

## SMDHU declares Legionnaires' disease outbreak is over

**By Brian Lockhart**

After announcing an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease on Oct. 7, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) has announced that the outbreak is now over.

All cases of the disease were limited to the City of Orillia and no cases were reported in New Tecumseth.

The Health Unit concluded an extensive investigation that centred around 27 known cooling towers at 17 sites in Orillia.

It was determined that a strain of Legionella found in the Orillia Rotary Place cooling tower was a genetic match with one sputum sample of a case of Legionnaires disease among the 35 reported cases.

Testing for the source of the other 34 cases could not be done. In addition, testing could not be done for seven of the sites as they had been shut down for the season before testing could be completed.

The cooling towers identified are being closely monitored.

"We are confident that with the testing, monitoring and completion of any required cleaning and disinfection of the cooling towers that continue to operate in Orillia at this time there is no further risk of transmission associated with this outbreak," said Dr. Charles Gardner, SMDHU Medical Officer of Health. "As such, the health unit is declaring the conclusion of this outbreak."

While the outbreak did take place within the jurisdiction of the SMDHU, Legionnaires' disease is localized and cannot be spread from person to person. It occurs when people inhale aerosolized water droplets containing the disease's bacteria from a nearby source.

Most people do not become ill from inhaling the bacteria, however, some people with risk factors like chronic lung disease are more likely to develop Legionnaires' disease.