

## LAMBTON PUBLIC HEALTH

We work to keep you, your family and our community safe and healthy.



Lambton Public Health ("LPH") provides mandated public health programs and services for eleven (11) municipalities throughout the County of Lambton, including collaboration with First Nations communities of Aamjiwnaang, Kettle and Stony Point, and Walpole Island. Throughout 2023, LPH continued to safeguard public health at the local level through community connectedness and collaboration to assess, protect, and promote health, along with efforts to advocate for healthy public policy.

LPH's vision is that Lambton County is a community that supports all people to strive for safety, health and well-being. LPH is part of the Public Health Services Division within the County of Lambton. LPH works with the community to: assess, promote and protect health, prevent disease and injury, and advocate for healthy public policy.

## STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH

In 2023, Ontario's Ministry of Health announced a new provincial strategy called the strengthening public health initiative, with a plan to refine and clarify the roles of local public health units. As part of its plan, the Ministry of Health also announced a 1% cap on future increases in annual base funding for a period of three (3) years starting in 2024. LPH received its funding envelope for 2023-2024 with a 1% increase, assisting with in-year needs for 2023.

To support next steps in exploring voluntary merger, the BOHs for LPH and Chatham-Kent Public Health engaged an independent consulting firm to inform the direction from the Ministry of Health's strengthening public health initiative. With support from the reinstatement of Council's Strategic Planning and Provincial Downloading Committee, due diligence was conducted for fulsome review, understanding, and reacting to any provincial policy changes that could negatively impact the County's financial position. Over the remainder of 2023 and into 2024, the consultant worked closely with the BOHs and presented findings, where the BOHs decided to continue as independent health units embedded within their municipalities, announced February 22, 2024.

LPH prepared for anticipated budget pressures by developing three (3) areas of strategic priorities to bridge to the end of 2024 until a new formal strategic planning process for 2025 onward could commence. These strategic areas determined priorities for the work of LPH while simultaneously recovering from a sustained response to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020. LPH's interim strategic priorities over 2023-2024 dedicated focus in the areas of:

- Evidence and Accountability,
- Mental Health and Addictions, and
- Future Readiness for Diseases of Public Health Significance (DOPHS).

LPH's programs and services throughout 2023 aligned with these strategic priority areas.



# Lambton Public Health

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

## EVIDENCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

*To ensure credibility, reliability, and responsiveness to community needs, sustaining public trust in the local public health work of LPH.*

An After Action Review (“AAR”) was conducted to examine best practices, challenges, and recommendations during recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic response. The goal of was to identify internal learnings and to engage with partners on lessons learned.

In August 2023, LPH joined an inaugural annual respiratory preparedness exercise requested by Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health (“CMOH”), led by Ontario Health, collaborating with health system partners including the local Sarnia-Lambton Ontario Health Team (“SL-OHT”). These annual exercises with health system partners aim to bolster system and community-level readiness to respiratory illness.

Locally, LPH presented respiratory season epidemiology, infection prevention and control (“IPAC”) Hub details, and respiratory season vaccines information at the SL-OHT’s webinar regarding respiratory season preparedness in November of 2023.

To enhance ongoing situational awareness regarding respiratory virus activity throughout the respiratory season, LPH linked to Public Health Ontario’s (“PHO”) Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool within LPH’s Seasonal Infectious Diseases Bulletin, launched in 2023. This bulletin displays local epidemiological trends of COVID-19, influenza, RSV, and other respiratory viruses, along with institutional outbreak status reports.

In January 2023, the County of Lambton Municipal Modernization Funds Project Report identified that the Public Health Services Division had one of the highest utilization rates for digital solutions among County operations. In keeping with this finding, LPH went live in April 2023 with an electronic medical record for clinical services, supported through an internal team to work with IntraHealth Profile™ consultants to onboard to the electronic medical record platform. This platform strengthened clinical services’ best practices for documentation and furthered efficiencies.

LPH endeavors to facilitate equitable access to health services particularly to those facing health inequities in the community. A health equity approach was sought throughout LPH’s domains of programs and services in 2023. Program indicators and dashboards continued to be developed to monitor and ensure impact in LPH’s program and service areas, with consideration and priority for a health equity lens.

*Overall, [our] team truly appreciates the support provided by the LPH team. Important relationships between us were developed long before the pandemic and that allowed us to immediately be comfortable leaning on each other to work through the many different challenges of a pandemic. I look forward to continuing to grow our relationships and working together as a solid team within the Sarnia/Lambton community.”*

**- Hospital Respondent**

### Health Equity



**1000+**

Client engagements at  
Mobile Markets

### Communications



**201,000**

Website  
Visitors

**575,000**

Pageviews

### Seasonal Infectious Diseases Bulletin

Last updated: October 27, 2023 with data as of the most recent surveillance week: October 15 to 21, 2023.



This report provides details about respiratory and enteric disease activity in Lambton County. It is updated each Friday by 4:30 p.m. The “Outbreaks” page is updated more frequently (each weekday by 4:30 p.m.). On statutory holidays, the report will be updated on the next business day. Data in this report represent a snapshot in time of information up to the most recent surveillance week (i.e., up to the Saturday prior to the most recent update). Information shown here can differ from other sources as data may have been extracted at different times. If you have questions about this report, please contact [LPH-Info@county-lambton.on.ca](mailto:LPH-Info@county-lambton.on.ca).

Notes about this week’s report: None.

Summary

Outbreaks

COVID-19

Influenza

Syndromic Surveillance

### RESPIRATORY VIRUS ACTIVITY IN LAMBTON COUNTY

These images provide a high-level overview of respiratory virus activity in Lambton County, using the activity levels below. Activity levels are based on the percent of all weekly outpatient visits to the local emergency department that were for respiratory illness, as reported by the ACES Viral Respiratory Mapper. To view provincial respiratory virus activity, please use the [ACES Viral Respiratory Mapper](#). To view the provincial activity level for COVID-19 and Influenza individually, please use the [PHO Respiratory Virus Tool](#).

Legend

Activity Level	Seasonal	Moderate	Elevated	High	Not enough data
Weekly % respiratory related ED visits	less than 15%	greater than 15% but less than 18%	greater than 18% but less than 21%	greater than or equal to 21%	Data not complete enough to make an assessment

### Sexual Health



**1,393**

Sexual Health Clinic Visits

### Communications



**42**

media releases issued

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

## MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION

*To facilitate the full integration of mental health promotion and addictions support into public health practice.*

### Harm Reduction



**4,146**

Naloxone Kits distributed  
- in partnership with NLCHC

### Harm Reduction



**27**

Community Sharps Disposal  
Bins exchanged

### Dental



**651**

seniors received  
dental treatment

### Health Growth & Development



**2,090**

Ask a Public Health Nurse  
attendees

In 2023, LPH once again conducted a local community health survey among Lambton residents through an unbiased third-party vendor, with key results indicating:

- 1) Community mental health was yet to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels, with steepest decline in self-rated mental health among those 18 to 44 years old;
- 2) In tandem with declining mental health, there was greater concern among many residents about their financial situation, with 4 in 10 saying they were unable to save, and 13% having a difficult time financially;
- 3) A majority of residents were aware of the increase in opioid and non-prescription drug poisonings/overdoses in Lambton County in the preceding five (5) years; and
- 4) Two-thirds of residents agreeing that Lambton County promoted equity and diversity in the community at the time of the survey.

Similar to provincial trends, LPH noted 35 opioid poisoning/overdose-related deaths over the 2023 year, compared to 16 deaths over the 2019 year.[1]

In an effort to prevent and address trends related to the toxic drug crisis, LPH worked closely with community partners on the steering committee and action tables of the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy ("LDAS"), launched in April 2023. More than twenty (20) community organizations comprise the work of the LDAS, which represents a coordinated and collaborative approach across sectors to prevent and reduce the harms of drug and alcohol use in Lambton County.

The Community Outreach Nursing Initiative addresses barriers to accessing needle exchange program supplies, harm reduction services, referrals, and other resources. This program and service aligns with the work of LDAS and the Lambton County Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, meeting needs of individuals directly and sensitively in the community in collaboration with community partners. LPH's community sharps disposal bins program resulted in a reduction in the number of reported sharps in public places.

In accordance with the OPHS, LPH's programs and services promote a healthy life course supporting families, childcare settings, schools, and community settings that set a strong foundation to enable and nurture mental health and wellness. In 2023, built environment healthy public policies, dental health screening and services, Healthy Babies Healthy Children programming, as well as child health and school health services, fostered and facilitated community wellbeing for mental health throughout infancy to older adulthood.

[1] Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (PHO). Interactive opioid tool: opioid-related morbidity and mortality in Ontario. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>



### STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

## FUTURE READINESS FOR DISEASES OF PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE

*To detect and manage future outbreaks or pandemics as advised by Ontario's CMOH to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in 2022. [2]*

#### Immunization



**23,602**

vaccines administered

#### Environmental Health



**1,356**

food premise inspections

#### Environmental Health



**450**

animal bite investigations

#### Customer Service



**7,379**

calls answered by Call Centre

While the risk of COVID-19 was diminished through factors such as increased immunity and high vaccination rates, combined with other seasonal respiratory pathogens, COVID-19 continued to be a threat to the health and wellbeing of Ontarians for the 2023-2024 respiratory season.

In keeping with LPH's role in supporting community coverage and access to respiratory season vaccinations, delivery channels included LPH community and mobile clinics, along with its continued integral role for ordering and distribution of vaccines to pharmacies and community health care providers.

LPH prepared for and implemented health protection measures against vaccine preventable diseases, vector-borne diseases, and other changing infectious diseases trends presenting greater demands on the healthcare system. LPH diligently continued work in areas of infectious diseases and environmental health surveillance, prevention, and case, contact, and outbreak control to protect the community from diseases of public health significance.

## GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

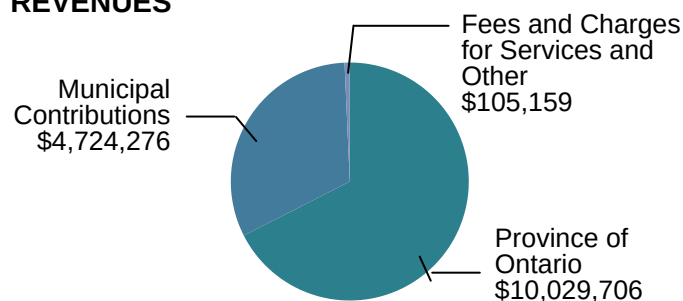
LPH is governed by the Lambton Board of Health, which is responsible for ensuring the provision of effective population health programs and services to meet the needs of the community.

The Ministry of Health is primarily responsible for funding public health units. Revenues supporting public health's operations derive from two main sources, which include cost-shared provincial/municipal funding. All costs programs and services were cost-share funded between the province and municipality. Additionally, LPH receives 100 percent grant funding through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, to support the Healthy Babies Healthy Children's programming.

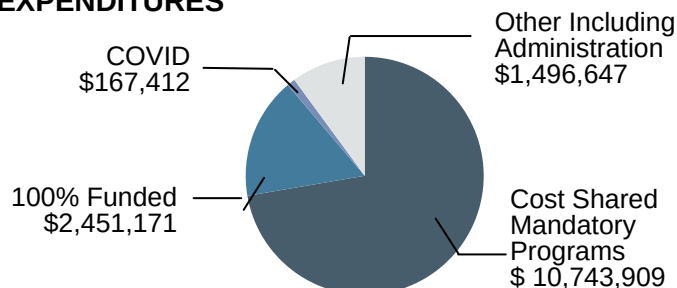
LPH also receives other revenues such as donations, and fees and service charges, which help to offset costs associated with services, such as for clinical supplies and food-handler education and training.

LPH's operating budget in 2023 was \$14,859,140.

### REVENUES



### EXPENDITURES



[2] Chief Medical Officer of Health 2022 Annual Report. Being ready: Ensuring public health preparedness for infectious outbreaks and pandemics. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/chief-medical-officer-health-2022-annual-report>