Health Unit Briefing: 2007 Ontario Budget

The following briefing document was initially e-mailed to alPHa members on March 22. It is reproduced below.

The 2007 Ontario budget contains very little news for the public health sector. Old news is restated, i.e., increasing provincial share to 75%, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, coverage for 3 new vaccines, expanding newborn screening program, and increasing breast screening program to 600,000 screenings by 2010. A chart in the document includes an increase of $0.5 billion from 2003 to 2007 for “public health including health promotion – to increase funding for public health programs including those delivered by public health units, immunizations, and for health promotion and illness prevention activities.” However, this is not broken down more specifically.

The budget continues with last year’s theme of “Opportunity for all Ontarians” and one backgrounder states that it “forms the foundation of a successful, caring and compassionate society.” Total provincial expenditures are $91.2 billion with $37.6 billion going to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, $373 million going to the Ministry of Health Promotion, and $3.6 billion going to Children and Youth Service’s.

Funding for the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program is expanded by $5 million on top of the existing $86 million base to support the needs of at-risk families with children.

In general, the 2007 budget builds on current investments in health care, i.e., family health teams and wait times. While there is little news for public health, there are many areas of interest to public health.

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2007 Ontario Budget
...continued from page 1.

Social Determinants of Health:
- Minimum wage to increase $0.75 per year until it reaches $10.25 in 2010.
- A restructuring of Ontario’s child benefits system. This will provide an additional $2.1 billion cumulatively in benefits over the first five years to 1.3 million children in 600,000 families.
- $127 million to municipalities immediately for new affordable housing or to rehabilitate existing housing.
- $80 million for up to 1,100 off-reserve housing units for aboriginal families.

Screening and Services:
- $20 million in 2007 (growing to approximately $40 million per year) for colorectal cancer screening for those aged 50 and older.
- $1.5 million in 2008 (growing to $2.5 million by 2010) to community-based AIDS service organizations and community-based HIV clinical services.

Physical Fitness:
- An additional $2.5 million (total fund becomes $7.5M) to the Communities in Action Fund to encourage Ontarians to participate in sports and other physical activities.
- $41 million for community infrastructure and multi-use facilities to promote physical activity, sports and wellness.

Addictions:
- $7 million in expansion money for addiction treatment programs.
- $1 million for pilot project in Stratford to target producers and traffickers of methamphetamine and dismantle their labs.

Human Resources:
- $50 million to increase the number of spaces in Ontario’s medical schools.
- $550 million to create 14,000 new spaces in graduate programs.

Water:
- $380 million (combined federal and provincial funding) to help 60 small and rural municipalities upgrade their water and wastewater systems.
- $140 million Rural Infrastructure Investment Initiative, which helps rural and small municipalities provide safe and reliable local infrastructure for clean water and wastewater.
- Fulfilling all 121 recommendations from the Walkerton Inquiry.
- Continuing the $120 million commitment to fund source water protection planning from 2004 to 2008.
- $7 million in the new Drinking Water Stewardship Program under the Clean Water Act.
- $21 million over the next 3 years to allow for research, education and early action to protect drinking water sources.

For more details, please visit http://www.ontariobudget.ca/english
Syndromic Surveillance:
What It's About and How We Can Use It in Public Health

This workshop was a joint offering of the Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO) and the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH), held on February 1, 2007.

The session introduced participants to the epidemiological tool of Syndromic Surveillance (SS), an innovative electronically-based system that allows users to examine pre-clinical data from various sources as clues to possible emerging diseases in communities before clinical diagnosis confirms them. With extensive cross-referencing capabilities, such a system can be used by epidemiologists for early detection as well as retrospective analyses. The following presentations of case studies illustrated the operations of syndromic surveillance systems:

- an overview of SS and a presentation on analyzing 911 call centre data to identify a spike in heat-related illness; http://www.alphaweb.org/docs/lib_009343422.ppt
- a presentation with a live demonstration of the electronic system being used by two health units to monitor data from Emergency Department admissions and alerts analysts to larger than expected clusters of admissions with a specific set of symptoms (e.g. GI, respiratory etc.); http://www.alphaweb.org/docs/lib_009354838.ppt
- a presentation by the Public Health Agency of Canada on the usefulness of monitoring Over the Counter (OTC) medication sales trends for early detection; http://www.alphaweb.org/docs/lib_009360052.ppt
- a presentation by Ontario’s Ministry of Health and Long Term Care on surveillance activities during pandemic phases; and http://www.alphaweb.org/docs/lib_009335209.ppt

- a panel discussion on moving forward on expanding the use of Syndromic Surveillance through partnerships and increased awareness.

Presentations are available on alPHa’s web site in the Online Library – choose “research/knowledge exchange/surveillance” from the issue menu and “presentations” from the document type menu (www.alphaweb.org/library.asp).

PRESENTERS:

Kate Bassil, MSc, PhD (cand)
Epidemiologist
Toronto Public Health

Bronwen Edgar, MHSc
Epidemiologist
KFL & A Public Health

Kieran M. Moore, MD, CCFP (EM), DTM & H, MMSc
Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine
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Dr. Hazel Lynn, MD, MHSc
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Victoria L. Edge, MSc, PhD
Senior Epidemiologist
Foodborne, Waterborne and Zoonotic Infections Division
Public Health Agency of Canada

Anne-Louise Winter, BScN, MHSc,
Nurse - Epidemiologist
Infectious Diseases Branch
MOHLTC
Building Healthy Communities

February 2, 2007

Assisted by a range of guest speakers and a panel discussion, participants in alPHa’s Building Healthy Communities Workshop developed a renewed understanding of the connection between public health policy and programs and the built environment. They learned about the historical relationship between public health and human endeavours to create cities, towns, utilities and infrastructure.

Participants heard presentations on current initiatives that promote and build upon this relationship, increasing their understanding of the immediate roles they can play in ensuring rural and urban communities are developed in ways that will encourage active living and overall health and wellness. They also took home the message that public health has already become part of the urban planning vocabulary, and must be further integrated into the urban planning process.

Workshop discussions and presentations covered a wide range of topics, including:

- Housing, Neighborhoods, Regions and Societies (Jim Dunn), which illustrated the health implications of the complex relationship between the individual and his or her society by focusing on spatial contexts for factors that influence the health of people in their various environments, from the micro-environment of the home to the macro environment of the society. Each has a bearing on factors ranging from exposure to environmental hazards, to sense of identity and status, to connectivity with community, and each can be intuitively linked to health outcomes.

- A Brief History (Norman Pearson), which tracked the evolution of attitudes toward the socio-geographical and infrastructural influences on human health, from the time that urban planning and public health were synonymous (sewage and drinking water management) through to the present, where health perspectives are largely absent from official plans, leading to an over-emphasis on individual behavioural factors of health, and an abundance of fragile, disconnected and temporary communities.

- Healthy Cities Movement (Fran Perkins), which spoke of the philosophical shift toward a broader, determinants-of-health-focused approach to health protection in Canada following the landmark Lalonde Report (1974). While the determinants of health have yet to be fully integrated into public policy, this presentation illustrated the progress made over the past 20 years by grassroots activities and activism related to healthy cities and their adoption into the official city structure (e.g. Toronto’s pedestrian charter, clean air groups, etc.) through the Healthy Cities Movement.

- Presentations from health units on local initiatives, including Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit’s Building Healthy Communities Committee, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge’s Designing Active Communities, and Waterloo’s Regional Growth Management Strategy, each of which demonstrated the effectiveness of local action and partnerships in developing healthy approaches to local planning.

- Spatial Elements of Sprawl in Low Density Areas (George McGibbon), a presentation on the influences of rigid separation of area uses, the importance of thriving community centres with connections to (and between) surrounding areas, and the particular effects of economic decline, cultural differences and climate change on northern, remote and First Nations areas.

- Presentations from the Ministry of Health Promotion (Healthy Eating Active Living Plan) and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe) illustrated how the public health dimension is approaching the forefront of public policy decisions on supporting healthy living choices and the creation of “complete communities.”

- A Panel Discussion that addressed the following key questions:
  - Should public health play a role in the built environment?
  - What could that role look like?
  - What are the barriers to public health playing a meaningful role?
  - What could be some first steps?
Designated Smoking Rooms
The Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco (OCAT) has written Canada’s Minister of Labour urging him to amend the Non-Smokers’ Health Act in order to eliminate designated smoking rooms in federally-regulated workplaces. As background, OCAT provided the Minister a copy of its September 2004 report called Designated Smoking Rooms (DSRs) In Ontario: Operation and Effectiveness Issues. The report draws a number of conclusions about the effectiveness and fairness of DSRs, and the challenges involved in overseeing proper DSR maintenance.

For a full copy of the report, please contact
Susan Lee, ext. 25, susan@alphaweb.org

Knowledge to Action
This winter, alPHA participated in two project sessions to support a planned approach to knowledge exchange, professional development and applied research in local public health practice. Co-sponsored by the Sudbury & District Health Unit and the Middlesex-London Health Unit, with support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Knowledge to Action project aims to define local public health needs in the above-named three areas, identify potential models for a system and make recommendations on action to government.

The first session that alPHA attended was a think tank meeting where participants mapped out challenges to public health knowledge exchange, professional development and applied research and discussed potential solutions for overcoming these challenges. The second session consisted of a day-long workshop held on March 26. Workshop participants provided critical analyses of the models and feedback on the challenges identified in the first meeting.

Building Healthy Communities
PRESENTERS:

Jim Dunn
Scientist with the Centre for Research on Inner City Health at St. Michael’s Hospital and Associate Professor of Geography and Health Sciences at the University of Toronto

Norman Pearson
International Planning Management Consultant

Fran Perkins
Co-ordinator of the International Health Unit of the Centre for Health Promotion, UofT

George McGibbon
Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Jean Lam
ADM, Ministry of Health Promotion

Jason Thorne
Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal

Ontario Public Health Standards
Like many health units, alPHA submitted its comments recently to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) in response to the draft Ontario Public Health Standards document. The Standards, which will replace the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, specifies those programs and services that all boards of health must deliver in their local communities.

Following consultations with the alPHA board of directors and its executive, staff answered the Ministry’s on-line survey, targeting those questions that were less technical or programmatic in nature and more focused on the public health system. The submitted response will be ratified by the alPHA Board of Directors at its meeting on April 27 and shared subsequently with the broader membership.

alPHA would like to thank the MOHLTC for the important opportunity to provide feedback on the Standards.
**Government News**

**HPV Vaccine Funding**
The March 2007 federal budget contained welcome news for public health in the area of immunization against human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cancer of the cervix. The Government of Canada will provide funding to provinces and territories to support the launch of a national program for the HPV vaccine that will focus on protecting women and girls from cervical cancer. Cancer of the cervix is the second most common cancer in Canadian women aged 20 to 44 after breast cancer. In July 2006, Health Canada approved the use of a vaccine by young girls and women that provides protection against the two types of HPV responsible for the majority of cervical cancer.

**LHINs Update**
On April 1, 2007 the province’s 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) assume their full responsibilities for funding, planning and integrating health care services at the local level. At the same time, the ministry’s Regional Offices will be winding down their operations. An internal ministry team has been established to ensure a timely, efficient and smooth transition to minimize disruption to health care providers and the public. For more information on LHINs, visit [http://health.gov.on.ca/transformation/lhin/lhin_bul.html](http://health.gov.on.ca/transformation/lhin/lhin_bul.html)

**10 Year Strategic Plan**
As many of you are aware, the McGuinty government is developing a 10-year strategic plan which will identify areas for improvements for the health system. To this end, the government held a number of regional consultations with Ontarians to hear their views and concerns about the health care system. These public dialogues took place in mid-February and concluded in early March. alPHa attended an information meeting about the plan, which is to be released this spring. At this meeting, health promotion followed by better access to physician care were identified as major priorities for the health care system.

**Healthy Pregnancy Guide**
The Government Canada has produced The Sensible Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy as part of a national campaign launched on February 28 to raise awareness of the health factors for a healthy pregnancy. The guide contains information on prenatal care and fitness, and is available free by visiting [http://www.healthycanadians.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.ca)

**Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review**
In fall 2006, the Ontario government, in partnership with municipal representatives The Association of Municipalities of Ontario and The City of Toronto, began a joint review of the provincial-municipal relationship that focuses on identifying a new fiscal and service delivery relationship for the future. One objective of the review is to better understand the nature and the implications of the complex relationship between the province and municipalities. While the Review is not an exercise in detailed program review, it is, however, broad in scope and includes the finance and funding relationship, and service delivery and service governance. The initiative is expected to be completed in spring 2008 and will produce a summary report containing recommendations and next steps for implementation.

A political table of provincial and local elected officials will guide the Review, while a coordinating table of senior provincial and municipal staff will manage the Review process, implement direction from the political table, and coordinate financial, staff and technical resources needed to support the Review. Agencies, including alPHa and boards of health, have an opportunity to provide input into the review. They may choose to attach an electronic submission, answer an on-line questionnaire or provide input to:

**Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review Secretariat**
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 13th Floor
Toronto, ON  M5G 2E5
Fax: (416-585-6161)

For further information and on-line submissions, visit [http://www.mah.gov.on.ca](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca)
Colorectal Cancer Screening Program
Health and long-term care minister George Smitherman recently announced Canada's first province-wide screening program to provide early detection of colorectal cancer. With an investment of $193.5 million over five years, the government is taking a two-pronged approach by targeting Ontarians with a family history of the disease and those aged 50 and older. alPHa has long supported such an initiative, passing a resolution in 2001 calling for a provincial colorectal cancer screening program, and applauds the Ontario government for taking this historic step. For more details about the program, please visit http://www.healthyontario.com/News_Tips/2007_1/Ontario_launches_colorectal_cancer_screening_program.htm

Ontario Health Quality Council
In September 2005, the Government of Ontario appointed the Ontario Health Quality Council to keep Ontarians informed about the state of the province's publicly funded health system and to help the health system keep improving its performance. The Council recently released its 2006 First Yearly Report. The document describes the attributes of a high-performing health system for Ontario. Among these, a system focused on population health that continuously improves overall health was identified. The report also explains some of the indicators that will be used to measure these attributes, and looks at ways to improve the health system such as spreading the use of best practice and evidence-based research, ensuring adequate health human resources and implementing e-health solutions (electronic health information management). To read the complete report, download a copy at http://www.ohqc.ca

alPHa Board of Directors
February 1 Meeting Update
- The alPHa Board received information about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's process on field consultations regarding the draft Ontario Public Health Standards. The Board determined an Association response would be appropriate.
- A motion was passed by the alPHa Board of Directors to approve closure of a number of past resolutions whose operative clauses have been fulfilled.

January 31 Strategic Planning Day
In a facilitated session, alPHa Board members determined the major priorities for the Association over the next few years:
- public health transformation (Capacity Review Committee recommendations);
- further engagement of the membership; and
- increased leveraging of stakeholder relationships.
alPHa will be developing an action plan based on the day's strategic discussions for review by the board of directors at the June annual conference. Once it is finalized, the strategic plan will be shared with health units for their information.

ParticipACTION is Back
On February 19, the federal government announced the renewal of ParticipACTION, committing $5 million over two years on the organization that once promoted physical fitness/activity to Canadians from the 1970s to the 1990s. ParticipACTION will support the efforts of the country, provinces and territories to creating healthier populations by working with media, education, business, labour, volunteer organizations, physical activity and sport groups.

Advocacy Committee Update
In February, alPHa staff and two members of the association's Advocacy Committee reviewed past resolutions that have not been acted upon since their initial endorsement. Two resolutions, A00-4 Boarding and Lodging Homes and A05-14 Community Pharmacies and Public Health Emergencies, were recommended for closure since their operative clauses have been fulfilled. Other resolutions will be followed up on and monitored for further developments. One major outcome of this meeting is the drafting of an association policy to deal with old resolutions. Many thanks to Scott Elder and Monir Taha for assisting with the February review. The Advocacy Committee meets next on April 24 to review the resolutions submitted for consideration at the annual conference in June.
### Health Promotion Dates

**How will your health unit celebrate or promote...?**

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<th>April</th>
<th>Dental Health Month</th>
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<td>National Cancer Awareness Month  (Daffodil Month)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>World Health Day</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Earth Day</td>
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<td>22-28</td>
<td>National Immunization Awareness Week</td>
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<td>1-7</td>
<td>National Summer Safety Week</td>
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<td>WHO, Move for Health Day</td>
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<td>6-12</td>
<td>Emergency Preparedness Week</td>
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<td>7-13*</td>
<td>National Mental Health Week</td>
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<td>Canada Health Day</td>
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<td>28-June 3</td>
<td>National Sun Awareness Week</td>
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<td>World No Tobacco Day</td>
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<td>4-8</td>
<td>Canadian Environment Week</td>
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<td>Clean Air Day</td>
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### Publications on the Web

- **2007 alPHa Orientation Manual**
  for Board of Health Members
  http://www.alphaweb.org
  *(Go to “Members” area, log in and click on “Board of Health Member Orientation”)*

- **Early Years Study 2:**
  Putting Science into Action
  http://www.councilced.ca/ceed/home.nsf/pages/EYS2

  http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/0708/PHAC-ASPC/PHAC-ASPC_e.asp

### Children’s Mental Health Week

"One in five children in Ontario struggles with their mental health ... you probably know one."

*~ brochure: Children’s Mental Health Ontario, 2007*

Children’s mental health is a public health issue. To raise awareness about the plight of mental illness in children and youth, Children’s Mental Health Week is taking place May 7-13. A series of events across the province will be held to bring attention to this critical issue, including a “Lobby Day” at Queen’s Park where children’s mental health agencies will visit MPPs to inform them of the field’s work and discuss the impact of funding shortfalls. If your health unit isn’t already working with local community partners on this issue, go to http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca for support and information.
Datebook

Designing Active Communities Together Forum
Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit

April 25, 2007
Lindsay Golf & Country Club, Lindsay, Ontario
To register, contact HKPR District Health Unit, tel. (705) 324-3569 ext. 207

OPERATION: Communicable Diseases Investigation.
Educational conference by Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, Ontario Branch Inc.

May 3 & 4, 2007
Holiday Inn Select Toronto Airport, Toronto, Ontario
http://www.ciphi.on.ca/

Third International Conference on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

May 9 to 11, 2007
London Convention Centre, London, Ontario
http://www.lfcc.on.ca/

The Evolution of Health Promotion
Health Promotion Ontario - 20th Anniversary Conference

May 10 & 11, 2007
Days Hotel and Conference Centre, Toronto, Ontario
Featuring perspectives on the evolution of health promotion - past, present and future. All current, former and “future” HPO members are invited to attend.

Changing – Evolving - Improving
2007 National Education Conference on Infection Prevention and Control

June 12 to 14, 2007
Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton, Alberta
http://www.chica.org

Public Health Connects
2007 alPHA Annual Conference

June 10 to 12, 2007
Hilton Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
co-hosted by alPHA and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

Join us in Windsor for an exciting educational and networking opportunity at this year’s alPHA Annual Conference. The theme is Public Health Connects, focusing on collaborations and communications in times of system reform.

Participants will learn

- how public health can work together with organizations such as LHINs and what you can do in your local area
- how to use the media successfully to communicate your message
- effective strategies for advocating the government

Registration required. To download a Registration Form, go to http://www.alphaweb.org/conference_info.asp

Please note: Reservations for guestroom accommodations (toll-free 1-877-973-7829) should be made before May 2, 2007 to be assured of the special conference rate.
Affiliates’ Corner

OAPHD
http://www.oaphd.on.ca

The Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD) has developed two new policy statements on oral health promotion and tooth brushing. The statements include an up-to-date, critical summary of the relevant literature on the topics and are available on the OAPHD web site. In other advocacy news, OAPHD has been formulating a collective response to the increasing number of challenges to the concept of community water fluoridation around the province. These range from formal court challenges (e.g. London, Ontario) to widespread publication of syndicated newspaper columns criticizing the use of fluoride in any form.

Member News

Dr. Michael Finkelstein, Associate Medical Officer of Health, Toronto Public Health, was recently seconded to the Division of Preventive Oncology, Cancer Care Ontario (CCO), as medical coordinator of screening. He will remain at CCO for the rest of 2007 and will return to public health in 2008.

Mary Johnson, Chair of the Board of Health of Eastern Ontario Health Unit, was recently elected by her alPHA colleagues to the alPHA Board of Directors. She replaces Gil Hebert, who stepped down from the alPHA Board in the fall, and will complete his term until June 2007.

Dr. Rosana Pellizzari will join Toronto Public Health as Associate Medical Officer of Health and Director of Policy and Planning on May 1. Dr. Pellizzari is presently the medical officer of health at Perth District Health Unit until April 30. Her appointment fills the vacancy created by Dr. Fran Scott’s secondment to the University of Toronto as Director of the Community Medicine Residency Program. Fran continues to work half-time as an AMOH in Planning and Policy for Toronto Public Health.

www.alphaweb.org