational programs, services, and working groups. The requests received to date address various needs including endorsement for new projects, assistance with bringing staff together to collectively inform and address projects with a relationship to multiple equity areas, and assessment of internal and external opportunities to strengthen our health equity impact.

### **Strategic Planning**

- Mobilization of the 2024-2027 [Strategic Plan](#) continues with strategy workgroups meeting regularly to complete and mobilize their work plans. Data collection is planned or currently underway across all groups.
- Starting in June 2025 and continuing twice a year until the end of 2027, selected strategy workgroups will present at Board of Health meetings to provide an update on

strategic planning project work, highlighted work completed, in progress and anticipated outcomes. The first two strategies to present are: Priority One, Strategy Three (Nurture a psychologically healthy and safe workplace) and Priority Two, Strategy Three (Advance initiatives to address mental health, substance use prevention, and harm reduction).

### **Quality**

- Several active quality improvement initiatives are underway across the organization, including projects to improve communication with local schools, enhance information-sharing with local health care providers, and streamline the Food Vendor Community Event Application process. Recently completed initiatives include the automation of regulated water sample follow-up using artificial intelligence (Power Automate) and a review of administrative staff coverage pools.