

**Report To:** Human Resources Committee, Board of Health  
**Submitted by:** Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health & CEO  
**Subject:** **REPORT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESPONSIVENESS – SECTION 5 OF THE ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS**

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**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- (a) **That the Human Resources Committee makes recommendation to the Board of Health to receive this report, as presented, for information.**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards (OPHOS), Section 5 - Community Engagement and Responsiveness, states the Goal/Objective is, “To ensure that the board of health is responsive to the needs of the local communities and shows respect for the diversity of perspectives of its communities in the way it directs the administration of the health unit in planning, operating, evaluating and adapting its programs and services.”

The requirements of Section 5 includes Community Engagement (5.1), Stakeholder Engagement (5.2), Contribute to Policy Development (5.3), Public Reporting (5.4) and Client Service Standards (5.5).

This report shares highlights of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health’s (WDGPH) actions and accomplishments pertaining to each section.

**5.1 Community Engagement**

Community partners and the public are kept informed by publicizing the BOH agenda, BOH reports and the *BOH Highlights* as well as through media coverage, twitter and Facebook postings and a constantly updated website.

Currently, WDGPH receives about 4300 web visits each week. The *Stay Well WDG blog* covers a variety of health related topics and is received by 500 subscribers and 3000 twitter followers each week. In January 2017 a new website will be launched and will significantly increase WDGPH’s reach because it will be designed to have more information on the homepage and will easily connect the public with services, through streamlined design and a powerful search engine. The new website will be fully accessible and available on all mobile platforms. This new website will align WDGPH with the upcoming requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Other examples of community engagement include:

- The Guelph-Humber health promoter mentorship program included WDGPH health promotion specialists working with 60 students in Orangeville to go door to door collecting data from residents on their perceptions of access to healthy food.
- WDGPH hosted radon clinic for the public this November in Guelph, Orangeville and Shelburne. The clinics were in partnership with local municipalities and Health Canada.
- Public Health worked with Dufferin County to administer a survey among social housing residents to gauge interest and level of support for smoke-free housing options.
- A telephone survey was conducted with over 600 community residents on alcohol-related knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and support for policy options.
- A telephone survey and key informant interviews were conducted to determine knowledge of and access to cessation supports among smokers in WDG.

## **5.2 Stakeholder Engagement**

Partnership and collaboration is one of the four grounding principles supporting the work of the Ontario Public Health Standards. Public health programs and services involve extensive partnerships within the health and other sectors (e.g., education, social services, housing, etc.). The quality and scope of local partnerships is considered an essential indicator of success for boards of health in achieving and maintaining the leadership role required to create the conditions necessary for effective change. (OPHS, 2008)

Examples of stakeholder engagement include:

- WDGPH hosted an infection control educational evening for health care practitioners at the Cutton Fields Golf Club on October 19.
- Supporting and guiding the adoption of evidence-based decision making (Dufferin Coalition for Kids) and leading the work of the Children's Report Card.
- Developing and implementing recommendations with partners at the children's planning tables in Guelph Wellington (Growing Great Kids and Growing Great Generations).
- Participating in various action groups such as the Guelph Wellington Action Committee on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy.
- Staff liaison roles with community partners including physicians, hospitals, midwives, Ontario Early Years Centers, women's shelters.
- Involvement in community specific projects such as Nurturing Neighborhoods
- Working with local schools to enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act
- Supporting U of G research into ticks populations and Lyme disease
- Chairing a community collaborative of diverse stakeholders to develop a Headwaters Food Charter. The Charter will anchor municipal commitments to sustainable food system policies.
- Working with child care providers, municipal camp staff and school boards to plan and implement workshops that will increase physical literacy knowledge and skills.
- The Immunization of Student Pupils Act (ISPA) has resulted in extensive engagement with school boards, principals and teachers in the public, parochial and private school systems.
- The Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and School Health team have a health promotion specialist or nurse who can work with teachers to support lesson planning related to The Ontario Physical Education and Health Curriculum.
- The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) continues to engage with local leaders and recently met with the CEOs of the Waterloo Wellington LHIN (WWLHIN) and the Central West LHIN.

### **5.3 Contribute to Policy Development**

Influencing healthy public policy is a WDGPH activity less known by the general public but a priority for WDGPH staff. WDGPH staff review municipal and county official plans and other land-use planning documents and provide input and feedback. A recent example is that staff reviewed Shelburne's official plan and 27 of the 30 recommended policy statements were adopted. WDGPH staff also partner with the Central West Tobacco Control Area Network (the seven health units in the central west region) to advocate for provincial tobacco policy. Most recently, this has included the amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) that prohibits smoking in playgrounds, sporting fields etc., and the implementation of the Electronic Cigarettes Act (ECA). WDGPH staff participated on a committee that implemented a 100% smoke-free policy on the Homewood grounds.

By hosting the Wellington Poverty Elimination Task Force, WDGPH is involved with several initiatives around poverty alleviation. In October, the MOH took part in a community panel discussion on supporting a basic income guarantee. The BOH has recently written to government representatives supporting a basic income guarantee and has written on other matters including the regulation of legalized marijuana.

### **5.4 Public Reporting**

WDGPH annually produces a Community Report highlighting the performance and finances of WDGPH for the previous year. The report is sent to stakeholders, posted on the website, promoted via social media and made available in each office lobby. WDGPH sends a media advisory and alerts social media followers to BOH meeting agendas and BOH reports as well as following up each meeting with a *BOH Highlights* which are made public and sent to municipal clerks to inform municipal leaders.

### **5.5 Client Service Standards**

WDGPH has a client service strategy that is informed by a baseline survey conducted in 2015 which showed very high levels of client satisfaction. Clinic wait times and the telephone service were mentioned as areas of concern. To that end, WDGPH revised clinic schedules to accommodate more clients and had the phone system evaluated by an IT consultant who identified steps to improve access to WDGPH via telephone. The new website will be fully accessible further improving client service and WDGPH's staff designer has been trained to make any requested document fully accessible through any assistive technology upon request. As part of the Agency's client standards, reception monitors Agency email ensuring they are forwarded to the program responsible the day they are received. Reception returns all messages received during business hours the same day or the next day at the latest. The client service strategy is looking at staff training in client service standards that will be based on a policy and procedure currently in development. These are informed by client comment boxes in every office lobby and client satisfaction survey.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH AND/OR FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Maintaining a positive relationship with clients, communities, stakeholders and the general public moves the goals of WDGPH forward and helps more people stay well. As a government funded agency, WDGPH must be seen as accessible, responsive and collaborative with all sectors of the community. Section 5 highlights community collaboration and influence while addressing the

reputational aspects of the Public Health brand and helps ensure that the health messages and services of the Agency are seen as an integral part of the local healthcare system.

**APPENDICES:**

NONE.

**REFERENCES:**

NONE.

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