
For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Public Release of the Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response Report**

FROM: Nancy Polsinelli, Commissioner of Health Services
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OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to share the release of the report titled “Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response” and provide an overview of current activities related to equity and engagement.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On December 10, 2020, Dr. Loh provided a verbal overview of how Peel Public Health is including equity and engagement considerations within the COVID-19 response.
 - On February 25, 2021, the document titled “Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response” is being publicly released.
 - This report provides context to equity and engagement by providing an overview about the social determinants of health, the relationship of the determinants of health and equity, and Peel Public Health’s mandate as it relates to equity and engagement.
 - The report, “Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response” is attached in Appendix I.
 - Appendix II highlights the progress on equity and community engagement activities since the verbal overview at Council on December 10, 2020.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

On December 10, 2020, Dr. Loh provided a verbal overview of how Peel Public Health is including equity and engagement considerations within the COVID-19 response.

The report titled “Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response” provides an overview of the social determinants of health, the relationship of the determinants of health and equity, and Peel Public Health’s mandate as it relates to equity and community engagement. It also provides additional details to the priority of Advancing Health Equity, outlined in the February 25, 2021, report to Council titled “Peel Public Health’s 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities.”

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Appendix I provides readers with a copy of the report titled “Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response” .

Appendix II highlights the progress Peel Public Health has made related to equity and community engagement activities since the verbal overview on December 10, 2020.

2. Findings

a) Determinants of Health

Individual or population health is affected by a variety of factors such as: exposure to biological determinants (e.g. age); risk factors (e.g. cigarette smoking), and determinants of health (e.g. income, education and race/racism). Structural determinants of health such as housing or labour policies also influence health outcomes.

b) Health Equity, Determinants of Health and COVID-19

Health inequalities or disparities, defined as differences in risk factors, determinants, or health outcomes exist for many populations and have been observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include differences in:

- Exposure to COVID-19 (e.g. in workplace settings, inability to work from home, inadequate housing, families with young children).
- Susceptibility to contracting COVID-19 once exposed (e.g. older age, persons with disabilities and/or chronic conditions).
- Access to testing and vaccination for COVID-19 (e.g. transportation to testing centres).
- Ability to follow public health guidance for COVID-19 (e.g. ability to stay off work to isolate, paid sick leave).
- Treatment of COVID-19.

c) Mandate of Public Health with Regards to Health Equity

Public health’s mandate as it relates to health equity is defined in the Ontario Public Health Standards – Health Equity Guideline, 2018. Key activities include:

- Assessing and reporting on the health of the population;
- Developing or modifying public health interventions to decrease health inequities;
- Engaging in multi-sectoral collaborations; and,
- Conducting health equity analysis, policy development and advancement of public policies.

d) Peel Public Health’s Role in the COVID-19 Response

Within the COVID-19 response, Peel Public Health’s role include:

- Case, contact and outbreak management;
- Epidemiologic surveillance and reporting;
- Public health measures;
- Education, engagement, enforcement and leadership; and,
- Communication with the Public, Stakeholders and Partners.

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e) Peel Public Health's Progress related to Equity and Community Engagement Activities

i) Case, Contact and Outbreak Management

- In partnership with Human Services, the expanded voluntary COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Program was launched on December 1, 2020. Over 180 Peel residents accessed this site in December 2020.
- Continued work with community partners to ensure the COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Program is promoted in culturally relevant ways.

ii) Epidemiologic Surveillance and Reporting

- Daily updates and enhancements to the Cases of COVID-19 in Peel Dashboard to include:
 - Daily updates on COVID-19 cases, outbreak status in long-term care homes retirement homes, schools and childcare settings;
 - Weekly updates for workplace outbreaks; and,
 - Addition of a downloadable data table for COVID-19 cases.
- Addition of a downloadable data table on the Interactive map of COVID-19 Cases in Peel Dashboard.
- Launch of the COVID-19 testing and positivity dashboard.

iii) Public Health Measures

- Development of a new Policy and Intervention working group with completed review and identification of additional interventions to help reduce and workplace transmission.
- Partnership with Ontario Health and Health Commons Solutions lab to identify and break down barriers to testing and isolation.

iv) Education, Engagement, Enforcement and Leadership

- Advocacy for targeted supports and policy changes that address the underlying social determinants of health including funding for a voluntary COVID-19 isolation and recovery site, paid sick leave, job loss protection, eviction protection.
- Partner with Ontario Health under the COVID-19 High Priority Communities Initiative.
- Continue to work with community agencies and stakeholders (e.g. Ontario Health, Community Response Table, Interfaith Council, COVID-19 South Asian Task Force, World Sikh Organization, Peel Poverty Reduction Committee, Roots Community Services.)
- Continue to conduct joint inspections of workplaces with Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development inspectors. A total of 71 joint inspections were completed between December 1 and January 17, 2021.

v) Communication with the Public, Stakeholders and Partners

- Ongoing website enhancements to provide clear and comprehensive information about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself.
- Continued work with community roundtables, as well as faith-based organizations and faith leaders to develop, adapt and communicate public health messages.

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- Continued translation of the COVID-19 web site into 13 languages as well as translation of social media messaging.
- Consultation with municipal Economic Development Offices on communication needs of business communities.
- Process enhancements for calls coming in through the Public Health Contact Centre.

CONCLUSION

Equity and community engagement are considered across all aspects of Peel Public Health's COVID-19 response. Peel Public Health will continue to advance the equity and engagement activities over the course of the pandemic.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response Report

Appendix II: Peel Public Health and COVID-19: An Equitable and Engaged Response - Status Update

For further information regarding this report, please contact Dr. Lawrence C. Loh, Medical Officer of Health, Extension 2856, Lawrence.loh@peelregion.ca

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Director and Medical Officer of Health.