

1

EXPANSION OF YORKSAFE PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTION DISCLOSURE INITIATIVE

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Steve Rebellato, Environmental Health Specialist, Public Health Branch;**
- 2. Receipt of the communication from Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner, Community and Health Services and Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health, dated May 9, 2012 regarding 'Colour-based Ratings for Inspection Disclosure'; and**
- 3. Adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated April 24, 2012, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services and Medical Officer of Health.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the proposed expansion of the YorkSafe inspection disclosure initiative to include the safe water and personal services settings programs.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report is prepared for Council in order for it to carry out its legislative duties and responsibilities as the Board of Health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. It outlines a proposal for the expansion of the YorkSafe inspection disclosure initiative to the safe water and personal services settings programs.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region Public Health conducts inspection and enforcement activities in a variety of settings as mandated by the Ontario Public Health Standards

Based on the Ontario Public Health Standards and associated protocols, health units in the province are required to carry out inspection and enforcement to help protect the

public's health across a range of locations. These include establishments that package, prepare, process and sell food to the public, personal services settings, and recreational water facilities. Certified Public Health Inspectors conduct unannounced inspections of establishments in accordance with provincial standards. Inspection frequency varies by setting.

The Ontario Public Health Standards also mandate health units to establish a procedure to disclose information from food premise inspections to the public. Literature suggests that inspection disclosure not only benefits consumers, but also acts as an incentive for food premise operators. Historically, disclosure of inspection results was done in York Region through the Health Connection public health telephone information line. Residents could receive information about the latest inspection report for food premises via fax, email, and/or mail, or have the results of the inspection read over the phone. Health units are not required by the Ontario Public Health Standards to have a process in place to disclose inspection results from other settings.

The YorkSafe inspection disclosure initiative has been in place for food premises since September 2011

In the fall of 2011, York Region Public Health launched the YorkSafe initiative to increase accessibility to food establishment inspection results, make Regional services more user friendly and increase awareness of services and programs through multiple communication channels. YorkSafe introduced two new components to inspection disclosure for food establishments:

1) Posting of "Proof of Public Health Inspection" signs in food establishments

Over 4,400 signs have been posted to date, representing 99.9% of food establishments in the Region.

2) YorkSafe website

Residents can access inspection reports for a 2-year period on the YorkSafe website. Since the website was launched, over 5,000 people have visited it.

Residents are still also able to receive food premise inspection results from the Health Connection telephone line.

The YorkSafe initiative has the support of the Ontario Restaurant Association and is beneficial to businesses and the public

In 2011 and 2012, the Public Health Branch conducted a survey with owners and operators of food establishments. Over 90% believed that the YorkSafe initiative would be useful to their business. The majority of those surveyed found that posting the YorkSafe proof of inspection sign in their establishment would be useful to customers, and 86% agreed with the statement that YorkSafe is important to the general public.

The Ontario Restaurant Association has also indicated that they support the YorkSafe disclosure initiative as a tool for both business owners and the public to increase transparency and food safety compliance.

A majority of York Region residents report that inspection disclosure is important and should be expanded to other settings

In 2011, the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) identified that four out of five York Region residents who use food establishments reported that food safety disclosure information currently posted on the YorkSafe website would influence their decision about where to eat. Further, four out of five also believed it should be compulsory for food establishments to post inspection results.

A Public Health Branch survey conducted with the public identified that over 85% of residents who currently use the YorkSafe website would like to see the results of inspections conducted in other settings. These other settings include:

- Safe water programs
 - swimming pools & whirlpools/spas (348 in total)
 - wading pools and splash pads (79 in total)
 - small drinking water systems (309 in total. Examples include water systems serving gas stations, campgrounds, arenas and community halls)
- Personal services settings (3,745 in total)
 - hair salons
 - ear piercing services
 - aesthetics salons--offering manicures, pedicures, facials, waxing, electrolysis, etc.
 - permanent make-up and micropigmentation services
 - tattoo and body piercing studios

Presently, members of the public who want information on inspection results for these settings must make a Freedom of Information request.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Stakeholder engagement and quality assurance processes will assist in implementation of an expanded inspection disclosure system

Based on the positive response to the YorkSafe inspection disclosure initiative for food premises, York Region Public Health proposes to expand it to the safe water and personal services settings programs. In doing so, a number of strategies will be used to help ensure optimal outcomes for the public, business owners, and public health inspection staff.

1) Internal and external stakeholder engagement

- operator consultation for feedback on the proposed system
- public consultation for feedback on the proposed system

- educational packages to all eligible establishments describing the change to the inspection disclosure system
- promotion of the YorkSafe expansion through “coming soon” signs for all participating establishments, which will direct the public to the YorkSafe website and Health Connection line for questions and comments.
- public health staff consultation on implementation and program delivery

2) Continuous quality assurance and evaluation

- daily review of inspection records
- field inspection audits with inspection staff
- operator and public satisfaction surveys at pre-determined intervals of program delivery
- rotation of public health inspection staff across districts/programs
- further evaluation of the food safety component of YorkSafe

In expanding the YorkSafe initiative, York Region will be the first health unit in Ontario to post inspection results for safe water and personal services settings programs

York Region would be the first health unit in the province to request that operators voluntarily post “Proof of Public Health Inspection” signs to advise the public of when inspections were completed for public pools and spas, small drinking water systems, and personal services settings. York Region would also be the first to post inspection reports for the safe water and personal services settings programs online. This will help increase transparency and enhance efforts to reduce health hazards in regionally-inspected establishments.

The mobile inspection technology used by Public Health Inspectors allows inspection reports to be uploaded to the YorkSafe website within 24-72 hours of being completed, following a quality assurance process. The website will provide:

- 1) Inspection records up to two years from the date of the search.
- 2) A glossary of terms to assist in the interpretation of infractions observed, charges and closure orders issued.
- 3) A GIS interface allowing for point-and-click capabilities to narrow down search requirements and locate premises on an interactive map.
- 4) A list of actions taken by the inspector to address issues raised (e.g. infractions, charges, closure) during the inspection.

As in the food premise inspection program, YorkSafe inspection results for the safe water and personal services settings programs will also be made available via the Health Connection telephone information line.

Phasing in the YorkSafe expansion will allow time for consultation and technology upgrades

The expansion of YorkSafe will be phased in over a period of 12 to 18 months to allow appropriate time for stakeholder consultation and technology upgrades. Dates when “Proof of Public Health Inspection” signs will be posted and inspection results will be available to the public include:

January 1, 2013 - Swimming pools and whirlpools/spas
July 1, 2013 - Personal service settings
(including nail salons, barber shops, tattoo parlours, electrolysis,
piercing establishments, micropigmentation and acupuncture)
- Wading pools and splash pads

January 1, 2014 - Small drinking water systems

Link to key Council–approved plans

Enhancing the YorkSafe initiative contributes to the following Multi-Year Plan goal and Strategic plan priority area and objectives:

2010 to 2015 Multi-Year Plan (Goal # 3) – Optimize the health of the community for all ages and stages through health protection, prevention and promotion initiatives

2011 to 2015 Strategic plan priority area and objective – Make Regional services more user friendly via increasing public awareness of Regional services and programs through effective use of multiple communication channels.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2012 Public Health operating budget includes \$113,078 of 100% provincial funding that can be utilized to support this initiative. As the program expands, any future additional resources required would be eligible for cost share funding (75% Provincial / 25% Municipal) and would be included in the 2013 budget proposal.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Public Health Branch has initiated dialogue on the expansion of the YorkSafe program with operators of municipally-run pools, whirlpool/spas, and splash pads.

Expanding the public health YorkSafe initiative will improve accessibility to inspection reports, increase transparency, and educate local residents on the inspection process.

7. CONCLUSION

Through the proposed expanded YorkSafe initiative, public health inspection staff will request that pools, spas, small drinking water systems and personal services settings post “Proof of Public Health Inspection” signs to advise the public that a public health inspection has taken place. The YorkSafe enhancements will also allow the public to access inspection reports for the safe water and personal services settings programs on the YorkSafe website or through Health Connection. The expansion of this initiative is consistent with Regional strategic directions in emphasizing health protection and prevention, and in increasing access to and awareness of programs.

For more information on this report, please contact Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health at Ext. 4012.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

Expansion of YorkSafe Public Health Inspection Disclosure Initiative

**Community and Health Services
Committee**

Steven Rebellato

Manager, Health Protection

May 9, 2012

YorkSafe is an inspection reporting program

- ❑ Currently focusing on food safety
- ❑ 2 components – signage and website
- ❑ Proposed expansion to disclose inspections for the safe water and personal services settings programs



YorkSafe was approved by Council in 2010 as part of the Multi-Year Plan

Timeline

- ❑ 2010 – Community + Health Services Multi-Year Plan
- ❑ 2011 – Launch of YorkSafe for food safety program
- ❑ 2012 – YorkSafe evaluation
- ❑ 2013/2014 – Proposed expansion to safe water and personal services settings programs

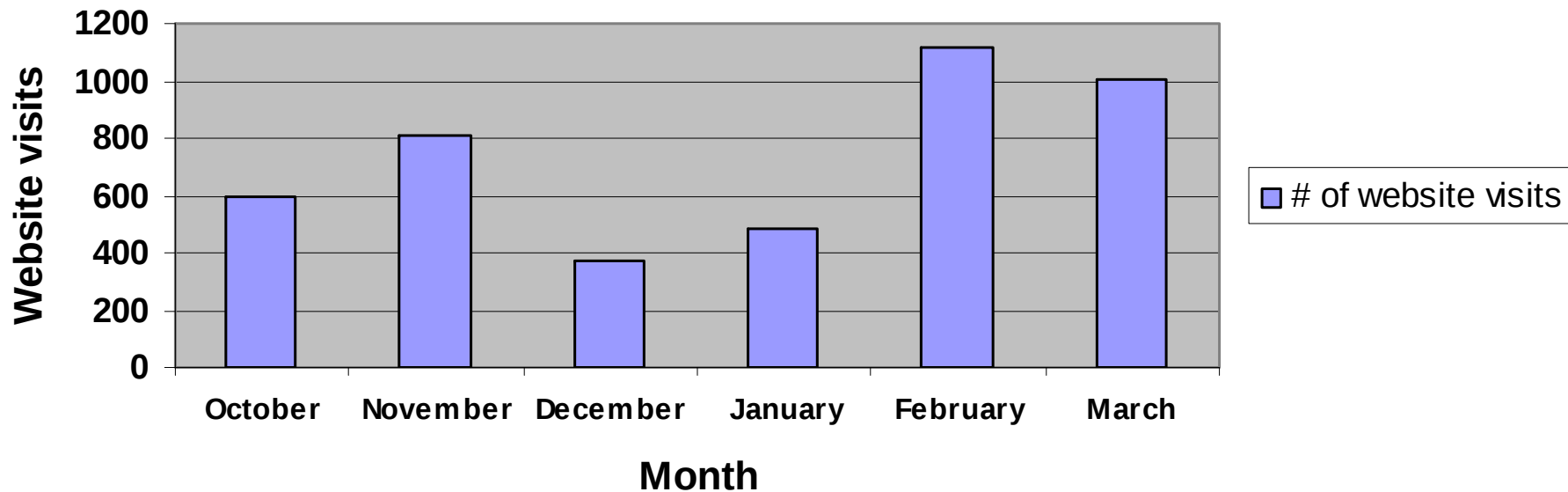
YorkSafe and the Food Safety Program

- ❑ Posted over 4400 “Proof of Public Health Inspection” signs
- ❑ Over 99% of food establishment operators have voluntarily posted
- ❑ Over 5000 website visits since September 2011



Visits to the YorkSafe website

YorkSafe Website Visits: September 2011 - March 2012



The YorkSafe website officially launched on September 16, 2011

YorkSafe Evaluation

- ❑ Food operators
- ❑ The public
 - ❑ Desire to see other programming
- ❑ Ontario Restaurant Association



Benefits of expanding YorkSafe to safe water and personal services settings programs

- ❑ Increase public awareness of public health programs
- ❑ Easy access to information
- ❑ Would be first health unit to post “Proof of Public Health inspection” signs



The media and disclosure of inspection results



- ❑ “Operators are not required to disclose reports, leaving bathers in the dark.” *Toronto Star (2011)*
- ❑ “Before your next visit to the spa, make sure you’re aware of the risks.” *Best Health Magazine (2010)*

Safe Water Program

- ❑ Swimming pools and whirlpools
- ❑ Wading pools and splash pads
- ❑ Small drinking water systems

The Safe Water Program inspects a total of 736 facilities/systems.

Personal Services Settings Program

- ❑ Hair salons and ear piercing services
- ❑ Aesthetic salons
- ❑ Permanent make-up and micropigmentation
- ❑ Tattoo and body piercing

The Personal Services Settings Program inspects a total of 3745 services.

Proposed timelines for YorkSafe expansion

January 1, 2013

- swimming pools
- whirlpools/spas

July 1, 2013

- personal services settings
- wading pools and splash pads

January 1, 2014

- small drinking water systems

Next Steps

- ❑ Stakeholder consultations including municipalities
- ❑ “Coming soon” signs
- ❑ Phased-in approach in 2013 and 2014

Municipalities were made aware of the proposed expansion in April, 2012



Community and Health Services Department
Public Health Branch

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee Members

FROM: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services
Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: May 9, 2012

RE: **Colour-based Ratings for Inspection Disclosure**

At its April 11, 2012 meeting, Community and Health Services Committee requested reasons for the non-use of a colour-based rating system for the YorkSafe inspection disclosure program.

Food premise inspection disclosure options were discussed extensively at Council in May 2001. Council chose to opt out of a colour-based rating system for reasons that included:

- Area municipalities with licensing by-laws would require amendments in order to adopt a revised colour-based inspection rating system while those municipalities without licensing by-laws would have to create one.
- Colour-based inspection rating systems would require a significant amount of communication in various languages on how to accurately interpret the colour ratings.
- Start-up costs were estimated to be \$1,145,000.

Council approved a system combining media releases on closures and charges and access to inspection results through the Health Connection telephone line.

A 2007 city of Hamilton review of inspection scoring systems, such as the colour-based system, determined that these systems are applied inconsistently across jurisdictions and are open to misinterpretation. The public is often confused as to how to assess the health risks of the significant infractions indicated by yellow "conditional pass" signs. The Hamilton review also concluded that there is considerable debate on the effectiveness of scoring systems. One measure of restaurant health is re-inspection rate, and York Region's re-inspection rates compare favourably to those of the GTA health units with colour-based inspection rating systems.

In Ontario, only five of 36 health units use a colour-based inspection rating system. The vast majority direct the public to a web-based system to access a summary of the most recent inspection report. The Region's YorkSafe web-based inspection disclosure program was approved in September 2010, through adoption of the Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan. There is an upward trend in public utilization of the website (www.york.ca/yorksafef). In March 2012 alone, there were over 1,000 hits to the site. This compares favourably to an average of two calls per month for inspection reports previously. Consultation with the public and the Ontario Restaurant Association has confirmed support for this model of increasing transparency.

Adelina Urbanski
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Dr. Karim Kurji
Medical Officer of Health

/nd

eDOCS 4151466