

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie,
Medical Officer of Health

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MLHU SOCIAL MEDIA: ACTIVITIES AND AUDIENCES

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 012-16 re: MLHU Social Media be received for information.

Key Points

- MLHU Twitter followers and Facebook fans have steadily increased by approximately 1,500 each per year. The 28 Facebook ad campaigns done in 2015 generated over 5 million impressions; during the same time period 4,213 tweets generated over 1.7 million impressions.
- As of last month, the MLHU had 8,563 Twitter followers, 4,110 (48%) of whom were from London and Middlesex County; during the same period, the Health Unit had 4,372 fans on Facebook of whom 67% were from London, as well as 584,000 views (more than 7,400 in January alone) and 316 subscribers to the agency's YouTube channel.
- Between 2013 and 2015, the percentage of website visits from mobile devices grew from 24.45%, to 34.73%, then to 46.33%.

Background

The Middlesex London Health Unit began using social media in October of 2009 to communicate wait times at the H1N1 immunization clinics that were being held in London and Middlesex County. This allowed residents to make informed decisions about where to get their vaccinations and how long they could expect to wait there. Local media were the first to follow the Health Unit on Twitter, and as a result of their reporting many others soon joined the MLHU's growing audience. It became clear early on that there was great potential to share public health information with audiences in a quick and efficient way.

Within a year, the MLHU had expanded its social media presence, creating a new YouTube channel where it could share videos that could be watched from anywhere, by anyone at any time. The hiring of an Online Communications Coordinator in October 2011, created a dedicated resource, not only for the Health Unit's website, but to enhance the MLHU's social media presence. Since then, the agency's social media activity has seen tremendous growth and close collaboration with Health Unit staff on the development of messages and strategies aimed at reaching specific audience segments. This included using Facebook as a marketing platform; creating advertising content and links to contests which promoted MLHU initiatives, activities and programs.

When the redesign of www.healthunit.com began in 2012, a decision was made to integrate the Health Unit's social media channels into the finished website; and to expand the MLHU's Facebook presence, from just advertising to being an active member of the community. The new Facebook page was launched on April 3rd, 2013 to coincide with the introduction of the MLHU's completely rebuilt website.

Social media is now an important part of the Health Unit's communications strategy. The recent creation of a new program-managed social media account (*Hey Teens!* @MLTeens on Twitter), supported closely by Communications, is expanding the possibilities for engaging specific audiences through social media. Communications continues to collaborate with many MLHU teams to develop content for established social media channels and also to advise staff about how to respond to questions, comments and feedback received through social media.

Communications will continue to investigate the opportunities that other, emerging, social media platforms may present. Details of the MLHU's social media activities, including some audience data and highlights, are detailed below and in the Appendices.

Highlights

In the time they've been live, the MLHU's social media accounts have become valuable resources for Middlesex-London residents seeking public health information online, whether they use mobile phones, tablets or desktop computers.

In the past three years, the MLHU's Twitter followers and Facebook fans have steadily increased by approximately 1,500 new followers and fans each year. In 2015, 28 Facebook post ad campaigns generated over 5 million impressions on Facebook users' timelines. During the same time period 4,213 tweets generated over 1.7 million impressions on Twitter users' timelines (see [Appendix A](#)).

Through social media, the Health Unit's programs and services have been able to connect with their audiences, generating interaction and participation (sharing information, asking questions and starting conversations). These interactions provide MLHU programs with ideal opportunities to educate, collaborate, encourage participation and advocate for change (see [Appendix B](#)).

Audience Analysis

The Communications Team has also been able to gather useful audience data including their location and the devices they use to access content. Analysis of this data shows a steady increase in website traffic from mobile devices, which is associated with referral sources via social media, and also how Middlesex-London residents are accessing public health resources and information online. A 2013 review of website traffic data for healthunit.com showed that 24.45% of all website sessions were through mobile devices (phones and tablets); in 2014 that number grew to 34.73%, and further to 46.33% by 2015.

As of January 2016, the MLHU had 8,563 Twitter followers, of whom 4,110 (48%) were from London and Middlesex County. During the same period, the Health Unit had 4,372 fans on Facebook, of whom 67% were from London, as well as 584,000 views (more than 7,400 in January alone) and 316 subscribers to the agency's YouTube channel.

Local interaction also made up a significant proportion of online activity on the MLHU's website last year. For the period between January 1, 2015 and December 31st, 2015, there were 228,543 web sessions from London. A session is defined as a group of interactions that take place on a particular website within a given time frame. A single session can contain multiple page views.

The report was prepared by Mr. Dan Flaherty, Manager and Mr. Alex Tynl, Online Communications Coordinator, Communications Team.



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