

## **2024: A Year-in-Review of Toronto Public Health**

**Date:** January 17, 2024

**To:** Board of Health

**From:** Medical Officer of Health

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides an overview of Toronto Public Health's accomplishments and achievements in 2024. The provision of a year-end annual report is a requirement in the [Ontario Public Health Standards, 2021](#), as set by the Ontario Minister of Health.

This past year, Toronto Public Health entered a new chapter, emerging as a post-pandemic organization with a renewed commitment to adapting and improving to best serve the diverse needs of our city. Some highlights of achievements in 2024 include:

- Creating Toronto Public Health's Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028;
- Providing vaccination to more than 42,000 children and youth, continuing to close the gap in vaccination rates that developed over the pandemic;
- Launching online vaping prevention resources, an Integrated Respiratory Diseases Dashboard, and a refreshed Population Health Status Indicators Dashboard;
- Hosting the Hastings Lecture Series event, Diverse Dialogues: Stigma and Breaking Barriers;
- Establishing the Indigenous Wellness Committee in partnership with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council; and
- Enhancing partnerships with City divisions and the community, including to recommend a maximum indoor temperature for tenants, and to expand breastfeeding services.

Looking to 2025, Toronto Public Health will continue to advance our strategic priorities, protecting and promoting the health of the more than three million residents of Toronto.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

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

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

## DECISION HISTORY

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In March 2024, The Board of Health adopted HL11.1 2023: A Year-in-Review of Toronto Public Health. The report provided an overview of Toronto Public Health's main accomplishments and programs provided to residents during 2023.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.HL11.1>

## COMMENTS

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This past year, Toronto Public Health (TPH) entered a new chapter, emerging as a post-pandemic organization with a renewed commitment to adapting and improving to best serve the diverse needs of our city.

In July 2024, The Board of Health adopted the Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan 2024-2028. The Strategic Plan will serve as a guide for Toronto Public Health over the next four years as we navigate five priorities:

1. Strengthen health protection, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness.
2. Promote health and well-being across the lifespan.
3. Promote the conditions to support positive mental health and reduce the harms of substance use.
4. Advocate to advance health equity.
5. Nurture a positive workplace culture.

Toronto Public Health's initiatives over the year 2024 align with these five priorities, as we worked toward creating a city where all people can be healthy and thrive.

### **Priority 1: Strengthen health protection, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness.**

Each day, TPH protects the health of Torontonians through interventions, such as ensuring the safety of drinking water and food, and protection and prevention against communicable and chronic diseases and environmental health hazards.

In 2024, TPH vaccinated more than 42,000 children and youth for School Immunization Program and Immunization of School Pupils Act vaccines, continuing to close the gap in vaccination rates that developed over the pandemic. TPH also provided more than 155,000 oral health screenings for students across Toronto.

In 2024, TPH completed over 28,600 food premises inspections and reviewed 4,446 food vendor applications for special events, ensuring residents can gather, celebrate,

and enjoy their favourite restaurants safely. TPH also conducted inspections of all tobacco and vapour product retailers in Toronto, including the use of youth test shoppers to measure compliance with laws prohibiting sales to minors.

Some other health protection and disease prevention highlights from 2024 include:

- **Vaping Resources:** launched new online vaping prevention resources to provide parents, caregivers, educators and youth with resources on the harms associated with vaping and tools to support reduction and quitting.
- **Integrated Respiratory Diseases Dashboard:** launched a revised [Integrated Respiratory Diseases Dashboard](#) (IRDD), as part of respiratory season preparedness to track influenza, COVID-19, RSV, and other respiratory infections.
- **Wildfire Smoke Strategy:** updated [TPH's protocol](#) for responding to deteriorations in air quality due to wildfire smoke.

### Spotlight on Partnerships

- TPH partnered with the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance, community health care providers, and other agencies to promote awareness about mpox, ways to prevent infection, and vaccination, and has continued to work in partnership as the outbreak has evolved and demands on resources changed.
- TPH worked in partnership with the Municipal Licensing and Standards and Environment & Climate Divisions to recommend to City Council a [maximum indoor temperature](#) of 26 degrees Celsius for leased residential premises in Toronto.

## Priority 2: Promote health and well-being across the lifespan.

Toronto Public Health works to ensure that people of all ages can live healthy lives, from optimizing health for children and youth, to promoting age-friendly communities for older adults.

In May 2024, TPH submitted [Healthy Aging in Toronto](#), a report to the Board of Health, with recommendations to work with partners to advance a city that is age-friendly, age-inclusive, and age-equitable for its older adults. Key initiatives include research projects and partnerships such as EMBOLDEN, 8 80 Cities, and Women's Age Lab to support a healthier social, natural, and built environment through community-focused strategies.

Over the 2023/24 school year, the TPH School Health Team implemented the Into Kids Health initiative with 14 Toronto District School Board schools in equity-deserving communities. This initiative resulted in revitalized outdoor spaces and play equipment, prioritized child, and youth mental health by creating safe, welcoming spaces, and strengthened partnerships with local organizations. Building on this success, TPH is expanding the Into Kids Health initiative to the 2024/25 school year to further support student well-being and community engagement.

As a member of Student Nutrition Ontario -Toronto, TPH supports Toronto's student nutrition programs, ensuring that children that children and youth have access to safe, adequate, and culturally appropriate nutritious food. For the 2024/25 school year,

student nutrition programs, run locally by parents, volunteers, and students, provide healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack options to over 235,000 students each school day.

### **Spotlight on Partnerships**

- Toronto Public Health partnered with Toronto Seniors Services and Long-Term Care to launch a new free mobile dental program for seniors, screening over 400 long-term care residents at Kipling Acres, Castlevue Wychwood Towers, Bendale Acres, True Davidson Acres, Lakeshore Lodge and Fudger House.
- Toronto Public Health Reproductive & Early Years team has expanded access to breastfeeding services across Toronto, including evening hours, increased service days, and a new partnership with TAIBU Community Health Centre in Scarborough to better support priority populations.

### **Priority 3: Promote the conditions to support positive mental health and reduce the harms of substance use.**

Toronto Public Health continues to advance policies, programs, and partnerships that aim to improve mental health and well-being and reduce the health and social impacts of substance use related harms along the entire continuum, including prevention, harm reduction, and treatment.

In 2024, TPH staff at TPH's The Works:

- supported over 17,200 client visits to the supervised consumption site,
- responded to over 650 overdoses,
- issued four drug alerts about potentially toxic drugs in circulation,
- collected and safely disposed of over 358,480 needles, and
- provided over 7,730 client referrals to other health and social services.

In September 2024, the Our Health, Our City Strategy Implementation Panel was established, which provides advice on the implementation of the city-wide five-year strategy. The Implementation Panel held their first meeting in October 2024. A one-year progress update on the strategy was presented to the Board of Health in November 2024, highlighting actions taken throughout the year to improve the mental health, well-being, and safety of all residents.

TPH also monitors, reviews, and provides comment on potential federal and provincial policy changes related to mental health and substance use. For example, over the past year, TPH made over 14 recommendations to reduce the harms associated with tobacco and vaping products in response to Health Canada's requests for feedback on the Federal Tobacco and Vaping Products Act (TVPA), including:

- Increasing taxation to match the burden of illness;
- Prohibiting flavours across all products;
- Restricting vaping and smoking in online gaming and social media;
- Adding federal penalties for retailers selling vaping products to minors; and
- Implementing cost recovery charges for tobacco and vaping manufacturers.

### Spotlight on Partnerships

- Toronto Public Health worked collaboratively with Toronto Shelter Support Services to develop recommendations, that were informed by clients and staff, to expand substance use and overdose prevention programming at temporary shelter hotel locations. These recommendations were included in the [Shelter Safety Action Plan](#) staff report, presented to City Council in December 2024.
- In June 2024, TPH and Toronto Police Service announced the Downtown Community Outreach Response and Engagement (CORE) Team, a one-year pilot which aims to address the complex health, mental health, substance use and housing needs of vulnerable individuals. Led by a specialized team of public health nurses and supported by a nurse practitioner, the program will provide short-term case management, health and social service referrals, as well as overdose and substance use responses.

### Priority 4: Advocate to advance health equity.

In 2024, TPH advanced initiatives grounded in health equity across Toronto's diverse communities.

Following consultation with round tables with Indigenous service providers in October 2023, the Indigenous Wellness Committee was established through partnership between Toronto Public Health and the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council in April 2024. Guided by Indigenous frameworks and an Indigenous facilitator, the committee has held seven meetings, working towards co-development of an Indigenous Wellness Action Plan with a focus on mental health and substance use. TPH continues to engage all Indigenous service providers to ensure broad contributions to this plan.

In August 2024, TPH launched a refreshed [Population Health Status Indicator Dashboard](#) that provides accessible, subpopulation-specific data that can be used by community partners and others as needed. Analyzing data by geography and socio-demographic characteristics can help to identify, monitor, and respond to health inequities.

### Spotlight on Partnerships

- Launched in March 2024, the TPH Ontario Health Team (OHT) Engagement Initiative fostered and enhanced relationships between TPH and nine OHTs across Toronto, with the goal of enhanced public health outcomes and reduced health inequities. As part of the initiative, providers from across health and community sectors work together to optimize resources.
- TPH supported the development of the [Access Plan for Two-Spirit, Trans & Non-Binary Youth](#), in partnership with the 2SLGBTQ Advisory Committee, other City of Toronto Divisions, and communities. Launched in October 2024, this is the City's first coordinated initiative to improve health and social outcomes for gender-diverse youth in Toronto.

## **Priority 5: Nurture a positive workplace culture.**

As an organization, TPH is committed to investing in our people and enhancing our workplace. Over the course of 2024, TPH implemented several initiatives to advance a positive workplace culture, one that fosters staff and people leader engagement in innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning and improvement.

In May 2024, TPH hosted its first public event since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hastings Lecture Series, *Diverse Dialogues: Stigma & Breaking Barriers*. Held at the University of Toronto's Isabel Bader Theatre, the event featured talks by Dr. James Makokis, Dr. Notisha Massaquoi, and Michel Rodrigue and a panel discussion hosted by Dr. Eileen de Villa on stigma and its impact on health and health decisions.

Several professional development and wellness initiatives were provided for TPH staff and leaders over 2024. These included leadership training and bi-monthly leadership talks for managers, and Canadian Red Cross Psychological First Aid training and certification for staff.

## **Next Steps**

As we move into 2025, TPH will continue to advance our strategic priorities and actions. This includes work on a climate change surveillance framework, updating our noise action plan, continuing to implement the *Our Health, Our City Strategy*, and implementing process improvements such as a new inspection management system. As the largest public health agency in Canada, we remain committed to advancing the health and well-being of all Torontonians.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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