

PORCUPINE HEALTH UNIT

Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board of Health



We Are Public Health - Nous sommes la santé publique
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Prepared by:
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Medical Officer of Health – Chief Executive Officer
June 15, 2022



MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH UPDATE

PHU COVID-19 RESPONSE

Porcupine Health Unit Status

*This table was updated on **Wednesday, June 15, 2022, at 12:00 p.m.***

Total Tests Completed*	167,491
Number of cases**	7,450
2022 Cases	4,299
Active Outbreaks	4
In Hospital	6
Deceased	69

**Of which PHU is aware. Data has a 2-day lag and is extracted from the Ministry of Health VA Tool.*

***Number of confirmed cases, to date, including active, out of region, and resolved.*

****Number of recovered cases plus the number of deceased cases.*

Testing data includes testing from community assessment centres and other health care settings, as well as targeted surveillance initiatives, such as in long-term care homes. Data is current with a 2-day lag.

The PHU has changed its reporting practice. The PHU continues to provide a weekly epidemiological survey, but daily updates reporting active cases have been discontinued to reflect the provincial changes to testing and case and contact management. The PHU has had 7,450 cases. With testing capacity and testing eligibility dropping as of December 2021 it is significant to report that the PHU has had 4,299 cases in 2022. Presently there are four active outbreaks in the PHU region. The team continues to work with all high-risk settings providing case and contact management, infection prevention and control measures to prevent and manage outbreaks in settings where individuals are at greater risk of poor outcomes. The PHU continues to announce tragic outcomes and continues to monitor hospitalization trends.

Vaccine Update

The PHU continues to provide access to vaccine. Vaccine messaging “Keep up to Date with your COVID Vaccines” has been shared by the province. In Timmins, two clinics are offered weekly at the health unit as well as a weekly mass immunization clinic. Continuation of the mass clinics will permit ramping up as needed to address local demand based on epidemiology and provincial recommendations. Weekly clinics are also offered in branch offices. During the summer, two weekend vaccine blitzes are planned across the region. A PHU Program Manager and Coordinator are sitting on a Ministry working group for the under-five pediatric vaccine, planning for the Fall when it is expected that the vaccine will be approved. The team continues to plan for the expected Fall COVID-19 booster program along with active planning for the significant influenza vaccination needs across the region. In some areas of the region, where access to Primary Care is limited, the PHU continues to assess its capacity with the demand for other needed public health services. The PHU is reporting 88.6 % for first doses over the age of 5, and 51.5% for third doses over the age of 12 across the region.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH UPDATE

ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS

With the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recognizing that the vaccine program will continue to demand PHU staff resources, the PHU continues to look to recovery, planning and a return to public health programs and priorities.

Environmental Health

The PHU team does a substantial amount of work to support host communities and those guests who have been evacuated from their home communities. The PHU collaborated with many community partners, First Nation leadership, and Mushkegowuk Council, in terms of vaccine clinic provision, support for infection prevention and control, case and contact management, Naloxone distribution and harm reduction services.

In partnership with Indigenous Service Canada, ten virtual and in person town hall sessions were held in Constance Lake First Nation. It was a humbling but great opportunity to be invited to the community after such a difficult time. The PHU continues to work to support the community and have issued notifications to health care providers across the PHU region that Blastomycosis needs to be a consideration especially, but not only for Constance Lake, with cases reported in other areas of the PHU and across Ontario. The PHU will work with Public Health Ontario to increase the profile of Blastomycosis across the province.

Monkey Pox

Currently, there are no cases in the PHU region. The Monkey Pox virus is not an airborne acquired virus but is acquired through direct contact. Presentation and testing information has been shared with all health care providers across the region. The PHU has processes and policies in place for case and contact management and opportunities for vaccine and will continue to share updates.

Foundational Standards

The PHU is pleased to have received an award of recognition from the Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario for the health unit's contribution and efforts to improve access to and equity of health services in French. During the pandemic, the health unit ensured that all communication to the public was available in both French and English. A French Facebook page was launched in the fall of 2020 to facilitate sharing of COVID-19 information. A summer student is developing a plan to further improve the active offer of French language services and delivery of programs and service in both official languages.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH UPDATE

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Hub

Northern health units were defined as IPAC Hub funding recipients. The PHU provides support and expertise to the hospitals, long term care homes, and retirement homes for infection, prevention, and control. The PHU team is hosting a series of seven modules in May and June. Attendance for the first four modules had over 150 participants from congregate settings, hospitals, long term care homes, and retirement homes across the region. Virtual Hub drop-in chat sessions have also been developed and are well attended providing opportunities to access expertise in addressing challenges with infection prevention control. The PHU has partnered with Living Space to support the establishment of their own internal infection prevention and control program.

Infectious Diseases and Clinical Services

In recognition of Pride Month, on June 29th the PHU outreach vehicle will be on display outside the Timmins office. Resources will be made available, and testing will be offered.

Across the PHU region, rates of cancer are generally higher than other areas of the province. With limited access to Primary Care, and individuals who did not access testing because of the pandemic, the PHU continues to address cervical cancer screening capacity with the hiring of summer nursing students and hope to hold additional clinics in June and July and supporting communities that do not have health care provider support. The PHU continues to work to increase its testing capacity in its Sexual health clinics.

Harm Reduction/Opioid Response

Due to changes in service provision from local partners, there has been a significant increase in visits to the Timmins office. As of June 13th, there have been 1,380 client visits for 2022. A shift in the average number of daily visits to the PHU was noted. In January, the number of visits per day was seven clients, and in June the daily average was 20.9. In collaboration with partners, the team is working to support outreach capacity in communities across the region.

Vaccine Preventable Disease

The team has been reviewing records at day care care-clinics, as well as continuing to address the Grade 7 vaccine catch up. The PHU is offering two clinics per week over the summer in Timmins and at all branches for routine immunizations that were missed due to the pandemic.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH UPDATE

Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aLPHa) Conference

On June 14th, the aLPHa Annual General Meeting was held. Resolutions were put forward for consideration. The resolution put forth by the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH), Race Based Inequities in Health was approved. Public Health Modernization and COVID 19 resolution put forth by Peterborough Public Health requesting further review and consultation prior to a continuation of the province's approach to the modernization of Ontario's public health system was approved. The resolution put forward by Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health was passed, calling for the establishing of a registry of cooling towers to streamline public health's process of locating and beginning remediation in an occurrence of outbreak. To address the provincial opioid crisis, the Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) put forth a resolution, calling on the province and providing priorities for public health and other partners to address the opioid crisis was also passed. Dr. Catton participates on this COMOH working group.

Respectfully Submitted,
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Medical Officer of Health/Chief Executive Officer
Porcupine Health Unit