

For Information

DATE: October 9, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **UNIVERSAL INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM 2012-2013**FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services  
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health**OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on Peel Public Health's influenza immunization program, including plans for immunization clinics and vaccine distribution to approved health care providers.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Influenza immunization is the most effective strategy in controlling the spread of influenza illness and is recommended for all individuals aged six months or older who live, work or attend school in Ontario.
- Peel Public Health received its first shipment of influenza vaccine on September 17, 2012 and is distributing vaccine to physicians, health care organizations, pharmacies and workplaces.
- Pending Ontario Government approval of a regulation proposed by the Ontario College of Pharmacists, pharmacists may be permitted to administer influenza vaccine in the province. As a result, Peel residents may have more options for receiving influenza vaccine this year.
- Thirty influenza immunization clinics have been scheduled between October 13, 2012 and January 8, 2013 at clinic sites located across Peel region.
- Health care workers can reduce the spread of influenza-like illness to patients by receiving influenza vaccine. In the 2011-2012 influenza season, average staff immunization rates in Peel facilities were 42 per cent in hospitals, 68 per cent in long-term care homes and 67 per cent in retirement homes.

**DISCUSSION****1. Background**

According to the 2010 Ontario Burden of Infectious Disease Study report, seasonal influenza causes an estimated 272 deaths each year in Ontario, as well as 621,151 illnesses requiring medical attention. This report ranked influenza as one of the 10 most burdensome infectious agents in Ontario causing premature death or reduced functioning.

Influenza immunization is the most effective strategy in controlling the spread of influenza illness. Under Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP), influenza vaccine

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is recommended and available free of charge for all individuals aged six months or older who live, work or attend school in Ontario. The role of Peel Public Health is to:

- promote influenza vaccination;
- conduct inspections of facilities storing publicly-funded vaccine to ensure that safe and effective vaccines are delivered to the public;
- distribute influenza vaccine to physicians' offices, hospitals, other health care facilities, pharmacies and workplaces;
- provide influenza immunization clinics;
- monitor influenza in the community and communicate information on influenza activity to stakeholders and the public; and
- support Peel hospitals, long-term care homes and other institutions in investigating and managing influenza outbreaks.

During the 2011-2012 influenza season, Peel Public Health distributed a total of 320,370 doses of influenza vaccine to health care providers, community clinics and other organizations in Peel. Of this, 85 per cent of vaccine doses were distributed to Peel physicians. A total of 9,756 doses (3 per cent) of influenza vaccine were administered by Peel Public Health at 35 community clinics located across Peel region.

### **2. Influenza Monitoring and Surveillance in Peel**

For the 2011-2012 influenza season (September 2011 to August 2012), there were 548 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza reported to Peel Public Health. This is an underestimate of the true burden of influenza in Peel, since not all people with influenza seek medical attention, and of those that do, many do not get tested for the virus.

In addition to monitoring laboratory-confirmed influenza, Peel Public Health works with local partners on a variety of surveillance initiatives. This includes monitoring of school absenteeism, daycare absenteeism through Regional daycares, and workplace absenteeism through the Region of Peel. Peel Public Health also monitors hospital indicators, such as emergency department visits and hospital admissions, to detect any increases in influenza activity.

### **3. Peel Public Health's 2012-2013 Influenza Immunization Program**

Peel Public Health received its first shipment of influenza vaccine on September 17, 2012 and is distributing vaccine to physicians, hospitals, long-term care homes, other health care organizations, pharmacies and workplaces. There are also 30 community influenza immunization clinics that have been scheduled between October 13, 2012 and January 8, 2013 at sites located across Peel region.

The focus of Peel Public Health's 2012-2013 influenza immunization campaign will be to:

- ensure that Peel residents have access to community clinics by providing a variety of locations with extended hours of operation;
- disseminate information on clinics, locations and hours of operation through news releases, print media advertising, posters and the influenza website;
- reach members of ethnic communities by advertising clinics in multicultural newspapers and other media;
- continue to promote annual influenza vaccination for health care providers with the goal of improving vaccine coverage rates and lowering infection rates among health care facility staff and residents/patients.

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In August 2012, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced that the scope of practice for pharmacists in Ontario may be expanded to include administration of influenza vaccine, pending approval of a regulation proposed by the Ontario College of Pharmacists. There are approximately 330 pharmacists practicing in Peel; eligible pharmacists that are interested in providing influenza immunizations will be provided with publicly-funded influenza vaccine. As a result, Peel residents may have more options for receiving the influenza vaccine this year. Peel Public Health is supporting pharmacists in meeting provincial requirements for storing and handling publicly-funded vaccine by conducting on-site refrigerator inspections that will ensure that these temperature-sensitive vaccines will be properly received, stored, and dispensed.

Updates on Peel Public Health's influenza immunization program can be accessed through the website [www.peelregion/flu](http://www.peelregion/flu) or through the Region's Customer Contact Centre at 905-799-7700.

### 4. Influenza Outbreaks in Institutions and Health Care Worker Immunization

The very young, the elderly, and chronically ill individuals are at higher risk for influenza-related complications and severe outcomes such as hospitalization and death. Most reported outbreaks of influenza occur in long term care homes. In the 2011-2012 influenza season, there were five confirmed influenza outbreaks reported in Peel institutions and all occurred in long term care homes.

Health care workers can reduce the spread of influenza-like illness to individuals in their care by receiving influenza vaccine. Influenza immunization of health care workers can reduce:

- cases of influenza-like illness among elderly patients;
- physician consultations for influenza-like illness; and
- all-cause deaths among the elderly.

In the 2011-2012 influenza season, average staff immunization rates in Peel institutions were 42 per cent in hospitals, 68 per cent in long-term care homes and 67 per cent in retirement homes. Peel Public Health continues to promote annual influenza vaccination for health care providers with the goal of improving vaccine coverage rates and lowering infection rates among health care facility staff and residents/patients.

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**CONCLUSION**

During the 2012-2013 influenza season, Peel Public Health will continue to monitor influenza-like illness in the region, investigate and manage influenza outbreaks, and make influenza vaccine available to Peel residents in order to reduce the burden of illness and costs associated with influenza.

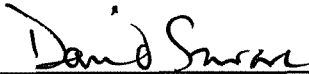


Janette Smith  
Commissioner of Health Services



David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

**Approved for Submission:**



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D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Isabelle Mogck at extension 2616 or via email at [isabelle.mogck@peelregion.ca](mailto:isabelle.mogck@peelregion.ca)*

*Authored By: Monali Varia, Loretta Rowan*

c. Legislative Services