



2025 Annual Report





SWPH Board of Health. Standing: Scott Strouffing and Norma Ryan

Message from the Chair

Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) has much to be proud of this year. In 2023, we face some of the largest measles outbreaks Ontario has experienced in many years, which disproportionately affected children in the health unit region. Throughout the experience, staff demonstrated professionalism, skill, and an unwavering commitment to protecting the health of those in the community, while continuing to deliver the full scope of our mandate in public health.

In addition to extraordinary demands, the launch of a new five-year strategic plan marks for us a defining accomplishment, setting a direction for the future through evidence, collaboration, and improving the health of every person we serve. We are a positive regulatory ahead. The strength of SWPH's programming, the values of staff, and the representative evidence-informed

decision-making give the Board great work, close to the work ourselves.

This moment is worth saying aloud! The Board of Health reinforced our investment this year into the new facilities that we are most proud to see completed and in progress. Strong alignment with local leaders has been essential in strengthening public health capacity, and has resulted in real progress toward achieving a healthier, more vibrant community.

On behalf of the Board of Health, thank you for your continued dedication to our communities. Your efforts are meaningful and positive, not only for the present, but also for the future ahead.

Best regards,

Barrie Watts, Chair
Southwestern Public Health Board of Health





Message from the CEO & MOH

The past year tested and affirmed the resilience of the organization. Our health and care at the epicenter of one of the largest measles outbreaks in a generation, respiratory responses, deep expertise, and sustained infection prevention and control efforts spanning programs across the organization. We throughout our service continuity remained strong with little interruption, even as demands increased. The level of performance does not happen by chance – it reflects planning, dedication, agility, and deliberate self-leadership the whole way. We are grateful for the trust, coordination, and commitment of our health system and community partners that sustained us through a challenging year.

The year also was a valuable year for future planning through the launch of our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. It is a plan shaped by the lessons of recent years and community input, and strengthened by voices of excellence learned in, your feedback, and helped define our priorities. This resulted in

a plan focused on advancing population health, bolstering service excellence, and ensuring organizational resilience as a clear blueprint for the next five years.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Board of Health for its continued confidence in our work, and its support for the vision outlined in the Strategic Plan. Their leadership and insight, more in our public health priorities position, were instrumental with clarity and purpose.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on delivering the high-quality programs and services that define Southwestern Public Health. It is a privilege to lead this organization, and to build self-care our next chapter.

Sincerely,

Cynthia R. Jahn
Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Mark Tom
Medical Officer of Health

2025-2029 Strategic Plan

SDPH's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan sets a clear direction for the next five years, grounded in community input and evidence, and guided by our vision: healthy people in vibrant communities. The plan focuses on three core priorities to advance SDPH's mission: deliver high-quality public health services, address strategic, unmet community needs in the region, and

[click to view the full strategic plan.](#)





Health Protection

In 2021, GHPP advanced regional disease prevention and protection through respiratory response, immunisation outreach, vector-borne disease control, and various mental health initiatives.

Seasonal respiratory activities continued a priority in fall 2021, with COVID-19, H1N1 and influenza disease risk-reduction local activities, through writing specific and community-based disease awareness, paired with public health-led vaccine immunizations delivered in the community and through efforts to reduce disease protection throughout the life cycle of residents living in the region.

Disease prevention continued through a program PBC workshops for long-term care, retirement homes, and congregate living settings... as well as the workshop provided during the pandemic. GHPP also continued to a provincial PBC guidance checklist for children settings, in collaboration with Public Health Ontario.

In Environmental Health, GHPP received Health Canada funding to support climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives related to retirement care. Additional local focus on environmental health is on the more proactive work of

public health, including inspections and food safety, reducing water-borne risks, ensuring safe water, and supporting public investigations in the community.

Highlights

- Tills + COVID-19 vaccine clinic administered through seasonal clinics (2021-2022)
- Low vaccination rates outreach conducted in 2021 included vaccination & participating community clinics (St. Hubert, St. Lawrence, St. Marys)
- Oxford County drinking water testing under 500L class, PBC engagements, and 22 post interventions
- Home-based control as bedside monitoring of 104 multiple myeloma cases multiple municipalities
- Multiple municipal responses targeted, coordinated through PPH collaboration, with GHPP supporting Ontario's highest ever count
- Infection prevention workshops delivered in September 2021 (for important reasons after a long year for us)



Outbreak in the community

In October 2020, measles began spreading rapidly across Ontario, resulting in one of the largest outbreaks in over three decades. By May 2021, COPIH reported 108

cases—mostly among unvaccinated children and youth.

COPIH supported quickly expanding vaccination, adding vaccine clinics, testing rates,

partnering with health and media organizations, and engaging affected groups. Staff helped residents access risks, provide education, support, and information about schools and children's centres. Clear communication and guidance led to increased access to vaccination activities. Throughout the crisis, COPIH maintained essential services, showing its ability to work effectively and efficiently.





Healthy Foundations

Community well-being was prioritized in 2020 through coordinated programming: early years and family supports, oral health, emergency management, and mental health.

Families accessed breastfeeding, parental, and parenting supports, including in-home home visits through Healthy Start's Healthy Children (HMHC) and the Home Family Partnership services. The expansion also launched HMHC, an evidence-based program supporting women effectively address partner violence, while oral health services expanded prevention and access for school-aged children and adult dentures.

Foundational public health and continued strong through staff emergency preparedness and response training, data informed planning and reporting, and local access that aim to reduce disease transmission for a healthy community for all.

Highlights

- 681 breastfeeding support requests (581 phone calls, 100 home visits, 100 staff time)

- 800 oral care phone lines (681 calls)
- Parent programming: 275 registrations, parenting programs: 81 participants
- HMHC: 2,988 home visits
- Home Family Partnership (HFP): 616 clients, 26 clients enrolled, 60 HFP visits, 128 HMHC visits, 104 program referrals (64 HFP)
- Oral Health (2020/2021): 1,128 students screened, women programs: 1,877 appointments for 607 unique clients (61.4)
- Health promotion: 46,791 home and visits, 173 website hit visits
- Emergency management: HMHC staff completed 681 calls
- Sexual Health (2020 continued cases): 601 chlamydia, 57 gonorrhea, 37 hepatitis C, 18 syphilis, 4 HIV
- Healthy Springs Program: 1,126 clients interviewed, 601 calls, 490 mental health, education visits





**"I feel like I can breathe for the first time. I am so proud of myself."
— IHEAL participant**

IHEAL: Empowering through safety

IHEAL, in collaboration with Women University and Illinois London Health Care, launched IHEAL in September 2021. IHEAL is a community-based, trauma-informed program for women who have experienced abuse from a current or former partner. The program responds to the long-term health, safety, and well-being impacts of intimate partner violence by pairing self-participants with a public health nurse who offers not only individual, confidential support in a safe location chosen by the participant, but also offers more than two decades of research by more researchers at Women University in partnership with the University of North Carolina and the University of New Brunswick. IHEAL is designed to close gaps in long-term supports, particularly for women living in rural communities.

In 2021, the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services provided funding to support implementation in this region, enabling IHEAL to be offered through IHEAL, expanding access to other health care providers for women across Elgin County, Oxford County, and the City of Thames.

Women meet weekly or every other week for six months and set their own priorities, which may include strengthening safety, improving physical and mental health, rebuilding social connections, accessing basic resources, and supporting personal growth.

Over 95% of women who have completed IHEAL recommend the program to others.





Healthy Communities

SDPH provided health equity and prevention by strengthening organizational frameworks, expanding school-based supports, and partnering with municipalities to create healthier community environments.

By partnering an organization with Health Equity Framework compliance an Equity Initiative Framework, SDPH can better track disparities in health outcomes and guide action to overcome across barriers. It allows programs to be designed to priority populations using a proportionate universal approach for students with the greatest needs receive the greatest support, alongside internal mental health literacy through that reinforced staff capacity.

Especially an urban/developmental Age-Friendly Community recognition in Epsom, St. Thomas and others) and support of healthy school/public spaces through Municipal Health Policy (MHP) expansion. We also launched Planet Health as a community prevention system, establishing local coalitions and conducting a baseline survey of Grade 4-6 students to inform Year 1 actions across the family, school, peer, and leisure domains.

Compliance and enforcement activities further supported safe environments for youth, including school-based clinical services and inspections of school/college facilities to reduce illegal access.

Highlights

- 1. Southwestern Public Health completed 100 youth access inspections in 2021, including 100 tobacco and 100 vape access inspections.
- 2. Only 10 inspections (10%) resulted in failures, meaning 90% of studies successfully complied with youth access requirements.
- 3. Of the 10 failures identified, 10 resulted in warnings and 1 resulted in charges.
- 4. Tobacco retailer inspections had a 99.9% mandatory youth access compliance rate, while vape retailers achieved 99.9%.
- 5. In addition to youth access checks, the Tobacco Control Programs completed 100 Display, Promotion, and Handling (DPH) inspections.

Healthy Schools Certification

Each year, GPHI works with local schools and school health partners to advance the health and well-being of individuals within the school community. Part of the work includes an annual submission to the Healthy Schools Certification through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention (CDC) – a nationally-recognized program that promotes and advances the health and well-being of students, school staff, and the broader school community.

A cornerstone of achieving the GPHI report card focused with the Healthy Schools Certification for 2024-2025, which included 7 schools within the Thomas Valley School System (TVSS) in partnership with TVSS. GPHI initiated a comprehensive communication strategy to recognize these achievements, including in-person celebratory events at each of the awarded schools, media relations activities with local journalists, and social media content.

The goal of this work was to celebrate the ongoing partnership between GPHI and TVSS to advance well-being in schools, while encouraging the local community and supporting staff to understand our shared vision for healthier schools communities in Elbert County, Colorado County, and the City of St. Thomas.



Corporate Services & Finance

Operational resilience was a focus in 2023 through investments in people, refinement of core support systems, and various facility operations and national security. Top-level staff and training investments in operational resilience were delivered through periodic off-site demand drills building the capacity needed to meet emerging public health requirements.

Membership and training opportunities were enhanced by public health response practices leading to off-site demonstrations with simulated responses, building a practical incident response strategy. These activities supported facilities

needs, such as floor floor mapping, evacuation and health order monitoring, while expanding existing opportunities for existing staff.

Staff training and standardized processes addressed management priorities – from cyber and privacy threats, to artificial intelligence applications, to media operational risks. These critical operational resilience exercises throughout the year with lessons applied when responding to media during the measles outbreak, and in preparing for H5N1 influenza cases and ongoing cyber threats regionally.



2025 Financial Report

Revenue

Local Tax Revenue	\$1,122,420
State Grants & Health Services Building Program	\$175,000
Other	\$62,500
County of Elgin	\$1,359,920
County of DeKalb	\$4,140,000
Other Programs	\$100,000
Interest	\$100,000
Other Investments	\$100,000
Total	\$6,962,320
Provisional Revenue	\$14,000,000
Total Revenue	\$20,962,320



Expenses

Total direct general programs and services	\$10,000,000
Capital Ex	-
Other directly funded programs	\$1,210,000
Other programs & non-fund expenditures	\$4,190,000
Total Expenses	\$15,400,000



Click here for our [full Financial Statements and Budgets](#).



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