

## OPERATION HEALTH PROTECTION

April 17, 2009

Operation Health Protection – a three-year action plan introduced by the Ontario government in 2004 – has resulted in significant improvements to the province’s public health system. Key accomplishments include:

### **Enhancing Infectious Disease Prevention, Detection and Control**

The government has taken a number of steps to better protect the public against infectious and communicable diseases. These include:

- Implementing the integrated public health information system (iPHIS) where information is electronically collected, transmitted and analyzed, allowing public health units to identify and track unusual and unexpected instances of infectious diseases. IPHIS proved to be a valuable resource in helping to track the 2008 listeriosis outbreak
- Establishing the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee which provides expert advice on prevention, surveillance and control measures
- Creating 14 regional infection control networks across the province to coordinate infection prevention and control activities, and support standardized practices in health care facilities
- Funding 166 infection prevention and control practitioners (ICPs) in hospitals and public health units across the province. An ICP is a health care professional with specialized training and expertise in infection prevention and control who works with all departments to prevent health care-acquired infections through planning, implementing and evaluating current practices.

### **Creating the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion**

The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion is the province’s first-ever arms-length public health agency.

The agency provides technical expertise and advice to frontline health care workers, public health units and government by translating research and information into practical tools. It also helps to enhance the public health system’s emergency response capability.

### **Upgrading and Renewing the Ontario Public Health Laboratories**

The Ontario Public Health Laboratories (OPHL) are being modernized and strengthened with the acquisition of a new laboratory information system. Over the last two years, new medical and scientific staff have been recruited nationally and internationally to strengthen the OPHL’s capacity as the labs became aligned with the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion.

### **Increasing Public Health Funding**

The government increased its share of funding for mandatory programs delivered by the 36 public health units to 75 per cent in 2007 from 50 per cent in 2004.

## **Improving Health Emergency Preparedness**

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care created the Emergency Management Unit (EMU) to lead and support emergency management activities for the health system. The EMU has become a centre of leadership and expertise in the area of health emergency management, with much of Ontario's work being held up as a model in other jurisdictions. The EMU has been instrumental in leading pandemic preparedness for the health sector and developing the public health emergency standard as part of the Ontario Public Health Standards.

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Mark Nesbitt  
416-314-6197

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