



Huron Perth Public Health **Annual Report** **2023**

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Vision, mission and values

Vision

Optimized health and well-being for all.

Mission

HPPH takes action to protect and promote population health and prevent disease, strengthening quality of life and well-being for all.

Values

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We value all community members. We are responsive to the communities we serve and commit to finding ways for people to feel safe and welcome.

Evidence-informed practices

We will use the best available information and public health best practices in our work.

Partnership and collaboration

We value our relationships and commit to authentic engagement in our work in order to meet the public health needs of our communities.



People

We acknowledge that HPPH staff are the greatest asset to achieving our vision and mission, and commit to creating a healthy workplace together.

Innovation

We embrace new ways to respond to the public health needs of our populations and will use bold and creative approaches as needed.

Accountability

We focus on our public health mandate and are committed to transparent accountability for the use of our resources.

Leadership

All staff are valued as HPPH ambassadors who continually show leadership by using public health knowledge, skills and expertise to improve population health.



Land acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the land where we are situated is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Neutral, and Wendat peoples. Today, this land is still home to Indigenous peoples, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to meet and work on this territory. We recognize the First Peoples' continued stewardship of the land and water, and that this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon wampum under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and resources by the Great Lakes in peace.



We acknowledge and recognize the Upper Canada Treaties signed in regards to this land, which include Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 ½, and our roles and shared responsibilities as treaty people committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation, gratitude, and respect with all Indigenous, First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.



2023 Board of Health

Remarks from Chair and Vice-Chair

The year 2023 marked the fourth year of operation for Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH). Over this time HPPH, created from the former Huron County Health Unit and Perth District Health Unit, has shown what a successful public health unit merger looks like.

Coming out of pandemic response, public health in Ontario continued to experience transitions in 2023 as the province announced reviews for public health structure, funding and mandates. A challenging budget shortfall additionally required HPPH to plan for a restructuring of programs and services; many of these changes came into effect in 2024.

Amid these announcements and changes, HPPH released its 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. This strategic plan helps HPPH chart the course in the transitional years ahead, building on the HPPH mission, vision, and values to focus on specific priorities and initiatives. As we move ahead, we keep in mind the mission of Huron Perth Public Health which is to take action to protect and promote population health and prevent disease, strengthening the quality of life and well-being for all. Public health is essential to the safety and well-being of our families and communities, as well as our prosperity.

We invite you to read this Annual Report and learn more about how HPPH helps create healthier communities. Every day public health works diligently to make people healthy where they live, work and play.



Above Top-Bottom: Bernie MacLellan, Board of Health Chair, Todd Kasenberg, Board of Health Vice-Chair

Dr. Miriam Klassen

Remarks from MOH and CEO

In 2023, Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) developed a Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2027 in consultation with stakeholders, board members and staff.

This plan will support staff in navigating the continued transitions in the field of public health, as new Ontario Public Health Standards are expected to be implemented in 2025, and a new funding approach will be operationalized in 2026.

HPPH also continued recovery efforts in 2023, strengthening programs and services that had been reduced or halted due to the pandemic, while normalizing our COVID-19 response. Some highlights include:

- the launch of the ‘Check What We Inspect’ disclosure program (allowing members of the public access to inspection results for premises inspected by HPPH’s Public Health Inspectors),
- the launch of the Mental Health Promotion Framework (including the three priority action areas of Mental Health Literacy; Resilient People; and Mentally Healthy Places), and
- the development of the HPPH Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy as well as a statement of commitment.



In the pages ahead you will find many more program updates, that reflect the breadth of public health work, and the impact on this community, as well as a summary of financial information.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all the HPPH staff who have worked with dedication and passion to provide these public health programs and services. Thank you also to the board of health for your support, wisdom and direction.

Miriam Klassen
Medical Officer of Health and CEO
Huron Perth Public Health

Board of Health



Board of Health Chair

BERNIE MACLELLAN

Mayor
Municipality of
Huron East

RHONDA EHGOETZ

Mayor
Township of
Perth East

PAUL ROBINSON

Provincial
Representative

Board of Health Vice-Chair

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City of Stratford

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Deputy Mayor
Municipality of
Central Huron

MARG LUNA

Councillor
Town of St. Marys

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Deputy Mayor
Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh

LESLIE BIEHN

Councillor
City of Stratford

ROBERT PARKER

Provincial
Representative

Management Team

Medical Officer of Health & CEO

Dr. Miriam Klassen

Physician Consultant

Dr. Lauren Hayward

Directors

Barb Leavitt

Julie Pauli

Tanya Sangster

Christina Taylor

Managers

Karen Bergin-Payette

Megan Goss

Lori Holmes

Annette Hoyles

Janet Jackson

Rita Marshall

Tanya Patry

Melissa Purdy*

Karen Sherwood

Nancy Summers

Dori Taylor*

Jessica Thompson

Angela Willert

*temporary managers for COVID-19 response

Locations

Clinton

77722B London Road

Listowel

161 Inkerman Street West

Stratford

Festival Square

10 Downie Street

West Gore

653 West Gore Street

Wingham

(closed permanently Dec. 31, 2023)

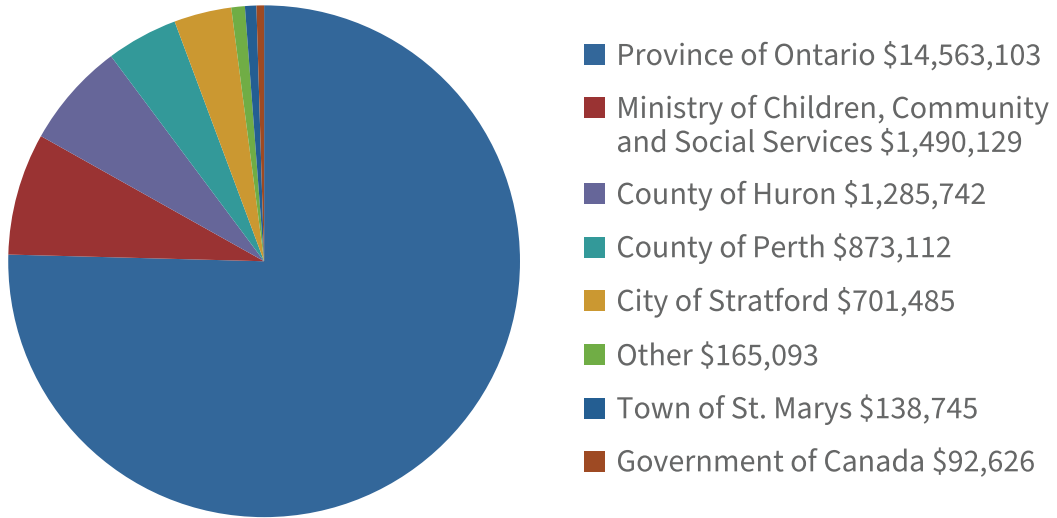
131 John Street East



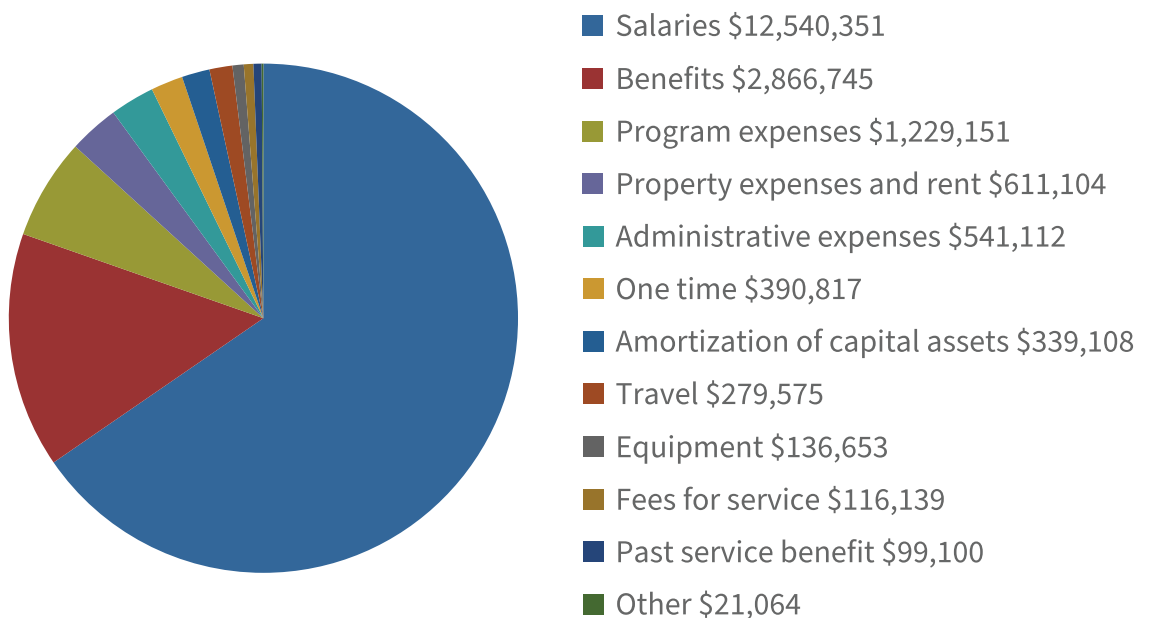
Above L-R: HPPH West Gore and Clinton offices

Financials

2023 Revenue \$ 19,310,035



2023 Expenses \$ 19,170,919



Health Protection

Infectious Diseases



Under the Ontario *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA), HPPH is required to follow up on reports of suspected and/or confirmed outbreaks of enteric and respiratory illnesses in retirement and long-term care homes. There were 99 outbreaks declared in institutions in 2023:

Disease	Outbreaks
COVID-19	45
Respiratory infection	34
Gastroenteritis	17
Influenza	3

There were 29 deaths from COVID-19 from January 1 - December 31, 2023 (outcome date).



Health professionals and HPPH work together to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases in our communities. [O. Reg. 135/18: Designation of Diseases](#) under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, outlines which communicable diseases are designated as Diseases of Public Health Significance (DoPHS) in Ontario. There were 339 DoPHS (excluding sexually transmitted infections and COVID-19) reported to HPPH in 2023. The top five were:

Disease	# Reported
Influenza	73
Campylobacter enteritis	61
Pertussis (whooping cough)	52
Salmonellosis	29
Cryptosporidiosis	24

Health Protection

Immunizations



School-based Program

Many routine immunizations were delayed over the previous years as COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and a focus on pandemic response limited the ability of health units and primary care providers to offer routine immunizations. Many students missed getting their routine immunizations as a result. To help get students up to date, HPPH held 47 catch-up immunization clinics in 2023:

Disease/Vaccine	Doses
Hepatitis B (Hep B)	1,891
Human Papillomavirus (HPV)	1,825
Meningitis (Men-C-ACYW-135)	1,140
Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Tdap)	1,121

COVID-19 and Influenza

HPPH held 93 clinics, providing 8,992 doses of COVID-19 vaccine and 1,632 doses of influenza vaccine.

HPPH also teamed up with Family Health Teams across Huron-Perth, offering 14 clinics where Family Health Team physicians and nurses gave vaccine against influenza while HPPH nurses gave vaccine against COVID-19. HPPH provided 2,489 doses of COVID-19 vaccine at these COVID-19/Flu clinics. We are grateful for the continued partnership with our primary care partners! Overall, HPPH provided 11,481 doses of COVID-19 vaccine in 2023.

Health Protection

Immunizations



Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFIs)

An adverse event following immunization (AEFI) is an unwanted or unexpected health effect that happens after someone receives a vaccine, which may or may not be caused by the vaccine. The unwanted or unexpected health effect could be a laboratory finding, symptom or disease.

Most AEFI reports are submitted by healthcare providers, who are mandated to report all AEFIs by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. AEFI reports may also be submitted by vaccine recipients or their caregivers.

Each AEFI report pertains to one individual vaccine recipient who experiences one or more adverse events within a certain timeline after receiving one or more vaccines.

In Ontario, all AEFI investigations are conducted by local public health agencies (LPHA), as part of post-marketing safety surveillance, and in accordance with provincial surveillance guidance.

In 2023 received and investigated 14 reports of AEFIs involving at least one of nine infectious disease agents, for a total of 16:

Infectious Disease Agents	# AEFIs
COVID	5
COVID pediatric	1
Men-C-ACYW-135	2
Hep B	1
HPV	1
Influenza	2
RSV	1
RZV (recombinant zoster vaccine)	2
Varicella	1

One of the five confirmed AEFIs additionally met the definition of serious AEFI, which is an AEFI in those with an in-patient hospitalization or reported to have died. This person has recovered. There were no deaths from AEFIs.

Health Protection

Environmental Health



The Environmental Health team continued to focus on essential activities to protect health, prevent and reduce health hazards, and mitigate disease risks associated with both built and natural environments.

HPPH reached a milestone by launching its online disclosure site, “Check What We Inspect.” This site allows members of the public access to inspection results for premises inspected by HPPH’s Public Health Inspectors. We will add inspection reports to Check What We Inspect in phases. We began with food premises inspection reports in 2023. Food premises include restaurants, mobile food trucks, catering premises, grocery stores, and other businesses that serve food to the public. We will gradually add all other premises inspected by public health. Inspections are also available upon request.

Other disclosures available at [Inspections and Disclosures](#) include status of beach water quality and convictions of tobacco and e-cigarette retailers.

Public Inquiries and Investigations

HPPH completed 1,732 public inquiries and investigations in 2023. The top four topic areas were: Food Safety (570), Rabies (526), Safe Water (326) and Health Hazards (202).

Inspections

Public Health Inspectors completed 2,064 inspections in 2023, consisting of Compliance (1,633), Re-Inspections (361), Pre-Opening Inspections (32), Complaint (21) and Demand (17).

Beach Water Sampling

- 17 locations across Huron Perth
- Collected 998 samples over 25 testing days from mid-June to end of August; received 38 adverse results (high bacteria levels)

Vector-borne and Zoonotic Disease Monitoring

West Nile virus

- 14 weeks of trapping
- 217 traps collected
- One positive test for West Nile virus in mosquito populations

Population Health

Health Promotion and Well-Being

Mental Health Promotion

In September 2023, HPPH launched a Mental Health Promotion Framework to staff. This framework provides a comprehensive, evidence-informed approach to mental health promotion at HPPH. It identifies three key areas of action: Mental Health Literacy, Resilient People and Mentally Healthy Places. As part of this work, the Health Promotion and Well-Being (HPWB) team is building organizational capacity to improve mental well-being in Huron Perth.



Substance

In November 2023, the HPWB team worked with a Grade 11 leadership class at St Marys DVCI to deliver the Challenges, Beliefs and Changes program. Health Unit staff trained 26 students to deliver substance prevention, media literacy messages, and coping skills to all the Grade 7 and 8 students at their school, reaching a total of 120 Grade 7 and 8 students.

HPWB team staff also partnered with the HPPH School Health Team to develop a two-session vaping program for Grade 6 students called My Brain My Choice. The program increases understanding of the brain, addiction and the addictive nature of nicotine, media literacy related to substance advertisements, positive coping strategies and refusal skills. Staff delivered My Brain My Choice to seven elementary schools.

Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017

In 2023, Tobacco Enforcement Officers received a total of 163 *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* complaints. Of the 163, approximately 81% came from schools. The complaints received from schools were largely due to student vaping infractions.

In 2023, there were 114 vapour product vendors and 103 tobacco vendors across Huron and Perth counties.

Injury Prevention

We were active in our work to prevent motor vehicle collisions through:

- Communication and problem solving to reduce barriers for municipalities to act.
- Making sure solutions work for rural Ontario.
- Supporting the integration of emerging Ontario practice in Huron and Perth through Road Safety Audit training.

Population Health

Healthy Growth and Development



Reproductive Health

242 expectant persons from Huron and Perth Counties registered for the health unit's online prenatal course.



Breastfeeding

In October 2023, HPPH launched a campaign during National Breastfeeding week called the Warm Chain of Support. The campaign highlighted local service providers and community members in Huron and Perth and how they can support breastfeeding in different ways. The campaign's purpose was to encourage families to reach out to professional and trained peer support.

In November, HPPH hosted a one-day breastfeeding refresher educational workshop with Kathy Venter, RN, Retired Midwife, and Certified Lactation Consultant. HPPH staff and local hospital and community health professionals who work with breastfeeding families were invited to participate. Thirty healthcare professionals and nine peer volunteers attended or viewed the recording of this event.

Population Health

Health Equity

Standardized Sociodemographic Data Collection

Collecting data on sociodemographic characteristics of health service users is a vital tool for designing equitable and effective health services. Sociodemographic characteristics include race, ethnicity, religion, immigration, language, sexual orientation, age, gender, and disability.

HPPH is committed to supporting organizational and program level approaches for the systematic collection of sociodemographic data and has initiated the development of a 'Data for Equity Strategy' to guide the planning and implementation of this work at HPPH.

HPPH Lived Experience Expert Panel

HPPH's Lived Experience Expert Panel (LEEP) is a virtual panel of community members aged 18 and older with lived experience of one or more systems such as social assistance, courts, child welfare, education, and/or healthcare etc., and who have experienced discrimination based on the social determinants of health.

The LEEP contributed their expertise and insights to the work of HPPH and our community partners in Huron Perth by responding to surveys on the following topics:

- how and where to challenge weight bias, stigma and discrimination
- strategies to increase tax-filing for people living with low income
- identifying safe community spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth
- how local parks and green spaces are used by community members
- how welcoming our communities are for newcomers to Canada
- community awareness of intimate partner violence (IPV) and IPV services

In 2023, LEEP insights, ideas and recommendations informed the current and ongoing work of HPPH, Poverty to Prosperity (P2P) Huron Perth, Huron County Library, Huron Local Immigration Partnership and Huron Perth Violence Against Women programs.

Population Health

Health Equity



HPPH's Health Equity Team members continued to provide co-leadership to Poverty to Prosperity Huron Perth, our region's anti-poverty coalition, and supported Kaswentha Two Row Now, an Indigenous-led group focused on education and awareness. In 2023, team members co-chaired the Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team (HPA-OHT) Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, Anti-Racism Advisory Council and participated in the Southwest Region OHT Health Equity and Accessibility Table.

Commitment to Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Board of Health is committed to moving forward in efforts to become anti-racist, equitable, diverse, and inclusive in its workplace and in all areas of public health work. This strategy included development of the HPPH Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and statement of commitment.

The Health Equity Team continues to support this strategy by creating opportunities, resources, and tools that encourage open discussions and serve to filter organizational approaches, human resources, programs, services, internal groups, initiatives, projects, activities, and physical spaces through an Integrated Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Lens.

The team also supports the Internal Indigenous Public Health Action Committee. The committee provides leadership to develop organizational objectives and advise on action plans focused on Indigenous health equity and public health related Reconciliation, guided by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#).

Population Health

School Health



HPPH offers a variety of resources, supports, and services to schools to promote the health and well-being of students and the school community. Using a comprehensive school health approach and the Ministry of Education’s [Foundations for a Healthy School](#), we work with school boards, administrators, educators, and community agencies to create an environment that will make a positive impact on student health and learning.

Piloting a more equitable way to support schools

Over the 2022-23 school year, HPPH held 50 consultations with AMDSB and HPCDSB principals to help determine priorities and programs for schools. During this time, HPPH delivered 45 in-school programs reaching 976 students. These programs included:

- Healthy Transitions
- Healthy Relationships Plus
- Let’s Get Cookin’
- Skill building small group sessions
- Playground games and
- Leadership training

For the 2023-24 school year, HPPH piloted a new way of delivering school health supports that was rooted in health equity and the social determinants of health. This new approach provides health promotion support to all schools but offers more support to the schools where families need it most. Provincial and local data, along with feedback from schools and school boards, is used to determine the level of support that a school receives. This pilot will be reviewed and adjusted as we work to find the best way to support Huron-Perth schools while considering local needs and resources.

Community and Family Health

Sexual Health and Harm Reduction



Appointments

There were over 3,350 client appointments booked at HPPH sexual health clinics in 2023. The top reason for attending sexual health clinics was testing for sexually transmitted infections (STI).

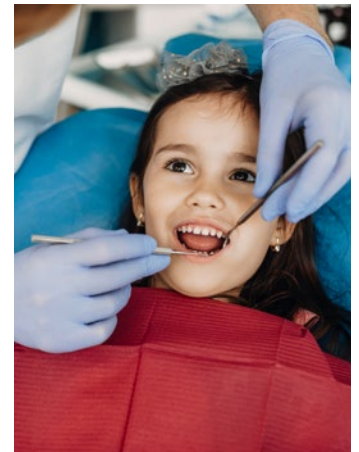
There were 362 lab-confirmed sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, Hepatitis C) reported to HPPH.

Naloxone kits

HPPH offers naloxone kits and training to help people who use drugs. Naloxone is a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive. In 2023, HPPH gave out 1,234 naloxone kits - 415 to clients and 819 to community partners for further distribution.

Community and Family Health

Oral Health



Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP)

In the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program, seven new providers signed service agreements with HPPH, which improved access to the OSDCP across Huron and Perth.

- 224 unique clients were enrolled in OSDCP with 1,213 OSDCP appointments with community dental providers for all clients.
- In 2023, we had agreements with 11 general dental providers, 2 specialist offices (endodontist and oral surgeon) and three denturists to facilitate the enrollment and provision of the OSDCP program.
- The areas that these dental offices service include; Seaforth, Stratford, Mitchell, Exeter, Wingham, Milverton, Goderich and St. Mary's. Clients are now able to access local denture clinics in Clinton, Goderich and Stratford.

Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO)

Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) is a free dental program for eligible children and youth 17 years old and under from low-income households. Through HSO, HPPH offers free preventive dental health services to eligible children and youth from families living with low income, and for children and youth who are identified through dental screening at school.

In 2023, 552 Huron Perth clients were clinically eligible for HSO-Emergency Essential Service Stream.

- 291 clients received preventive services at HPPH clinics

HPPH Dental Screening

- 715 clients received dental screening (HPPH site clinics, non-school and remote clinics)
- 7,484 children screened in schools (JK, SK, grades 2, 4 and 7).
 - Staff help connect families to the Healthy Smiles Ontario program where needed.

Community and Family Health

Healthy Babies Healthy Children and Anabaptist Community Work



Mother and Young Child Clinic (MYCC)

Mother and Young Child Clinic (MYCC) provides nurse practitioner services to perinatal clients and families with young children in Anabaptist communities who may experience barriers to accessing primary care. In 2023, there were a total of 1,126 visits. Of those visits, immunizations were given at 339 visits (30.1%).

Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC)

The Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program provides home visits to parents who would like support during pregnancy, after the baby is born, and/or during the early years as the child grows and develops. This includes information and support on pregnancy, breastfeeding and infant feeding, growth and development, parent-child attachment, and referral to other programs and services. A total of 108 families received Healthy Babies Healthy Children home visiting services in 2023.

Foundational Standards

Communications

In 2023, HPPH issued 35 news releases on a variety of topics including animal incidents, budget impacts, heat warnings, and respiratory illnesses. Media coverage of HPPH included 240 news articles.

The HPPH website welcomed 107,122 unique visitors in 2023. The five most popular pages were:

- [HPPH home page](#),
- [Get a COVID-19 vaccination](#),
- [Beach Water Quality](#),
- [Immunizations and Vaccines](#), and
- [Careers](#)



Foundational Standards

Surveillance, Health Assessment, Research and Evaluation

The SHARE Team (Surveillance, Health Assessment, Research and Evaluation Team) continues to complete work in the areas of population health assessment, and program monitoring and evaluation, as well as building staff capacity in these areas. In the fall, an external respiratory activity dashboard was published, including weekly updated information on influenza and COVID-19 showing the number of cases, hospitalizations, deaths, and outbreaks. The SHARE team continued to update the integrated Respiratory Activity Assessment report.

Other major population health assessment projects include the Reproductive Health Status Report (to be completed in 2024) and supporting grant applications for the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program. The team began or completed several evaluations in 2023, including the School Health Delivery Approach, Inspection Disclosures, and the Anti-Racism Training.

Huron Perth Public Health Respiratory Activity 2023-2024 Respiratory Season starts August 27, 2023 Updated on March 20, 2024

Newly reported COVID-19 counts in Huron Perth by week received

Week	Start Date	End Date	# of New Cases	# of New Hospitalizations	# of Deaths	# of New Outbreaks
11	2024-03-10	2024-03-16	13	0	2	0
10	2024-03-03	2024-03-09	15	1	1	1
9	2024-02-25	2024-03-02	47	6	2	1
8	2024-02-18	2024-02-24	25	1	1	2
7	2024-02-11	2024-02-17	24	2	0	2

These numbers reflect new cases, hospitalizations, deaths, and outbreaks as reported to HPPH. Some reports to HPPH are delayed. The numbers do not reflect the current hospitalizations or ongoing outbreaks.



www.hpph.ca



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askhpph@hpph.ca

