

Medical Officer of Health: Report to The Board of Health

Prepared by Dr. Carol Zimbalatti
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

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Contents

- Medical Officer of Health Update 3
- Programs and Services Updates 4
 - Corporate Services 4
 - Communications 4
 - Facilities Operations (formally Building and Maintenance) 4
 - Information Technology 5
 - Planning and Evaluation 5
 - Quality Assurance 6
 - Clinical Services 6
 - Communicable Disease Control 6
 - Professional Practice 7
 - Oral Health and Vision Screening 7
 - Sexual Health/Clinical Information 8
 - Vaccine Preventable Diseases 9
 - Community Services 10
 - Environmental Health 10
 - Healthy Families 11
 - Healthy Living 14
 - Healthy Schools 15
- Finance 17
- Human Resources 18
 - Employee & Labour Relations 18
 - Occupational Health and Safety 18
 - Professional Development 18
 - Staffing 19

Medical Officer of Health Update

Strengthening Public Health

The Health Unit continues to be actively engaged in shaping our future with respect to two of the three Strengthening Public Health pillars: voluntary mergers and Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) review. We understand that the Ministry of Health is still many months away from engaging with public health units regarding the third pillar, the funding formula review.

Senior management and BOH representatives have been actively engaged in meeting with counterparts in Renfrew County and District Health Unit, consultants, and colleagues across the province regarding mergers. We are gaining an understanding of the factors that contribute to or threaten merger success and are assessing how these may influence our future path. We also continue to engage with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health for clarifications around voluntary merger proposal and funding processes/parameters.

Staff, primarily at the management level, have also been involved in the OPHS review, through the OPHS standard groups to which they belong. As appropriate and in consultation with senior management, they are providing feedback on the current 2018 OPHS and on the proposed revisions for 2025. Thus far the changes proposed to the OPHS are not momentous and will not reduce the amount of work expected of local public health enough to come in line with the sub-inflationary budget increases that the Ministry of Health has promised for 2025 and 2026.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health also recently provided an update regarding some changes to the OPHS to be implemented in 2024. They include changes to the Emergency Management Guideline, the Menu Labelling Protocol, and some changes to resources to support the Food Handler Training Course and Exam, the Small Drinking Water Systems educational materials and tobacco signage related to the *Smoke Free Ontario Act, 2017*. None of the changes outlined will significantly alter Health Unit operations.

2023-2024 Respiratory Season

Provincially, the respiratory season is winding down, with Public Health Ontario signaling in their February 16 [Integrated Respiratory Virus Risk Indicators](#) report that respiratory virus activity is expected to decrease in both the adult and pediatric populations over the period to February 24. That isn't to say that respiratory viral infections are no longer occurring. SARS-CoV-2 is still circulating, as is influenza. We often see an increase in influenza B cases late in the season. Locally, we continue to see sporadic influenza cases among those eligible for testing; but as of February 21, there are no active institutional influenza, COVID-19, or RSV outbreaks. Thus far, the respiratory season was less severe than many anticipated, with enhanced planning and good influenza and COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness perhaps mitigating some of the impact.

Programs and Services Updates

Corporate Services

Communications

- Working on a review of the Health Unit's social media presence including current tools and future opportunities to reach different target audiences.
- Supporting the release of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan survey, reaching over 61,000 people to date, resulting in 2,813 link clicks. Link clicks do not mean that someone has completed the survey, as someone could click the same link multiple times.
- Supporting other internal priorities, including employee psychological health and safety, planetary health awareness and executive messaging around merger feasibility.
- Working with programs to prepare and disseminate timely content in the wake of National Non-Smoking Week, Sexual Health Week and Family Day.
- Working with Sexual Health on a plan to raise awareness of syphilis risk among new priority populations.

Facilities Operations

2024 Priorities Addressed:

North Bay

- Prepared salt bins for winter.
- Replaced stained carpet tiles in many areas of the building.
- Refinished faded tables in the staff kitchen.

Parry Sound

- Installed internal signage. Secured company for external signage installation to be scheduled soon.
- Purchased a new accessible exam bed for the Sexual Health Clinic.
- Installed AODA accessible door for the main floor.
- Working with landlord maintenance to resolve the air conditioning issue in the server room.
- Water pressure booster pump was installed to resolve low-pressure issue.
- Temporary generator has been installed and operational. Awaiting landlord to install permanent solution.

Covid 19

- Weekly monitoring of Personal Protective Equipment cleaning supplies for Covid 19 (sanitizer and disinfectant).

Information Technology

2024 Priorities Addressed

- Converted the Nipissing boardroom into a MS Teams Room providing improved video integration and functionality.
- Major software and hardware update to our backup and recovery solution.
- Laptop refresh for Oral Health Team was completed.

Planning and Evaluation

Population Health Assessment and Surveillance

- Analyses of trends in chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing data, as well as selected abortion data was performed for the Health Unit region and in comparison, with provincial statistics to inform program understanding and planning.
- Data from the 2022-2023 cycle of the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey has been received and analysis has started, focusing initially on indicators related to vaping within schools.
- Internal indicators have been developed regarding respiratory disease surveillance using methodologies based on the early aberration reporting system (EARS).
- A project has started in conjunction with the school collaboration group to establish a data reservoir/surveillance program. This program aims to centralize data pertaining to regular projects and programs that occur at schools. This includes sexual health, vaccine preventable diseases, oral and vision health, environmental health, and communicable disease control.
- An abstract submitted for presentation at the 2024 Canadian Public Health Association's conference was recently accepted. A poster entitled "COVID-19 outbreak at a residential apartment building in Northern Ontario, Canada" will be presented between April 23rd and 24th, 2024 in Halifax, Nova Scotia by a Health Unit staff member and co-author.

Health Equity

- The Health Equity Needs Assessment Report was finalized and shared with all staff. This report encapsulates the outcomes of a comprehensive needs assessment undertaken by the Health Unit on what is needed to strengthen our capacity to meaningfully address health equity. Recommendations from the Executive Team (included in the report) in response to the findings are being mobilized including the scoping of existing health equity work and the formation of a new committee designed to centralize, coordinate and collaborate in our organizational approach to equity.
- Thirteen organizations in our district that serve priority populations applied to the Health Unit's health equity training funds towards health equity specific professional development for staff and/or volunteers. Funds were applied to training that occurred

between September and December 2023 on areas such as applied suicide intervention skills, mental health first aid, trauma informed care, 2SLGBTQ+ positive spaces, decolonization and Indigenous cultural awareness.

Effective Public Health Practice

- In late 2023 the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Committee, as part of an ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of excellence, reached out to all staff with the CQI Maturity Survey Tool to gather valuable insights regarding CQI at the Health Unit. This survey was the same tool used in 2016 by the Locally Driven Collaborative Project: Strengthening CQI in Ontario's Public Health Units that many Health Unit staff completed at that time. The CQI Maturity Survey Tool was sent for all staff to complete with the intention to identify changes, if any, to the organization's level of CQI maturity as it relates to organizational culture; capacity and competency; and perceived value of CQI. The survey closed in mid-January 2024 and the results will be reviewed at an upcoming CQI committee meeting. The comprehensive assessment of the results by the CQI committee will help to inform next steps for logic model planning and will be instrumental in shaping the future direction of organizational CQI efforts.
- The Health Unit is currently in the understanding phase of strategic planning. The primary activity during this phase is internal and external data collection via surveys and focus groups. Internal data collection with staff and Board of Health members is now complete and external data collection with clients, individuals who live in our Health Unit region and community partners will be complete by the end of February. At the end of this phase (March 15), it is anticipated all the data will be collated, analyzed and themed to inform the direction phase where draft strategic priorities are set.

Quality Assurance

Policies and Procedures

A total of 270 policies, procedures, and associated documents were processed between October 21, 2023, and February 6, 2024: 190 documents issued, 26 new numbers assigned, and 54 documents archived.

Quality Issue Reports (QIR)

- Q1 results will be reported on in the April MOH report.

Clinical Services

Communicable Disease Control

Invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) infections

The CDC program has observed an increase in invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) infections. The highest number of cases in over twenty years was reported in the Health Unit area in 2023. An increase in iGAS cases was also observed in Ontario and other provinces in 2023. A Public Health bulletin was issued to local healthcare providers about the increase in cases. A separate

Public Health bulletin was issued to local social service agencies informing them about the increase in cases and when to advise clients to seek immediate medical attention.

Group A Streptococcus (group A strep, *Streptococcus pyogenes*) can cause both non-invasive and invasive disease and may be present in asymptomatic carriers. Invasive group A streptococcal infections occur when the pathogen infects normally sterile sites, such as the blood, cerebrospinal fluid, joints, pleural or pericardial fluid. Two of the most severe forms of iGAS are necrotizing fasciitis “flesh-eating disease” and Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome, for which, rapid diagnosis, aggressive management, and early use of appropriate antibiotics are critical.

Influenza

Since the beginning of the 2023-2024 season and as of February 20, there have been a total of 198 lab-confirmed cases of influenza reported in the district.

Outbreak Activity

From November 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024, the CDC program managed 40 outbreaks in long-term care homes, retirement homes, other high-risk congregate living settings and childcare settings. This included 20 COVID-19 outbreaks, 7 outbreaks caused by an unknown respiratory illness, 2 outbreaks of Influenza A and 11 outbreaks caused by an unknown enteric illness. Five of the 11 unknown enteric illness outbreaks were in childcare centres.

Update Dosanjh Care Residence

Dosanjh Care Residence was a Community Homes for Opportunity (CHO) located in Powassan, Ontario, providing supportive housing for individuals experiencing complex mental health issues who require 24-hour support. The facility was closed under order on October 26, 2023, at the time of the closure 38 individuals lived at the residence. The home was reinspected on November 20, 2023, by one Public Health Inspector and two Public Health Nurses. The closure order was rescinded on November 22, 2023.

The residents have not returned to the home and remain under the care and supervision of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Professional Practice

The Professional Practice Program has just welcomed a new semester of students. We are currently supporting a total of 26 students from various educational programs including nursing, education, dietetics and social work. The students are working in programs including Vaccine Preventable Diseases, Sexual Health, Healthy Schools, Communicable Disease Control, Healthy Living, Healthy Families, Communications and Occupational Health and Safety. The placements range from 60-420 hours in length, depending on the student's educational requirements.

Oral Health and Vision Screening

Construction of the dental clinic in the Parry Sound office is complete. We hosted our first preventive dental clinics February 7-9, 2024. Two Registered Dental Hygienists travelled to Parry Sound to assist with the clinic as we are in the process of recruiting a dentist and

assessing the staffing required to run the dental clinic. Clients included a mix of children and seniors, and they appeared to appreciate having an opportunity to receive dental care closer to home and at no cost.



Sexual Health/Clinical Information

Sexual Health Update

We have officially launched the “GetaKit” testing expansion program in collaboration and partnership with the University of Ottawa. This initiative will increase access and decrease barriers for priority populations in our district through mail-out HIV self-tests and online requisitions for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. Program process mapping is in progress with the Planning and Evaluation Team to evaluate workflow for greater efficiencies for clients and staff and prioritize services for our most equity-seeking population. We have also recently updated our approach to data collection and monitoring of clinical services for improved data quality to support program planning, evaluation and service delivery.

Enhanced Harm Reduction (EHR) & Needle Syringe Program (NSP)

Surveillance

Information collected through the Overdose / Negative Drug Reaction Reporting System was sent to more than 160 community partners in weekly email updates and through the Health Unit's interactive surveillance dashboard. From November 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024, within the Health Unit district, there were 36 overdoses / negative drug reactions reported with five resulting in death. This represents a slight increase in overdoses / negative drug reactions and deaths when compared to the same time period in 2022/2023.

The temporary Community Health Promotor position that was piloted in the Fall has now been transferred permanently to the Sexual Health and Clinical Information program from Healthy Living. This position will continue to focus on the enhanced harm reduction (EHR) work previously carried out in Healthy Living and involves activities to better align the EHR work with other harm reduction initiatives, including naloxone and the Needle Syringe Program. We continue to seek an appropriate location for "Our Healthbox (OHB)." The OHB offers low-barrier access to health products and community health and social service information using advanced interactive SMRT1 technology. Individuals can anonymously access take-home HIV self-testing kits, naloxone, harm reduction supplies, and personal items such as winter hats, socks, or hygiene items.

Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Influenza and COVID-19 Vaccine Campaigns

This respiratory season, we offered both influenza and COVID-19 vaccines at community clinics across the district.

- the Health Unit hosted 29 clinics
- 7,206 doses of influenza vaccine were administered
- 9,047 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered

In-house clinics provided 175 doses of influenza vaccine and 145 COVID-19 vaccine, primarily to children under 5 years of age as well as immunocompromised clients when community clinics or pharmacies were not optimal.

We supported the distribution of 2,835 doses of vaccine to Long Term Care Homes, 16,715 doses to primary care providers, and 2,485 doses to hospitals across the district. Additionally, we worked collaboratively with community partners in social services and community paramedicine to reach equity seeking and priority populations.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Campaign

New this fall, the Ministry of Health announced the implementation of a publicly funded RSV campaign to respond to increased rates of RSV among vulnerable populations. Publicly funded vaccine was made available to select groups of Ontarians including:

Those 60 years of age or older who are:

- Living in Long-Term Care Homes
- Living in Elder Care Lodges

- Residents of retirement homes licensed to provide dementia care
- Patients in hospital receiving alternate level of care (ALC)
- Patients receiving hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis
- Recipients of solid organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplants
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis

The Health Unit reached out to our community partners (Long-Term Care Homes, Elder Care Lodges, and hospitals), and to date, have provided 1,065 doses of vaccine for distribution to these populations. The Health Unit continues to reach out to community partners to offer support as needed. The Health Unit has also been available to provide vaccines to eligible individuals who reside in our community through community clinics or by in-house appointments.

Community Services

Environmental Health successfully wrapped up 2023 with conducting 20 of 22 menu labelling routine inspections, with one being completed in January 2024 and another facility pending due to renovations. Only one menu label complaint was received against one of these premises.

Seven hundred and fifty-six (756) year-round food premises were inspected in 2023 and based on the nature of their operation:

- 135 were high risk (3 inspections per year)
- 266 were moderate risk (2 inspections per year)
- 355 were low risk (1 inspection per year)

Two hundred and eighty-three (283) food premises that operate seasonally received at least one inspection in 2023. Where non-compliance is identified during routine inspections, follow-up re-inspections are conducted to ensure compliance; 368 re-inspections were completed. Twenty-eight (28) food related complaints were received through intake, thus resulting in additional inspections. Lack of compliance and observed risk may result in the issuance of Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) section 13 orders; 7 section 13 orders were issued in 2023.

Environmental Health received eight complaints concerning personal service settings, two of which resulted in HPPA closure orders.

Five hundred and fifty-four (554) animal bites from dogs, cats, and other animals were investigated in 2023 to prevent and control rabies virus among humans.

We inspected 48 outdoor and indoor swimming pools, spas, and wading pools at different frequencies, with the year-round facilities receiving one inspection every three months. We are observing a trend of new operators/owners acquiring resorts who possess limited knowledge of operating recreational water facilities, resulting in many HPPA section 13 closure orders. The following closures occurred: 5 closures of Spas, 15 closures of Class B Pools, 1 closure of Class A Pool, and 1 closure of Wading Pool.

We investigated 169 adverse water reports.

Tobacco Enforcement Officers completed 234 inspections at 112 tobacco vendors in 2023, 11 re-inspections were conducted, and 25 warnings were issued. One hundred and thirty-four (134) workplace/public places were inspected, an additional 170 surveillance inspections and 3 re-inspections were also conducted. One hundred and thirteen (113) compliance checks were conducted at 78 vape vendors, with 6 warnings issued to vape vendors. Youth Access compliance checks occurred 220 times with 26 sales completed; 51 warnings were issued, and 10 tickets.

For a complete list of the set fines as per the Provincial Offences Act, please refer to the following:

- [Food Safety](#)
- [Water / Small Drinking Water Systems](#)
- [Personal Service Settings](#)
- [Swimming Pools and Spas](#)

Perfluoroalkylated Substances Update

Perfluoroalkylated Substances (PFAS) are manmade substances. The most common are perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). We use many products that contain PFAS. They can be used to keep food from sticking to cookware, to make carpets and sofas resistant to stains, to make clothes and mattresses more waterproof, and to make some food packaging resistant to grease absorption. Due to their common use in everyday products, almost everyone is exposed to low levels of PFAS from the air, soil, indoor dust, food, water, and various consumer products.

Determining the health risks associated with PFAS is an active area of study. Toxicological studies on animals have found that high levels of PFAS are associated with reproductive, developmental, endocrine, liver, kidney and immunological effects. Extrapolating these findings to the human population is difficult, and many questions remain regarding the degree and the length of time of exposure likely to cause these impacts.

PFAS presence was detected at the Jack Garland Airport and the Canadian Force Base (CFB) facilities by the Department of National Defense and reported to the local office of the Ontario Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP) staff in December 2016. The use of fire-fighting foam during training exercises prior to 1998 is the likely source of contamination. The MECP in 2017 invited the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit to comment on its impacts on human health. PFAS from the above-contaminated site are making their way into Trout Lake (the source intake for the North Bay municipal water system) through Lees Creek and other water bodies (creeks and lakes) around the City of North Bay (CNB).

The Health Unit reported this matter to the Ministry of Health and sought help in managing these new substances with both limited information and curtailing regulations available. With the help of Public Health Ontario, the Medical Officer of Health Recommendations were developed as a risk communication tool and shared with the partner agencies involved (CNB, MECP, DND), the media, and the public at large. An individualized version of the letter of the

MOH recommendations was delivered in person to the residents in the affected area by a public health inspector and an environmental officer from the MECP.

The HU has been participating in discussions held by the agencies involved in the PFAS site management headed by DND regarding implementing MOH's recommendations and other government requirements/directives about human and ecological impacts. Activities to monitor and decrease exposure to PFAS are ongoing:

- Municipal water usually measures below the MECP standard of 70ng/L for the sum of 11 PFAS substances with occasional excursions above the standard.
- Because of well water readings above the MECP standard, some residents in affected areas are supplied with bottled water. Delivery of bottled water is coordinated by the CNB and paid for by DND.
- As of mid-January 2024, some of the residents who received Point of Entry Treatment systems (POETs) were removed from bottled water service since the POETs are proven to be effective based on multiple rounds of testing. These residents were notified of this change via a letter from DND delivered in December that included the 2024 maintenance schedule for the POETs.
- A small number of households were also provided with a municipal water connection. Confirmatory sampling in mid-October 2022 and late January 2023 showed results below the MECP standard of 70 ng/L. Additional residents on the bottled water service were offered POETs in the spring 2022 treatment system, or a Point of Use (POUT) when limited by space in the home.
- A few households did not accept the offer in late January 2023; they have been advised that the offer still stands and that similar systems have been installed successfully in the area.
- Some residents (without POETs installed) remain on bottled water because their drinking water exceed the MECP standard of 70 ng/L at one time or another. The contractor continues monitoring these sites after they have exceeded in previous testing.
- Health Canada is reviewing their proposed objective value for PFAS in Drinking Water to 30 ng/L for the sum of all PFAS detected in the water sample.
- In 2024, DND will continue to conduct drinking water monitoring, surface water and groundwater sampling, flow measurements, storm sewer network surveying and the influent and effluent sampling and maintenance of POET Systems they installed at private homes.

The HU is also aware of PFAS found in fish, chicken eggs, and foam. The public is advised not to consume fish caught in Lee Creek and to limit the consumption of trout caught in Trout Lake. PFAS were detected in eggs from chickens raised at a farm near Lee Creek Road. The hens may have acquired it from water, soil, or feed. MECP is still investigating and trying to determine what the results mean. The HU asked the City of North Bay staff to scoop the foam if found on the shores of municipal beaches. Parents are advised to not let their children play with foam

around beaches as it may contain higher concentrations of PFAS. Canada has yet to develop regulatory standards for eggs like European countries.

Healthy Families

The Healthy Families Program provides individual and group services to clients including Breastfeeding Clinics, Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) postpartum phone calls, HBHC Blended Model Home visiting for families facing multiple risk factors, developmental screening and referral, Family Health Information line, online parenting and prenatal education, and participation in delivery of high-risk prenatal group education.

Direct Service Metrics	2023 annual
Postpartum screens by hospital for HBHC postpartum follow up	469
HBHC telephone follow-up with postpartum families	438
Home visits to HBHC families with-risk	661
Active families in the HBHC program	171
Families on HBHC waitlist at end of year	35
Breastfeeding Clinic encounters	181
Online Prenatal Program registrations	16
Triple P (online parenting program) registrations	19
Family Health Information Line Calls	1981

2023 Health Promotion

Healthy Families population-based activities focused on infant and child mental health promotion, positive parenting, trauma-informed care, resilience, and the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on adults who are parenting young children. These concepts are informing activities to support responsive relationships, strengthen core skills, and reduce sources of stress for families. Focused work with community partners will continue in 2024, e.g. Postpartum Mood Disorders, ACEs and Resiliency, community approach to prenatal education, Positive Parenting, developmental referral pathways, and several others.

Families in the Kitchen



Families in the Kitchen (FITK) is a program created by the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (NBPSDHU) for parents with children 0-4 years of age who live in the Nipissing area and experience health and social inequities. FITK is a weekly onsite program that strives to improve food skills and increase social connectedness and well-being for high-risk families with children

The program is facilitated by a Public Health Registered Dietitian (RD) and a Public Health Nurse (PHN) who also support participants with complex needs in accessing other health or social

services. During the pandemic, FITK was placed on hold. Due to a new community partnership with the Family Enrichment Program, the program was re-launched in early February. Family Enrichment enhances the FITK service with an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) to provide a parent-child circle time component, as well as providing volunteer child minding services while parents participate in the activities.

Healthy Living

Highlights from 4th Quarter of 2023 and 1st Quarter of 2024:

Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being Standard

- In November 2023, the Health Unit along with a community partner with lived experience presented at the [National Conference on Ending Homelessness](#) hosted by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness in Halifax on the **See the Person anti-stigma campaign**. The presentation was given on behalf of the Nipissing District Homelessness and Housing Partnership. The presentation emphasized the power of people with lived experience in the co-creation and promotion of public education and advocacy efforts related to housing and income. The evaluation of the campaign demonstrated reach to 235 health and social service providers and about 700 grade 7-12 students.
- Worked with Eating Disorders Prevention Ontario (EDO-P), to organize training for internal staff with the goal of promoting a holistic approach to well-being. Next steps involve continued collaboration with EDO-P to convene a local community of practice with partners who work with children and youth.
- Initiated the ACEs and Resilience Working Group through the Muskoka, Nipissing and Parry Sound Child and Youth Planning Table (MNPS CYPT). Twelve organizations will engage in developing and implementing a cross-sectoral knowledge translation plan on ACEs and resilience.

Healthy Environments Standard

- Worked with community partners and Health Unit staff to submit a proposal to the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation (ORCCA) for a staff capacity grant. The proposal was accepted and aims to develop a Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (VRA) leading to a sustained regional community of practice (COP) to facilitate the mobilization and collaboration of local municipalities, First Nations, academics, conservation authorities, and other community partners. Project planning is commencing and will include key informant interviews and surveys to gauge proposed partners' interests and preparation for initial gathering of partners planned for Q2 2024.

Substance Use and Injury Prevention Standard

- Concluded the *Before the Floor* campaign on alcohol. The campaign was a multi-public health unit initiative with the goal of reducing binge drinking among the "Partier" peer crowd through strategic messaging and engagement on social media.
- Initiated media campaign for harm reduction messaging and awareness related to cannabis edibles.

- Conducted evaluation of the Gambling Harm Reduction Partnership (GHRP) with a focus on planning for 2024.
- Hosted a Smart Funding Proposal – Grant Writing workshop in partnership with Regional Development Advisors from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. Twenty-nine individuals representing 15 organizations attended. Most of the organizations support older adults in Nipissing and Parry Sound districts (e.g., older adult clubs, community support services, libraries).
- Worked with community partners to develop and launch the [Nipissing and Parry Sound Transportation Inventory](#).
- Coordinated Fall Prevention Month Lunch and Learn in partnership with Canadore College, Parry Sound Campus, and WPSHC.
- Initiating Cannabis Stash Box campaign targeted at safe storage of cannabis products, in collaboration with Oral Health, Healthy Families, and Sexual Health/Clinical Information
- Volunteerism campaign for older adults in development. Encourage volunteering to age well, stay social and support local agencies to fulfil their mandate (e.g. transportation services accessed by older adults)
- Hosted STAND UP! Facilitator Training in North Bay with support from registered physiotherapists from the North East Specialized Geriatrics Centre. Ten facilitators were trained to provide this free 12-week fall prevention program for community dwelling older adults. Pre and post evaluations were conducted and will be reviewed for future trainings
- Attended Nipissing Wellness Ontario Health Team’s Navigation Services Community of Practice event and presented on the work of the Transportation Working Group and shared the developed resource with attendees.

Healthy Schools

Highlights from 4th Quarter of 2023 and 1st Quarter of 2024

Concussions and injury prevention:

- Supported the Near North District School Board (NNDSB) in developing cycling skills in grade 7/8 students at 7 schools in Parry Sound district. Health Unit supported by having trainers trained and seeking grant funds for the trailer and fleet of bikes.

Healthy eating behaviours and food safety:

- Hosted four [Adventures in Cooking](#) community kitchen gatherings across district; 24 community partners attended (in partnership with Healthy Living).
- [Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program \(NFVP\)](#) started week of November 20, 2023; 59 schools enrolled.
- Multi-board indoor composting pilot being planned.
- [Great Big Crunch](#) promotion (March 7, 2024) in collaboration with NFVP and Student Nutrition Program – Nipissing, Parry Sound, Muskoka.
- Preparing for NFVP outcome evaluation in May 2024.

- Eating disorder training January 2024 – capacity building for school boards.

Healthy sexuality:

- Updated content on the Health Unit’s website including the Teach It First Campaign.
- Multiple IMPACT Instagram posts about testing and contraception.
- Participated in Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l’Ontario ([CSPNEO](#)) workgroup on consent, boundaries and sexual health for grade 9/10 students.
- Continue to support CSPNEO workgroup on consent, boundaries, and sexual health for grade 9/10 students.

IMPACT *Instagram Account and youth engagement:*

- Monthly/bi-monthly posts addressing all school health topics.
- Participation in [NND SB](#) and CSCFN student senate.
- Facilitated [take your kid to work day](#) at the Health Unit in 2023.
- Partnership with R.I.S.E at St. Joseph Scollard Hall (presentation + IMPACT content made by youth).
- Hosting four BEd student placements and 1 groups of 3rd year nursing student placements.

Mental health promotion:

- Launched [Attendance Matters Campaign](#), created jointly with all School Board Mental Health leads and internal Mental Health Committee to augment student attendance as the north has lower student attendance.
- CSPNEO mental health lead provided training to Health Unit school leads on Policy/Program Memorandum 169 ([PPM 169](#)).

Oral health:

- Dental screenings completed in 24 schools to date, with 1,142 students screened. Currently, 98 students have been identified as in need of urgent dental care, and 689 students offered a free prevented service.
- Dental school screenings to continue average of one to three schools weekly.

Physical activity and sedentary behaviour:

- Conducted Outdoor Ways of Learning and Sharing (OWLS) observation as part of the evaluation plan for Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord ([CSCFN](#)). Planning underway for an OWLS community of practice within NND SB & Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board ([NPSCSB](#)). A presentation was made by the Health Unit along with school board partners at the [2023 Health Schools National Forum](#).
- Active hallways materials provided to 5 elementary schools within CSCFN. Follow-up completed with 5 elementary schools within CSCFN, 4 within NPSCSB, 3 within NND SB
- Commenced planning for Bike to school month (June 2024).

Planetary Health:

- Lending Library items updated: climate emotion game, treaty teachings activity, Let's Talk Science activities updated
- Supported a Community Conversation event at Powassan Library
- EcoSummit with 10 elementary schools NPSCSB with S.J.S.H. Outdoor Leadership & Environmental Studies Program (S.O.L.E.) youth leadership at St. Joseph Scollard Hall fall 2023
- IMPACT post about winter driving emergency kits

Substance use and harm reduction:

- [Naloxone Kits in At-Risk Workplaces](#) support to school boards provided to implement as required by Ministry of Labour
- NNDSB sharps pick up kits provided to support schoolyard sweeps and safer learning environments.
- The Health Unit signed on as an official partner with Planet Youth and thus branded the initiative as Planet Youth Nipissing
- Planet Youth Nipissing meeting with Icelandic coordinator to train local coalitions and plan for data gathering in secondary schools after March Break.

UV exposure

- Winter sun safety posts shared on IMPACT.

Violence and bullying

- Assisted with Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) content update on provincial working group. PALS program being implemented at 1-2 NNDSB elementary schools as a pilot initiative.
- Planning for local Safe school conference with co-terminus boards and Police services.

Visual Health

- Vision screenings completed in 24 schools to date, with a total of 428 students to be screened (SK only).
- Eye See Eye Learn Information Sheet included with each referral for parents/guardians.
- Communications with superintendents and board staff about April 2024 solar eclipse safety procedures.
- Content on vision updated on the Health Unit's website.

Finance

The Finance department has worked on year-end transactions and making sure all 2023 costs have been accounted for. The Q4 report was filed on time on January 31. The Annual Service Plan has been received from the province and Managers are inserting their planning data and Finance is completing the matching budget dollars. Cash flow has been tight in January as the

Ministry is behind in flowing the following funding: 2023 COVID funding (expected Feb 28), Ontario Seniors Dental Care Capital funding (expected February 15); previous Mitigation funding and 1% increase (expected before March 31). Preparations are starting for the annual audit in March. As well, Finance assisted with merger discussions and provided documents as needed for that process.

Human Resources

Employee & Labour Relations

At the Joint OPSEU/ONA/Management committee meeting held on December 14, 2023, the committee noted that the Holiday All Staff Celebration was a positive event that it was beneficial for everyone to be together as a group and to have a day to reconnect and socialize. There were also discussions about employee concerns about the potential mergers of Public Health Units, and it was noted that frequent updates to staff are helpful.

OPSEU elected a new OPSEU Chief Steward, John Mitchell, effective January 17, 2024 to replace Diane Bednarz who filled this role for many years. We would like to acknowledge all the work that Diane Bednarz did over the years as the OPSEU Chief Steward.

Occupational Health and Safety

Of the number of staff eligible to receive influenza immunization, we achieved 100% compliance. This does not include valid exemptions due to medical reasons or based on grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Public Health Nurse, Occupational Health and Safety, is precepting a 4th Year Nursing Student. The student is learning about immunization, mask fit testing, job demands, ergonomics, and infection prevention and control as applied in a public health setting.

Several occupational health and safety procedures are being reviewed for currency and in consideration of psychological health and safety impacts. These include Ability Management, Job Demands Profiles, and Critical Incident Debrief (new). A new Respectful Workplace Policy, along with updated procedures for reporting and managing workplace harassment and violence are scheduled to be released by the end of March 2024.

Presentations have been made to the Executive Team, Managers Team, and the Joint Health and Safety Committee to inform them of the newly developed [Internal Mental Health Strategy](#), including a summary of results from the Internal Mental Health Staff Survey conducted last Fall. This is to be followed by all staff receiving a summary of the survey results and an overview of the strategy.

Professional Development

Internal professional development sessions recently coordinated by Human Resources since the last report include:

Professional Development Session	Date	Number of Participants
Basic Life Support Recertification	November 6, 2023	8
Basic Life Support Recertification	November 15, 2023	6

Professional Development Session	Date	Number of Participants
Defensive Driver Training (Online Self-Directed)	Completed by Dec. 15, 2023	27

De-Escalation training sessions will be held in February and March 2024.

Staffing

The following temporary positions were recently filled. These vacancies were created because of backfilling employees assigned to temporary job assignments, a leave of absence, and to assist with workload:

- Public Health Nurse, Communicable Disease Control (1.00 FTE) from November 9, 2023 to September 6, 2024
- Executive Assistant, Planning, Evaluation and Communications (0.40 to 0.60 FTE) from November 27, 2023 to March 1, 2024
- Program Administrative Assistant, Finance (0.63 FTE) from January 2, 2024 to March 29, 2024
- Emergency Management Coordinator, Corporate Services (up to 280 hours) from January 8, 2024 to June 28, 2024
- Acting Program Manager, Oral Health and Vision Screening (1.00 FTE) from February 5, 2024 to December 31, 2024

The following permanent positions were recently filled. These vacancies were created because of internal transfers and staff departure:

- Public Health Inspector, Environmental Health (1.0 FTE) effective November 8, 2023
- Bilingual Public Health Nurse, Vaccine Preventable Diseases (1.0 FTE) effective December 20, 2023
- Program Administrative Assistant, Healthy Families (1.0 FTE), effective January 8, 2024
- Clinic Dentist, Oral Health and Vision Screening, (0.943 FTE), effective January 22, 2024

The recruitment of the following permanent and temporary positions is currently under way:

- Human Resources Coordinator, Abilities and Wellness, Human Resources (1.00 FTE)
- Public Health Nurses, Communicable Disease Control (2.00 FTE)
- Community Development Coordinator, Healthy Schools (1.00 FTE)
- Clinic Dentists, Oral Health and Vision Screening (1.50 FTE)
- Mental Health Coordinator, Healthy Living (1.00 FTE)
- Clinical Coordinator, Oral Health and Vision Screening (1.00 FTE)

We continue our efforts to recruit a permanent Accounts Payable Clerk, Finance.

There has been no net increase in permanent positions. There were some positions that were eliminated and new positions created as outlined in the Operational Plan and Financial Budget Proposal 2024. Effective April 11, 2024, a permanent 0.8 FTE Family Home Visitor position in

the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program in Healthy Families will be eliminated which is funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).

Approved by

Carol Zimbalatti, M.D., CCFP, MPH
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer
North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit