

2

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WEEK JANUARY 3–7, 2005

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, October 8, 2004, from the Commissioner of Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee and Regional Council recognize the week of January 3–7, 2005 as National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week.
2. A copy of this report be circulated by the Regional Clerk to local municipal Councils in York Region for their information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to request Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee and Regional Council to recognize January 3–7, 2005 as National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week in honour of the value and accomplishments of public health inspectors in York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

The Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) was initially established to promote the profession, enhance the status and standards of public health inspectors and cooperate with other similar associations. In recent years, CIPHI has been involved in supporting research objectives in the field of public health, publishing articles in its quarterly *Environmental Health Review Journal* and advocating for changes to public health policy at the provincial and federal levels.

In order to recognize and commend public health inspectors, CIPHI declared January 5–11, 2004 as the first annual Environmental Health Week. This has been recently renamed National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week in order to accommodate differing titles for public health inspectors across the country. At the national level, in 2004 CIPHI was involved in promoting this event across Canada, and at the local level the York Region Health Services Department, Health Protection Division, was proud to promote the public health inspection-related programs and services through open houses at Regional offices.

3.1 Enhanced Public Health Inspection Role

Public health inspectors have traditionally been associated with food safety and food premises inspections, but their roles have evolved to include many areas of expertise listed below. Health promotion and education, as well as enforcement, are integral components of the public health inspection program. As a result of food safety education by public health inspectors in 2003, over 1,200 individuals in the community were certified through York Region's PROTON Food Handler Training Program. PROTON is an educational program developed for individuals working in the food industry serving the general public in order to increase their awareness of food safety practices.

3.2 York Region Public Health Branch

Public health inspectors are mandated under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* to deliver specific public health programs and enforce the *Act*. In York Region, public health inspectors deliver public health programs such as safe water, infection control, rabies control, West Nile virus control, injury prevention (swimming pool and playground inspections), health hazard investigation (arena inspections, indoor air quality investigations and complaint investigations) and emergency response. Public health inspectors are trained in infection control and conduct audits and education to staff in long term care facilities, hospitals, daycares and personal services settings.

While public health inspectors in York Region work in several divisions within the Public Health Branch, the majority (60 FTEs) are employed by the Health Protection Division. In 2003 the following inspections/investigations were conducted in York Region:

- Food Safety Investigations – Inspections/reinspections – 11,141
- Food Safety Charges Laid – 47
- Infection Control (Daycares, Personal Service, Long Term Care Facilities) – 1,756
- Injury Prevention (Public Pools, Spa, Waterslides) – 762
- Complaints Investigated – 2,094
- Rabies Investigations – 808
- Boil Water Advisories Issued - 31

Advocacy and promotion of public health programs has expanded the role of the public health inspector in York Region. Inspectors promote and advocate to improve outdoor air quality (e.g. annual Smog Summits, International Walk to School Day, Corporate Clean Air Task Force), water protection and conservation (e.g. the York Children's Water Festival, Ecofestivals), and pesticide reduction (e.g. Pesticide Reduction Guidelines for Lands Owned by the Regional Municipality of York). Public health promotion is also facilitated through Public Health Inspectors collaborating with other public health divisions, regional departments, area municipalities and community groups.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

During the week of January 3–7, 2005, numerous public health and municipal locations will be involved in activities to engage the community through educational resources,

demonstrations and displays throughout York Region to celebrate National Environmental Public Health Week.

4.1 Invitation to York Regional and Local Municipal Councillors

Promotion of the week-long festivities will be through media releases, the York Region website and printed advertisements in local York Region newspapers. The role and responsibilities of the public health inspector in York Region previously showcased in a week-long television series by a local media representative will air again during National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week.

York Regional and Local Municipal Councillors will be invited to join a public health inspector for half a day as they conduct inspections and investigations. Restaurants, public pools, indoor arenas, daycares, long term care facilities, and personal services establishments are some of the premises that Councillors may have the opportunity to visit in their constituency.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

Public health inspectors support the Vision 2026 goals of Responding to the Needs of our Residents and working to Enhance Environment, Heritage and Culture through the provision of services on safe food, safe water, injury prevention, environmental health initiatives, and disease control.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All costs associated with the planned activities for National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week will be accommodated within the proposed 2005 Public Health operating budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week is an opportunity for local municipalities to recognize the skill, dedication and professionalism of York Region's public health inspectors, and for Regional and local municipal Councillors to experience first hand the daily routine of a public health inspector.

7. CONCLUSION

Recognizing National Environmental Public Health Professionals Week provides an excellent opportunity to increase public awareness regarding the quality of services provided in our communities by public health inspectors in York Region.

Continuing these promotion and recognition efforts annually may assist in soliciting interest from students in a career in public health inspection and address the shortage of trained and certified public health inspectors in Ontario.

It is anticipated that the realm of public health programs delivered by public health inspectors will continue to evolve as future public health needs are addressed. From emergency response to promoting clean air initiatives, the ability of public health inspectors to evolve and willingly accept new challenges in the field of public health is invaluable for York Region and local municipalities. The importance of public health inspectors to York Region will increase as risks to public health and our environment continue to change.

It is recommended that a copy of this report be circulated to local municipal Councils in York Region for their information.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.