



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Bryna Warshawsky, Acting Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 April 18

---

**REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT'S WEBSITE – UPDATE ON STATUS AND PUBLIC LAUNCH**

***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that Report No. 045-13 re “Redevelopment of the Middlesex-London Health Unit’s Website – Update on Status and Public Launch” be received as information.*

**Key Points**

- A redesign of the Health Unit’s website was required to keep up with changing technologies, requirements and social media needs.
- The redesign of the website was a collaborative project involving the entire Health Unit that took approximately one year to complete. Resolution Interactive Media was contracted to undertake the website redevelopment project after a competitive Request for Proposal process.
- The new website was launched on April 3, 2013 at a media conference.

**Background**

Consumers are always seeking better and more efficient ways to find solutions and answers to challenges and questions, and the Internet has become an easy source for the information, regardless of the topic. In September 2012, the Pew Research Center, a leading American think tank and trend tracker, found that 72% of Internet users said they had looked for health information online within the previous year.

As the leading source of local health information, the importance of a strong online presence has never been more critical for public health. Although the Internet can provide credible, factual and reliable information, it also links to information that is unreliable, untested or misleading. Therefore, it is very important for public health units, which are known to be trusted sources, to provide current, relevant information.

More than a decade ago, the Health Unit had the foresight to obtain [www.healthunit.com](http://www.healthunit.com) as its online address, securing its position as a leader in providing health information to the online community. From its initial launch in April of 2000 through a major re-design in late 2004 and a re-write in 2007, the Health Unit’s website has grown over time and has had new features and capabilities added as necessary. While the Health Unit’s online information was current, the website’s foundation and architecture had not kept pace with the evolving ways the Internet is used. The advent of social media and the growing number of web-enabled devices such as smart phones and tablets are just a few of the additional factors that are changing the ways people find information online and how they share what they learn.

The information gathered during consultations held as part of the Health Unit’s most recent Strategic Planning process, which was outlined in the *Strategic Plan Discovery Report*, highlighted the potential of new technologies to communicate messages and indicated the need to redevelop the Health Unit’s website. The *Strategic Plan Discovery Report* also highlighted the need for additional Communications

Resources. In the fall of 2011, Mr. Alex Tymł was hired as the Online Communications Coordinator and was tasked with leading the website redevelopment project. As part of the Health Unit's Strategic Plan, the completion and launch of a completely renewed website was one of the Enhanced Communications Strategic Achievement Group's (Communications SAG) main goals for the first quarter of 2013.

### **Goals of the Website Redevelopment Project**

From the earliest stages of the website redevelopment project, certain criteria for this important resource began to emerge. A new website would have to:

- be easier to navigate than the previous versions;
- require a strong, built-in search function;
- be compatible with a wide range of mobile devices;
- incorporate the Health Unit's current and future social media channels; and
- meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

As an overarching project goal, a redeveloped website must provide easy access to Health Unit programs, services and information, while providing an enjoyable experience for online visitors.

### **Process for Redevelopment of the Website**

The Health Unit issued a *Request for Proposal* to redevelop the corporate website in February of 2012. By April, the Health Unit had entered into a contract with London and Toronto-based web design, web development and digital marketing firm, Resolution Interactive Media (ResIM) to undertake the work.

In May 2012, a team of staff members under the leadership of Mr. Alex Tymł had been assembled to collaborate with ResIM on this important project. An online survey was made available on [www.healthunit.com](http://www.healthunit.com) to seek online users' input on how they would use the new website and what Health Unit information was most important to them. ResIM also interviewed Health Unit staff, community partners and others to determine their thoughts and preferences about website design and online content. ResIM was instrumental in creating the technical aspects and architecture of the website, while staff members collaborated, developed and wrote or re-wrote more than 1,300 pages of web content.

### **Project Costs for the Website Redevelopment**

As part of the 2012 grant request to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, a \$100,000 one-time funding request was made for the Website Redevelopment project. The redevelopment of the website was identified as part of the Board of Health strategic plan. As such the project moved forward without a funding commitment from the Ministry, and in the summer of 2012 the Board learned that the Ministry was not in a position to fund the project and did not approve their 75% (or \$75,000) share of the project. This required the project to be funded from the general Mandatory Programs funding.

The website redevelopment project required two phases. Phase 1 consisted of professional services provided by ResIM to develop the new website. This included research, testing, planning, design, and training and cost \$83,000 (plus HST). Phase 1 was significantly completed by the end of 2012. Phase 2 of the project primarily consisted of loading content to the new website that was being written or re-written by Health Unit staff. The initial plan was to use existing health unit expertise and staff time to load the content to the new website. This meant shifting significant amount of resources from program work to this phase of the project. This work was to occur in the first three months of 2013. In February, the province announced it was reconsidering the 2012 one-time request for this project, however to qualify, the resources had to be utilized by March 31, 2013. This additional provincial funding (\$75,000) allowed the Health Unit to contract with ResIM for additional services to assist the Health Unit in loading web content. In addition, these funds were used to cover costs for Health Unit staff associated with work on the website from January 1 to March 31, 2013.

### Launch of the Redeveloped Website

The website that has resulted from this project was launched publicly on Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> during a news conference held at the Health Unit's 50 King Street office (see the [news release](#) related to this event). As part of the public launch, Mr. Alex Tymi demonstrated some of the redeveloped website's architecture, navigation and other capabilities. His efforts in leading the web committee in the completion of this important project were warmly acknowledged by Health Unit colleagues who attended the event.

This report was prepared by Mr. Dan Flaherty, Manager, Communications.



Bryna Warshawsky,  
Acting Medical Officer of Health

**This report addresses** the Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards, section 5.1 *Community Engagement*.