


# A Healthy City for All



2016  
ANNUAL REPORT

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**Dr. Barbara Yaffe**  
Acting Medical  
Officer of Health

*Byaffe*

## A Message from The Acting Medical Officer of Health

On behalf of Toronto Public Health (TPH), I am proud to present our 2016 Annual Report. Together with our partners, TPH delivered valuable programs and services that contribute to the health of all residents in the city of Toronto. This report outlines our key initiatives and accomplishments for the year.

The theme of this year's report is "Public Health impacts everyone, and at all different stages of their lives." Our work touches the whole population as well as diverse communities within the city. Our healthy public policy work included a comprehensive report on Housing and Health, significant research input into the transit fare equity plan, as well as improvements to the City's hot and cold weather responses. Toronto Public Health's commitment to strengthening the inclusion for diverse communities is demonstrated through Toronto's first Indigenous Health Strategy, the Syrian refugee response, the recommendation for three Supervised Injection Sites and the new gender-inclusive washroom policy at TPH.

Toronto Public Health's mandate includes health promotion and health protection. We do extensive health promotion work across all age groups, with a particular focus on the health of children and youth. In addition to our regular health protection work in healthy environments and communicable disease control, we conducted the largest emergency exercise in organizational history, called EpicTO. This was a full-scale emergency exercise designed to simulate a clinic response using our Mass Immunization Clinic (MIC) plan, involving over 350 staff. The lessons learned from EpicTO will be used to improve the MIC plan and enhance organizational planning for emergencies.

I would like to thank my TPH colleagues and staff for their continued dedication and hard work to improve the health of all residents and reduce the barriers that create health inequities in the city of Toronto. With the ongoing work and commitment of our staff, and the invaluable support of our Board of Health members and community partners, Toronto Public Health is well-positioned for the work, challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

## A Message from The Chair, City of Toronto Board of Health

On behalf of the Board of Health, I would like to congratulate Toronto Public Health (TPH) on the release of its 2016 Annual Report. This report highlights the ongoing work at TPH, and tells an important story of how the City promotes and protects the health of Toronto residents.

As chair of the Board of Health, I am especially proud of the successful collaborations in which TPH participated. Among these, TPH's work with the Toronto Newcomer Office, the Toronto Refugee Health Network, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to plan, coordinate and effectively respond to the needs of 4,489 new Syrian refugees stands out. Through TPH's efforts, more than 4,000 doses of vaccine were administered to approximately 1,800 Syrian newcomers, and 600 received dental care.

Toronto Public Health also saw more than 9,000 moms at their breastfeeding clinics, delivered smoking cessation workshops to priority populations, and supported student nutrition programs where 179,583 Toronto students participated daily.

In July 2016, the Board of Health unanimously approved TPH's proposal for supervised injection sites in the city of Toronto. These sites will save lives, and I am pleased to have been able to support this important strategy.

I would like to thank Dr. Yaffe for her leadership and work as the Acting Medical officer of Health in 2016, and would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of both past and present Board members. Together we play a vital role in protecting and promoting the health of all in Toronto.



**Councillor Joe Mihevc**  
Chair, City of Toronto  
Board of Health

A handwritten signature in white ink on a blue background, reading "Joe Mihevc".



# Funding Public Health

## 2016 Annual Budget

In 2016, the Government of Ontario provided funding for 72% of the TPH gross operating budget with 24% contributed from the City of Toronto and the remaining 4% from user fees and other divisions in the City.

The cost sharing formula of 75:25 for most public health services means that every \$1 of investment by the City results in \$4 of service.

**1,864.58**

STAFF

**\$244.1 Million**

GROSS OPERATING BUDGET

The budget supports ongoing public health service levels, and adds:

**\$1.6 Million**

INCREASE IN STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM

To ensure Toronto students have access to nutritious meals and snacks to help them stay healthy and enhance learning

**\$0.2 Million**

INCREASE IN TORONTO URBAN HEALTH FUND

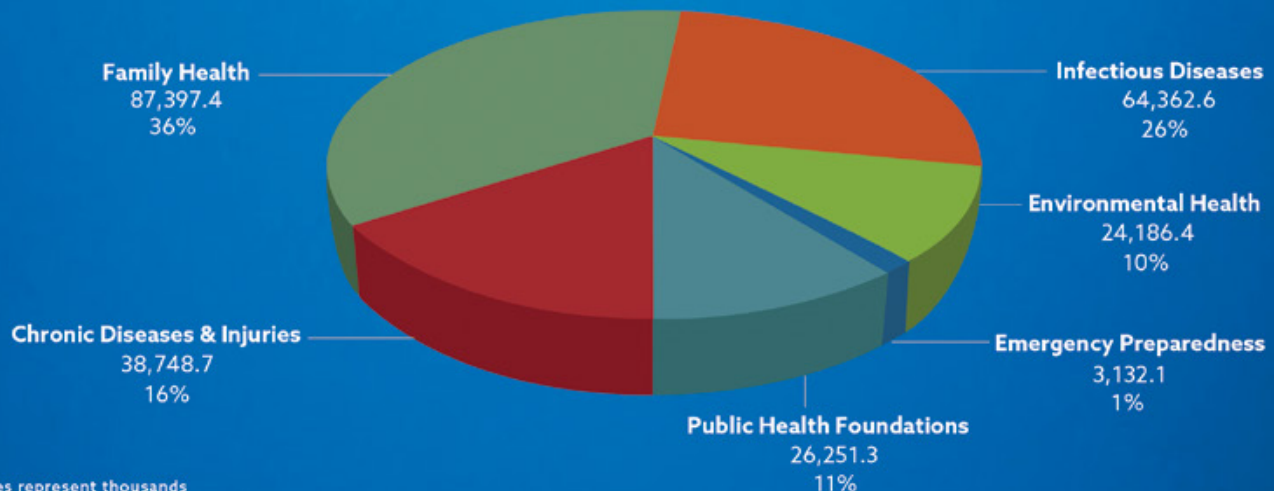
**\$0.5 Million**

INCREASE FOR DAY NURSERY IMMUNIZATION

## TPH 2016 Approved Operating Budget (\$000s)



## TPH 2016 Approved Operating Budget by Ontario Public Health Standard (\$000s)



All \$ values represent thousands





# Return on Investment in Public Health

A relatively small investment provides every person with considerable returns.

- The average lifespan of Canadians has increased by more than 30 years since the early 1900s
- 25 of those years are attributable to advances in public health
- There are numerous public health achievements that led to this remarkable accomplishment

## EVERY \$1 INVESTED IN:



Immunizing Children

**SAVES**

**\$16**

in health care costs



Car and Booster Seats

**SAVES**

**\$40**

in avoided medical costs



Fluoridated Drinking Water

**SAVES**

**\$38**

in saved dental care



Tobacco Prevention

**SAVES**

**\$20**

in future health care



Early Childhood Development

**SAVES**

**\$9**

in future spending on health, social and justice services

## Health Indicators

Toronto Public Health is responsible for monitoring, assessing, and reporting Toronto's health status.

The chart below presents recent estimates for selected health status indicators and shows how Toronto is doing compared to the rest of Ontario and to the most and least favourable results for health units in Ontario.

The estimates for Toronto's health indicators vary across the city with poorer health often associated with [lower income](#) and other social determinants of health including [race](#), [immigration status](#) and sexual orientation.

Overall, Toronto compares favourably or is on par with the rest of Ontario. Rates for physical activity, diabetes prevalence, and low birth weight infants are exceptions.

**Population (2016): 2,731,571**

**Births (2016): 30,225**

**Deaths (2010): 16,606**

— Health Unit with Least Favourable Result

○ Ontario without Toronto

T Toronto

+ Health Unit with Most Favourable Result

Indicator	Ontario Range			
<b>Life Expectancy Female</b> 2010	80.1		83.7	85.4 86.1
<b>Life Expectancy Male</b> 2010	75.5		79.5	80.7 82.8
<b>Teen Pregnancy Rate**</b> 2014	45.8			17.7 16.4 7.8
<b>Low Birth Weight</b> 2015	8.4%	7.3%	6.6%	3.8%
<b>Large for Gestational Age</b> 2015	17.6%		10.5%	7.3% 7.0%
<b>Smokers, Adults</b> 2013/14	33.5%		19.6%	16.4% 13.6%
<b>Exceeds Low Risk Drinking Guidelines</b> 2013/14	38.2%		28.0%	23.8% 19.3%
<b>Physically Active During Leisure</b> 2013/14	42.1%	49.5%	52.3%	59.4%
<b>Overweight or Obese, Adults</b> 2013/14	67.3%		56.7%	49.2% 46.9%
<b>Colorectal Cancer Incidence*</b> 2012	74.9		52.3	44.2 40.9
<b>Lung Cancer Incidence*</b> 2012	97.8		58.5	45.2 41.1
<b>Breast Cancer Incidence*</b> 2012	144.9		112.7	109.1 87.8
<b>Diabetes Prevalence</b> 2013	12.4%	11.2%	9.9%	8.4%

\*Per 100,000 people, age-standardized    \*\*Per 1,000 female teens

Indicator definitions, data sources and related notes are available at: [toronto.ca/health/statistics](http://toronto.ca/health/statistics)









PUBLIC HEALTH IS ABOUT ALL OF US

## TPH Honours Public Health Champions

The Public Health Champion Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions towards protecting and promoting the health of Toronto residents. These contributions include demonstrating leadership in reducing health inequalities, fostering collaboration to improve the health of the population, building community capacity through innovative health promotion strategies and acting as a catalyst for positive change. In 2016, the Public Health Champion Awards were presented to Sarah Miller and the Agincourt Community Services Association.

Sarah Miller demonstrated remarkable leadership and dedication through her research and activism with the Canadian Environmental Law Association and as Co-Chair of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition's Environmental and Occupational Working Group. Her work on the Community Right-to-Know bylaw led to the creation of Toronto Public Health's reporting program ChemTRAC, which collects yearly data from local businesses and institutions on 25 priority substances in the city's air that are at levels of concern for health. These efforts raised awareness on the impact that environmental contaminants have on public health, contributed to public discussion and had a lasting influence on healthy public policy.

Agincourt Community Services Association (ACSA), a non-profit, multi-service agency for children, youth, seniors, newcomers, homeless and underserved communities, has been an instrumental part of the community for over 50 years. Through addressing public health issues such as income and income distribution, employment, early childhood development, food insecurity, social exclusion and social safety, and harm reduction, ACSA has acted as a catalyst for positive change. Through its work with the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, ACSA improved public health indicators and outcomes in an effort to reduce health inequities.

Congratulations to both winners!



*(L-R) Paul Nagpal, Board of Health and 2016 Public Health Champion Awards Selection Committee member, Sarah Miller, 2016 Public Health Champion Award Recipient – Individual, Councillor Joe Mihevc, Chair, Board of Health, and Dr. David McKeown, former Medical Officer of Health*



*(L-R) Paul Nagpal, Board of Health and 2016 Public Health Champion Awards Selection Committee member, Lee Soda, Executive Director, Agincourt Community Services Association (2016 Public Health Champion Award Recipient – Organization), Councillor Joe Mihevc, Chair, Board of Health, and Dr. David McKeown, former Medical Officer of Health*





## Board of Health Approves Supervised Injection Services in Toronto

People dying from drug overdose is a serious public health issue in Toronto, as it is elsewhere in the country. Between 2004 and 2015, there was a 73% increase in the reported number of overdose deaths in Toronto (from 146 in 2004 to 253 in 2015). Of particular concern is the role of opioids, such as heroin and fentanyl in these deaths.

Supervised injection services (SIS) are health services that provide a safe and hygienic environment where people can inject pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained staff. In July 2016, the Board of Health and City Council supported the implementation of small-scale, integrated SIS at Toronto Public Health/The Works, Queen West-Central Toronto Community Health Centre and South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

International research shows SIS reduce drug overdoses, save lives, and limit the spread of HIV and hepatitis C by reducing unsafe injection practices, such as the sharing of previously used needles or other injection supplies. In addition to supervised injection, individuals using these important health services are provided with sterile injection supplies, education on overdose prevention and intervention, medical and counselling services, and referrals to drug treatment, housing, income support and other services.



*Supervised injection services reduce drug overdoses, save lives, and limit the spread of HIV and hepatitis C.*





## Pilot Course Improves Infection Prevention and Control Knowledge

While attending a salon or spa can be a relaxing break it's important to note that serious infections can spread if proper steps to clean and disinfect are not taken.

The BodySafe program at Toronto Public Health (TPH) is an infection control inspection program aimed at Toronto businesses that provide personal services such as tattoo and body piercing shops, and hair and nail salons. These establishments are also known as Personal Services Settings (PSS).

In 2016, the program began offering two Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) courses for owners and operators of PSS. One course focused on IPAC general concepts and requirements and the other focused on sterilization methods in PSS. The courses were developed at the request of the Board of Health to pilot a voluntary PSS IPAC certificate program.

TPH received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from the participants about both courses. Participants indicated that the courses increased their knowledge on IPAC, that they would make improvements in their daily practices and recommend the courses to their co-workers.





## Seaton House Group A Streptococcus Outbreak Response

Group A streptococcus (GAS) is a bacterium that causes common illnesses such as strep throat and skin infections. Very rarely, GAS can cause more severe infections, hospitalizations and deaths, which are more common in persons experiencing homelessness or under-housing.

In late March 2016, an outbreak of GAS was declared at Seaton House men's shelter. Toronto Public Health (TPH) worked closely with the shelter to respond to this outbreak and went into an Incident Management System (IMS) response to implement outbreak control measures.

Staff from across TPH and the shelter responded to this outbreak. This involved organizing screening clinics for clients and shelter staff, eventually covering 1,624 people, managing all positive cases and carriers, recommending and implementing improvements to infection control, harm reduction outreach, extensive consultation with experts in GAS management, the activation of a federal field epidemiologist and education and outreach with persons experiencing homelessness or under-housing.

The outbreak management team persevered to promote and protect the health of this highly vulnerable population.



*Staff from across TPH and the shelter responded to this outbreak. This involved organizing screening clinics for clients and shelter staff, reaching 1,624 people.*



## Promoting Food Safety

In September 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) participated in a one-day event promoting health awareness at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto.

TPH inspectors attended the event and educated approximately 1,500 attendees on food safety. They answered questions and provided tips about safe food preparation at home, safe hand washing, proper thawing and cooking of foods, and how to store and shop for foods safely.

The inspectors engaged the attendees by quizzing them on food safety and by giving away *Keep Food Safe at Home* pamphlets (in English and in Chinese) and foldable grocery bags to the winners.

## Gender Inclusive Washroom Policy: It's All About Respect

Toronto Public Health (TPH) developed and launched a new Gender Inclusive Washroom Policy in 2016, the first of its kind corporately within the City. This policy promotes everyone's right to use the washroom that matches their self-determined gender identity and/or gender expression, regardless of one's sex assigned at birth. TPH is committed to human rights and strengthening inclusion for gender diverse communities, including people who identify as trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-binary.







## The Heat is On: Responding to the Impacts of Climate Change

It is expected that due to climate change the number of days where Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings are called will increase over time.

Toronto Public Health's (TPH) Climate Change and Health Strategy (2015-2019) sets out a direction and specific actions to better understand and respond to the effects of climate change on our health. TPH has been implementing this strategy through research studies, program evaluation, advocacy work and public education. By the end of 2016, 24 of the 32 actions identified in the strategy were implemented, including some that focus on extreme heat.

A new Harmonized Heat Alert and Response System (HARS) was fully implemented in 2016 across Ontario with the health units using new health-based heat warning triggers. During the summer of 2016, there were 15 days of Heat Warnings and eight days of Extended Heat Warnings.

Hot weather response activities focus on protecting vulnerable groups at increased risk for heat-related illness, including those living in apartments without air conditioning. In 2016, Toronto Public Health developed *Protect Your Health from Heat*, an educational resource for tenants and landlords in multi-storey buildings on how to protect their health during extreme heat, and targeted high density apartments in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas whose demographics include vulnerable individuals.

In 2016, TPH and its partners distributed 19,000 resources to tenants, vulnerable clients, community agencies and other public locations such as libraries and community centres. *Protect Your Health from Heat* is now available in 11 languages on the TPH website.



## Diabetes Prevention Strategy

Thanks to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's announcement in 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) began enhancing its ability to plan long-term for its Diabetes Prevention Strategy.

In addition to continuing to deliver diabetes prevention programming to individuals who are at high risk for type 2 diabetes, the Diabetes Prevention Peer Leadership Program at TPH selected and funded 19 community agencies to recruit peer leaders who will implement diabetes prevention workshops and activities in diverse communities. TPH trained 97 peer leaders in the fall of 2016 and will provide ongoing support to these facilitators in 2017 as they begin their community outreach.



Diabetes Prevention Peer Leaders and staff at Sherbourne Health Centre launch their *A World within a Block* cookbook

TPH also partnered with community agencies to provide diabetes screening within higher risk communities using the CANRISK assessment tool. Of those who were screened, 62% per cent were identified as 'high risk' and were referred to primary care for follow-up. Early identification and follow-up are important components of an effective diabetes prevention strategy.

TPH will use the new funding to continue supporting individual behaviour change, building agency capacity to reduce type 2 diabetes, and enhancing environments that support healthy choices.





## Enhancing Cold Weather Planning and Response

In 2016, TPH enhanced its two-year-old Cold Weather Plan based on new research that was carried out in partnership with Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) and the Centre for Urban Health Solutions.

The research found that in Toronto, cold-related injuries are most prevalent from mid-December to the end of February, and frequently occur during moderately cold temperatures as well as extreme cold.

As part of the work, interviews with people experiencing homelessness found that for this population, health impacts are beyond cold-related injuries, occur at a range of temperatures, and most likely on moderately cold, wet days. The research was partly funded by the Healthier Cities and Communities Hub Seed Grant Initiative (a collaboration of Toronto Public Health, the Wellesley Institute, and the Dalla Lana School of Public Health). These findings supported recommendations for increased availability of winter drop-in services for people experiencing homelessness and for those who are under-housed.

Supporting continuous access to drop-in services throughout the winter reflects a new understanding that the cold weather response in Toronto should include services that are offered on a seasonal basis as well as when Extreme Cold Weather Alerts are called.

Further enhancements to the Cold Weather Plan in 2016 included new communications materials about the effects of moderate cold temperatures on health and help all Toronto residents stay active and safe in the wintertime.



*Cold-related injuries are most prevalent from mid-December to the end of February, and frequently occur during moderately cold temperatures as well as extreme cold.*





## Prevent Lyme Disease by Getting Tick Smart

With the number of blacklegged ticks found in Toronto on the rise, Toronto Public Health (TPH) in 2016 enhanced its public education efforts to raise awareness of the risks and prevention of Lyme disease.

This included collaborating with York Region Public Health and Durham Region Health Department to create consistent blacklegged tick signage. In partnership with Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, TPH's Get Tick Smart signs were posted in Rouge Valley, Morningside Park and Algonquin Island to alert the public that blacklegged ticks were found in these areas and to provide information on Lyme disease prevention.

Last spring TPH held a media event to update the public on the status of blacklegged ticks and demonstrated 'tick dragging', the method used to collect ticks from the environment.

To improve access to the latest blacklegged tick and local risk area information, TPH posted a surveillance map on its website displaying the areas where blacklegged ticks had been found and the number that tested positive for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. The map proved to be one of TPH's most popular online resources.





## Preventing Injuries from Winter Slips and Falls

Walking is a healthy, environmentally-friendly activity linked to a lower risk of death and many diseases including heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. However, accumulation of snow and ice on sidewalks makes it harder to walk on them and increases the likelihood of injury due to slips and falls. A 2016 analysis shows that between 2006 and 2015 there were almost 30,000 emergency department visits and 2,800 hospitalizations from falls on snow or ice among residents age 15 and older. Most of these falls were considered urgent, potentially serious or semi-urgent. The study, which is the result of a TPH collaboration with Toronto's Transportation Services and Insurance and Risk Management divisions also found that injuries arising from slips and falls on snow or ice cost the provincial healthcare system close to \$4 million per year, and cost the City about \$6.7 million per year in liability insurance claims.

The rates of visits to emergency departments, admissions to hospital, and liability insurance claims related to slips and falls on snow and ice in Toronto all closely mirror local annual snowfall. Efforts to improve sidewalk snow clearing, increase awareness of City snow clearing programs for those who are elderly or disabled, enhance public education, and carry out more data analysis and mapping will encourage walking as part of a safe, healthy wintertime lifestyle, and may have both health and economic benefits.

## Keeping Air Quality in Check at Indoor Ice Rinks

While ice skating is great exercise there is a risk that poor air quality at your local indoor rink could make you sick. The exhaust from ice resurfacing machines can elevate the levels of carbon monoxide and/or nitrogen dioxide which could result in headaches, drowsiness, rapid breathing, nausea and vomiting.

To determine the levels of exposure to the public, Toronto Public Health worked closely with Public Health Ontario in 2016 to gather air quality data from several City of Toronto ice arenas. The project, which includes several other health units, is aimed at researching the generation of ultrafine particles from resurfacing operations. The results will help document the exposure values and provide recommendations to facility operators on control measures to mitigate potential health impacts related to poor air quality.



## Helping Make Fresh Food Affordable and Accessible

In an ongoing effort to champion and support a healthy and sustainable food system Toronto Public Health partnered with FoodShare to make fresh and affordable produce available at Grab Some Good pop-up markets inside three TTC subway stations. TTC riders can now pick up a variety of healthy ingredients for their evening dinners (or even an apple to eat on-the-go) at Downsview, Kipling and Victoria Park stations. In 2016, approximately 35,000 purchases of fresh produce were made. As one shopper stated, “Before coming to the market, I would buy chips as a snack. Now I’m eating more fruit because I see them here.”

Two convenience stores in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas were also converted into “healthy corner stores”, bringing fresh fruits and vegetables to their shoppers. Owners reported an increase in customer visits, particularly from shift workers and parents with young children. “This is so great,” said one parent, “trying to get me, the baby and the stroller into the grocery store is just so difficult.”

In the fall of 2016, through help from partners at the Victoria Park HUB, Toronto Public Health launched a new Community Food Works (CFW) pilot for Syrian refugees. CFW runs an integrated program delivering food handler certification, food literacy education and employment supports to low-income groups who face financial and cultural barriers. Food handler training is a pre-requisite for many food-based jobs.

Supported by Toronto Public Health dietitians, the CFW pilot trained two groups using a peer-to-peer model tailored to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of Arabic-speaking newcomers. CFW not only builds food skills, but acts as a settlement program addressing many issues, such as social isolation. “I was alone before the group,” said one of the program participants, “now I feel connected. Not just with Syrians but with others as well.”



*Before coming to the market, I would buy chips as a snack. Now I'm eating more fruit because I see them here.*







## Toronto Public Health Responds to the Needs of Syrian Refugees

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) worked closely with the Toronto Newcomer Office to disseminate health and settlement information to 4,489 Syrian refugees in Toronto. TPH also collaborated closely with the Toronto Refugee Health Network and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to anticipate, plan and coordinate how to effectively respond to the health needs of this population, specifically in the areas of immunization and dental care.

Many of the government-assisted refugees were housed at temporary sites such as hotels. With the help of TPH Community Health Officers acting as liaison staff at these temporary sites, TPH administered more than 4,000 doses of vaccine to approximately 1,800 Syrian newcomers. Dental staff screened almost 600 Syrian newcomers and 200 of them were referred to TPH dental clinics for urgent dental treatment.

In addition to administering immunizations and dental care, TPH provided education at these sites on infection prevention and control practices. Four smoking cessation workshops were offered at one of the sites along with Nicotine Replacement Therapy. TPH staff counselled pregnant women and their families on topics such as prenatal care, nutrition, and sexual health, and distributed health promotion resources that had been translated into Arabic.

TPH also participated in seven information fairs across the city to provide support for 530 private sponsors of Syrian refugees.

As Syrian newcomers continue to settle in communities across the city, TPH will continue to provide ongoing service delivery, advocacy, monitoring, and inter-sectoral leadership within the City of Toronto. This will include engagement with key partners to address the needs of emerging newcomer populations.





# Toronto Public Health Testimonials

*Just a small word to thank TPH and especially Christe Okonkwo-MacKenzie and Marian Yusuf for their dynamic work and endless source of positive energy and help for every newcomer. My wife and I were trained as volunteer educators to Arabic-speaking participants for the Food Skills and Nutrition program and then became Peer Facilitators for food skills and nutrition sessions of the Community Food Works for the Arabic-speaking newcomers at Victoria Park Hub.*

*Later we did the Food Handling Program and got the Food Handling Certificate. During this program we learned a lot about food safety and healthy food. Through this program, TPH raises newcomer awareness to avoid unhealthy food and by this way to prevent many chronic diseases related to unhealthy food. At the end TPH promotes healthy, happy and productive family and increase the quality of life. Thanks TPH, Christe and Marian.*

-Abboud and Wehbe, Syrian newcomers





## Putting a Lid on It: Helmet Safety

Helmet use in Toronto needs a push! *The 2015 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* revealed that Toronto students, on average, report not always wearing a helmet while bicycling which is significantly higher than the provincial average.

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) launched the Toronto Helmet Initiative in partnership with Toronto Police Service, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, and the Hospital for Sick Children. All partners are committed to raising awareness of the benefits and importance of proper helmet use.

TPH marketed and promoted the Toronto Helmet Initiative and helmet fitting rules on its website, social media, during a Bike Rodeo (a bicycle safety clinic that aired on CTV), and through print resources posted in schools, libraries and recreation centres.

The campaign generated web traffic to the TPH Helmet Initiative page ([toronto.ca/helmets](http://toronto.ca/helmets)) where visitors received evidence-based practical information on injury prevention and helmet use. The campaign's official hashtag (#wearyourhelmet) gained over 103,700 impressions.



*The campaign's official hashtag (#wearyourhelmet) gained over 103,700 impressions.*





# Toronto's First Indigenous Health Strategy Launched

The Toronto Indigenous Health Advisory Circle (TIHAC) released Toronto's first Indigenous Health Strategy (TIHS) entitled *A Reclamation of Well Being: Visioning a Thriving and Healthy Urban Indigenous Community*. This community-led strategy will inform the ways in which Toronto Public Health and the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network work with the community to improve Indigenous health outcomes in the city.

The TIHS was presented at a community launch and feast on March 23, 2016 at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. The TIHS is comprised of a vision, mission, operating principles, three strategic directions and 24 strategic actions. The key to TPH's success in implementing the TIHS will be in following the operating principles set out by TIHAC. For more details, this report is available at <http://ow.ly/yeam309IGuC>.

The Strategy's vision is a thriving and healthy Indigenous community in Toronto through the respectful harmonizing of practices, policies and resource allocation. Its mission is to lead transformation in health programs and services toward well-being for Indigenous people in Toronto.

## There are three strategic directions:

1. Reduce Health Inequities for Indigenous Peoples
2. Influence the Social Determinants of Indigenous Health
3. Harmonize Indigenous and Mainstream Health Programs and Services

In addition to continuing Indigenous cultural competency training across the organization, TPH will focus on the implementation of the four actions identified in the strategy including advocating for affordable, healthy food for Indigenous people in Toronto, supporting programs that address violence in Toronto's Indigenous community, expanding culturally-sensitive parenting support programs and supporting new and existing public health promotion programs.





## Smoking Cessation Workshops

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) delivered smoking cessation workshops in the community to the following priority populations: young adults, Aboriginals, LGBTQ2S, newcomers, refugees, and people living with HIV, addictions, and mental illness. These groups have a higher prevalence of smoking than the general population.

### Partnership with CAMH

TPH partnered with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) to deliver research-based, cost-free, smoking cessation workshops in local Toronto communities. Eligible participants also received a five-week supply of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) patches. TPH staff provided one-on-one counselling to 226 clients through these workshops; 225 received nicotine patches.

### Partnership with Indigenous Serving Agencies

TPH partnered with four Indigenous agencies to address smoking cessation within the Indigenous community. TPH staff counselled 149 Indigenous clients on smoking cessation and provided them with NRT. This partnership strengthened the relationship between TPH and these agency leaders.

### LGBTQ2S Youth/Young Adult Partnership

In 2016, TPH was involved in the development of a LGBTQ2S Youth/Young Adult Partnership. Staff held a two-day LGBTQ2S Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation forum and 20 youth/young adults attended. TPH coordinated three follow-up sessions with 10 LGBTQ2S youth/young adults and a local queer-owned communications company helped facilitate the sessions. The company generated a report with recommendations for a campaign and community cessation and prevention strategy. The second phase of the campaign and strategy development will be taking place in 2017.



# Toronto Public Health Testimonials



*I heard about the smoking cessation workshops through Jennifer, a public health nurse. I wanted to quit smoking to feel better and in a way that is manageable. I've cut down and I plan to fully quit smoking. I now have less choking in the mornings. This service is good as it helps with stress and reduces cancer risks. It's better when people don't smoke. Jennifer is really nice and the information provided at the workshops is great.*

Jesse, smoking cessation program participant







## TPH Discovers Source of Elevated Blood Lead Levels in Newcomer Family

An investigation led by Toronto Public Health (TPH) was successful in determining that elevated blood lead levels in a newcomer family were caused by contaminated spices (turmeric, red chili and coriander powder) that they imported and ate.

The success of the investigation was due to the collaboration between TPH, Toronto Water, Public Health Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

TPH implemented a number of health interventions to assist the family and to increase awareness of this possible source of lead exposure among newcomers. This included providing the family with information about the risks associated with lead as well as removing the spices from the household. In addition, TPH included a notification to health care providers in TPH's *Communiqué* e-newsletter and made presentations at public health conferences.

Due to the investigation and the lessons learned, TPH has now increased capacity to respond to these and similar types of investigations in the future. Staff have also been providing guidance to other public health units in Ontario for carrying out similar types of investigations.



## Avoiding the “TRAP” Zone of Air Pollution

People near major roadways have an increased risk to exposure from traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) and its related health impacts. With a growing number of Torontonians spending time close to major roadways this a health issue of increasing importance.

Extensive research has conclusively linked TRAP with adverse health outcomes including difficulty learning, and reduced life expectancy. In Toronto, local air quality studies have identified health impacts from TRAP as a concern for people who spend time near busy traffic corridors. Of particular concern are facilities such as schools, daycares, and homes for the aged that house vulnerable groups near traffic corridors.

In 2016, TPH, in collaboration with the City’s Environment & Energy (E&E) division, jointly initiated a strategy to address the effects of TRAP in Toronto. Opportunities exist to reduce exposure to TRAP for both existing and proposed facilities near busy roads. TPH and E&E collaborated with several City divisions, Greater Toronto Area (GTA) health units, and other partners to identify evidence-based tools to mitigate those impacts.

As a result, measures such as ventilation and filtration systems, building design, vegetation and physical barriers, are currently being included in the design of several new schools and daycares in Toronto to minimize exposure to TRAP in these facilities. A staff report with a comprehensive TRAP strategy, to include local, provincial, and federal level mitigation and policy recommendations is currently being prepared for the Board of Health in 2017.





## The Ward Health Profiles Part 2

Wards are an essential part of Toronto's local government system and central to how Toronto's local government works. Toronto has 44 wards, which vary in size, demographic composition and population. The Ward Health Profiles report, a two-part series, provides an overview of built environment factors that contribute to health in each ward and enables residents and City Councillors to understand and respond to local health issues.

In June 2013, Toronto Public Health (TPH) released Part 1, *Health Status and Public Health Services*, which highlights different characteristics of the community for each of Toronto's 44 wards. In 2016, TPH released Part 2, *Healthy and Liveable Communities*, which focuses on the built environment.

The built environment is part of the physical environment that makes up our community. This includes buildings, streets, sidewalks, parks, open spaces, and land. The built environment has an impact on the health of the people who live, work and visit there. It can influence people's levels of physical activity, safety of travel, the quality of outdoor air, access to jobs and services, and opportunities for social interaction and recreation.

The Ward Health Profiles Part 2 include a series of maps that show differences across Toronto's 44 wards for a number of characteristics that represent the built environment: walkability, active transportation, public transit use, automobile use, green space, food availability, industrial air pollution and heat vulnerability.

TPH distributed Ward Health Profiles to City Councillors, other City divisions, and various community partners. The Ward Health Profiles can be used by members of the public to better understand how the built environment influences the health of their communities.





## At Toronto Public Library Your Health Matters

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) and Toronto Public Library launched Your Health Matters, a joint health promotion initiative. The project has increased access to credible health information and public health programming in library branches across the city.

Toronto residents can now check out more than 30 health titles that have been reviewed and approved by TPH. They can feel confident that the information they are reading is credible and evidence-based. All they have to do is look for the Your Health Matters logo.

In select library branches, these materials and related resources are showcased in a dedicated health display, and are complemented by a range of health workshops provided in-branch.

The response has been very positive. So far, public health nurses have provided over 70 health promotion services based on community assessment and local needs, while the circulation rates for the recommended health titles continue to rise – the materials have been borrowed nearly 4,000 times.

Both TPH and Toronto Public Library strive to reduce inequities to improve the lives of all Torontonians. This project helps to advance our shared values of access, equity, community engagement and inclusion. For further information visit [www.tpl.ca/yourhealthmatters](http://www.tpl.ca/yourhealthmatters).





## Providing the Benefits of Breastfeeding to Families Across Toronto

Toronto Public Health (TPH) operates 13 breastfeeding clinics and six breastfeeding support groups across the city.

**In 2016, Toronto Public Health had 9,022 face-to-face interactions at breastfeeding clinic visits, in addition to completing:**

- 14,866 infant feeding phone calls
- 730 breastfeeding/infant feeding home visits
- 175 breastfeeding support group sessions

Public health nurses and lactation consultants from partnering community agencies and hospitals work together to provide breastfeeding support, up-to-date breastfeeding information including language-specific materials, teaching and follow-up, and referrals to other services as appropriate. The breastfeeding support services are free and open to all pregnant and breastfeeding families.

TPH's breastfeeding support services have evolved over the years based on expressed needs from the community. Service improvements have included expanding clinic hours and days, providing cultural and language-specific support groups, and working with existing community partners to provide multiple programs at one site.



**Prenatal Health,  
Infants & Young  
Children**



## Toronto Public Health Testimonials

*When I came home from the hospital with my baby, I felt like I lost hope in my ability to breastfeed. I asked my mom for help and she suggested I visit the breastfeeding clinic at Toronto Public Health. I found the staff at the breastfeeding clinic very welcoming and non-judgemental. I felt comfortable sharing my concerns and I received the help I needed during that difficult time.*

*I am grateful that the breastfeeding clinic at Toronto Public Health existed. At the time, I was feeling overwhelmed and exhausted from being a first-time parent and managing his day-to-day care. This program gave me the support and knowledge I needed to care for my baby the way I wanted to.*

Farah, new mom







## Pregnancy to Parenting Blog

In April 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) launched *pregnancytoparenting.ca*, a new blog featuring information about prenatal to postpartum health, and baby's first year.

The blog is written by TPH health professionals (public health nurses, registered dietitians and speech language pathologists) and covers a variety of topics including pregnancy, nutrition, breastfeeding, emotional health, child development and parenting tips.

The most popular posts so far include those on advanced maternal age in pregnancy, holding baby skin-to-skin, postpartum depression, baby's milestones, brain food for mom and baby, healthy recipes, parenting stress, and the importance of taking prenatal multivitamins.

### The blog's achievements in 2016 include:

- 16,067 visitors since launch
- an average of 1,400 monthly unique visitors
- 80 published articles
- 39,109 views
- 11,063 Facebook referrals
- 124 followers



*The blog's achievements in 2016 include 16,067 visitors and an average of 1,400 monthly unique visitors.*





## Questionnaire Helps Measure Healthy Child Development

Healthy development in early childhood provides the building blocks for positive emotional, social and physical health and well-being. The inability to meet developmental expectations in early childhood can set in motion a lifetime trajectory of vulnerabilities. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool that measures vulnerability in childhood. This tool measures development in five areas: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development, Communication Skills and General Knowledge.

TPH uses the EDI results in many ways to guide and inform program and service planning. In 2016, TPH analysed the current data to identify trends in Toronto from 2005 to 2015. This analysis provides a snapshot of how children in Toronto are faring and identifies inequities in healthy development, including a focus on children with special needs.

Overall, the results are encouraging. The most recent data show a significant decrease in the overall vulnerability rates for senior kindergarten students in Toronto between 2005 and 2015 (15.7% in 2005 to 13.6% in 2015). This is primarily due to children doing better in the area of language and cognitive development.





## Supporting Aboriginal Mothers and Their Families

A program that aids homeless Aboriginal women has increased the number of children staying with their birth parents, decreased apprehensions by child protection agencies and increased positive parental interactions. Through collaboration with Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST), Toronto Public Health (TPH) provides home visits to homeless Aboriginal women during their pregnancy and after birth, incorporating nurse-led interventions, as well as traditional Indigenous teachings, beliefs and practices about pregnancy and parenting.

A public health nurse visits with the families at least once a week and works diligently to help the parents plan, set goals and reflect on their successes. In 2016, TPH and NCFST, in partnership with other agencies that provide services to Aboriginal families in Toronto, completed 678 home visits with 28 clients. These clients have benefitted immensely from having services provided with Indigenous cultural relevancy.

### How the program works

The nurse works with transient, pregnant women who express a strong desire to make changes to be able to parent their child, and allows the women to be the expert. Some of them have left long-term homelessness, substance use and street life, to keep their baby. The work always includes the reclamation of the client's Indigenous heritage. The nurse is often part of traditional teaching and ceremonies, which helps the client embrace the sacredness of life and birth.



*TPH and NCFST, in partnership with other agencies that provide services to Aboriginal families in Toronto, completed 678 home visits with 28 clients.*





## World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is celebrated in Canada from October 1–7. Toronto Public Health (TPH)'s 2016 Breastfeeding campaign reminded Toronto residents that breastfeeding is one way to care for our children and the world we all share.

Younger mothers (ages 25 or under) are less likely to exclusively breastfeed to six months (TPH, 2010). TPH worked with 13 members of the Youth Health Action Network (YHAN) ages 16 to 24 to brainstorm on social media messages supporting this year's theme that resonate with youth.

Promotion on social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram) during the 2016 campaign resulted in a significant amount of community engagement and drove traffic to the campaign website for health information.

One particular Facebook post generated close to 103,000 impressions (views) and more than 1,800 engagements (reactions, shares and comments). The TPH breastfeeding Pinterest board had the top number of impressions, and the campaign web page ranked third out of all TPH web pages for the week of October 1–7.

The campaign web page contributed to a 3.5-fold increase in the number of visitors to the breastfeeding website.



## Spotlight on Child Health Indicators

Toronto Public Health (TPH) is continually exploring new data sources and health status indicators to support program planning, service delivery, and healthy public policy. In 2016, TPH reported new measures of child health, including the 18-month well-baby visit, vulnerability for early development, and childhood tooth decay.

### **52% of children received the 18-month well-baby visit<sup>1</sup>**

This visit is a critical primary health care assessment of the developmental progress of children, including motor skills, communicative abilities, and behavioural issues. During the visit, children and families may be referred to public health services such as speech and language, hearing and low vision, nutrition and parenting programs.

### **13.6% of children were deemed vulnerable<sup>2</sup>**

The Early Development Instrument measures vulnerability, or the inability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations, among children in Senior Kindergarten. Understanding how children are doing helps those in public health make informed decisions about what services and policies can best support children and families.

### **12.6% of children had tooth decay<sup>3</sup>**

TPH conducts annual oral health screenings in Toronto public and separate schools to detect early signs of possible problems. Children with tooth decay may be referred for further dental care as needed. Historically, schools in Toronto with more students living in low-income areas and those with more recent immigrant students have had a higher prevalence of tooth decay.

<sup>1</sup>Children aged one to two years, Toronto, 2013. Source: Medical Services Claims History Database, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHEALTH Ontario, Date Extracted: February, 2016

<sup>2</sup>Vulnerable on two or more for the five EDI domains, Kindergarten Students, Toronto, 2014/15. Source: Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University

<sup>3</sup>Kindergarten to Grade 8 Students, Toronto, 2015. Source: Oral Health Information System, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, OHISS Application. Date Extracted: October 2016







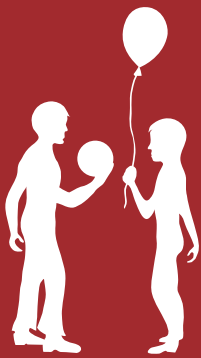
## Raising the Village

Toronto Public Health (TPH) plays a key role in improving the quality of and access to services so that all children and families in Toronto are well supported for optimal growth and development.

This work is strengthened through a partnership between TPH and the Toronto Child & Family Network (TC&FN) led by Toronto Children's Services. The network brings together leaders from many systems that affect the lives of children and families such as education, health, mental health, special needs, child care, family support, libraries and recreation. Collectively, and with the help of major funders, the TC&FN works to mobilize better coordination of all of the systems that affect children's development. The network enables an enriched understanding of the role each system plays in meeting the needs of children and families and supports shared planning, reduced duplication of efforts and more streamlined and powerful advocacy.

In 2016, the TC&FN was re-structured to include a steering committee, an Aboriginal Advisory and Planning Committee, a Réseau Régional de Langue Française, and four working tables addressing specific areas of intersection. TPH staff bring their public health expertise and enthusiasm to the working tables and play key roles in the development of new strategic directions and action plans for the network.

The TC&FN kicked off its new organizational structure by launching the Raising the Village website making rich data and very useful resources widely available to all who share the goal of improving the well-being of Toronto's children and families. *Raising the Village: Measuring the Well-Being of Children and Families in Toronto*, a report written in collaboration with TPH, can also be found on this website.



**Children  
& Youth**





## Want Safer Neighbourhood Streets? Here's How

Toronto residents concerned about street safety can now turn to a handy guide that explains the required policies step-by-step, and shares advice about which ones may be most relevant to them. Entitled *The Guide to Safer Streets Near Schools: Understanding Your Policy Options in the City of Toronto*, it features email templates for inviting local councillors to a meeting, a sample traffic-calming petition and a list of local organizations campaigning for safer streets.

The guide is the result of a broad collaboration that includes Toronto Public Health, University of Toronto's School of the Environment, Toronto Centre for Active Transportation, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Cycling Think & Do Tank, and CultureLink Settlement Services. The guide was co-authored by Green Communities Canada and Masters students from York University and the University of Toronto.

The content is based on research on the barriers the public faces when requesting road safety and traffic calming improvements in their neighbourhoods. The research focuses on the experience of individuals and groups who were both successful and unsuccessful in their change requests. By highlighting and explaining the relevant City of Toronto policies, it offers advice that allows residents, especially school and parent councils, to effectively navigate these barriers.

The guide is available in both English and French, was promoted through newsletters, on the Internet and social media, and is planned to be distributed to parent and school councils in four school boards: Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, le Conseil scolaire Viamonde, and le Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud.







## TPH Calls on Public to Design Toronto-Themed Condom Wrapper

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) called on the city's young adults to design the next round of wrappers for condomTO, part of a sexual health promotion program that distributes free Toronto-themed condoms. The condomTO Wrapper Design Contest targeted youth to raise awareness of the importance of using condoms for safer sex and normalizing condom use.

According to the most recently available data on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Toronto, the number of reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis is rising. Youth ages 15 to 24 have the highest rates of chlamydia, the most common STI, and involving them in a prevention campaign is consistent with TPH's Youth Engagement Strategy.

TPH partnered with The&Partnership marketing agency, Miami Ad School Toronto and ONE Condoms to launch a condom package design contest to Toronto youth ages 18 and up.

The contest attracted 438 unique submissions that ranged from "6ix"-inspired messaging (the city's nickname used by the rapper Drake), to a raccoon, and TTC inspired art. Ten contest finalists were selected by an expert panel of judges including leaders in sexual health, art and design, local media and local politics. The public voted for the winners; 8,000 people voted a winner and a runner up in each of the four design categories. The grand prizes included a scholarship with Miami Ad School Toronto and a paid internship with The&Partnership marketing agency.

In total, the contest provided 26 youth with sexual health training and ambassador roles, and 32 youth with design skills training.



*Youth ages 15 to 24 have the highest rates of chlamydia, the most common STI, and involving them in a prevention campaign is consistent with TPH's Youth Engagement Strategy.*





## Toronto Public Health Testimonials

*I enjoyed the challenge of coming up with a design that both represented Toronto and promoted safer sex. Aside from the novelty of getting to design a condom wrapper, I found the entire campaign to be an innovative and engaging challenge that was beneficial to artists and creatives of all ages in Toronto. It fostered community and encouraged an open discussion of safer sex and condom use.*

*The contest gave young creatives the opportunity to use their creative talents as a vehicle for sexual health promotion. The voting process tapped into the public's pride for their city as they were able to vote for the design that they felt was the best representation of the Toronto they know so well.*

*It's great that Toronto Public Health passed along the responsibility of sexual health promotion to youth so that they can contribute to the solution in their own way; whether by submitting a design or simply voting for their favourite design. I am proud to have participated in this contest and will continue to keep the discussion of safer sex open in the future.*

Andrea, condomTO contest winner





## **New e-Newsletter Helps Families to Eat Well and Be Active**

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) launched inTOkidshealth, a monthly e-newsletter that provides parents, caregivers and health professionals with information on how to keep children healthy, safe and happy.

The new e-newsletter focuses on a wide variety of topics, including healthy eating, physical activity, positive parenting, injury prevention, mental well-being and more. The inTOkidshealth e-newsletter was widely promoted on social media as well as in libraries, community centres and schools.

By the end of January 2017, the e-newsletter had more than 750 subscribers, and a reported level of engagement (based on click rates and read through rates) of four out of five stars.

TPH will be circulating a survey to all inTOkidshealth subscribers in 2017 to determine if the e-newsletter is meeting its objective of increasing parents' and caregivers' awareness of strategies for promoting health and well-being of children ages three to 10.



*By the end of January 2017, the e-newsletter had more than 750 subscribers, and a reported level of engagement (based on click rates and read through rates) of four out of five stars.*







## Supporting Vulnerable Families

The Investing in Families (IIF) team reduces health inequities by responding to the health of vulnerable families receiving Ontario Works and connecting them to vital health and wellness-related services. As part of a multi-divisional partnership, Toronto Employment and Social Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Toronto Public Health coordinate efforts to provide a seamless wrap-around approach supporting these families to access City services and benefits.

In 2016, IIF public health nurses conducted nearly 1,000 face-to-face interactions with families to assess, plan and implement specific plans of care, and 26 Let's Talk groups provided support to more than 500 clients, helping to reduce social isolation and increase a sense of community. Participants learned about parenting strategies and wellness for the entire family.

The work of this partnership was instrumental in helping a mother and her children recently escape a situation where they endured a long history of intimate partner violence. The public health nurse they turned to immediately secured the safety of the family by developing a specific safety plan for them. In these types of situations, it often means moving the parent and children into a temporary family shelter, connecting them with legal services and linking them with child protection services for support.

Once the immediate crisis was averted, the mother attended a Let's Talk group facilitated by the public health nurse where she was empowered to develop a sense of social inclusion and healthier social connections, build her self-confidence and increase her parenting skills. All of this helped her children to better cope with the trauma they witnessed and helped them deal with the family's separation.









Toronto  
Public Health  
Testimonials

*Sadly in my case the thought of not being able to provide the basic necessities in life for my kids was not a feeling I wanted to visualize, or how that life would be for them. So I rather stayed in the most unhealthy and abusive marriage for years thinking that was my only option for me and my kids.*

*Until one day when I was almost strangled to death right in front of my kids, till my then 12- year-old son tried to shield me from his father, and my 8-year-old autistic son tried to block both his ears from the screaming and the hell I was going through. The look I saw on my kids' faces was so terrifying and heart-breaking, in that moment I prayed and promised myself I will change my whole life.*

*Eventually I did get out, and ended up in a women's shelter with my kids for almost two years. Through this humbling experience came somehow, somebody thought about this genius idea of funding called IIF funding that can provide the kind of support and needs for families like me and my kids. IIF gave me the peace of mind that any struggling parent asks for. Thank you for this particular funding. Freedom of confidence and self-esteem equals a healthy life.*

– Investing in Families client







## Engaging Youth in Health Promotion

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy provides Toronto Public Health (TPH) with funding for youth engagement in health promotion initiatives. The Investment in Youth Engagement (IYE) initiative, currently in its eighth year, was established by TPH to support youth engagement work in the community with a focus on tobacco use prevention and other chronic disease and injury prevention topics such as physical activity, sport and recreation, healthy eating, mental health promotion, substance and alcohol misuse, and injury prevention.

In 2016, TPH supported 33 Investment in Youth Engagement (IYE) youth groups across the city of Toronto to work on various community projects that address health issues such as mental health promotion, physical activity, second-hand smoke, hookah use and smoke-free movies. The IYE groups also held meetings with City councillors to advocate for public health policy.

More than 2,800 youth participated in the IYE initiative in 2016, reaching 8,300 youth in Toronto through their peer-led workshops, community events and use of social media. Youth leaders also took part in monthly sessions to further develop their leadership skills.

An ongoing research study in partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement revealed positive health outcomes from the youth participating in the IYE initiative such as a statistically significant decrease in the use of alcohol, an increase in physical activity and an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption. In 2017, the IYE initiative will continue to support youth engagement in the community with a focus on health promotion.



*More than 2,800 youth participated in the IYE initiative in 2016, reaching 8,300 youth in Toronto through their peer-led workshops, community events and use of social media.*





## Leveling the Playing Field – HPV Rollout to Boys

Grade 8 girls have been receiving the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine since 2007. In 2012, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization made a recommendation to immunize boys with HPV vaccine to reduce the risk for oral and anogenital cancers and genital warts. Toronto Public Health (TPH) advocated for the expansion of HPV vaccination to include boys for health equity considerations, and to reduce the overall economic burden of HPV-related disease.

In 2016, the Ontario government announced funding for the HPV-4 (Gardasil®) vaccine to all students in Grade 7, moving the program from Grade 8 to Grade 7. From September to December 2016, TPH administered 7,834 doses of HPV to Grade 7 boys, about 64% of all the boys in Grade 7. The total number of HPV doses given to girls (Grades 7 and 8) was 16,158. Students need two doses of the vaccine to be protected.

The Ontario government also announced that, as of September 2016, the HPV vaccine would be publicly-funded in Ontario for males between the ages of nine and 26 years who self-identify as gay, bisexual, trans, or men who have sex with men (MSM). These males can receive the vaccine from their family physician or a sexual health clinic.

HPV vaccination has both short-term and long-term benefits. In the short-term, it reduces the risk of getting genital warts, which can affect body image and self-esteem in youth. The long-term benefits include preventing cancers and pre-cancerous lesions in those who are vaccinated and preventing the broader spread of the virus through herd immunity protection for both males and females. Students will receive a second dose of the HPV vaccine in 2017.







## Student Nutrition Program

Toronto Public Health (TPH) supported student nutrition programs in 2016, reaching 179,583 students daily. This would not have been possible without the 3,000 parent and community volunteers contributing approximately 238,775 volunteer hours.

Student nutrition programs are community-based meal programs that help level the playing field for kids from Kindergarten to Grade 12, providing healthy food to support learning and development throughout the school day. Research indicates that when children and youth eat healthy meals and snacks at school, they learn better. Student nutrition programs also contribute to healthier eating habits and reduce the risk of obesity and chronic disease.

TPH's collaborative partnership with FoodShare Toronto, Toronto's public school boards, and their charitable foundations ensures a coordinated approach to this important program. Public health inspectors and registered dietitians train and consult with program volunteers to help build their capacity to plan, prepare and serve nutritious meals.



*The physiological and psychological benefits of the program are fantastic; it enhances their day; it gives them the energy, that boost that they need – which is fabulous.*

### Ivana Runca

Teacher – Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School





## Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Sexual and reproductive health is a fundamental part of overall health and well-being. Toronto Public Health (TPH) developed *Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!*, a curriculum support document for Grades 5 and 6. Throughout the 2015-2016 school year, the work group used this document to facilitate twelve professional learning group sessions, supporting more than 300 Toronto public and private school teachers.

The Grades 5 and 6 curriculum support document aligns sexual health-related teaching materials with the revised 2015 Ontario Human Development and Sexual Health Curriculum, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accepting Schools Act Bill 13, and local school board equity policies.

This document acknowledges the importance of mental health promotion in the success of all students, features activities that use inclusive language, and is responsive to gender equity and diversity. It includes handouts, up-to-date diagrams, a glossary and other resources, and each lesson contains student activities and a Key Facts section for teachers.

*Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!* curriculum support document is posted on the TPH website in both English and French, and is compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).





## Let's Get Physical Toronto! – activeTO

In an ongoing effort to increase physical activity and prevent chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease in the city, Toronto Public Health (TPH) relaunched its activeTO campaign in 2016. The campaign included a special event at Yonge-Dundas Square, a website redesign, and a marketing plan to increase use of [activeto.ca](http://activeto.ca) and promote physical activity.

To kick-off the campaign, the activeTO team, with help from Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Open Streets TO and CycleTO, transformed Yonge-Dundas square into a massive playground. Adults and children passing through the square participated in Zumba demos, a CycleTO bike maintenance workshop, and showcased their fitness and agility skills in the interactive play zone. The event was attended by approximately 1,000 people.

The activeTO site now features an event calendar that allows users to locate free and accessible activities within their local communities and around the city. It also provides helpful tips on staying active, maps to discover the city's routes and trails, and family-friendly activities. The activeTO marketing plan helped attract 18,414 unique visitors to [activeTO.ca](http://activeTO.ca), averaging 3,100 visitors per month.

The social media campaign during the launch resulted in over 123,270 impressions and 1,100 engagements, 13 of which were from notable influencers such as City of Toronto's Chief Planner Jennifer Keesmaat, Sunnybrook Hospital, and the David Suzuki Foundation. The relaunch has helped strengthen TPH's partnerships with Open Streets TO and Parks, Forestry and Recreation and activeTO will continue exploring more cross-promotional opportunities with both organizations in 2017.



Adults



*The activeTO marketing plan helped attract 18,414 unique visitors to [activeTO.ca](http://activeTO.ca), averaging 3,100 visitors per month.*







## An Action Plan to Address Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant and preventable public health concern. In Canada, one in three women has experienced abuse at some point in her life. Every six days, a woman is killed by her partner.

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) developed the *Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Action Plan 2016-2019*. TPH is supporting the implementation of the Action Plan across all relevant City divisions, agencies, and boards.

Within the first year, progress was made in addressing actions in the areas of prevention, early identification and response. In addition, TPH identified the need to enhance the plan to address the unique issues faced by vulnerable groups, beginning with the Indigenous and LGBTQ2S communities. These groups are at increased risk of IPV and face a lack of services and barriers to existing services.

Selected IPV achievements in 2016 include a forum on gender-based violence prevention, 171 teacher/classroom support sessions in the Toronto District School Board, workshops with domestic violence shelters to increase access to women using substances, and advocacy for provincial legislation to provide paid leave to those affected by IPV.

In 2017, TPH will work with the Toronto Indigenous Health Advisory Circle to address IPV. For LGBTQ2S communities and other vulnerable populations, TPH will ensure all programs and services are culturally appropriate and safe, incorporate an anti-oppression, anti-racism, intersectional approach in all staff training, and advocate for increased availability of appropriate legal services, police responses, shelter and mental health supports.







## Housing and Health: Unlocking Opportunity

Toronto Public Health released a report in October 2016 on housing and health to increase awareness about the importance of affordable, good quality, and stable housing for health, and to support efforts currently underway to address this issue.

*Housing and Health: Unlocking Opportunity*, outlines the Toronto housing context, at-risk populations, and evidence on how housing can affect health. It also features stories from Torontonians with lived experience, who provide compelling accounts of how housing instability and homelessness have affected their health.

The report also provides policy recommendations developed in partnership with the City's Shelter, Support and Housing Administration and the Affordable Housing Office and in consultation with housing community stakeholders that aim to reduce homelessness and housing instability and improve health. The report also highlights the need to address the upstream determinants of homelessness and housing instability, such as income security, employment, violence prevention, and discrimination, among others.



*The technical report... features stories from Torontonians with lived experience, who provide compelling accounts of how housing instability and homelessness have affected their health.*





## Cooking up Change – TPH’s First Culinary Challenge

Toronto Public Health wants to help people make informed food choices when dining out. Our goal is to help create environments where people can make healthier food choices. To further promote healthy food choices TPH’s Savvy Diner campaign hosted its first Culinary Challenge in November 2016 to encourage budding chefs to incorporate healthier options into their menus. Contest participants were asked to create an entrée recipe that meets specific nutritional requirements and their dishes were judged on presentation, taste and nutritional quality. Four teams made up of culinary students from Humber and Centennial Colleges competed head-to-head and created beautiful, delicious meals.

The winners of the 2016 Savvy Diner Culinary Challenge were Emma Marple and Amber Bell of Humber College. Notable local celebrity judges included Rose Reisman, a leading nutrition expert, author and media personality; Ted Reader, a celebrity chef and author of several cookbooks; and John Cirillo, an award-winning, world-class chef and culinary academy operator. They were joined by floor judges, renowned chefs, Mark Wilson and Tony Fernandes.

The event garnered impressive social media engagement and the program looks forward to another challenge in 2017.

Savvy Diner also expanded its healthy dining campaign to provide food service operators access to tools and resources they can use to enhance menu options for customers seeking healthier choices. The program refreshed its [savvydiner.ca](http://savvydiner.ca) website and made improvements to the site’s mobile device functionality.



*(L–R) Emma Marple and Amber Bell of Humber College, winners of the 2016 Savvy Diner Culinary Challenge.*



## Smile! TPH Expands Access to Dental Care

Good dental care is not only a proven factor in promoting the overall health of an individual, it can make all the difference for someone struggling to land that first job by giving someone the confidence to smile and make eye contact during an interview. Unfortunately there is no public dental insurance for the working poor in Ontario, and only partial coverage for those on social assistance.

As part of the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy, Toronto Public Health (TPH) is collaborating with Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) to increase access and improve the level of dental services for Ontario Works (OW) adult recipients. Effective May 2016, all adult recipients on OW were given the additional option of being treated at all of the 23 TPH dental clinics for emergency dental care.

Many of the TPH dental clinics are located in close proximity to TESS offices and therefore are easily reached by OW clients. Many patients eligible for government-funded dental programs often face challenges seeking dental care from private dental service providers. This partnership significantly increases access for OW clients to receive dental care. By the end of 2016, a total of 2,142 OW adult clients accessed dental treatment at a TPH dental clinic. TPH dental clinics also continue to provide regular dental care to children under 18, clients referred by specific TPH perinatal programs and low-income seniors.







## TPH Research Supports Reduced TTC Fares

Affordable public transit is vital for people living with a low income and/or experiencing homelessness as it often is their only means of transportation. Access to public transit directly impacts this group's access to health, social, recreational, educational, and employment opportunities. A Toronto Metropass costs \$146.25, one of the highest prices in the world for a monthly public transit pass, according to a recent study from Movinga, a European moving company.

Due in part to research undertaken by Toronto Public Health (TPH) in collaboration with other City divisions and community stakeholders, Toronto City Council approved the Fair Pass Program, a major step in making public transit more affordable to low-income TTC users. The plan will be phased in starting in 2018 and provide discounts of 33 per cent on single adult fare of \$3 and 21 per cent on the adult Metropass to eligible riders.

The research carried out by TPH and its partners highlighted the need for reduced transit fares for individuals with a low income. It also documented the health benefits of affordable transit fares, and examined what other cities in Canada and around the world are doing to address the high costs of transit.

City Council's adoption of the Fair Pass Program is aligned with Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy and has the potential to improve access to health and other services necessary for health and provide health benefits.



## **e-Learning Module Helps Older Adults to Stay on Their Feet**

Toronto Public Health (TPH) is helping caregivers by testing an online e-learning module that examines age-related changes, modifiable risk factors associated with falls, and enables caregivers to incorporate fall prevention strategies when working with older adults. The testing is part of new education strategy for the Step Ahead to Fall Prevention program introduced in 2016.

Overall, 18 participants completed the pilot testing on this e-learning module including TPH and long-term care staff. Most of the participants said they were satisfied with the e-learning module's content, ease of navigation and instructions and felt it should be recommended to personal support workers (PSWs), registered practical nurses (RPNs), registered nurses (RNs), and other health care personnel. They also recommended sharing the e-learning module with social workers and community agencies that offer programs to older adults and interact with them directly.

TPH will launch the Step Ahead e-learning module in 2017 and will encourage community agencies to incorporate it into their new employee training. York Region Public Health Unit, a partner in the development of the e-learning module, will aid in its implementation and evaluation.

The e-learning module will serve to strengthen connections between public health and other health care sectors including the Local Health Integration Networks and support efforts underway to promote consistent fall prevention curriculum, programming and services across the city of Toronto.



**Seniors**



Toronto  
Public Health  
Testimonials



*I heard about this service because it's close to where I live. The location is very convenient for me. Staff are very friendly there; they are always there for me when I need them. They are very professional, friendly and kind.*

*If I have a dental emergency or need any help they are there for me – even if I don't have appointment. I appreciate that a lot.*

*For me, the basic dental care is free. I'm a senior citizen on a fixed income so this helps me very much. Dental care can be very expensive and can cost thousands of dollars. This is a huge help for senior residents.*

Lucille, TPH dental clinic client





## Excellence Toronto at TPH

In 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) began participating in a long-term corporate initiative called Excellence Toronto. Excellence Toronto is a framework through which all City divisions will pursue excellence and continuous improvement to transform business practices and modernize how services are delivered.

In December 2016, TPH reached the first milestone by completing a baseline self-assessment. TPH's self-assessment of the six drivers of excellence (leadership, customer experience, employee engagement, strategic planning and financial management, partners and suppliers) demonstrated that TPH is tracking well to achieve the Bronze designation.

In 2017, the City of Toronto will submit one application on behalf of all divisions to Excellence Canada, an external authority for verification of Bronze designation. Once Bronze designation is achieved, the City (including TPH) will begin working towards the higher designation levels.

TPH is committed to continuous improvement and to the Excellence Toronto motto of "getting better together".



## Year Five of the Knowledge Exchange Forum (KEF)

The annual KEF supports knowledge exchange through program presentations, capacity building, and networking across Toronto Public Health (TPH). It provides staff with the opportunity to participate in an internal conference hosted by their peers. KEF relates directly to the strategic directions of leading innovation in public health practice and being a healthy workplace. It is supported by the TPH Learning Committee and the Senior Management Team.

In 2016, KEF celebrated its fifth year. Attendees were made up of 252 TPH staff and students from partner academic health science faculties. There were 19 presentations throughout the day and presenters included staff from all levels of the organization and speakers from external agencies.

Since 2011, over 1100 TPH staff have attended KEF. Evaluations indicate that presenters increased their presentation skills and developed confidence in their speaking ability. Attendees appreciated the quality of the event and the presentations. KEF has also increased learning and communication across the organization.





## Student Preceptor Program at TPH

The Student Preceptor Program coordinates all unpaid student placements at TPH.

The students placed through the Student Preceptor Program come from various regulated and allied health professional academic programs. From 2015 to 2016, the number of undergraduate students in the program increased from 343 to 354 and the number of graduate students increased from 99 to 111. Most of the TPH student placements are made up of nursing students. In 2016, 178 TPH staff supervised 141 nursing students. From the 94 public health nurses that TPH hired in 2013 through to 2016, 32 have completed a TPH student placement.

TPH continues to place a wide range of students through the Student Preceptor Program and works with academic institutions to form partnerships. In 2014, Toronto Public Health entered into a partnership with the University of Toronto and University Health Network to enhance the Master of Public Health Nutrition & Dietetics (MPH N&D) program. The MPH N&D program offers a comprehensive, systems-oriented approach to dietetic education. As a key partner, TPH has been involved in all aspects of the MPH N&D program including program governance, administration and curriculum development.

The first cohort of students from the enhanced program began placements at TPH in January 2016. In 2016, TPH dietitians supervised 23 MPH students. The partnership has offered professional development for staff as well as offering opportunities for staff to contribute to dietetics education such as guest lectures, teachings, and workshops.





## Towards a Healthy City for All – Celebrating TPH Staff

TPH Celebrates You, the first Recognition Awards Program at Toronto Public Health (TPH), was held in September 2016 with over 150 TPH employees in attendance. Feelings of pride, appreciation and excitement filled the room, as individuals and teams walked on stage to receive their recognition certificates. The goal of the Awards Program is to provide an opportunity for TPH staff to formally acknowledge the exceptional work and accomplishments of fellow employees who have significantly contributed to the Toronto Public Health vision of A Healthy City for All. Awards were presented in four categories that contribute to the valuable work of TPH and to employee engagement: Customer Service Excellence, Innovation, Community Engagement, and Healthy Workplace.

The first year of the TPH Recognition Awards Program was a success thanks to all the employees who submitted a nomination, formally acknowledging 200 employees for individual or team accomplishments. Employees who attended the 2016 celebration had the following to say:

***“Fantastic event!!”***

***“Thank you for making this day special for me. You surely touched my heart.”***

***“That was without a doubt the best recognition event I have attended at the City.”***

TPH Celebrates You is scheduled again for 2017.





## EpicTO Emergency Preparedness Exercise

In October 2016, Toronto Public Health (TPH) conducted the largest emergency exercise in organizational history called EpicTO. EpicTO was a full-scale emergency exercise designed to simulate a clinic response using the Mass Immunization Clinic (MIC) plan involving over 350 staff.

The EpicTO exercise program consisted of two related but separate emergency exercises. The first exercise focused on decision-making and coordination processes using the MIC plan and the Incident Management System (IMS). The second was a full-scale exercise which simulated the MIC clinic response.

### The main objectives of the exercise were to:

1. Demonstrate TPH's ability to effectively coordinate a response in accordance with the MIC plan and procedures.
2. Assess and validate TPH's ability to immunize clients according to the planning assumptions and scenario models in the MIC plan.

EpicTO was an excellent opportunity for TPH to test its emergency plans and procedures in a challenging practice environment. The lessons learned from EpicTO will be used to improve the MIC plan and enhance organizational planning for emergencies.





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