

## **Public Education and Community Outreach**

### **Objective:**

To inform Peel residents about WNV and the measures that they can take to prevent human illness including mosquito breeding site reduction and mosquito personal protective measures.

### **Background:**

In 2001, Peel Public Health introduced its first WNV Public Education Campaign – Put Mosquitoes Out of Touch. The campaign informed Peel residents about WNV and emphasized personal protection against mosquito bites and habitat reduction. The tactics included a mail-out to over 300,000 households, the development of an information package for public distribution at targeted locations, development of a dedicated WNV website ([www.peel-bugbite.ca](http://www.peel-bugbite.ca)) and advertisements in local newspapers. The successive campaigns in 2002 and 2003 were built on this original initiative and each year materials and tactics were reviewed, revised and enhanced.

In 2004, Peel Public Health and Communication Services developed a strategy and messages to complement the provincial WNV campaign. The objectives of the communication activities in 2004 included: continued education of residents about WNV, the need to report dead crows and blue jays, the importance of mosquito reduction through the removal of sources of stagnant water on their property and the use of personal protection measures.

The tactics of the 2005 and 2006 WNV public education campaign in Peel included a mail-out to over 350,000 households in Peel, advertisements in local papers, and distribution of educational materials to the area municipalities, Region of Peel staff and multicultural groups.

In 2007, Peel Public Health will continue raising public awareness of WNV through the media, the WNV website ([www.peel-bugbite.ca](http://www.peel-bugbite.ca)), community outreach activities and advertising in local publications.

### **Planned Activities:**

- Presentations on the West Nile Virus Prevention Plan will be made at Regional and area municipal Councils if requested. Additional presentations to the general public may be conducted if the risk of WNV infection increases.
- A generic WNV brochure will be developed and distributed to the general public through community outreach activities.

- Other WNV educational materials (fact sheets, fridge magnets) will be produced and distributed in high-traffic areas in Peel. They will also be shared with local municipalities, neighbouring health departments, and conservation authorities for their information and distribution. Most materials will also be available on the Region of Peel WNV website for downloading.
- The WNV website ([www.peel-bugbite.ca](http://www.peel-bugbite.ca)) will be redesigned to be more user-friendly. It will contain information on WNV and several fact sheets on topics such as personal protection measures, reduction of mosquito breeding sites, larviciding, and many others. The website will be regularly updated with information on the status of WNV activity in Peel and with the catch basin larviciding schedule. An on-line stagnant water form will continue to be available.
- Educational materials on WNV will be sent to special groups: long-term care facilities, child care centres, garden centres, parks and recreation departments, physicians, golf courses and horticultural societies.
- Educational materials on WNV will also be sent to various seniors' groups in all three municipalities (e.g., Mississauga Seniors' Centre, Brampton Senior Citizen Council)
- The WNV displays, in conjunction with other educational materials, will be used to educate the public about the issue. They will be set up and staffed by Peel Public Health employees in strategic locations such as Regional facilities, the Peel Children's Water Festival, the Trillium Health Centre Seniors' Health and Wellness Fair, and other high-traffic areas in Peel.
- Ministry of the Environment regulatory requirements for public notification of the use of larvicides will be met through regular newspaper notices. In areas other than catch basins, a larviciding notice sign will be posted at the site.
- A series of advertisements with key WNV messages will be placed in local newspapers in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.
- Media relations activities will include ongoing news releases to the local and specialty media (garden, seniors, parenting), interviews with MOH and AMOH and media briefings and/or news conferences if required.
- Local health care providers will be notified about the status of WNV activity in Peel through a faxed newsletter called the Health Professionals Update. Early in the WNV season information on WNV signs and symptoms, laboratory diagnosis, treatment, patient counselling and human case reporting to Peel Public Health will be provided. Additional notification will be provided on the status of WNV should the situation progress or change.

- To assist partner agencies to respond to public inquiries with consistent information, a series of updated WNV Q & A fact sheets will be distributed to the offices of Regional and local Councillors, Brampton and Mississauga Animal Services, local municipalities, conservation authorities, hospitals, other key stakeholders, and Regional call centres. Fact sheets will also be available on the Region of Peel WNV website.
- WNV weekly updates will be produced for Regional Councillors, local municipalities, neighbouring health departments, conservation authorities, the media, and other stakeholders. The update will be widely distributed and will be posted on the WNV website.
- Communication to Regional employees will consist of regular updates to all Regional staff through Pathways, paycheque inserts, posters in Regional facilities, departmental meetings and informal discussions.
- A multicultural component of the strategy will include enlisting the help of Peel Public Health's internal contacts from ethnic communities to disseminate WNV key messages through local and GTA ethnic media and through multicultural community centres. Translated WNV fact sheets will also be available on the WNV website. Advertising in the local ethnic media will also be considered.
- A contingency communication plan in the event of adulticiding has been developed. It includes tactics such as public meetings, advertising, direct mail, news conferences and briefings, media relations, news releases, website updates to inform the public about adulticiding treatment areas and schedules.
- Peel Public Health will also act as a resource to local occupational health and safety departments if they require assistance in drafting policies and educating employees regarding WNV. Additionally, Peel Public Health will share information about WNV and training with contracted vendors.
- Peel Public Health will hand deliver WNV educational materials to households in the vicinity of a positive mosquito batch or human case. Peel Public Health staff will also be available to conduct stagnant water surveys on residential properties in areas where WNV is detected.