



Sessional Paper No. P-5

Petition relating to Chronic Lyme Disease (Sessional Paper No. P-5) Mr. McDonell.
(Tabled March 19, 2012)

Response:

This government is committed to protecting the safety of all Ontarians and their families from preventable vector-borne diseases.

In 2010, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care initiated a Lyme disease awareness campaign with the slogan "Let's Target Lyme" to inform the public on how to recognize ticks and tick bites, the symptoms of Lyme disease, and ways to protect themselves. For health care providers, the campaign outlines Lyme disease symptoms, as well as testing and treatment options.

Brochures, posters and pamphlets to educate the public have been made available to local public health units to use in areas with established black-legged tick populations and endemic Lyme disease.

A provincial Lyme disease website is also available with sections dedicated to the public and health care providers:

- English: www.ontario.ca/lyme
- French: www.ontario.ca/maladiedelyme.

The 2011 Lyme disease strategy includes continued human and tick surveillance, tick control and public education.

The number of cases of Lyme disease in Ontario has remained fairly stable at approximately 100 cases per year for the past three years with the number of samples submitted for Lyme disease testing increasing as a result of public awareness campaigns and physician education initiatives.

Public Health Ontario (PHO) conducts blood testing for *B. burgdorferi*, the bacterium that can cause Lyme disease. PHO conducts these tests at the request of a health care provider. PHO follows a scientifically-validated two-tier testing protocol involving enzyme immunoassay (EIA) and Western immunoblot assay (WB). Both tests complement each other in confirming clinical suspicion of infection.

This process is aligned with the Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and uses Health Canada approved test kits.

Laboratory testing for Lyme disease plays a supportive role in diagnosis of Lyme disease. Diagnosis of Lyme disease is a complex process that relies on assessment of clinical signs and symptoms, tick exposure history and results of blood tests. Moreover, because laboratory results for patients tested immediately after a bite by an infected tick may not yet reveal antibodies to the bacterium, it is recommended that patients exhibiting symptoms be tested again four weeks later to get an accurate result.



Honourable Deb Matthews