This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 5:55:37 2026 / +0000 GMT

WDGPH eyeing regionalized approach to flatten curve of COVID-19

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) has been working in overdrive to ensure the community has been protected and informed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, but that increased service has come at a cost, media learned last week.

Last Wednesday (June 3) the board of health held a meeting to discuss how the pandemic has impacted their services in recent months. The financial impact of the coronavirus has been significant in our region. Nearing the end of the first quarter of this year, WDGPH has seen a surplus of $65,000 due to the timing of expenses of COVID-19 response related costs.

?Generally, it's due to the timing of the expenses when they come in, when we can pay for them and so forth. One important note made by the financial audit committee was that the agency covered pretty significant amount of COVID-19 response related costs,? explained director of administrate services, David Kingma.

They are expecting COVID-19 response related costs to hit a staggering $1 million, Mr. Kingma explained to the board.

Of that, $800,000 was designated to additional human resources efforts, including increase in staffing, as well as hours, including overtime. $200,000 was used for personal protective equipment.

?We don't anticipate those costs to continue at the same rate we have been going in the first two months, which was high gear,? said Mr. Kingma.

The health agency has received two letters from the Ministry of Health that $100 million has been set aside from the provincial government for reimbursement of the COVID-19 response related costs public health units.

Medical Officer of Health Dr. Nicola Mercer updated the health board regarding COVID-19 testing. The provincial government announced on May 24 a new testing strategy for Ontarians, encouraging all residents to get tested, with a goal of 16,000 tests completed daily. Premier Doug Ford encouraged testing to be done, even for those who don't have COVID-19 symptoms.

?Locally, this new testing strategy from the province actually didn't impact us as much as it might have in other areas. The reasons for that is because we have always had very broad non-referral assessment centres in all of our areas,? she explained. ?We had never required a referral, we've always encouraged people to come into assessment centres if they think they have symptoms, so really the only change the province implemented was, that people (who aren't showing) symptoms (can now visit) our assessment centres.?

Volumes have increased at the WDGPH assessment centres, averaging 200 a day in Guelph. Traffic has increased at Headwaters Health Care Centre, close enough that they have been rethinking plans for their assessment centre, explained Dr. Mercer.

WDGPH relies on their assessment centres as the Province goes forward in their phases of reopening the economy. The importance for testing will continue to increase as residents begin to head back to work, especially as no vaccine has been developed as of yet.

?We know that until we have a vaccine, we're going to need to have these assessment centres for quite some time,? said Dr. Mercer.

Kingston's Medical Officer of Health encouraged the provincial government to lean towards a regionalization approach regarding the reopening of the province, with the approval of many other Medical Officers of Health around the country.

?I won't disagree that Medical Officers of Health were looking to add to the provincial direction. Not to contradict personal direction, but really add local flavour, and actually enhance it,? said Dr. Mercer.

Premier Doug Ford initially rejected the idea of regionalization on May 8, stating that the Province will move together as one unit, as opposed to individually. But Dr. Mercer explains that Mr. Ford is starting to change his mind, having announced this past Monday that Stage 2 in the reopening of the province would take on a regionalized approach, with all but the Golden Horseshoe area now in the second stage.

?The Premier is now agreeing and talking about the regionalization reopening. Recognizing that not every area of the province is the same. For example, what might work in Wellington, might not work for Peel right now,? explained Dr. Mercer. ?There is no difference right now, there is no regionalized approach. This is something we are working to move towards.?

She added, ?I'm excited about this. I think it's actually the right approach. And I look forward to more conversations from the Province about what regionalization looks like, and allowing this to occur, part of the provincial reopening of our economy.?

Dr. Mercer expressed to the board the importance of reopening our economy, not only for residents to relieve themselves from being shut down at home, but as it's connected to their health.

?Restarting the economy is extremely important. Income is linked to health, having an economy reopened is linked to mental health as well as economic health and wellness, and physical health,? she explained. ?We need a safe reopening and a safe way to get people back and working, in order to keep people healthy.?

For more information about the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, please visit wdgpublichealth.ca.