



Toronto Public Health's **STRATEGIC PLAN** 2024-2028



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

We are pleased to present Toronto Public Health's Strategic Plan 2024-2028, which serves as a blueprint for our key priorities, ensuring continued delivery of impactful interventions to Toronto's diverse population of over three million residents.

At the highest level, we envision a city where all people can be healthy and thrive. Toronto Public Health is committed to moving this vision forward by protecting and improving health at a population level while reducing health inequities. **We are extremely grateful to Toronto Public Health staff, members of the Board of Health, and all of our partners for their dedication to advancing public health in Toronto.**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health professionals worked tirelessly. The pandemic highlighted the importance of public health in protecting and promoting health and well-being. We have all learned lessons from the pandemic. For Toronto Public Health, these lessons are informing our daily work and help us to prepare for future emergencies.

Over the next four years, Toronto Public Health will be guided by the values and priorities outlined in this Strategic Plan, alongside the legislative framework for public health in Ontario described in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Ontario Public Health Standards*.

We are grateful to all members of the Board of Health – Strategic Plan Development Committee for their leadership in the development of the Strategic Plan. We would also like to thank partners, community members and Toronto Public Health staff who contributed to the public engagement process and shared valuable insights. This input, alongside population health data and best practices in other jurisdictions, helped to shape this plan.

The Board of Health and Toronto Public Health look forward to continuing to advance the health and well-being of Torontonians through the implementation of this Strategic Plan.



Councillor Chris Moise
Chair of Board of Health



Councillor Alejandra Bravo
Vice Chair of Board of Health,
Chair of Board of Health -
Strategic Plan Development
Committee



Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The City also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.





**Public health
helped save your
life today, you just
didn't know
it.**

INTRODUCTION

We have all heard the expression “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” but often, we find ourselves responding to problems rather than addressing them at their source. While the health care system works “downstream” curing and caring for individuals, public health is focused “upstream,” preventing diseases from starting in the first place. Public health recognizes that many health problems – chronic diseases, mental health and substance use issues, challenges of child growth and development, and even many aspects of communicable disease control – will never be solved one person at a time. Think of it this way: a doctor usually treats one patient at a time, but in public health, our patient is the entire population of the City of Toronto.

Public health works by understanding the causes of ill health and taking action against them. Population health interventions aim to modify the underlying factors – the determinants of health – which include social, economic, and physical environments. These factors can impact health at the population level. However, because responsibility for collective action often lies across various sectors, public health works collaboratively and through advocacy to improve the environments that shape our health.

Public health seeks to maximize health status – in simple terms, helping people to be as healthy as possible. This includes a range of interventions from preventing the spread of disease (e.g., food or vector-borne illness or sexual health), promoting healthy living (e.g., diet and physical activity), and advocating for conditions that improve health for residents (e.g., clean air, green space).

Public health achieves its goals by measuring and understanding the health issues impacting the population and their causes, prioritizing interventions within its scope and resource constraints, and taking action at the population level where efforts are most effective. Toronto Public Health’s Strategic Plan 2024-2028 provides a blueprint to guide our work over the next four years.



VISION:

A city where all people can be healthy and thrive.

MISSION:

Toronto Public Health protects and improves health at a population level while reducing health inequities.

VALUES:

- Accountable and transparent
- Community engaged and connected
- Equitable and inclusive
- Credible and evidence-informed
- Innovative leadership

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.

PRIORITY 1



Strengthen health protection, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness.

Each day, Toronto Public Health protects the health of Torontonians through interventions, such as ensuring the safety of drinking water and food. At the same time, we take the lessons learned from previous emergencies, like the COVID-19 pandemic, to prepare for the infectious diseases that will emerge in the future. Public health also prepares for other pressing public health issues, such as climate change. In this context, a priority for Toronto Public Health is to strengthen health protection, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness through the following objectives:

Objectives

- 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.
- d. Monitor and prepare for climate change and collaborate with partners to address its impacts.



PRIORITY 2

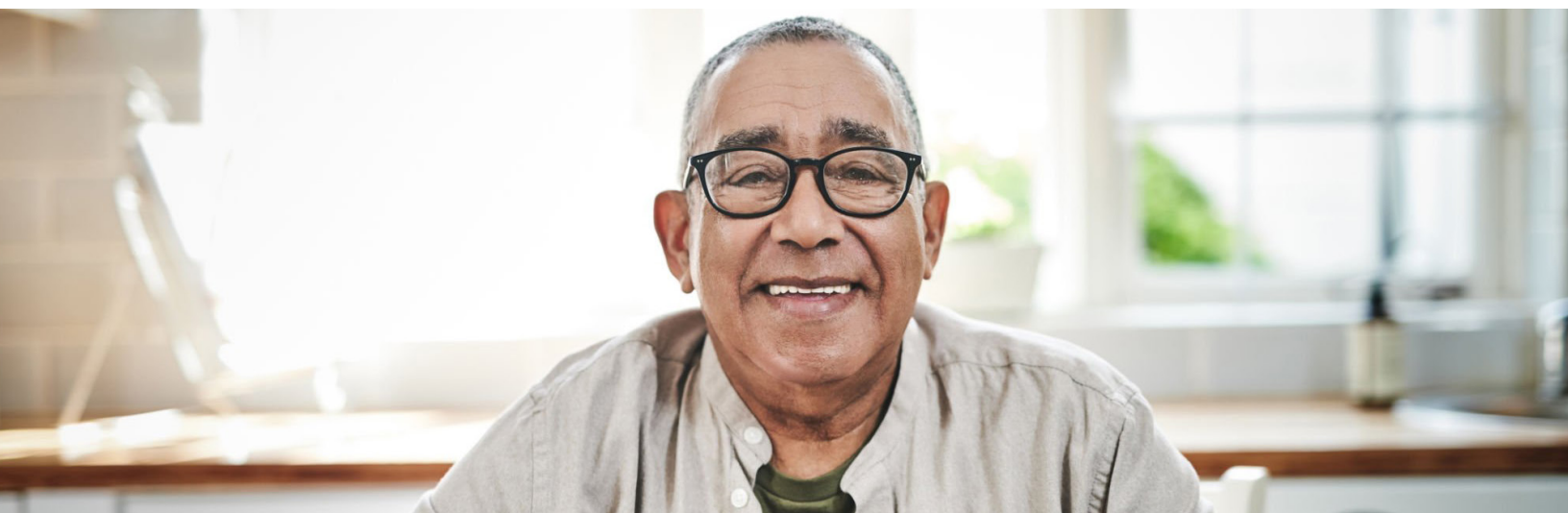


Promote health and well-being across the lifespan.

Public health works at all stages of the lifespan by helping to create healthy environments for living, learning, working, and playing. This includes interventions aimed at optimizing health for children and youth, as well as initiatives that enhance healthy aging and age-friendly communities for older adults. A priority for Toronto Public Health is to promote health and well-being across the lifespan through the following objectives:

Objectives

- a. Reduce the burden of chronic and infectious diseases across the lifespan.
- b. Prioritize effective interventions for children and youth to meet their changing needs.
- c. Advise on aging in place and age-friendly communities.
- d. Advocate for healthy social, natural, and built environments and collaborate with partners on initiatives that advance these goals.



PRIORITY 3



Promote the conditions to support positive mental health and reduce the harms of substance use.

Many Torontonians experience mental health challenges, which worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, substance use has increased and can have significant impacts on overall health and well-being. A public health approach to drugs aims to prevent and reduce harms from the use of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, vapour products, and unregulated drugs. This work also includes preventing drug toxicity deaths. A priority for Toronto Public Health is to promote the conditions to support positive mental health and reduce the harms of substance use through the following objectives:

Objectives

- a. Deliver public health interventions that respond to the drug toxicity epidemic.
- b. Reduce harms associated with the use of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco and vapour products.
- c. Strengthen public health services that are trauma-informed and reduce stigma.
- d. Deliver public health interventions that promote mental health.



PRIORITY 4



Advocate to advance health equity.

Social factors, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status, shape our health. Health inequities or health disparities are differences in health that are avoidable and created by unfair social policies and systems. Achieving health equity means the entire population has access to the resources and opportunities needed to support overall health and well-being. A priority for Toronto Public Health is to advocate for and advance health equity through the following objectives:

Objectives

- a. Assess and report on health inequities and population health needs.
- b. Collaborate with partners across multiple sectors to address local health needs.
- c. Share evidence, advocate, and collaborate to influence actions that impact population health.



PRIORITY 5



Nurture a positive workplace culture.

Toronto Public Health staff are our most valuable resource. They are dedicated, skilled and committed to advancing public health in our city. Every member of Toronto Public Health's workforce has a role to play in implementing the Strategic Plan. As an organization, we are committed to investing in our people and enhancing our workplace. An organizational priority for Toronto Public Health is to nurture a positive workplace culture for our staff through the following objectives:

Objectives

- a. Foster a culture of innovation, continuous improvement and learning.
- b. Develop and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.
- c. Foster a welcoming and inclusive work environment.
- d. Optimize collaboration across Toronto Public Health for greater impact.

