

For Information

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DATE: March 8, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION STRATEGIC PRIORITY**

FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services  
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health

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## OBJECTIVE

To provide an update on Nurturing the Next Generation, one of Peel Public Health's strategic priorities and Council's Term of Council Priority #10, Optimizing Early Child Development.

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Peel Public Health received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Knowledge Synthesis Grant to conduct an extensive review of the literature to identify population health interventions to improve early child development program planning and delivery in Peel.
- Research findings were shared at the Nurturing Matters Conference, February 22 and 23, 2012 ([www.nurturingmatters.ca](http://www.nurturingmatters.ca)).
- The Conference was attended by public health and early child development experts, policy makers and community leaders who generated recommendations based on the research findings.
- Family Health programs will be examined in light of the research findings and this may result in changes to existing programs and service delivery.
- Peel Public Health has been recognized by public health experts, community partners and researchers as an innovative leader in this field.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Background

Under the Ontario Public Health Standards, local boards of health are required to provide fundamental public health programs and services to all residents in Ontario. One of these requirements is for the provision of effective Family Health programs. Family Health encompasses both the Reproductive Health and Child Health standards. The goals of the Reproductive Health Standards are to enable individuals and families to achieve optimal preconception health, experience a healthy pregnancy, have the healthiest newborn possible and be prepared for parenthood. The Child Health Standards goals are to enable all children to attain and sustain optimal health and developmental potential.

Nurturing the Next Generation, one of Peel Public Health's strategic priorities, is focused on this earliest period of life from the preconception period through to the end of the first year.

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Its purpose, to optimize early child development, is one of Regional Council's Term of Council Priorities. The early stages of life have a profound impact on lifelong health and wellbeing. Their demonstrated importance provides Peel Public Health with an opportunity to impact the long-term health of individuals, families and the Peel community. Utilizing the best evidence available, the plan is to implement interventions that will impact the future health of the citizens of the Region of Peel.

Working at a population health level, the aim is to provide programs and services that are accessible to all child-bearing families. Programs at this level range from policy initiatives to services that are universal in nature or have an impact on outcomes for a defined population. When strategies are directed at populations more broadly, there is a greater effect on the overall health status.

### **2. The Approach**

In order to determine what relevant population health approaches Peel Public Health should implement, the literature review sought to answer the following question:

What are the population health interventions that Peel Public Health can realistically implement to support early child social, emotional and cognitive development from the prenatal period through infancy to the end of the first year of life?

In order to answer this question, staff selected an innovative community-university partnership approach. In collaboration with researchers from Trent University, York University, the University of Calgary and McMaster University, the team was awarded a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Knowledge Synthesis Grant in September, 2010. This grant provided Peel Public Health with the funding to undertake a 'first of its kind' literature review with a stated expectation that research findings would be shared (knowledge translation).

### **3. The Knowledge Synthesis Findings**

The literature review explored three key mechanisms to support parents and their families during the important transition to parenthood: parent education, social marketing initiatives and social connectivity interventions. In each of these three domains, the literature has been synthesized to understand "what works for whom, under what conditions".

The findings of the literature review were shared at the Nurturing Matters: Investing in Population Health Approaches to Support Parenting and Infant Development Conference held on February 22nd and 23rd, 2012. Scientific experts in the field of early child development provided stimulating presentations (Appendix I). Presentation slides and videos are available on the [NurturingMatters.ca](http://NurturingMatters.ca) website.

The parent education literature indicates that parents appreciate a menu of services, 'just in time' information and flexible, convenient options for accessing what they need, when they need it. Reaching and engaging parents is difficult, as parents are stressed and pressed for time. Parents are more likely to participate if you offer a service of value and relevance, based on adult education principles.

Social marketing is a strategy that can be undertaken to impact health behaviours. Social marketing is not just glossy advertising. It is most effective when audiences are segmented, a mix of face-to-face and media are used, and when cultural beliefs, practices and barriers

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to change are understood. A comprehensive approach across a range of activities that are sustained over time and well resourced will achieve the best results.

Findings related to social connectivity reveal that a lack of social support within the parenting environment creates challenges. Programs have moved away from appreciating the value of people coming together as an end goal of its own. Valuing social connections for parents, promoting community connections, using community development strategies and understanding that fathers need something different is important. Supportive parenting environments are health enhancing for families and their children.

Participants were challenged to critically examine current programs and practices, considering the research findings and impact on population health.

The Nurturing Matters Conference was attended by 220 experts in public health, early child development, infant, child and maternal health as well as community leaders and decision-makers responsible for programs and services. Over 20 health units from across Ontario and agencies from outside the province were represented.

The Nurturing Matters Conference was rated as excellent/very good by 92 per cent of participants and Peel Public Health was recognized as an innovative leader. In their evaluation of the conference, colleagues expressed a desire to collaborate with Peel Public Health on this initiative.

### **4. Future Plans**

The final report of the literature review, incorporating recommendations developed by the Nurturing Matters Conference delegates, will be completed. Family Health programs will be examined in light of the research findings and this may result in future changes to existing programs and service delivery. The evidence-informed decision making process will guide the team to develop innovative population health approaches to engage parents, connect them with their communities, and increase the health and wellbeing of Peel's children.

Peel Public Health is dedicated to sharing its knowledge and collaborating with other Regional Departments, community partners and leaders in public health to apply the research in practice. Dissemination of the research will continue, beginning with workforce development within Peel Public Health, professional publications and presentations.

Family Health is in the early stages of planning for the next phase of the strategic priority. Next steps will include collaboration with research partners to develop a comprehensive plan for Peel and to apply for additional research grants to study the impact of new initiatives.

A further report to Council outlining a more detailed plan will be provided in 2013.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Terms of Council Priority costs are included in the approved 2012 operational budget. The literature review and conference were funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Grant. Peel Public Health will continue to apply for additional research grants.

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**CONCLUSION**

Peel Public Health and the Family Health division are committed to an evidence-informed population health approach to early child development. This Term of Council Priority is important to Peel staff, community partners, public health units, child development leaders and researchers. Together, the Nurturing the Next Generation Strategic Priority and the Term of Council Priority #10 will allow families to raise children in a supportive environment, one in which children reach their full potential.



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 Anne Fenwick at extension 2449 or via email at [Anne.fenwick@peelregion.ca](mailto:Anne.fenwick@peelregion.ca).*

*Authored By: Anne Fenwick*

- c. Legislative Services  
    Manager, Financial Support Unit (FSU)

APPENDIX I



**Conference Program**  
**Wednesday February 22, 2012**

**Introduction**

**Judy Buchan, RN, BScN**  
**Project Manager, Nurturing the Next Generation**

**Welcome**

**Emil Kolb**  
**Peel Regional Chair and CEO**

**Opening Remarks**

**Anne Fenwick, RN, BScN**  
**Director, Family Health, Peel Public Health**

**Knowledge Translation at CIHR**

**Adrian Mota, BSc**  
**Manager of Knowledge Translation Initiatives, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)**

The objective of the CIHR is to excel, according to internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence, in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened health care system. Nurturing Matters exemplifies this objective.

**The Public Health Way**

**Dr. David L. Mowat, MChB, MPH, FRCPC, FFPH**  
**Medical Officer of Health, Peel Public Health**

The Public Health Way is Peel Public Health's governing philosophy and describes who we are, what we think and what we do as public health.

**The Brain on Stress: Why Early Life Experiences Really Matter!**

**Bruce S. McEwen, PhD**  
**Alfred E. Mirsky Professor and Head of the Harold and Margaret Milliken Hatch Laboratory of Neuroendocrinology, The Rockefeller University. Member of the US National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences**

A discussion of the impact of stress and adverse childhood experiences on the developing brain.

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**Self Regulation: A Preventative Health Approach**

**Stuart Shanker, PhD**

**Professor of Philosophy and Psychology, York University. Director of the Milton and Ethel Harris Research Initiative, York University.**

A discussion of how self-regulation as a developmental outcome is health promoting – for children, parents and communities.

**What Works for Whom, under What Conditions: Setting the Context**

**Brenda Smith-Chant, PhD**

**Chair of the Psychology Department, Trent University. Adjunct Professor with the Milton and Ethel Harris Research Institute, York University**

Realist review methodology will be explored with an observation of the problems inherent in research related to population-level interventions targeting the transition to parenthood.

**Parent Education – Findings from the Nurturing the Next Generation**

**Knowledge Synthesis**

**Cyndi Gilmer, MHSc(N), RN**

**Lecturer, School of Nursing, Trent University**

Implications for practice will be highlighted.

**Social Connectivity - Findings from the Nurturing the Next**

**Generation Knowledge Synthesis**

**Claudine Bennett, RN, BScN**

**Research & Policy Analyst, Family Health, Peel Public Health**

Implications for practice will be highlighted.

**Social Marketing - Findings from the Nurturing the Next Generation**

**Knowledge Synthesis**

**Melanie Gillespie, MA**

**Research & Policy Analyst, Office of the Medical Officer of Health, Peel Public Health**

Implications for practice will be highlighted.

**From Cells to Society and Return**

**Dr. Jean Clinton, BMus, MD, FRCP(C)**

**Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neuroscience, McMaster University. Staff, McMaster Children's Hospital. Associate Member of the Offord Centre for Child Studies.**

Prepare to be inspired and motivated by Jean's enthusiasm and humour. How can we use policy and program levers to impact the earliest time development?

**Q & A with the Expert Panel**

Featured speakers, researchers and advisors from the Nurturing the Next Generation Research Team will field questions related to the findings from the realist review.

**Table Talks**

**Facilitated by Jo Nelson, ICA & Associates Inc.**

Table conversations about the implications of the day's presentations.

Thursday February 22, 2012

**Welcome**

**Judy Buchan, RN, BScN**  
Project Manager, Nurturing the Next Generation

**Engaging Parents – Avoid the One-Size-Fits-All Effect**

**Brenda Smith-Chant, PhD**

**Chair of the Psychology Department, Trent University. Adjunct Professor with the Milton and Ethel Harris Research Institute, York University**

Parent engagement requires a concerted effort to offer what parents want. Your assumptions about parent participation will be challenged.

**Social Marketing in Support of Early Childhood Development**

**François Lagarde, MA**

**Social Marketing and Communications Consultant, Adjunct Professor, Department of Health Administration, Faculty of Medicine, University of Montreal**

and

**Marie Gendron, BA**

**Director, Help Them Grow**

**Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation**

Case Study: Help Them Grow Campaign in Quebec: Learnings from an early child development social advertising campaign

**Returning to the Realm of Relationships**

**Nicole Letourneau, PhD, RN**

**Professor, University of Calgary, Norlien/ACHF Chair in Parent-Infant Mental Health, Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute for Child and Maternal Health Faculties of Nursing & Medicine (Pediatrics), University of Calgary**

The importance and impact of early relationships within the parent-child environment on children's biopsychosocial development.

**Moving Forward with Forward Thinking**

**Brenda Smith-Chant, PhD**

**Chair of the Psychology Department, Trent University. Adjunct Professor with the Milton and Ethel Harris Research Institute, York University**

and

**Anne Fenwick, RN, BScN**

**Director, Family Health, Peel Public Health**

Participants will be challenged to critically examine current programs and services in light of the findings of the knowledge synthesis.

**Where do we go from here?**

**Facilitated by Jo Nelson, ICA & Associates Inc.**

Participants will be guided through an action planning process that will allow them to leave the conference with new connections, ideas and evidence-informed strategies for future planning.