

Toronto Public Health's Preparation for FIFA World Cup 2026

Date: October 10, 2025

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto is scheduled to host six FIFA World Cup 2026 (FWC26) matches from June 11 to July 2, 2026. Several fan events, including the FIFA Fan Festival Toronto at Fort York and The Bentway, will also be operating until July 19, 2026. Many visitors will be international travellers attending matches at the Toronto Stadium (known as BMO Field outside of the games period) and participating in gatherings and events held across the city.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) is playing a supportive role in the City's coordinated planning for the FWC26. The scale of FWC26 and the associated fan events presents significant public health challenges, including risks of communicable diseases (including sexually transmitted infections), substance misuse, and environmental hazards such as extreme heat and air quality deterioration caused by wildfire smoke. Planning efforts are guided by hazard identification and risk assessments (HIRAs) and are aligned with provincial standards. TPH is drawing on lessons learned from previous mass gatherings, including the 2015 Toronto Pan/Parapan American Games, to inform its approach and strengthen its response capabilities.

TPH has begun to develop a comprehensive FWC26 operational plan that includes emergency management protocols, enhanced surveillance, and targeted health promotion initiatives. The plan is based on the findings from the HIRA process, and it also includes the activation of an Incident Management Team, coordination with City and FWC26 Emergency Operations Centres, and the development of e-learning modules for staff. Food safety is a key focus, with the launch of a new food safety portal for vendors and organizers to streamline oversight and reduce administrative burden. TPH is also expanding staffing and overtime capacity to meet increased service demands.

TPH will continue to refine its strategies as more details about participating countries become available to support a safe and healthy FWC26 experience for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health direct the Medical Officer of Health to continue to participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026 planning and identify opportunities to enhance Toronto Public Health's programming to support the games.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Expenditures required for Toronto Public Health (TPH) to support the FIFA World Cup 2026 will be absorbed within TPH's base budget and is included in the 2026 Operating Budget submission for TPH.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed the report and agrees with the financial impact information in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

In June 2022, City Council adopted EX34.8 - Hosting FIFA World Cup 2026 and authorized the City Manager to create the FIFA World Cup Secretariat.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EX34.8>

In April 2022, City Council adopted EX31.3 - Toronto's Bid to Participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026 and directed the Mayor and the City Manager to accept the nomination of Toronto as a 2026 Host City should it be awarded by FIFA and to enter into associated agreements.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agendaitem.do?item=2022.EX31.3>

COMMENTS

Governance, Planning and Partnerships

The FIFA World Cup 2026 (FWC26) Toronto Secretariat serves as the central coordinating body for all City-led initiatives related to the games. Within this Secretariat, the Toronto Leadership Table plays a critical role in ensuring that City's priorities, stakeholder interests, and legacy goals are integrated into the planning process. TPH is a member of this table and contributes to broader health system planning efforts through the Integrated Health and Medical Planning Table (IHMPT), a subgroup of the Toronto Integrated Safety & Security Unit (T.ISSU). The IHMPT is responsible for public health and health sector readiness and relevant plans including conducting a hazard identification and risk assessments (HIRA).

TPH also participates in the FWC26 Emergency Preparedness Working Group, led by Toronto Emergency Management, and the FWC26 Communications Working Group, led by Toronto Police. These groups are developing comprehensive emergency preparedness and communication strategies to support the games. TPH's involvement ensures that public health considerations are embedded in all aspects of planning and response.

TPH has established a dedicated FWC26 Steering Committee and Working Group to oversee planning and coordination. These efforts are aligned with the Ontario Public Health Standards and legal agreements associated with the games, including multi-party and host city agreements. FWC26 planning is informed by hazard identification, risk assessments, best practices, utilization of existing emergency plans, and lessons learned from previous events.

TPH's FWC26 operational plan will be integrated with broader emergency preparedness plans developed by Toronto Emergency Management and the IHMPT. TPH has already participated in onsite risk assessments at key venues, including Toronto Stadium (BMO Field), Fort York (the host of FIFA Fan Festival Toronto), Downsview Park, and Centennial Park. TPH contributed to the IHMPT risk assessment including leading the communicable disease section and supporting other key public health risks such as extreme heat and air quality which were led by other community partners.

Through its participation in the IHMPT, TPH is contributing to health and medical planning efforts that ensure access to health services for spectators and event personnel, maintain continuity of care for Ontarians, and safeguard public health. The IHMPT is also preparing for potential emergencies or disruptions, with a focus on mitigating health risks and minimizing health system impacts during the competition period.

Public Health Risks of Mass Gatherings

Mass gatherings present a range of public health risks. The close contact among individuals from diverse regions increases the potential for disease transmission, including the importation of rare diseases not typically found in Canada. In addition to communicable diseases, mass gatherings may lead to increased rates of sexually transmitted infections and substance misuse. Since FWC26 will be held outdoors during the summertime, environmental health risks are also a concern. Outdoor events during the summer months may be impacted by extreme heat and air quality deterioration caused by wildfire smoke.

As part of its strategic priority to strengthen health protection, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness, TPH adheres to the Ministry of Health's Emergency Management Guideline under the Ontario Public Health Standards. The FWC26 games pose specific risks to Toronto, as identified through a HIRA and will result in a period of increased service demand. Each of these identified hazards will need a surveillance and mitigation plan.

Toronto Public Health is leveraging lessons learned from previous mass gatherings, including the 2015 Toronto Pan/Parapan American Games and past FIFA events in

Canada and elsewhere, to inform its planning and risk mitigation strategies. TPH is working with Public Health Ontario (PHO) and Sunnybrook Hospital on identifying risks through a HIRA framework. In addition, TPH is consulting with Vancouver Coastal Health and the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control to learn lessons from hosting the Olympics, the 2021 heat dome event, and wildfire smoke air quality mitigation programming. TPH is also coordinating with Vancouver Coastal Health as they are the other Canadian host city for FW26.

TPH Enhanced Programming for the Games

Emergency Planning

TPH is enhancing its emergency preparedness through the development of a FWC26 Operational Plan. This plan includes the activation of an Incident Management Team during the games, coordination with inter-agency Emergency Operations Centres, updates to business continuity plans, and the development of emergency management e-learning modules for staff.

Food Safety

Large-scale events have historically been associated with foodborne illness outbreaks. During FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, over 2,000 individuals sought care for gastrointestinal illness. In Toronto's 2015 Pan/Parapan Games, clusters of gastrointestinal illness were reported, although no common food exposure was identified.¹

To further mitigate food safety risks, TPH is launching a food safety portal for vendors and organizers to streamline notifications to operators and keep an accurate list of ingredients and food suppliers. Once an inspection is completed at a food premises, TPH can document their menu items and other characteristics for easy recall and communications. This portal will enhance the effectiveness of TPH's Food Safety Program, reduce administrative burden, and enable public health inspectors to engage with vendors more efficiently. The portal is a significant achievement for TPH and, as a FWC26 legacy, will support food safety at the growing number of special events in the city.

TPH is also planning to enhance staffing capabilities during the FWC26 period and implement after-hours and overtime protocols to support increased demand. These measures will ensure that TPH can maintain high standards of food safety and public health protection throughout the games including overlapping events like Pride Toronto, Taste of Italy, and other large summer events.

¹ Chan, E., Hohenadel, K., Lee, B., Helferty, M., Harris, J. R., Macdonald, L., & Badiani, T. (2017). Public health surveillance for the Toronto 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. Canada communicable disease report = Relevé des maladies transmissibles au Canada, 43(7), 156–163. <https://doi.org/10.14745/ccdr.v43i78a04>

Surveillance

Public health surveillance is the ongoing collection of health-related information used to monitor trends and identify potential threats to the city of Toronto. Surveillance is a routine and core function within TPH. During FWC26, TPH will enter into enhanced surveillance to monitor health impacts from communicable diseases, extreme heat, air quality deterioration from wildfire smoke, substance use/misuse, and injuries on visitors and residents during the games period.

TPH is also working with lab partners to develop a facility-based wastewater testing program for specific health targets during the games to further enhance surveillance information for high-impact infectious diseases that have the potential to cause outbreaks. This will be focused on the Stadium and fan zone areas.

TPH will share the information collected through the enhanced surveillance period with partners (internal and other public health partners) for situational awareness and public health action, as needed.

Environmental Health

In summer 2025, Toronto experienced 22 days under a heat warning and five days under a Special Air Quality Statement due to wildfire smoke. TPH will amplify its health protective messaging related to heat-health to event attendees and will collaborate with Toronto Water and Toronto Paramedic Services to provide access to cooling infrastructure like misting stations and water trucks around FWC26 events. In the event of a deterioration of air quality, TPH will work with FWC26 organizers to provide guidance to event attendees and activate its Wildfire Smoke Response Plan.

TPH is working to promote sun safety during FWC26 by building upon the BeSunSafe skin cancer prevention program, which has provided sunscreen, shade, and awareness in partnership with Parks and Recreation, David Cornfield Melanoma Fund, and Douglas Wright Foundation since 2017. The existing Heat Relief Network sites near FIFA Fan Festival Toronto and the Toronto Stadium are being examined to determine how they can be a resource for the event attendees.

Sexual Health

In Toronto, Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBIs) such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis are among the most reported communicable diseases. In 2024, STBBIs accounted for approximately 64% of all diseases of public health significance reported to TPH, including over 14,000 cases of chlamydia and 7,000 cases of gonorrhea. Increased case numbers are frequently associated with mass gathering events. TPH is planning targeted interventions, including public health education campaigns, and coupling health education with the distribution of safer sex supplies including branded external condoms, non-branded insertive (female) condoms, dams, and lubricant.

Respiratory Infections

In Canada, respiratory season occurs every winter and includes a surge in common respiratory diseases such as influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), COVID-19 and rhinovirus. Toronto typically experiences lower levels of respiratory viruses during the spring and summer months. While FWC26 will occur during an anticipated lower activity period for respiratory viruses, TPH will monitor wastewater trends through [Public Health Agency of Canada's wastewater testing program](#). If an increase in respiratory virus activity is detected, TPH will promote messages aimed at reducing infection risk.

As of September 23, 2025, there is an ongoing measles outbreak in Ontario with a total of 2,375 cases reported in 2025. To date, the majority of cases have occurred in the southwestern and northeastern regions of Ontario. Since the outbreak started in late 2024, Toronto has only experienced a few cases of measles. TPH will continue promoting measles messaging and vaccination through its programming and collaborating with health care providers to promote vaccination.

Next Steps

TPH will continue to participate in FWC26 planning and preparedness by enhancing program areas anticipated to be impacted by the games and collaborating with the City of Toronto FWC26 working group and the IHMPT. The countries competing in Toronto will be announced in December 2025, after which TPH will refine its planning and risk assessments to address health risks specific to incoming fans.

TPH is committed to leveraging this opportunity to enhance public health initiatives, engage residents, celebrate diversity, and build lasting partnerships. At the same time, TPH will manage risks and ensure the continuity of critical services for Toronto residents, particularly vulnerable populations.

Toronto Public Health Strategic Impact

TPH's preparation for FWC26 supports priorities outlined in TPH Strategic Plan 2024-2028, specifically:

- #1 Strengthen health protection, disease prevention and emergency preparedness.
 - (a) Prepare for and respond to outbreaks and public health emergencies informed by best evidence and lessons learned from previous responses.
 - (b) Enhance emergency preparedness and response infrastructure.
 - (c) Effectively communicate with the public about how they can protect their health.

CONTACT

Dr. Michael Finkelstein, Deputy Medical Officer of Health, Toronto Public Health, 416-392-7405, Michael.Finkelstein@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Dr. Michelle Murti
Medical Officer of Health