

Attachment 1

Toronto Public Health
Year-in-Review

2023



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH



As Chair of the Board of Health, it's with great pride that I share the key activities and achievements by Toronto Public Health in 2023. A year marked by health challenges ranging from transitioning and continuing to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, to urgent community needs concerning shelter, food insecurity, mental health, substance use, addictions, and the overall well-being of our communities. Yet, Toronto Public Health has demonstrated both a swift and nimble response.

Our staff skillfully rose to these challenges addressing both COVID-19 and other public health needs, whilst prioritizing equity and community engagement. As the Board prepares Toronto Public Health's strategic plan for 2024-28, I stand confident in our capacity to build on our successes and enhance the health and well-being of our city even further.

The accomplishments of 2023 wouldn't be possible without the strong support and collaboration of local organisations and community leaders. As we step into 2024, Toronto Public Health and the Board of Health remain dedicated to fostering community involvement, recognizing its crucial role in promoting public health and addressing health inequities.

Together, we can and will build a healthier city.

Chris Moise

Councillor Chris Moise
Chair, Board of Health

MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH



As I reflect on 2023, I am proud of the dedication and accomplishments of the Toronto Public Health team. Our organization has transitioned from a pandemic response model into a new organization well-positioned to meet the public health needs of Toronto residents.

At the start of 2023, on January 25, we recognized the third anniversary of the first COVID-19 case in our city. Public health efforts, both locally and globally, continued to focus on the COVID-19 response throughout the year. At the same time, we published the 2023 Population Health Profile report to understand the health needs of Torontonians as we emerge from the pandemic.

We also responded to urgent public health issues, like the MPOX resurgence, while supporting our City of Toronto colleagues on matters requiring a collective response – wildfire smoke, capacity in emergency shelter and warming centres among many other needs.

Our city continues to grapple with the drug toxicity crisis, demanding our continued leadership, vigilance, and innovative approaches to harm reduction, treatment, and prevention. And I am particularly proud to highlight the launch of the new Our Health, Our City: A Mental Health, Substance Use, Harm Reduction, and Treatment Strategy for Toronto, underscoring our commitment to evidence-based strategies and inclusive approaches to community wellness.

The end of 2023 was met with the winddown of our COVID-19 emergency response and the beginning of a process to establish Toronto Public Health's strategic directions in 2024 and beyond. Together, these mark a new chapter for Toronto Public Health as we look to post-pandemic recovery, aligning our work to best advance the health of Torontonians, address health inequities, and ensure we can effectively respond to disease outbreaks and emergencies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eille". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health

THEME 1: PARTNERSHIPS

Toronto Public Health remains committed to strengthening partnerships.

To support the health and well-being of Torontonians, Toronto Public Health reaffirmed its relationship with community partners and health system colleagues. In addition to regular and ongoing engagement efforts, Toronto Public Health conducted further focused visits with community partners, prioritizing those serving equity deserving neighborhoods and populations including Black communities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, seniors, women, and people with disabilities.

Toronto Public Health played a key role in the [Deputy Mayor’s Mental Health Roundtable](#) in June 2023. This event brought together political, community, emergency response and health leaders from across the city to discuss the pressing challenges that Torontonians face in mental health and addictions. Key findings included the need for ongoing and sustainable funding for shelter services, increased funding for supportive housing, 24/7 mental health and substance use crisis centres, and a provincial coordination protocol for transfer to emergency departments.

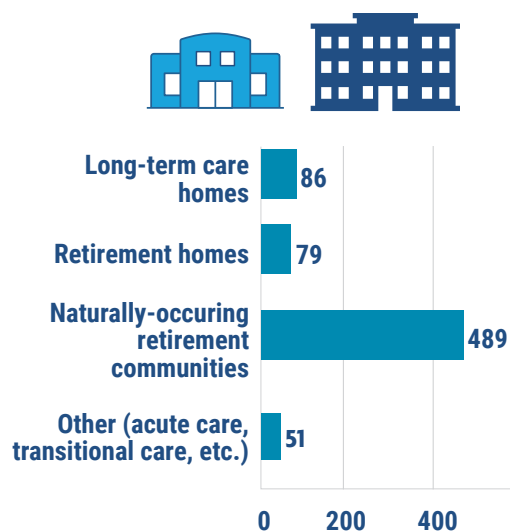
The [Health and Homelessness Working Table](#) was launched and is comprised of experts and people with lived experience. The establishment of the Table demonstrates our commitment to addressing the root causes of health disparities and advancing health equity. The Table’s purpose is to provide recommendations on actions to address key health issues facing homelessness.

Ontario Health Teams

- Central West
- North Western Toronto
- West Toronto
- Mid-West Toronto
- North Toronto
- North York Toronto Health Partners
- Scarborough
- East Toronto Health Partners
- Downtown East Toronto



700+ care settings and communities



THEME 2: HEALTH EQUITY

In 2023, Toronto Public Health advanced initiatives grounded in health equity across Toronto's diverse communities. These include revisiting the [Toronto Indigenous Health Strategy](#), continuing to support the actions outlined in the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan and implementing equity-informed approaches for COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations. In addition, the [Our Health, Our City](#) strategy for Toronto is an example of the City's commitment to advance policies, programs and partnerships in the City of Toronto that reduce inequities, increase access to the social determinants of health to improve mental health and well-being, and reduce the health and social impacts of substance use related harms.

Toronto Public Health also maintained its work to champion evidence-informed programs known to address the social determinants of health. Key among these is Toronto Public Health's student nutrition program, which will ensure more than 225,000 Toronto students have access to nutritious food during the school day in the 2023/2024 school year. In keeping with Toronto Public Health's long-history of advocacy for effective health interventions, in 2023, the Medical Officer of Health and the Board of Health called on the Federal government to fulfill its campaign promise of a National School Food Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more effective public health communication practices that meet community where they are. Building on the lessons learned from COVID-19, during the MPOX outbreak response, in collaboration with community partners, Toronto Public Health developed a multi-channel communications strategy. This included digital and social advertisements, a digital toolkit for 2SLGBTQ+ sexual health and promotion, and tailored communications products to be distributed at community events. During the MPOX resurgence, the availability of these new approaches allowed for a more proactive communications approach and response.

Social determinants of health: Student Nutrition



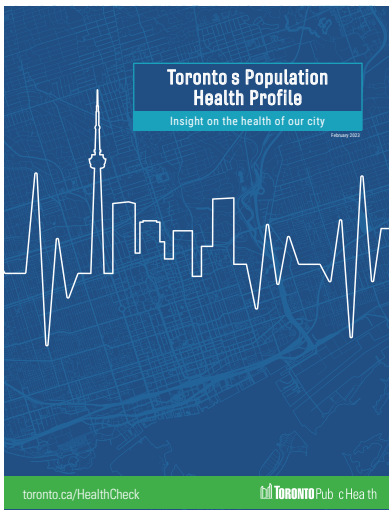
ensures more than
225,000

Toronto students have access to nutritious food during the school day in 2023/2024.



In 2023, the Medical Officer of Health and the Board of Health called on the Federal Government to fulfill its campaign promise of a [National School Food Program](#).

THEME 3: LEVERAGING DATA



Toronto Public Health released [Toronto's Population Health Profile \(TPHP\)](#). This report not only fulfilled our mandate under the Ontario Public Health Standards, but also provided critical insights into local health trends. The TPHP guides Toronto Public Health's efforts to address emerging health needs. The report is also used broadly by stakeholders and partners in understanding the health of the populations and sub-populations of Toronto.

Toronto Public Health integrated wastewater surveillance into its interactive respiratory illness surveillance dashboards. These new data points enhanced early detection of infectious disease circulation in the population, enabling a more proactive deployment of response measures.

Toronto's Population Health Profile: Population Growth



Toronto's population increased by 2.3% between 2016 and 2021. By 2031, Toronto's population is expected to exceed 3.4 million people.

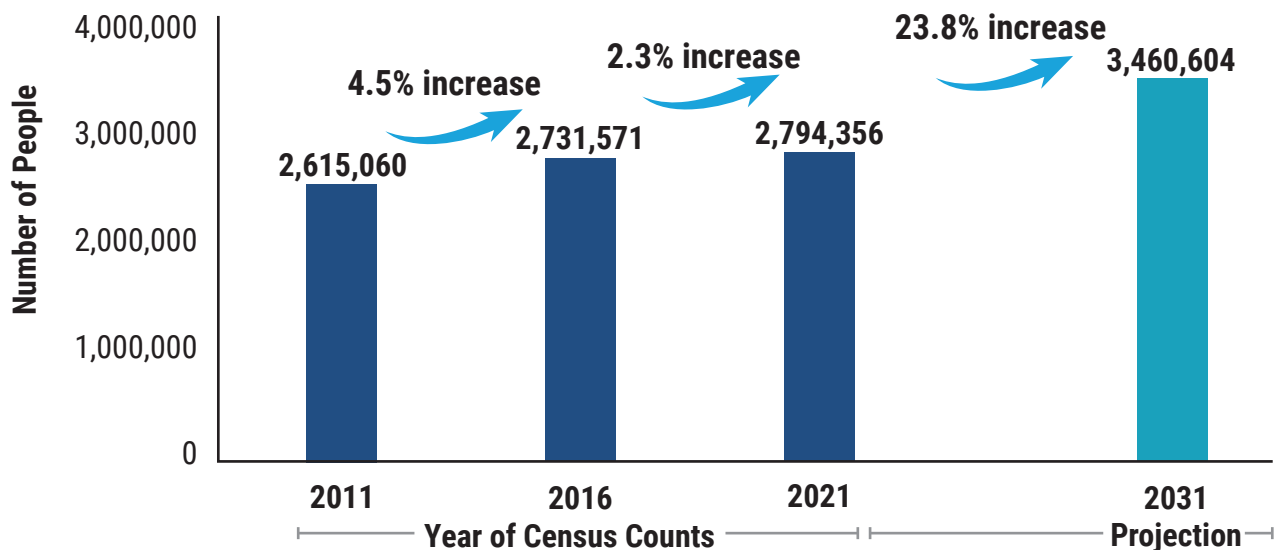


Figure 1: Population Growth, Toronto, 2011, 2016, 2021, and 2031

Data sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011, 2016, 2021
 Population Projections 2031, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHealth Ontario,
 Date Extracted: October 17, 2022.

THEME 4: HEALTH PROGRAMS

The end of the emergency response to COVID-19 marked a pivotal moment for Toronto Public Health. Throughout 2023, Toronto Public Health focused on restarting and strengthening non-COVID-19/pre-COVID public health programs and services.

Initiatives contained in the '[Healthy Summer](#)' report and the '[Fight the Flu & COVID-19](#)' campaign underscored Toronto Public Health's efforts to promote wellness and foster healthy communities and Torontonians. Toronto Public Health also prioritized understanding the [pandemic impacts on children and youth](#), as well as taking action to support the health needs of this population in 2023. Similarly, progress was made in responding to historic levels of wildfire smoke, including coordinating with our City colleagues on the development of a [Wildfire Smoke Response Strategy](#).

32,500+ inspection locations



- ✓ 17,000+ food premises
- ✓ 1,400+ special events (food)
- ✓ 1,200+ indoor pools and spas
- ✓ 700+ outdoor water facilities
- ✓ 1,800+ tobacco vendors
- ✓ 4,400+ personal service settings

Promoting the health and mental well-being of youth and students in schools was a significant area of focus. Vaccination, one of the most effective public health interventions, was also a primary focus and tremendous effort was put into the catch-up for student immunization. Notable gains in vaccination coverage were made for the 2023/2024 school year. In the 2023/24 school year, Toronto Public Health assessed records under the Immunization for School Pupils Act (ISPA) from three school boards among students born in 2006 and 2016.

Other areas of focus included:



Food premises inspections: Nearly 32,000 food premises and special events inspections took place in 2023. These inspections help to ensure food safety, which in turn, prevents foodborne illnesses, reduces contamination risks, and facilitates early outbreak detection.



Swimming pool inspections: As required under the Ontario Public Health Standards, swimming pool and spa inspections were fully re-instated. Inspections are essential in reducing the risk of drowning incidents, preventing waterborne illnesses, promoting proper hygiene practices, and ultimately safeguarding the health and well-being of those who use these recreational facilities.



Dental and oral health services: More than 1,100 first-time clients to Toronto Public Health's dental services and nearly 1,200 emergency dental appointments were provided. Dental services prevent and manage oral diseases such as cavities, gum disease, and oral cancers, which not only improve overall oral health but also contribute to better systemic health, reducing the risk of complications related to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and adverse pregnancy outcomes, while also promoting better nutrition, speech, mental health, and quality of life.

WHAT'S NEXT?

**HELP
SHAPE
TORONTO
PUBLIC HEALTH'S
STRATEGIC
PLAN!**

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FEEDBACK

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A new [Strategic Plan](#) is in development, led by the Board of Health.

Engagement with the provincial Ministry of Health on measures to strengthen local public health continues, including advocating for sustainable funding and policy initiatives that prioritize the health of all Torontonians.

Toronto Public Health remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering evidence-informed programs, services and actions to best support and advance the health of Toronto's diverse and vibrant communities. Together with community partners and health system colleagues, Toronto Public Health continues to make progress on building a healthy and resilient city for all who live, work, and play in Toronto.

