

Board of Health Meeting June 18, 2020

Summary

Auditor's Report

The 2019 Audit was presented to the Board by Ms. Serena Fortin, auditor for Allan and Partners LLP. She stated that: the accompanying financial statements represent fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of the entity as of December 2019, and its result of operations, its changes in net debt, and its cash flows for the year that ended in accordance with the Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards. The Board of Health approved the 2019 Audit.

Provincial Appointments to the Board

Currently there are five vacancies for provincial appointments to the Board and we have submitted our request to the Minister of Health for a reappointment, along with a new appointment. The provincial appointees bring a valuable perspective to the work of the Board.

COVID-19 Update

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark region continues to have a very low number of community people diagnosed with COVID-19, with between 120 and 150 tests being done at the three Assessment Centres. In the past week there has been a surge in the request for testing by people who want to visit someone in a long- term care home because all visitors must have a negative test within two weeks before a visit.

Provincial Stage 2 Opening

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark qualified for the Provincial Phase 2 Opening because of our very low number of cases in the past two weeks, the hospitals have adequate capacity to function, and there is adequate testing available to the public.

The Health Unit is involved directly in supporting food premises, personal service settings, and water recreational settings to open with COVID-19 precautions in place as well as adhering to all the usual public health regulations. They were all sent information packages and Public Health Inspectors will follow up with each one. Our Website has a detailed section for businesses of all types with resources and links to other sites, for example, the Ministry of Labour. We are also working with child care centres that plan to open, building on provincial guidance and our learnings with the emergency child care centres.

Our work with municipalities will continue in this new stage, and we are pleased to consult on plans for reopening municipal parks, recreation opportunities, and beaches. Our beach testing will start next week. We are pleased to work with municipalities on special events they are planning to ensure they are done safely.

Drug Overdoses and Deaths

Eight people have died in the past two months in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, likely from a fentanyl overdose. This is more deaths than we would usually have over an entire year. During May, the hospitals have also seen an increase of people presenting to the emergency department with an overdose.

The Health Unit, along with community partners, suspect the increase in overdoses are a result of a toxic supply of substances as the usual supply routes are not available, COVID-19 related stresses, and a change in the availability of health and social services. The stress, uncertainty, and anxiety associated with the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased substance use amongst vulnerable populations.

Harm reduction supplies (single use equipment and naloxone) and further access to services and referrals continue to be offered throughout Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. <https://healthunit.org/health-information/drug-use-harm-reduction/> Naloxone is also available through local pharmacies. We are increasing access to naloxone through a new partnership with paramedics and supporting policy changes to increase access through the ER departments.

We are doing social media posts, communicating with other agencies (police, EMS, hospital, probation and parole, addictions and mental health) who are then spreading our messages through their clients. We are also connecting with some key people within the drug using circles in Perth to spread information as well.

Health Canada has funded our proposal for a “Peer Support Navigator for People Who Use Substances in Leeds Grenville”. We are pleased to have our first peer support worker join our team. For more information please contact Jennifer Adams at the health unit at 613-345-5685.