



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 17, 2018
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Semi-Annual Report (BOH18028) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

This report fulfills the Board of Health policy on communication between the Medical Officer of Health and the Board of Health, as outlined in Report (PH06038).

Information:

This is a summary report covering the period from January 1, 2018 to June 30, 2018 (Q1 and Q2, 2018). The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) are the guidelines for the provision of mandatory health programs and services for Boards of Health in Ontario. Investigations completed by program areas for Infectious Diseases and Environmental Health in the OPHS are the focus for this report. These program areas are as follows:

Infectious Diseases

(Includes Reportable Diseases under the Health Protection and Promotion Act)

- Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control;
- Rabies Prevention and Control;
- Sexual Health, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Blood-borne Infections (including HIV);
- Tuberculosis Prevention and Control; and,

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- Vaccine Preventable Diseases.

Environmental Health

- Food Safety;
- Safe Water;
- Health Hazard Prevention and Management;
- Vector Borne Diseases Control; and,
- Tobacco Control.

Reportable disease cases are from people who reside in the City of Hamilton at the time of their diagnosis. Information in Appendix A has been extracted from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC) integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS) database, and databases maintained by Public Health Services (PHS), and are subject to change due to case follow-up procedures and/or delayed diagnosis.

Appendix A provides information to the Board of Health (BOH) in a summarized format based on issues brought commonly to staff by BOH members. Appendix A includes data for three prior years, as well as the current year, which allows for trend monitoring. It is also organized to delineate information for routine monitoring of infectious diseases and environmental health issues (Part 1 and 2, respectively), and workload (Part 3).

Program Highlights (January 1st, 2018 – June 30, 2018)

Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control / Food Safety

In May 2018, the Infectious Diseases Program and Food Safety Program jointly investigated an outbreak of *Salmonella Heidelberg* linked to a local restaurant. Investigation of four laboratory confirmed cases of Salmonellosis identified food consumption at the restaurant as a potential exposure. An inspection of the restaurant revealed critical infractions related to cooking, preparation and cold holding of high risk foods.

Food samples collected from the premise revealed *Salmonella Heidelberg* in prepared chicken, and in other prepared food items in the restaurant, strongly indicating cross contamination of foods due to improper food preparation. The restaurant was issued a closure Order under Section 13 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act R.S.O. 1990 and a media release was issued informing the public of the outbreak and recommending patrons seek medical care if symptomatic. Further laboratory analysis of specimens from cases and food samples confirmed the link between the cases and food products. The premise came into compliance with the Food Premises Regulation 562 and was reopened in June 2018.

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Sexual Health

Gonorrhea on the Rise:

Gonorrhea cases in Hamilton have been higher than normal and are increasing from previous years. This may be explained by improved screening and detection, along with growing antimicrobial resistance to first-line medications. More cases are reported in males aged 20 to 29 than in females because gonorrhea tends to be symptomatic more often in males than in females; this may motivate men to seek health care and get diagnosed. Infections among females under 20 are especially worrisome given that infertility is a potential outcome of gonorrhea, which may result in psychosocial and economic costs. Public Health Services provides free antibiotic treatment to all community physicians to assist with prompt sexually transmitted infection treatment. Free condoms, safer sex counselling, testing and treatment for gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted infections are all offered at the Sexual Health and street health clinics.

Safe Water

Arsenic in Drinking Water:

The Ontario drinking water quality standard for Arsenic was lowered from 25 ug/L (parts per billion) to 10 ug/L effective January 1 2018. Prior to and following the effective date, public health staff worked cooperatively with the owners and operators of five small drinking water systems to ensure the general public were not accessing drinking water with arsenic levels above the new maximum acceptable concentration. The arsenic concentrations in the municipal drinking water systems are well below the new drinking water standard for arsenic.

New Recreational Water E.coli Threshold:

It is notable that the Revised Recreational Water Protocol and new Operational Approaches for Recreational Water Guideline (OPHS) allow a higher concentration of E. coli bacteria in the water at public beaches. The previous allowable E. coli concentration was 100 E. coli bacteria per 100 ml of water whereas the new allowable limit is 200 E. coli bacteria per 100 ml. This change now aligns with the federal concentration limit.

Health Hazard Prevention and Management

Airshed Modelling:

On March 5, 2018 staff from the Health Hazards Team hosted the biennial Upwind Downwind Conference. The objective of the Conference was to bring together experts in the fields of air quality, public health, planning and engineering to collectively discuss and present on state-of-the-art science in air quality and climate change.

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The 2018 conference focus was a presentation of the Hamilton Airshed Modelling Systems (HAMS) by Golder Associates Ltd., the firm retained by Hamilton Public Health Services in partnership with Hamilton Industrial Environmental Association (HIEA). HAMS helps us to understand both the types and place of origin of emissions to Hamilton's airshed and where to best advocate for policies to improve the air quality for the citizens of Hamilton (BOH18016). The conference was very well attended with approximately 100 attendees, including 13 exhibitors from Health Canada, The Lung Association, McMaster Centre for Climate Change, Mohawk College, RWDI Inc. and Environment Hamilton. The next Upwind Downwind Conference is scheduled in Q1/2020. It has already been requested that at that time, a follow-up presentation be done on the Hamilton Airshed Modelling System (HAMS) and the work and/or outcomes of using HAMS.

Tobacco

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 (SFOA) was expected to come into effect on July 1, 2018 and intended to prohibit smoking of medical cannabis and the use of electronic cigarettes in the same areas where tobacco smoking is already prohibited. However, these changes to the SFOA have been halted in order to give the new government the opportunity to review the new regulations related to vaping. Public Health Units across Ontario are awaiting notification from the province regarding: expected timelines for legislative review; stakeholder engagement plans; and expected changes to the legislation. In the interim, The Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2006 remains in place, as does the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015. Additionally, Ontario Public Health Units are monitoring the potential impacts on enforcement related to legalized cannabis scheduled to become law on October 17, 2018. Public Health Services will keep the City of Hamilton Board of Health informed of any Regulatory changes and impacts resulting in service delivery changes and/or pressures.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A to Report BOH18028 – Infectious Disease and Environmental Health (Jan to Jun 2018)