

**Chatham-Kent Board of Health
Minutes**

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

11:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Present: Councillor Joe Faas (Chair)
Councillor Karen Kirkwood-Whyte
Councillor Brock McGregor (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Carmen McGregor
Ms. Noreen Blake
Mr. Ron Carnahan
Ms. Sharon Pfaff
Teresa Bendo, Director, Public Health
Dr. David Colby, Medical Officer of Health
Dr. April Rietdyk, General Manager, Community Human Services
Lisa Powers, Executive Assistant, Community Human Services

Regrets: None

1. Provision for Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

No member of the Board declared a pecuniary interest on any matter on the open session agenda.

2. Minutes of the Board Meeting of

Councillor B. McGregor moved, seconded by Ms. Pfaff:

“That the minutes of the Board of Health meeting of November 18, 2020 be approved.”

The Chair put the Motion.

Motion Carried

3. Business Arising from the Minutes - None

4. Education/Training

a) COVID-19 Update by Dr. David Colby, Medical Officer of Health

In an effort to update the Board, Dr. Colby provided the following verbal update:

- Chatham-Kent remains in the Protect-Yellow level
- As of this meeting, CK has one case in hospital
- As of this meeting, CK has one Long-Term Care Home outbreak; cases confined to staff at this time

- Canada has approved its first COVID-19 vaccine

In response to questions from the Board, Dr. Colby indicated:

- There are myriad factors that contribute to moving between colour-coded restriction levels
- Residents of any region need to follow closely all public health measures
- The Pfizer vaccine requires deep freezing, and it is important for the freezer to be located close to where the vaccine will be distributed
- Vaccine distribution will be a team effort between the Health Unit and CKHA

Mr. Carnahan moved, seconded by Councillor Kirkwood-Whyte:

“That Dr. Colby’s verbal report be received as information.”

The Chair put the Motion.

Motion Carried

5. New Business

A. Items Requiring Action - None

B. Information Reports to be received

- a) Update on Membership for the Chatham-Kent Board of Health, verbal report by Dr. April Rietdyk

Dr. Rietdyk shared the following verbal update:

- At Council on Monday, December 14, Michael Genge and Magdiel Hoste were appointed to the Board of Health, as Citizen Appointees, for a term running January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2024.
- Orientation will be provided to Mr. Genge and Ms. Hoste prior to the January Board meeting.
- Ms. Blake’s appointment was renewed by the Province, for a term ending Feb. 26, 2022.

The Board thanked Mr. Carnahan and Ms. Pfaff for their long service and commitment to public health and the Board of Health. Dr. Rietdyk indicated that as per tradition, trees will be planted at the Health and Family Services building in honour of Mr. Carnahan and Ms. Pfaff; information will be communicated when available.

- b) Director's Report for the Month of December, 2020, prepared by Teresa Bendo, Director, Public Health

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of current events or issues arising at Public Health.

Comments

Grant Proposal for Peer – led Outreach Program

Staff submitted a grant application for the Community Opioid/Overdose Capacity Building (COM-CAP) Initiative through Public Health Ontario (PHO). The goal of the COM-CAP Initiative is to support networks and organizations responding to opioids/overdose and related harms. There is up to \$75,000 available over four years and three communities will be chosen to receive the grant. There is a real emphasis in the grant to demonstrate clear and meaningful engagement of people with living and lived expertise of substance use.

As a requirement of the grant, lead organizations must submit an application with two co-applicants. For this grant, CK Public Health worked with the United Way and ROCK Missions as co-applicants. For the application, it is being proposed to expand peer-led outreach interventions through a collaborative, community-driven approach that uses a trauma and violence informed care approach. Meaningful engagement through this project means that peers will shape all aspects of how outreach services are provided and the work will be driven by priorities that are important to them. The United Way will support the peer-to-peer project team and mobilize community resources and ROCK Missions role involves the "boots on the ground" community outreach workers, developing and building trusting relationships with People with Lived/Living Expertise of substance use, and walk beside peers as trusted support to empower them to engage in the project. CK Public Health will be responsible for managing the funds, liaising with the COM-CAP team at PHO, overall project oversight/management, and supporting evaluation of the project.

Ongoing Training/Education in public health topics

To respond to the Board's interest in ongoing training and education about key public health topics, the Foundational Standards team will be providing a curated list of opportunities that will be shared monthly in this report. Some training opportunities chosen for this month are:

[Let's Talk: Health Equity](https://nccdh.ca/images/uploads/Lets_Talk_Health_Equity_English.pdf)

https://nccdh.ca/images/uploads/Lets_Talk_Health_Equity_English.pdf

This four page document explores the concept of health equity and how it applies to public health practice, offering explanations to clarify the meaning of related terms, such as health inequity and health inequality. The discussion questions at

the end were designed to spark dialogue, reflection, and action—in lunch room and meeting settings—to address the social determinants of health.

Time commitment: 30 min

Supports: Foundational Standards, Health Equity Guideline

[Social Determinants of Health - an introduction](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PH4JYfF4Ns)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PH4JYfF4Ns>

This six minute video looks at the social determinants of health - what they are, how they impacts health and a useful framework to understand it.

Time commitment: 6 min 30 sec

Supports: Foundational Standards and Program Standards

[ABC of Indigenous Awareness](https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/abc-of-indigenous-awareness) (blog) <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/abc-of-indigenous-awareness>

There are over 700 articles on the Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. blog and this one links a blog post to every letter of the alphabet - from Aboriginal Rights all the way to Zoning. Three, free eBooks that support working effectively with Indigenous Peoples are also available for downloading (located at the end of the blog).

To subscribe to ICT Inc.'s Indigenous Relations Bulletin for blog posts and upcoming training and workshops, click [here](https://www.ictinc.ca/indigenous-relations-bulletin). <https://www.ictinc.ca/indigenous-relations-bulletin>

Time commitment: 20 min (if you choose your own adventure with the corresponding articles, the time commitment will vary)

Supports: Foundational Standards, Relationship with Indigenous Communities Guideline

Consultation

There was no consultation required in producing this information report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications with this information report.

Ms. Bendo informed the Board that a report on enhancements to harm reduction would be coming before Council in early 2021.

- c) COVID-19 Community Survey and Presentation, prepared by Rebecca Haskell-Thomas, Planning and Evaluation Specialist

Background

Nine months into the pandemic, residents of Chatham-Kent have been living with varying degrees of public health measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. As well, CK Public Health staff have been working hard to keep the community safe.

The Ontario Public Health Standards require public health units to collect population health and other information to understand the current context and inform programs and services. The COVID-19 response is no different.

It is in this context that CK Public Health contracted Ipsos to conduct a Community Survey covering topics including:

- trust and confidence in CK Public Health during the pandemic,
- the impact of COVID-19 on mental health,
- perceptions and behaviors regarding public health measures, and
- vaccination intention for COVID-19 and the flu.

The information was gathered to support planning and evaluation efforts related to CK Public Health's COVID-19 response, including understanding how well CK Public Health is reaching the community with information and how much confidence the public has in CK Public Health. The results provide indicators of areas of the response that could be enhanced by targeted messaging and health promotion to promote adherence to and confidence in public health measures. It also serves as a baseline against which to track key indicators in the future.

The survey was administered over the telephone with residents of Chatham-Kent. A dual frame design was used, first using a cell phone sample to better reach younger Chatham-Kent residents, and then using a landline sample. This resulted in a final sample of 20% landlines and 80% cell phones. The survey was about 15 minutes in length.

A total of 540 residents of Chatham-Kent were surveyed between October 22 and November 2, 2020. This sample was considered to be representative of Chatham-Kent residents over the age of 18 by gender, age, and region (urban, semi-urban, rural).

A full copy of the report, including limitations, is available upon request.

Comments

There is strong confidence in CK Public Health during the pandemic.

Residents trust CK Public Health as a credible source of COVID-19 information. Almost all Chatham-Kent residents believe that CK Public Health is doing a good job providing up to date information (90%), a figure that is supported by the nearly half (49%) of residents who state that they have visited the CK Public Health website or social media.

Confidence in CK Public Health is strong among Chatham-Kent residents. Almost all respondents (92%) trust CK Public Health to protect the health and wellbeing of the community, and a majority, four in five (83%) feel confident in their local medical officer of health to inform them of risks of the pandemic.

Not everyone in Chatham-Kent trusts what they hear in the media about the pandemic: an important minority of four in 10 (44%) think the media is exaggerating the extent of the outbreak; men, those 18-34, parents and those with high school or less are more inclined to think this way, and these are the groups that are either less worried about getting COVID-19 or who are more likely to say they will not get the vaccine. In light of this, CK Public Health plays a critical role in the dissemination of trustworthy information about COVID-19 to the residents of CK.

Chatham-Kent is resilient. Still, perceptions of mental health have worsened in the community since the onset of the pandemic.

Sixty-two percent of respondents said their mental health is about the same as it was before the pandemic. Still, nine months into the pandemic with public health measures in place to reduce the transmission of the virus, Chatham-Kent residents are significantly less likely to rate their mental health as excellent/very good (62%) than they did in a 2017 survey (-7pts). A third (31%) of respondents indicate their mental health is slightly/much worse than it was before the coronavirus outbreak. Overall perceived health is relatively strong (81% indicate their overall health is very good/good, +14 points since 2019).

COVID-19 and public health measures are not affecting everyone in the community equally; self-rated mental health of Chatham-Kent residents varies by generation, gender, family structure, and existing health status. This is consistent with other research conducted by Ipsos.

- Younger people (aged 18-34) rate their positive mental health lower compared to older age groups, and they are also most likely to say their mental health has become worse since COVID-19.
- Women also appear to be feeling a greater impact, providing a lower positive mental health rating and indicating a greater decline in mental health since March, compared to men.
- Parents' rating of their positive mental health is slightly lower than the average (but not significant), and they are significantly more likely to say their mental health has worsened since the start of the pandemic.

Importantly, those who already struggling with mental health appear most vulnerable on several fronts.

- Those who self-identify their mental state as fair or poor are more likely to indicate their mental health has worsened since the pandemic and are also more likely to rate their overall health as fair, poor, or very poor pointing to an important connection between mental health and overall wellbeing. They tend to skew slightly more men, <65 years old, less than university education and have lower household income (<\$30K).

Most Chatham-Kent residents perceive COVID-19 as a risk to health.

The perception of risk of COVID-19 is high among residents; more than half (55%) say they are worried about getting infected with COVID-19 this year (just under half (43%) of households have at least one high-risk person in their household). Further, a third (28%) say they know someone who has tested positive for coronavirus.

However, there is also a widespread perception that in many cases, COVID-19 is manageable: only one quarter of residents (24%) think they would get 'extremely' or 'very' sick if they were to get the virus, leaving almost half (46%) who expect they would get 'somewhat' sick, and a further one in five (19%) who think they wouldn't get very sick.

Higher vs. lower income households (those earning \$100,000 or more) are more likely to know someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. However, they are more likely to consider coronavirus a low risk to their personal health (more likely to say the virus would not affect them seriously if they or family were to be infected). In contrast, lower income households (<\$30K) are more vulnerable: more likely to be personally at-risk for complications from COVID-19, to suffer fair/poor mental health, and to think they will be seriously affected if they were to be infected.

Overall, there is strong agreement with public health measures among residents, but there are some outliers.

Ninety-two percent of residents have adapted to the new measures and settled into new routines, while 89% agree that the restrictions are necessary; fewer (75%) agree, however, that those around them are complying with the measures. And, one in five (20%) say restrictive measures are doing more harm than good.

- People from lower income households are also more likely to think that public health measures are doing more harm than good. Also, this group is less likely to have visited the CK Public Health website or social media accounts for information about COVID-19.

Most residents are adhering to public health measures.

Engagement with preventative behaviours is strong: a majority indicate they are always/often washing their hands regularly (94%), wearing a face covering (91%), or staying two metres apart (82%).

That said, there is still evidence of risk-taking behaviour among a minority group. There is a portion of the population (roughly one in 10) that say they are always/often attending indoor places where it is difficult to wear a mask or social distance, are attending gatherings of any size, or are rarely/never limiting indoor social gatherings to the prescribed 10 people or less.

Uptake of public health and safety measures is not universal; attitudes and actions vary by gender and generation.

- Women are significantly more likely to agree that they are adapting to the measures and adapting to new routines, and more likely to agree that the public health restrictions are necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, women see stronger uptake of hand washing, wearing a face covering, social distancing, and reducing touching their face.
- Younger residents (18-34 years) are more likely to not be adhering to social public health restrictions than those older: they are more likely to be attending indoor places where masking and social distancing is difficult and are more likely to feel that public health measures are doing more harm than good in their community, pointing to this age group as a potential risk population.

Not all residents are willing to fully adhere to the public health measures of self-isolation and testing.

Although a majority (87%) are confident that testing is available for those who need it, only half (52%) of all respondents indicate they would get tested right away if they began to experience mild COVID-19 symptoms. A fifth (19%) of respondents state they would not get tested immediately and would not self isolate if they began experiencing symptoms. The most likely reasons for not testing immediately are that the symptoms could be something other than COVID-19, or a feeling that it might be better to wait and see how symptoms develop.

Socio-economic and family structure factor into COVID-19 attitudes and actions.

- Parents and younger residents (18-34 years) seem to be high-risk groups, being significantly more likely to indicate they would not get tested if they were to have symptoms of COVID-19 and more likely to say they would not be able to self-isolate due to work or other out-of-home responsibilities, despite being more likely than other subgroups to have experienced COVID-19 symptoms since March. These two sub-groups are also more resistant to getting the COVID-19 vaccine when it is released.

Just over half of residents are willing to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Despite the promise that a COVID-19 vaccine could eventually help put an end to the pandemic and loosening of the public health measures currently in place, not everyone is willing to be vaccinated in Chatham-Kent. While half (54%) of respondents say they definitely/probably would get the vaccine, a full third express uncertainty (29%) while two in ten indicate they would not get the vaccine (17%). Among those who express concern, efficacy of the vaccine and concerns about side effects top the list of reasons for their hesitancy.

Gender, generation, and family structure appear to have a significant impact on vaccination attitudes in Chatham-Kent.

- Women are significantly more likely to be vaccine hesitant (indicate they are “not sure” they will get the vaccine). However, this appears only related to the COVID-19 vaccination, as women are significantly more likely to have already gotten (or are planning to get) the flu shot- pointing to a disparity in attitudes towards influenza versus COVID-19 vaccine.
- Those under 65 years old are also more hesitant (and 18-34 years more reluctant, i.e. will not get it). Parents in Chatham-Kent also show both hesitancy and reluctance. Forty-one percent say they will definitely or probably get the COVID-19 vaccine but 29% say they are unsure and 29% say they will not get it. This group is also more likely to say they will not get the flu shot this year. Hesitancy and reluctance to get the COVID-19 vaccine are driven by concerns about efficacy and safety (not proven to be safe yet) and about side effects and anti-vaccine beliefs.

Almost half have been, or plan to be, vaccinated against the flu this year.

Forty-six percent of residents have either been vaccinated against the flu or plan on doing so this fall or winter. This is higher than the percentage (39%) who reported getting their flu shot last year, but lower than the national influenza vaccination coverage of 42% in the 2018-2019 season.

Vaccination intentions vary by gender and generation:

- While women are more hesitant to get the COVID-19 vaccine, they are more likely to get the flu shot. Men are equally as likely as women to get the COVID-19 vaccine, but are less compliant about the flu shot.
- Parents are more likely than the average to not get their flu shot, which is consistent with resistance to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Consultation

The Foundational Standards team met with staff supporting communications to identify key findings. Foundational Standards team members are working with CK Public Health teams to use findings from this survey to develop targeted messaging and health promotion strategies to promote adherence to and confidence in public

health measures, and to continue to provide clear and evidence-based information to residents and community partners in Chatham-Kent.

Financial Implications

This survey was funded through the 2020-2021 base budget.

Ms. Haskell-Thomas shared a PowerPoint presentation in support of the report, to reiterate key findings.

Councillor B. McGregor moved, seconded by Ms. Blake:

“That the three reports be received as information.”

The Chair put the Motion.

Motion Carried

C) Items to be Received and Filed

Councillor C. McGregor moved, seconded by Councillor B. McGregor:

“That items a and b be received and filed”

- a) Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) Information Break, dated November 16, 2020
- b) Letter from Timiskaming Health Unit regarding Bill 126 Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020

In regard to Item a, Councilor C. McGregor indicated the Board could look for information around a virtual alpha conference this year.

The Chair put the Motion.

Motion Carried

6. Non-Agenda Items

Councillor C. McGregor informed the Board that alPHa is still working diligently with the Province and other partners to support Public Health, and more updates will be provided when available.

Councillor Kirkwood-Whyte informed the Board that Council is unanimously supportive of a partnership with Indwell.

7. Time, Date and Place for the Next Meeting of the Board

The next meeting of the Board will be held Wednesday, at the Health and Family Services building, 435 Grand Ave. W., Chatham, with the open portion of the meeting to start at 11:00 a.m.

8. Adjournment

Moved by that the meeting be adjourned at.

Joe Faas, Chair