**Teen pregnancy rates continue to increase**

**Child advocate urges province not to sweep teen pregnancy trend 'under the carpet'**

New Brunswick’s teen pregnancy rates are increasing again after a sharp decline in the 1990s, according to the Department of Health.

One in almost 40 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 is getting pregnant, according to the province’s health department.

The province’s Office of the Child and Youth Advocate raised the issue of increasing teen pregnancy levels in its latest report.

The report recommended having an open discussion about the trend.

“Sometimes there is still a tendency in our province to sweep these issues under the carpet, to not engage in debate and an honest search for solutions,” the report said.

“We need to be mindful of the intergenerational costs of unwanted pregnancies and develop policies and programs for the best interests of all children, whether infants or teenagers.”

A health department report examined recent teen pregnancy levels and showed there had been a dip in the number of young people becoming pregnant.

The number of women 19 and younger getting pregnant was 1,162 in 1992 and 613 in 2009.

In 1992, the teen pregnancy rate was 62 and that dropped to 34.5 in 2004 and 2005. However, the province’s teen pregnancy rate increased to 43.1 in 2008 and 42.6 in 2009.

### Many factors behind increase

Lucia O'Sullivan, a psychology professor at the University of New Brunswick and the Canada research chair in adolescents' sexual health behaviour, said there could be many factors leading to higher teen pregnancy rates in the province.

She said a comprehensive sexual education plan does make a difference in lowering the level of teen pregnancy.

As well, O'Sullivan said New Brunswick's struggling economy may be part of the reason why the number of teens giving birth in the province is 30 per cent higher than the national average.

"In many cases the teenage pregnancy rates reflect in some regard the educational and employment opportunities that young people see for themselves,” she said.

Lyta Tobias, 20, became pregnant with her daughter when she was 15 years old.

Looking back, Tobias said if she had someone to teach her to have more self respect, confidence and hope for the future, she might never have gotten pregnant.

"Like, you know, being taught how to behave appropriately, having a role model and having someone to look up to that is accomplished,” she said.

Now that her daughter is four years old, Tobias said she is going back to school to become a nurse and a role model for her daughter.

**Natural Science 9 Question**

**Discuss some ways that you believe may provide a solution(s) to the problem of teen pregnancy?**