

West Nile linked to woman's death

West Nile virus is being linked to the death of a Burlington woman in what Halton Region says is the first human case of the virus in Halton this year.

A report from the Ontario Public Health Toronto lab shows the death of a Burlington woman in her seventies last week was associated with West Nile virus (WNV). Confirmatory testing is underway.

The Region's mosquito surveillance program has found WNV in batches of mosquitoes for five consecutive weeks—including one in Acton—indicating that the risk for human WNV illness continues to be elevated in Halton. The last WNV-associated death in Halton occurred in 2002, when there were 60 reported cases of human WNV illness. Since 2002, Halton has experienced four years with no human cases and four years with one to five cases per year.

"August and September are the months

of highest WNV activity in mosquitoes and when human cases are most likely to occur," said Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of health.

About 80 per cent of persons infected with WNV don't become noticeably ill. About 20 per cent experience West Nile fever with chills, headache, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting, and sometimes a rash. Less than one per cent develop a neurologic disease such as inflammation of the brain or paralysis of one or more arms or legs. Death is rare, occurring in less than one in a thousand infections. The risk for serious illness from WNV goes up with increasing age and in people with underlying illnesses.

Maps showing the locations of positive mosquito pools, as well as standing water sites that have had larvicide applied are available on the Health Department's website at www.halton.ca/wnv, along with tips to protect against WNV.

Cameras an issue of 'safety'— Pautler

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"A state-of-the-art video surveillance camera system in the board's secondary schools will assist with and improve the safety and security for students, staff, visitors and board property," states a board staff report presented to trustees at the board meeting.

Halton Regional Police reviewed the proposed building and grounds surveillance coverage areas, provided input and concurred with the proposed video surveillance strategy, say board staff.

A school board committee established to investigate the video surveillance camera system options available has pre-qualified four camera system vendors.

An electrical engineering consultant was consulted to prepare a video surveillance camera system performance specification and tender (contract) bid package.

The project would go to tender once it has been approved by the board.

Funding for the camera system would come from the board's Facility Renewal Reserve. The balance in the fund is expected to be about \$13.4 million by this September.

Oakville Trustee Anthony Danko ques-

tioned the need for such an expenditure, especially when the board is projecting a multi-million dollar budget deficit for 2011-12.

"I don't see any reason why we need this system. We just heard (about) our bad news budget."

In response to Danko's concerns, facilities superintendent Giacomo Corbacio reminded trustees that funding for the project would come from a reserve fund and not the board's operating (day-to-day funding) budget.

Education Director Michael Pautler told trustees a report on a security project came before the previous board of trustees two years ago.

"We see it as an issue of school safety. Principals and vice-principals spend a lot of time ensuring the safety of students. Where cameras are (in high schools) it seems to have (resulted in) a safer, calmer school environment."

Pautler also noted that besides a possible deterrent effect, the cameras should make it easier for school administrators to deal with school vandalism or other negative issues after the fact because of the availability of reviewing videotaped evidence.



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