

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH UNIT MANAGING INCREASE IN PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Public health has long engaged in emergency preparedness and response activities. However, in the past few years the number of situations that affect public health have increased dramatically. As a result, emergency management has become more prominent in the day to day work of the Health Unit. To enhance the coordinated response to health emergencies, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit recently hired an Emergency Preparedness Manager, the only one among northern health units.

During the last few years, Health Unit staff have managed some significant health emergencies including:

- H1N1 pandemic, 2009
- MUMPS outbreak, 2009
- E. coli outbreak, 2008
- Listeria outbreak, 2008

The most recent public health emergency, the H1N1 pandemic, reinforced the importance and value of coordinated efforts between levels of government, Community Emergency Management Coordinators, health agencies and community partners. The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit also coordinated internal efforts redeploying staff from their normal work to assist with vaccine clinics, call centers, communications and many other activities as the pandemic evolved between April and December. The Health Unit recently received a formal certificate of appreciation from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for efforts undertaken during the H1N1 pandemic.

Quotes:

According to **Deb Matthews, Minister of Health, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care**, “Measures taken by Dr. Chirico and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit staff, including the coordination of the H1N1 immunization program, surveillance, activities and regular and timely communication with key stakeholders enabled a successful response.” *(Excerpt from letter accompanying MOHLTC certificate)*

“When the H1N1 virus was at its peak, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit organized the immunization of our communities and acted quickly to keep identified cases contained,” said **Monique Smith, MPP for Nipissing**. “I am proud of the response from the team, led by Dr. Chirico.”

Jim Chirico, Medical Officer of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit says, “I am very proud of our staff for their teamwork and how they went above and beyond all expectations during the H1N1 Pandemic. As well, the cooperation from our community partners across the district was essential for the success of our mass vaccination clinics and preparation of our Flu Assessment Centers. I especially wish to thank Commander Scott Todd and Staff Sergeant Rob McDonald, of the OPP, for their commitment in the planning and coordination of the Flu Assessment Centers.”

Quick Links

- www.healthunit.biz
- www.emergencymanagementontario.ca
- www.getprepared.gc.ca

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