

Toronto Public Health 2024 Risk Management Report

Date: June 20, 2024

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides the Board of Health with an update on the risk management reporting that is part of the Ontario Public Health Standards Accountability Framework. It outlines risks and challenges facing Toronto Public Health in 2024, which include talent availability, resource capacity to address evolving and emerging public health issues, and challenges securing public support and adherence to public health advice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 17, 2023, the Board of Health received its annual report about Risk Management as required by the Ontario Public Health Accountability Framework. [Toronto Public Health 2023 Risk Management Report](#)

COMMENTS

The Ministry of Health's Public Health Accountability Framework, which came into effect in January 2018, outlines the requirements to which Boards of Health are held accountable. One requirement is for public health units to have a formal risk management framework. To satisfy this requirement and keep the Board of Health informed, Toronto Public Health submits a risk management report to the Board of Health annually.

Toronto Public Health's risk management framework is based on the Ministry of Health's risk prioritization matrix of impact and likelihood (Table 1). High risks are considered those with a score of 15 or higher, medium risks those with a score of 10 to 14, and low risks those with a score of 9 or lower. A risk score is calculated by multiplying the potential impact values with the likelihood of occurrence.

Table 1: Ministry of Health Risk Matrix

Potential Impact	Threatens the success of the objective (5)	5	10	15	20	25
	Substantial impact on time, cost or quality (4)	4	8	12	16	20
	Notable impact on time, cost or quality (3)	3	6	9	12	15
	Minor impact on time, cost or quality (2)	2	4	6	8	10
	Negligible impact (1)	1	2	3	4	5
		Unlikely to occur (1)	May occur occasionally (2)	Is as likely to occur as not to occur (3)	Is likely to occur (4)	Is almost certain to occur (5)
Likelihood of Occurrence						

For 2024, three significant organizational risks have been identified based on the likelihood of occurrence and potential impact on Toronto Public Health's ability to meet its goals of improving the population's health, reducing health inequities, and preparing for and responding to health emergencies.

1. Talent Availability

This is a people/human resources risk with a score of 16: 4 impact and 4 likelihood. Talent availability was also identified as a risk in both 2022 and 2023.

Toronto Public Health's most valuable resource is the talent that is attracted and retained across the organization. Toronto Public Health, like many organizations, is experiencing an increase in retirements and, at the same time, staff are exiting for other employment opportunities. The departure of staff also reflects:

- employee fatigue, given the extreme demands placed on staff throughout the pandemic;
- increased demands on employees due to emergency issues such as infectious disease outbreaks, the worsening opioid epidemic, and new emerging issues (for example, those related to climate change such as air quality and extreme heat);
- remote work providing new employment opportunities beyond traditional geographic boundaries; and
- the availability of more lucrative opportunities in other organizations and sectors.

At the same time, there is a significant talent shortage in some of our most competitive positions to fill. These developments not only impact the attraction and retention of talent, but it also contributes to a loss of organizational history and knowledge.

Over the past year, Toronto Public Health has taken action to address this risk. For example, the leadership development initiative has been expanded and includes the Leadership Foundations and Bi-Monthly Leadership Talks programs. In addition, the medical resident program was re-launched in 2023 with nine medical residents; plans are in place to increase the number of these opportunities for both medical residents and students. Last, Toronto Public Health continues to dedicate resources to the employee Wellness Program to grow the program through increased communications, wellness events, and People Leader tools.

Due, in part, to these actions, the risk score for talent availability has decreased from 20 in 2023 to 16 in 2024.

Additional strategies to further support mitigating this risk include: succession planning initiatives; employee development and training; employee wellness program; new recruitment strategies; and partnerships with educational institutions for cross-developmental opportunities.

2. Resource Capacity to Address Evolving and Emerging Public Health Issues

This is an operational/service delivery risk with a score of 12: 4 impact and 3 likelihood.

Toronto Public Health's primary focus from 2020 through to 2023 was responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the planning and execution of an effective vaccination campaign. During the pandemic, Toronto Public Health also dealt with several emerging issues, including outbreaks of mpox and invasive meningococcal disease, and a

worsening opioid crisis. The resource capacity needed to address the pandemic and other emerging issues challenged Toronto Public Health's ability to properly address non-pandemic and/or non-outbreak public health issues.

As Toronto Public Health began to emerge from the COVID-19 response, there was an opportunity to resume and broaden non-COVID-19-related functions. These functions include resuming routine public health programs that had been paused or scaled down during the pandemic. Toronto Public Health staff are working to address the backlog of health promotion and protection activities, while also adapting to meet the changing needs of the population.

Constraints on available resources still exist, along with a fatigued workforce, which increases the likelihood that Toronto Public Health may not have the capacity to identify and address evolving and emerging public health issues in as timely and comprehensive manner as desired.

Strategies to mitigate this risk include: Adjust staffing levels of the public health routine programs and services based on priority; enhance relationships with provincial, national and international jurisdictions for the surveillance of communicable diseases; partner with educational institutions and/or other organizations within the health care sector; and leverage the new organizational structure to address complex issues.

3. Challenges Securing Public Support and Adherence to Public Health Advice

This is a stakeholder/public perception risk with a score of 12: 3 impact and 4 likelihood.

Misinformation, disinformation, continued COVID-19 fatigue and increasing frustration and disagreement with public health protective measures implemented during the pandemic may result in individuals not following public health advice and makes it more challenging to meaningfully engage with certain populations. Decreased uptake of vaccines and an increase in vaccine hesitancy are both matters of concern.

Strategies to mitigate this risk include: Monitor the public's expressions of concerns and address them through strategic communications and media; position Toronto Public Health as a trusted and reliable source of information; ensure the toronto.ca website has valuable, reliable and accurate information with a focus on inclusivity and accessibility; collaborating and partnering with trusted community leaders and organizations; and continuing to promote vaccinations and develop and deploy evidence-based interventions and programs.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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