

## Communications Office

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Peterborough Area Leads Ontario in Physical Activity and Breastfeeding Duration Rates According to Initial Report on Public Health

## *Areas of Concern Include Teen Pregnancy and Smoking Rates*

Friday, August 21, 2009, Peterborough

Peterborough City and County ranked as the most active region in the province and has Ontario's highest rate of breastfeeding duration according to the Initial Report on Public Health released today by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC).

"I'm very proud that our community can boast the highest rates of physical activity and breastfeeding duration in the province. This shows that people in the Peterborough region understand that regular exercise is vital to staying healthy. In addition, breast is best for babies and I'm glad to see that so many mothers in our region are feeding their babies breast milk for at least six months," said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU), who also co-chairs the Performance Management Working Group of the MOHLTC's Public Health Division that designed the report. "It's very useful to have these provincial benchmarks so we can see where our strengths are in key areas of public health and where we need to improve."

While Peterborough rated well in some areas and below provincial averages in others, overall the report showed local health is on par with the rest of Ontario for the majority of the health status indicators. In addition to leading the province in physical activity and breastfeeding duration health indicators, Peterborough also ranked seventh overall in its rate of proportion adults who have a healthy body mass index (BMI). However, Dr. Pellizzari noted there were some areas of real concern that the PCCHU is investigating, such as high teen pregnancy rates, high teen smoking rates, and above average heavy drinking rates for adults.

"The report helps us zero in on certain health risks of target populations where we know more resources are required to effect change," said Dr. Pellizzari. "We're already examining the data

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closely, and gathering more information to better understand and improve upon these findings. For some indicators like teen pregnancy, the small size of our population may account for fluctuations in the rates, and for others, such as youth smoking and heavy drinking, we know that our rates are skewed because of the extremely small sample size.”

Highlights from the report include:

- Peterborough region leads Ontario with a **physical activity** rate of 63.87 compared to the provincial average of 50.29. The physical activity index indicator estimates the age standardized proportion of those 12 years and older by level of energy expenditure in the categories “active” and “moderately active” in their leisure time physical activity.
- Peterborough region has the highest rate of **breastfeeding duration** at 65.3. This indicator is based on the estimated proportion of mothers aged 15-55 years who breastfed their last baby (born within the last five years) for a duration of six months or more. The provincial average is 50.2.
- In the Peterborough region, the age standardized proportion of people age 18 yrs and older whose self-reported height and weight denote a **healthy body mass index (BMI)** is 48.7 – the seventh highest rate in Ontario.
- Of the 4458 **adverse water quality incidents** in Ontario in 2007, only 99 of these were in the Peterborough area. An adverse drinking water quality incident occurs when a water sample test result exceeds the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards or an operator observes that the system may not be providing safe water.
- In 2007, the Peterborough region had the highest rate of **low birth weight babies** in the province with a rate of 67.53 as compared to the Ontario average of 47.85. The low birth weight indicator estimates the rate of singleton live births weighing 500-2499 grams immediately upon birth, based on the mother’s usual place of residence per the total for singleton live births weighing at least 500 grams per 1000 births.
- In 2007, Peterborough region had an above average **teen pregnancy rate** of 41.8, as compared to the provincial rate of 25.7. The teen pregnancy rate indicator estimates the number of pregnancies per 1000 females age 15-19 years.
- Peterborough has the fourth lowest rate of **smoking abstinence among youth**, with a rate of 61.93 compared to the provincial average of 80.51. This indicator estimates the proportion of youth age 12-19 years who have never smoked a whole cigarette.
- The **smoking prevalence rate** of Peterborough area youth of 21.34 is above the provincial average of 9.54. Smoking prevalence pertains to the estimated age-standardized proportion of people age 12-19 who are current smokers.
- **Adult heavy drinking rates** in the Peterborough region are above the provincial average (47.74 compared to 36.89). The adult heavy drinking episode indicator estimates the age-standardized proportion of people age 20 years and older who reported consuming five or more drinks on at least one occasion during the previous 12 months.

Dr. Pellizzari noted that in addition to providing health indicator rates, the report featured two case studies from the PCCHU to showcase the excellent public health services and programs

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taking place in this region. One article highlighted the Board of Health's partnership work with Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations and the other highlighted food security initiatives in Peterborough. Case studies were used by the MOHLTC to draw attention to health performance indicators that could not be measured quantitatively, such as quality of partnerships, and innovation.

Using 2007 data, this is the first time the MOHLTC has produced a province-wide report based on specific public health indicators. The report is designed to provide a meaningful comparison of Ontarians' health across the province. The data was gathered and analyzed by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES), an independent, non-profit organization that conducts research on a broad range of topical issues to enhance the effectiveness of health care for Ontarians.

The full report can be accessed at  
[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pubhealth/init\\_report/index.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pubhealth/init_report/index.html) .

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