



Meeting the COVID-19 Challenge

Social impact and response in
Prince Edward County, Ontario

Interim Report
March to September 2020

Prepared by The County Foundation (TCF)

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Prepared for
The County of Prince Edward

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About this Project

Purpose

The County Foundation (TCF) has been engaged by the County of Prince Edward to prepare a research report on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Prince Edward County. The data is intended to reflect on the wellbeing of our community and will be organized around the areas of focus as reported on in TCF's 2018 **Vital Signs Report** which has been digitized and will be populated to show trends over time.

Process

The interim report is based on one on one interviews with community service providers that were conducted using the Zoom on-line platform and is informed by data from various provincial and national sources. The report covers the period from **mid-March to the end of September 2020**.

Going forward, statistics will be collected as they become available and follow-up interviews will be conducted in February 2021. A final report will be issued in March 2021 and it will include qualitative and quantitative data based on **Vital Signs** indicators.

Benefit

This project will inform priority actions for the Municipality and TCF and will provide **Vital Signs** working group members and other community organizations with information to support their decision-making and their writing of grant applications. It will also provide information to encourage community members to contribute to the wellbeing of our community.

Focus Areas

Education | Employment & Income | Environment | Food Insecurity | Housing | People, Arts & Culture | Physical and Mental Health | Safety | Transportation

Organizations Interviewed

Government Funded Organizations	Non-Government Organizations
Career Edge	Albury Church
Children's Mental Health Services	All Welcome Here
Community Advocacy & Legal Centre (CALC)	Alternatives for Women
Highland Shores Children's Aid	Arts on Main Gallery
HPE Public Health	Climate Resiliency Coalition
OPP East Region	County Kids Read
PEC Affordable Housing Corp	Glenwood Cemetery
PEC Family Health Team	PEC Arts Council
PEC Library	PEC Women's Institute
PEC Museums	Picton United Church Food Bank
PELA Social Services (PELASS)	Prince Edward Learning Centre (PELC)
Picton BIA	Quinte Access
Quinte Conservation	ROC Recreation Outreach Centre
The County Prince Edward	Students' Commission of Canada - PEC
The Hub Child and Family Centre	The PEC Community Care for Seniors Assoc.
	The StoreHouse Wellington & District Foodbank
	United Way HPE

“The greatest challenge was the feeling of loss, not being in control, and trying to support everyone as much as possible. We have been resilient, but everyone has some scars and stress.” Susan Quaiff, ED, The HUB Child and Family Centre

Common Themes

Several overarching themes emerged during the interviews.

Collective Impact

“It takes the collective action of government, agencies, and individuals – If any piece doesn’t work, it falls apart. It’s important to operate as a community.”
Eric Serwotka, Director of Public Health Programs Hastings-Prince Edward

This statement was especially true during the early days of COVID lockdown. In PEC, organizations and businesses leaned on each other for support and best practices.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of collaboration.

- A central Help Line was established to connect seniors, vulnerable members of the community, and residents in self-isolation with essential services and volunteer delivery of vital supplies.
- COVID-19 assessment centres were quickly organized by a team of local health care organizations.
- An initial shortage of PPE resulted in competition and increased prices; it ultimately led to more collaboration among healthcare agencies and streamlined supply chains with economies of scale. Local businesses, organizations, and individuals stepped up to make hand sanitizer and non-medical masks.
- The *County Food Depot* was organized by *The Food Collective* to provide supplementary groceries and gift cards. Resources are distributed among members of the Collective.
- Organizations are sharing resources and best practices online. This has provided a sense of community and has resulted in more coordinated efforts and a stronger voice.
- The municipality launched an online consultation site that invites residents to help shape County planning decisions, and to provide a COVID-19 resource for County businesses.
- Picton, Bloomfield, Wellington and Consecon business associations collaborated more closely. Going forward, they may benefit from a more unified approach.
- The *Shop Local* campaign through the *Picton BIA* was managed by volunteers.
- Caremongering groups are active in our community. These online movements offer good deeds and helpful hands among neighbours – shopping, deliveries, and wellness checks.
- Local emergency funding support was streamlined and centralized through the *Emergency Community Support Fund* grant and *PEC Helping PEC COVID-19 Fund*.
- Most organizations depended on guidance from the HPE Public Health.

Strong leadership

In a crisis, the response of leaders influences the outcomes.

- From the top down, federal, provincial, and municipal leaders issued reassuring, consistent messaging that kept politics aside. They addressed the public regularly in person and were accessible and open.
- The unknowns were acknowledged, and decision-making was based on the advice and guidance of health experts.
- All levels of government quickly reorganized to focus on the pandemic. COVID-19 benefits and financial relief were efficiently deployed.
- PEC Mayor Steve Ferguson remained highly visible in the community and provided regular updates through various media.
- **HPEDSB** Director of Education Sean Monteith focused on the message that the safety of students and staff was the Board's priority.
- The **OPP** maintained a visible presence during the tourist season, despite being short-staffed.
- **HPE Public Health** diverted from certain programs to provide essential guidance regarding COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- The leaders of community organizations demonstrated their resourcefulness by finding new ways to deliver their services, while ensuring the wellness of clients and staff.

Communication challenges

- Uncertainty was so all-encompassing that elaborate acronyms were coined such as VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity).
- COVID-19 necessitated the adaptation to internet-based technology. This further revealed the digital divide created by unreliable Internet in rural areas, cost of equipment and lack of technical skills. The barriers impede communications, access to online education, access to employment programs and the ability to work remotely.
- Disseminating information County-wide is a challenge despite various avenues of communication. This becomes more critical in an emergency or quickly changing situation.
- Prince Edward County is served by agencies covering mixed jurisdictions which creates complexity for service provision and communication and makes the collection of PEC-specific data difficult, if not impossible. For example: Hastings Prince Edward Public Health, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services; Highland Shores Children's Aid [Hastings, Prince Edward & Northumberland], Hastings & Prince Edward Children's Mental Health Services.
- PEC has a gap in access to information about the most vulnerable people in the population.

A catalyst for innovation, change, and renewed awareness

The pandemic has altered the way we communicate, work, learn, shop, and socialize. It has forced organizations and businesses to scale up their use of technology and to rethink their approach. Resulting innovations and advancements include:

- Leveraging technology to communicate and provide services
- Reshaping of programs /events and changing from on-site to virtual delivery
- Advancement of telecommuting, virtual learning, remote health care, execution of legal documents, and interactive activities.

“This was an opportunity to learn and improve, and to be innovative. It has been difficult, but we will be a better organization at the end. Many organizations will never return to their old models of operating.”

Susan Treverton, ED, Community Living PE

When faced with a common threat, a shared sense of togetherness can lead people to look past their differences and collectively respond to the challenges they face.

- There has been a spotlight on inequities based on gender, race, class, and sexual orientation and a renewed will to make positive changes.
- The pandemic highlighted the need for a basic guaranteed income.
- COVID-19 drew attention to the value of natural spaces and brought PEC and the Sandbanks to the attention of the province.
- There is a renewed sense of value for essential front-line workers.
- Younger volunteers stepped up to help.
- All levels of government were focused on the same page.
- Partnerships were formed or strengthened.

New projects started or continued despite the obstacles:

- The hospital building campaign made significant gains with fundraising and received provincial approval to move ahead with the plans.
- The **Picton Library** expansion project continued to raise funds while being sensitive to the other financial pressures in the community.
- The INSPIRE Skills Link program at **Prince Edward Learning Centre** successfully ran during COVID-19 lockdown. This program creates a connection between employers and unemployed youth facing barriers. It was a significant effort to convert the in-class program to online learning and finding employers who could take on cohorts during this time.
- The **Arts Council** and **Community Care for Seniors** applied for funding to start a new project called “The Art of Conversation”, where an artist teams up weekly with a senior and the culmination is a piece of art - visual, poem, vocal.
- A wire sculpture of a Second World War soldier was unveiled at **Glenwood Cemetery** to pay tribute to more than 300 veterans buried at the Picton cemetery. The unveiling date was planned for May on the 75th anniversary of VE Day; it was delayed until July.

Impacts of COVID-19 on community organizations

The top challenges faced by organizations from mid-March to the end of September

How COVID-19 has affected:

- a) **the operation of organizations (changes to revenue, expenses)**
 - Revenue was stable for government-funded programs and organizations.
 - Organizations and programs that rely on fundraising and earned revenue were negatively affected. Some have been depending on federal income support programs such as the *Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy* CEWS which will end on December 19, 2020.

- Forecasted budgets did not cover the increased costs for PPE, additional cleaning, facility renovations, updating of electronic equipment. The deficits may be partially covered by government funding and grants.
- Organizations are using up their emergency financial reserves.

b) programs and service offerings (discontinuance or modification, virtual delivery, marketing, and communications)

- Resources and staff have been diverted to COVID-19 related activities, at the expense of other programs.
- Although facility doors were initially closed to the public, essential services continued with modifications.
- Social isolation forced the advancement of telecommuting, remote health care, virtual classrooms and training, and interactive online programs.
- Delivery, curbside pickup, and drive-thru were used to provide physical products and services (food, books, COVID-19 assessments).
- Most events and fundraisers were cancelled. A few transitioned to online or hybrid models.
- The health and safety climate took precedence over strategic planning. Planning can only be done a couple of weeks in advance.

“On March 20 (Black Friday), everyone left the office and started working from home. In less than a week we had to shut down some programs that have taken 39 years to set up.” Debbie MacDonald Moynes, Prince Edward County Community Care for Seniors Assoc.

Education

- All publicly funded schools in Ontario were closed for two weeks following March break in response to the emergence of COVID-19. It became clear that the pandemic would not be resolved quickly, and schools remained closed to the end of June. Students’ final marks were based on their progress at time of closure.
- Online programming was provided. Schools reached out to provide laptops to students. Lack of internet access was a barrier for some. Adult students were affected by lack of childcare.
- School boards and bus companies worked with **HPE Public Health**, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labour to prepare for a safe re-entry to schools in September.
- Related to the COVID-19 protocol changes, there is a shortage of teachers and bus drivers.
- Eight additional public health nurses were hired for school health teams specific to COVID-19. The team serves a family of schools consisting of a high school and its feeder schools. As of September 30, there have been no confirmed COVID-19 cases in the HPE schools.
- Initially the **HPEDSB** Virtual School had 1750 students enrolled (kindergarten to grade 12). This number jumped to 2500 as of October 1, requiring a re-organization in staffing.
- Colleges and universities are offering hybrid virtual and on-campus programs.
- Post-secondary budgets have been impacted by the decrease in tuition revenue from international students and students delaying education plans.
- Adult learning programs have experienced reduced enrolment and revenue.

Employment and Income

- The economic slowdown and loss of employment have heightened the vulnerability of many.
- The federal government implemented emergency funding programs to help individuals and businesses cope with losses due to forced closures for the prevention of the spread of the virus.
- Locally there is a mismatch of job opportunities and job seekers. Many job postings at **Career Edge** are unfilled for a variety of reasons. There are fewer hospitality and construction jobs, job seekers may not have the skills, there is anxiety and fear about returning to work, and many are benefitting from *the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit* CERB wage subsidy.
- Minimum wage rates in Ontario increased on October 1 which brings the new rate to \$14.25 an hour.

“A just recovery is a guaranteed livable basic income.” Deirdre McDade,
Lawyer, Community Advocacy & Legal Centre

Environment

- Jurisdiction over natural areas is divided: Sandbanks is provincially governed, Wellington Beach is municipally owned, and Quinte Conservation owns and manages six different areas within the County including Little Bluff.
- COVID-19 placed a significant spotlight on the value of natural spaces and brought PEC and Sandbanks to the attention of the province.
- Beaches and natural areas experienced overcrowding and abuse. Little Bluff Conservation Area had to be closed to the public for the remainder of 2020.
- **Quinte Conservation** water quality monitoring and stewardship services were disrupted.
- The **Climate Resiliency Coalition** cancelled a spring symposium intended to raise awareness about community resilience.

Food Insecurity

- The food supply chain was disrupted. Panic and hoarding were initial responses. Food prices have increased.
- The usage of offshore farm workers was in jeopardy, causing concerns about crop failure in 2020. Their arrival was delayed, and then self-isolation was required for two weeks before they could begin work. Some farms in Western Ontario had high rates of COVID-19 infection among workers; there were no confirmed cases at farms in PEC.
- Communal food activities stopped.
- **Food to Share** meal preparation was limited due to lack of kitchen access.
- *Food for Learning* program of nutritious snacks and lunches was not active during the school shutdown from March to June.
- **ROC (Recreation Outreach Centre)** increased their food distribution through the County Care Kits. Frozen meals, food and hygiene kits were delivered to over 200 youth and their families throughout the County.
- *Meals on Wheels* program was ramped up to deliver hot and frozen meals to seniors County-wide.
- *Table Settings* program provided prepared meals for migrant farm workers.
- **Picton Food Bank** and **Wellington StoreHouse Foodbank** experienced below average demand, while larger urban centres reported increased demand.

- The *County Food Depot* was organized by the Food Collective to provide supplementary food. It is running at about 50% of the forecasted demand, but numbers are increasing in September.

People, Arts and Culture

- Many art and music events were cancelled; a few continued with virtual programming.
- *Art in the County* successfully went online to support local artists. Their outreach was expanded to a new audience. They will likely continue with a combined on-site and virtual event in future.
- The **Regent Theatre** was granted municipal funds to pivot their programming to a hybrid model. Their content is streamed live to the audience at home, or through their partners at the Mustang Drive-In.
- In mid-March, **Arts on Main** closed their doors because of the COVID-19 lockdown. Then on May 31, after 13 years of operation, they permanently closed their physical gallery in Picton when they could not get rent relief. They added an e-commerce component to their website and ramped up their presence on social media. But, for members, this has not been as successful as a physical gallery.
- **PEC Library** continued to adjust their services during the stages of reopening. They offered online reservations, virtual programming, and curbside pickup.
- **PEC Museums** partially opened two sites on July 31. Interactive online school activities launched in mid-August. Events with COVID-19 protocols are planned, including Flashback February.
- **County Kids Read** faced many COVID-19 related challenges after their community partners were closed and school visits were curtailed. They continue to adapt their operating model to safely distribute books to children in need.
- **PE Women's Institute** had to cancel their biggest fundraiser, the annual Art and Craft Sale, that supports local charities.
- Community churches were affected in many ways. Although church services were provided online, congregations were losing their sense of community, fundraisers were cancelled, and outreach initiatives were put on hold.

“Delivering programs virtually seemed to fit a need at the time. It gave some normalcy and structure to the days and was a real anchor for some, at least initially.” Barbara Sweet, PEC Library

- Inequity, based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class, has been a theme throughout COVID-19. The pandemic has increased awareness of the connectedness of humanity.

“This is a moment in history when people want to stand up for anti-racism. It’s an amazing opportunity for us, about who we want to be.”
Judith Burfoot, All Welcome Here

Physical and Mental Health

Physical Health

- When comparing the statistics in Prince Edward County with those of the province, PEC residents fall within several high-risk categories: higher population of seniors, higher rates of obesity, greater prevalence of chronic disease, more smokers, lower median income rate, higher level of food insecurity, lower numbers having regular access to a doctor. People within these categories may have increased vulnerability to infectious diseases.
- During the summer, there was an influx of visitors from COVID-19 hotspots which was a concern to PEC residents.
- Long-term care facilities have been hit especially hard by the virus, but up to September 30th, there has been only one confirmed case in PEC.
- Front line workers (health, childcare, long term care homes, group homes) are caring for patients/clients despite great uncertainty, resource limitations, and personal risk. There is a shortage of staff in these facilities.
- Electronic medical health records are web-based, which allows many health care professionals to work remotely with flexible schedules.
- Organizations have relied greatly on guidance and support from **HPE Public Health**. With a significant COVID outbreak, **HPE Public Health** would be understaffed.
- **Quinte Health Care** (QHC) postponed elective surgeries and other non-emergency clinical activities. **HPE Public Health** deferred services such as immunizations and clinics to deploy staff to areas of greater need such as COVID testing. Non-emergency dental care was curtailed.
- Wearing PPE adds to stress and exhaustion and masks present lip-reading barriers for the hearing impaired.
- Infection control programs and procedures are improving because there is greater understanding of the transmission of the virus.

“The greatest challenge was being thrown suddenly into a situation with no handbook. We had to keep going, we could not shut doors and stop services. The priority was how to keep people healthy and safe, and people were afraid.”

Susan Treverton, ED, Community Living Prince Edward

Mental Health

- The combination of social isolation, high stress, job losses, grief, closures of regular services and supports, access to cannabis and alcohol, and an overwhelmed health care system created an environment for mental health and substance abuse problems.
- Parents had the pressure and economic impact of having children at home with few supports: no school, day care, summer camps, or respite.
- Children and youth are experiencing anxiety without social outlets and by the return to school.
- Long-term care and group home residents are experiencing emotional distress and mental health concerns in response to COVID-19.
- Residents, especially seniors, were fearful about the influx of tourists from COVID-19 hot spots, and the crowding.
- **Quinte Health Care** emergency departments reached an all-time high of opioid overdoses in April and May. HPE was already experiencing an opioid crisis.
- Organizations and agencies have been reaching out to members / clients / staff to keep people feeling connected and lowering stress by providing information and reassurance.

“Staff have all reported mental health issues. No one is immune, the timing varies. Life as we know it has changed. People are grieving, and there is more to come. The worst has not hit yet.” Kathy Kennedy, ED, Prince Edward Learning Centre

Safety

- Traffic congestion and speeding created safety issues in July and August. Emergency vehicles cannot quickly get through long lineups of traffic at the Sandbanks, and along narrow streets in Wellington.
- Police and bylaw calls increased for tourism-related problems including trespassing, crowding, and noise. Tensions were high and residents were frustrated.
- Three drownings occurred at North Beach. A Quinte area drowning coalition is being set up.
- National figures show an increase in domestic violence, but the local incident reports were down.
- The *Community Safety & Wellbeing* momentum was stalled.
- Thefts and break & enters decreased substantially because stores were closed and people were at home during the day.
- Little Bluff conservation area was inundated with tourists, resulting in crowding and safety issues. The steep access to the water is dangerous, and the fencing at the edge of the bluff needs work. The property had to be closed in August. It will require a huge investment to make the property safer and to control the crowds better.

“Women who are in abusive homes may be very isolated during this time. This is the most concerning issue to come from COVID-19, a drastic drop in calls. During COVID lockdown, women didn’t have the same opportunity to access services.”
Leah Morgan, Alternatives for Women

Housing

- COVID-19 has put on additional pressure for:
 - people who have lost income and/or employment.
 - with the new normal of working remotely using virtual technology, people are relocating to PEC. This is increasing prices and reducing availability.
- A provincial moratorium was placed on residential evictions on March 17. Evictions resumed in August while the pandemic still poses a health threat.
- There is more interest in housing development now, with the popularity of PEC. Infrastructure is required for roads, water, and power.
- The former Pinecrest Memorial Elementary School property was officially turned over to the LoveSong group that aims to create affordable housing for seniors.

“Finding housing solutions has become more challenging. Before the pandemic, the wait list was high, and some have been waiting for years.” Connor Dorey,
Housing Manager, Prince Edward Lennox Addington Social Services

Transportation

- **County Transit** public fixed route was launched in August. The original scheduled launch date of April 1 was delayed due to COVID-19. This is a three-year pilot and, based on feedback, routes are being adjusted.

c) clients/service recipients (e.g. change in numbers, methods of maintaining contact)

- Organizations reached out right away with reassurance calls and emails.
- Face to face contact and networking opportunities were disrupted.
- Many clients/students/end users were provided with cell phones, laptops, and tablets, but lack of technical skills and internet access are barriers to communication.
- There is evidence that there is a distinct difference in how different age groups prefer to connect. In general, ages 30-40+ and seniors are comfortable with phone conversations. The younger generations are more comfortable with online communications.
- Organizations tried to communicate with their clients in ways that worked best. Meetings were held outdoors and through screen doors. *Alternatives for Women* is constructing a private outdoor counselling area. Extensive use was made of Microsoft Teams, Zoom videoconferencing, and social media. **Community Care for Seniors** combined Meals on Wheels deliveries with wellness checks, and they used an internet-based phone and teleconferencing app. **Community Advocacy and Legal Centre [CALC]** set up an Internet-based texting app for communicating with clients without using their personal phones. **ROC** staff members were given individual cell phones for clients to reach them directly. **Children's Mental Health Services** revamped their website to improve mobile access.
- Zoom fatigue and missing social interactions are common experiences. Organizations have been developing interactive online activities to engage groups.

d) employees (change in numbers, methods of maintaining contact)

- Many employees were redeployed to priority areas or caught up on behind-the-scenes tasks. Some worked part-time or were laid off temporarily. A few could not work due to health-related circumstances.
- The CEWS wage subsidy helped to retain employees in non-government funded organizations.
- Where possible, people worked from home. Adjusting to remote working and communicating required a steep learning curve and investment in technology.
- Childcare was a problem for many. Emergency childcare was available in PEC, but availability was limited to prioritize health care workers. Working from home was an option for some parents.
- Most workers have job protections under the *Employment Standards Act*. These have been expanded during COVID-19 by the addition of *Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (IDEL)*.
- Recruiting and maintaining enough employees during this time is a challenge for health care, long-term care, group homes, education, childcare, and bus driving.
- The lockdown time was used to increase technical skills and professional development, to refine policies and programs, and to extend online reach.
- Employee meetings were held more frequently, often via videoconferencing or outside, to deal with the frequent changes and uncertainties. Meetings are important for morale and for feeling connected.

e) volunteers (change in numbers, changes in ways they helped organizations)

- Most volunteers are seniors, many of whom are self-isolating and limiting their volunteer activities. The volunteer pool has decreased significantly for positions such as helping in food banks, driving, deliveries, and on-site activities.
- Fundraisers and events are reliant on volunteer help, but most events were cancelled.
- During lockdown, many organizations could not have volunteers. However, some programs such as *Meals on Wheels* needed to ramp up their service. Volunteers who could not assist physically were able to help with COVID-19 screening calls for the *Meals on Wheels* drivers and recipients, and by placing reassurance calls.
- This unique time created an opportunity for members of younger generations to volunteer. The *Food Depot* was an example of this. Many have returned to work now, making volunteer shifts more difficult to fill.

“The crisis has shown us how important volunteers are, but there is an over reliance on volunteers in PEC. Many are seniors, and there are fewer permanent residents. The pool is getting smaller.” Sandra Latchford, Volunteer, Glenwood Cemetery

“This experience made it very clear that there is volunteer burnout. There are many groups with limited funding and no staff. They are struggling to keep going.”
Sarah Doiron, Manager, Picton BIA

COVID-related funding support from government programs

a) Funding received:

- *Emergency Community Support Fund*: a collaboration between the Community Foundations of Canada and the federal government to provide funding for non-profit organizations that serve vulnerable populations, to help offset COVID-19 related operating costs
- *Municipal COVID-19 Recovery Grants*: for community groups, not-for-profits, and charities, administered by The County Foundation
- *PEC Helping PEC–COVID-19 Fund*: to provide resources for support to the communities vulnerable in the areas of food and health
- Federal/provincial funding for rural municipalities
- *The Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF)*: for extraordinary expenses related to COVID-19
- *Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program*: to help the sector enhance health and safety measures to better protect agri-food workers
- *Emergency Support Fund for Heritage Organizations*
- *Resilient Communities Fund*: through *Ontario Trillium Fund*, a one-time fund to support the non-profit sector recover and rebuild from the impacts emerging from COVID-19
- *Investment Readiness Fund*: some are using this for pandemic preparedness.
- CEWS federal wage subsidy: used by organizations that did not have government funded staffing
- **Community Food Centres of Canada**: grocery gift certificates
- **Food Banks Canada**: food boxes

b) Level of dependence on this funding for continued operations.

- Non-government organizations are struggling financially because of restrictions on fundraisers and earned revenue, and with the ending of wage subsidies.
- COVID-19 workplace protocols have not been fully completed for some facilities.

Steps taken to mitigate the COVID-19 impact

a) that have worked well and that organizations will continue:

- outreach to clients/members/end users through the communication channels that work best for their audiences
- enhanced technical literacy training
- improved infection control measures
- telecommuting for efficiency and flexibility
- virtual health care, training, meetings, education, interactive programs
- hybrid events that combine on-site activities with virtual delivery
- closer collaboration with associated organizations.

b) that were not successful and what was learned from this.

- **HPE Public Health** was among the first health units in the province to respond to the crisis but this took its toll on staff. Their 24/7 support line received 40-50 calls/ day at all hours. It was stressful for staff and the overtime hours were excessive. They adjusted resources to add enough support.
- **HPE Public Health** does not have the capacity to provide all services during a pandemic. They are hoping that doctors and agencies will be able to help fill the gaps.
- For some organizations, it was difficult to let the community know that services were being continued during lockdown. This led to mixed messages and confusion. Organizations have a better sense of how to communicate in the future.
- A massive influx of visitors overran beaches and natural spaces in June and July. The County and **Quinte Conservation** will be better prepared to manage this in future.
- *Meals on Wheels* program was initially reduced due to shortage of volunteers but was quickly expanded when the need became clear.

How organizations are planning to prepare for a future wave of COVID-19 or the next epidemic/pandemic

“No one can say with any certainty if, when, or how big a second wave will be. Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam says provinces and territories should prepare for a “fall peak,” a resurgence, a rebound that could be several-fold worse than their previous experience.” Dr. Theresa Tam.
Press Conference, August 14, 2020

- There has been an adaptation to teleworking – by staff and clients/end users.
- Technical capacity has been upgraded.

- Many programs were modified for virtual delivery and can quickly revert.
- Organizations are reviewing their staff needs for childcare and considering how to continue the work should schools close or if COVID-19 shutdowns are required.
- There is better knowledge and preparedness for infection control.
- The federal government and health agencies are preparing to administer more flu vaccines this fall/winter to reduce the strain on the health care system.
- **Prince Edward Family Health Team** PEFHT would like to set up group programming classes to deal with the high level of anxiety in their patient population.
- Workplace physical alterations were made to ensure safety. However, some workplaces are not large enough to accommodate the increased need for space.
- The municipality is developing a tourism management plan for 2021.
- The municipality, province and **OPP** are working toward better traffic control for the Sandbanks.
- The **PEC OPP** detachment is requesting eight additional officers for next summer.
- Quinte Conservation is working toward improved safety and crowd control measures at Little Bluff Conservation area.
- A Quinte drowning coalition is being formed.

Conclusion

Research undertaken for this interim report indicates that organizations and volunteer groups have demonstrated flexibility, resilience, and commitment to maintain services through the first six months of COVID-19. Their work to reassure staff and clients helped to provide a sense of well-being and belonging through an ongoing climate of uncertainty. But the research also points to community challenges to be addressed, some of which were exacerbated by the pandemic.