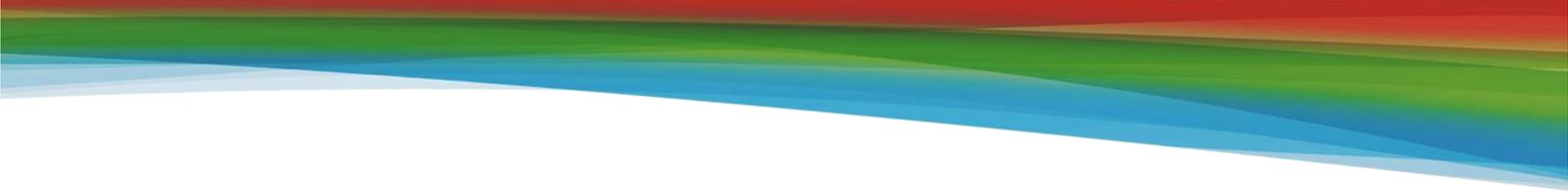


Public Health Matters: A Strong Economy Supported by Healthy Communities

Monday, January 19 | 1:15 – 2:30

Civic South





PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS



A STRONG ECONOMY SUPPORTED BY HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

**Presentation by Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Chair, Association of Local
Public Health Agencies (alPHa)
Rural Ontario Municipal Conference (ROMA)
January 19, 2026**

Why Local Public Health Matters

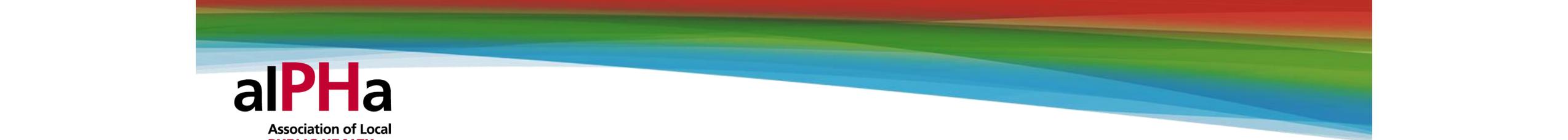
- A healthy economy depends on healthy people
- Public Health prevents illness and protects communities
- Reduces downstream health-care costs
- Supports productivity and long-term economic resilience

Public Health Modernization

- Completed: Public Health mergers
- In progress: Ontario Public Health Standards under active revision
- Forthcoming: Funding model review

Ongoing Funding Pressures and Need for Stabilization

- Funding has not kept pace with inflation and population growth
- Average inflation ~4% vs ~1% funding increases
- Erosion of local public health capacity... costs are not eliminated; they are shifted downstream.



alPHa

Association of Local
PUBLIC HEALTH
Agencies

Local Public Health Impact

- Expanded immunization programs have reduced hospitalizations
- Thousands of outbreak responses each year help keep communities safe
- Food safety inspections and investigations protect public health and local economies
- Early intervention and prevention programs reduce the burden on the health care system.



alPHa

Association of Local
PUBLIC HEALTH
Agencies

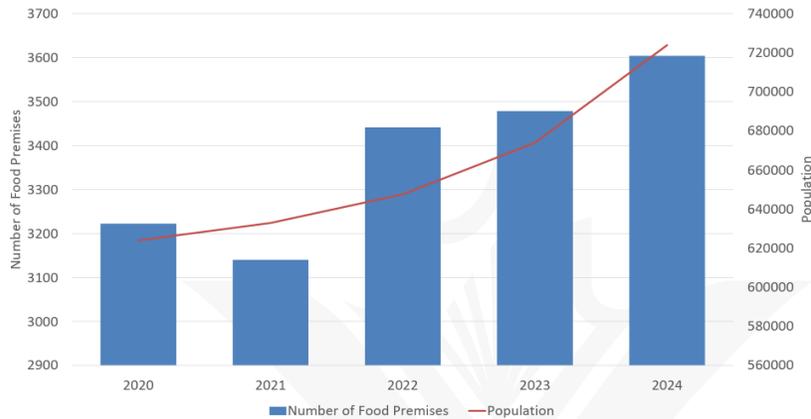
Public Health Continues to Step Up

- Steadily increasing demands
- For example, in 2024 compared to 2018 (at provincial level):
 - 231% increase in respiratory outbreaks supported in long-term care homes, hospitals, retirement homes, etc.
 - 16-33% increase in vaccine doses administered to students
 - 62% increase in food safety complaints triggering investigations
 - 42% increase in recreational water complaints triggering investigations
 - 637% increase in Infection Prevention and Control complaint follow-ups

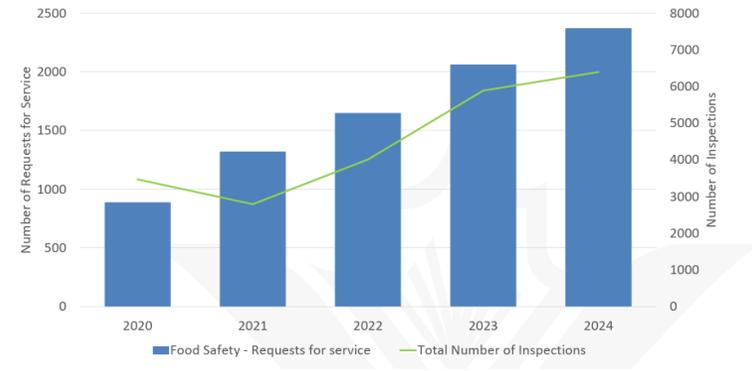
Illustrative Example – Growing Demands

Region of Waterloo Public Health, 2020-2024

Population Growth and Food Premises



Food Safety Requests for Service and Inspections



PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS



January 2026

A STRONG ECONOMY SUPPORTED BY HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH'S ROLE

Protecting local public health is essential to supporting Ontario's economy. A healthy population is more productive, reduces health-care costs, and drives long-term prosperity. Through community-based strategies and strong partnerships, local public health improves health outcomes, increases efficiency, and strengthens local economies across Ontario. The positive impact of local public health in Ontario is illustrated in the examples below.

OUR ASK:

We are asking provincial and municipal decision makers to sustain and strengthen funding for Ontario's local public health system so that communities stay healthy, services remain stable, and the economy stays strong.

PREVENTING DISEASE: IMMUNIZATION

Immunization keeps children healthy and parents in the workforce — while reducing costly hospital care.

- 25% fewer hospitalizations among children aged 0–4 during the 2024–25 RSV season after expanded infant immunization
- 186,000+ Hepatitis B doses and 233,000+ HPV doses delivered to students in 2024
- Childhood immunization reduces ER visits, hospital stays, and long-term health costs

PROTECTING THE POPULATION: OUTBREAK PREVENTION & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Public health detects and contains outbreaks early, protecting workplaces, care settings, and essential services.

- 5,000+ respiratory outbreak responses in congregate settings (2024–25)
- 1,800+ follow-ups by public health units in response to Infection Prevention and Control complaints in 2024
- Emergency response support for First Nations communities during floods and wildfires in 2025

PROTECTING THE POPULATION: INSPECTIONS

Public health inspections prevent illness by enforcing safety standards in everyday settings.

- 42,000+ food premises inspected in 2024
- 6,800+ pools and spas inspected in 2024
- 8,600+ personal service settings inspected in 2024

PROTECTING THE POPULATION: INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations stop health threats before they spread, protecting communities and the health system.

- 14,000+ food safety investigations in 2024
- 106,000+ disease notifications managed in 2024
- 28,000+ rabies exposures investigations in 2024

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

Preventive public health programs reduce chronic disease and long-term health-care costs.

- 556,000+ students screened for dental needs in 2024
- 526,000+ children and youth supported through Healthy Smiles Ontario as of March 2025
- 109,700+ seniors enrolled in the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program as of March 2025
- 99,450+ postpartum Healthy Babies Healthy Children screens completed April 2024–March 2025



Be the unified voice and a trusted advisor on public health



Advance the work of local public health through strategic partnerships and collaborations



Support the sustainability of Ontario's local public health system



Deliver member services to local public health leaders

How Are We Responding?

- Furthering partnerships for collective impact
- Prioritizing services based on local needs & provincial priorities
- Advancing digital modernization & innovation

Investment in Digital Modernization

- Will propel public health agencies towards the next level of operational efficiency and client service
- Will also streamline processes and reduce friction across the entire health system, helping to prioritize patient care over administrative duties.

Return on Investment

- Only ~1% of Ministry of Health operating budget
- Significant cost avoidance in hospitals and emergency care
- Early intervention saves lives and resources
- High economic and social return

Conclusion

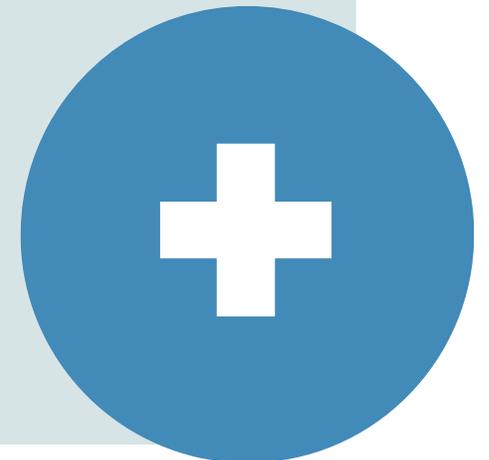
- A healthy population contributes to productivity, workforce participation, and reduced dependence on costly health care
- Investment in public health is an investment in Ontario's fiscal health and long-term economic strength.

PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS



A Strong Economy Supported
by Healthy Communities

By Doug Lawrance,
Mayor of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout
& Chair of the Board of Health, Northwestern Health Unit





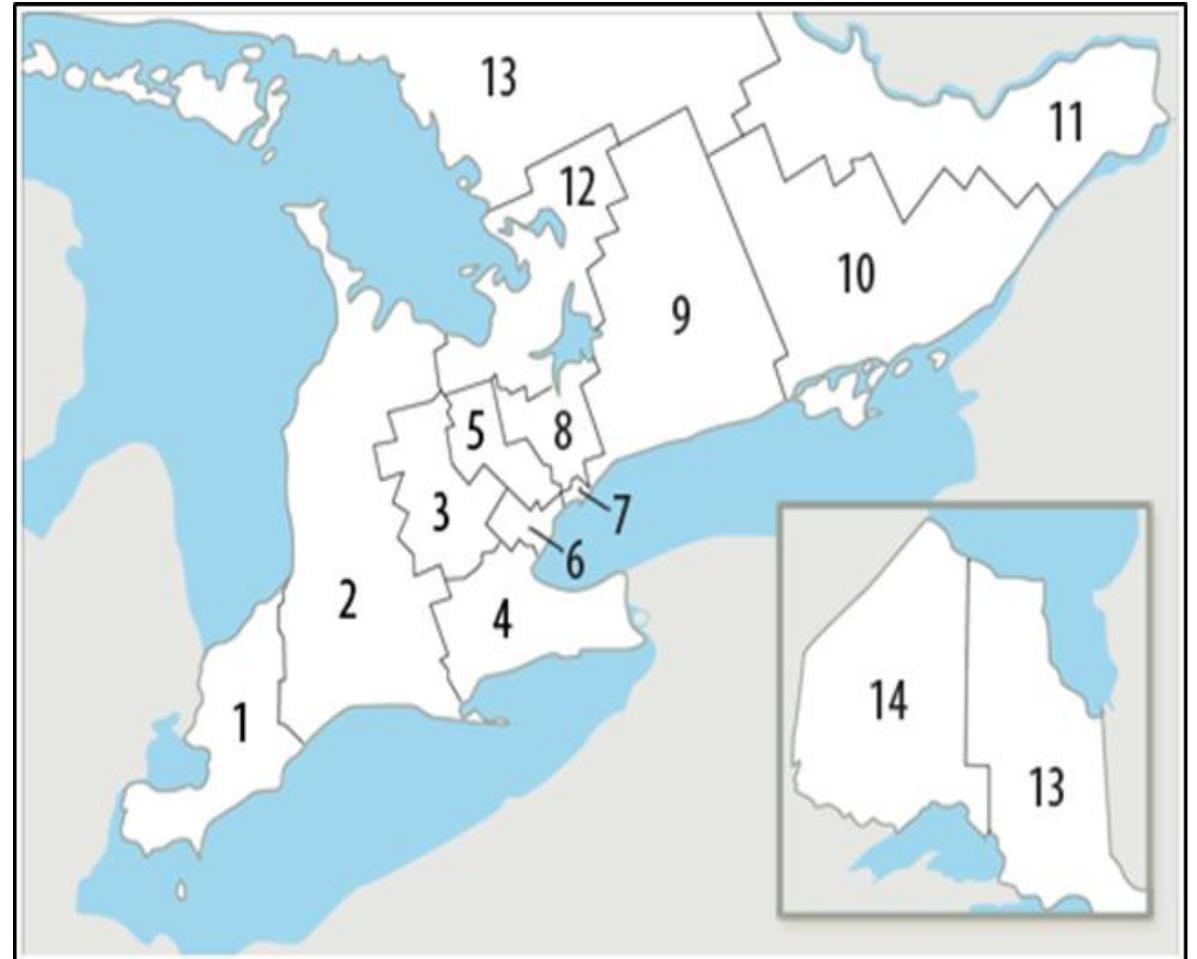
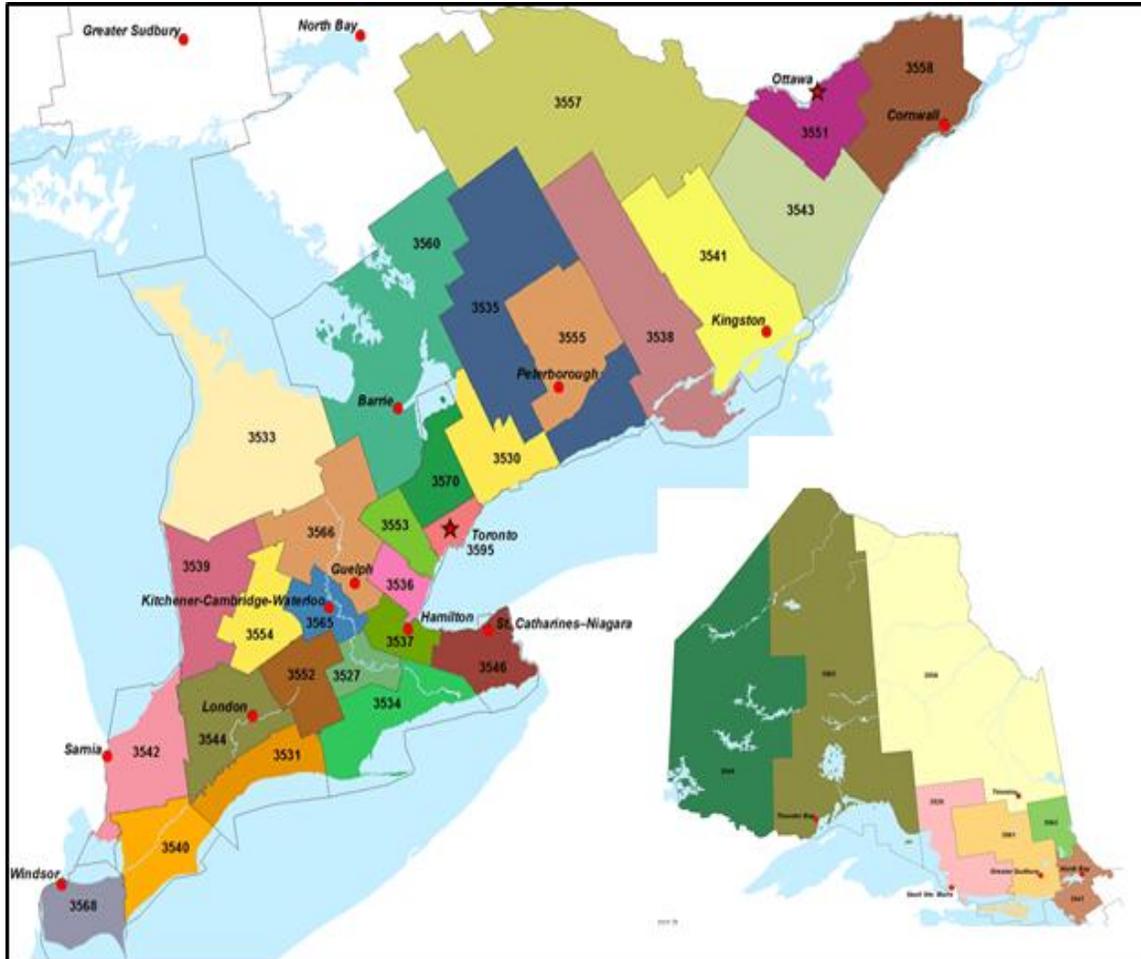




YOU ARE CROSSING
90° LONGITUDE WEST
AND ARE ENTERING
**CENTRAL STANDARD
TIME ZONE**



THE SOUTHERN VIEW HEALTH CARE





**PUBLIC
HEALTH
PROMOTES A
STRONG
ECONOMY**

Every **\$1 spent** on immunizing children with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine **saves \$16** in health care costs.

- Keeping people at work and contributing.
- Keeping people at school and learning.
- Keeping people healthy, out of hospitals, out of the acute care system.

“Acute care is like going to Court. Public health and primary care keep us out of Court - away from those expensive costs of acute care.”

-Speaker at the alPHa 2023 Summer Symposium.

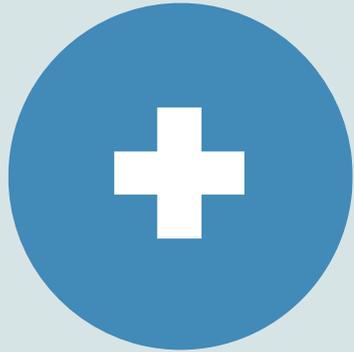
TALKING POINTS

01 Vaccines

02 Smoking

03 Alcohol Availability

VACCINES

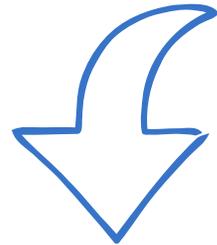


DISEASE CASES IN CANADA: BEFORE & AFTER VACCINES

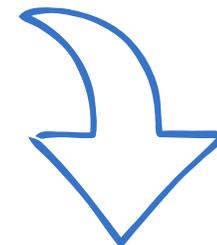
Cases before the vaccine	Disease	Cases after the vaccine	↓
36,101	Mumps	737	98%
53,584	Measles	37	99%
2,545	Polio	0	100%

VACCINES

Adult immunizations save Canada an estimated
\$2.5 billion each year

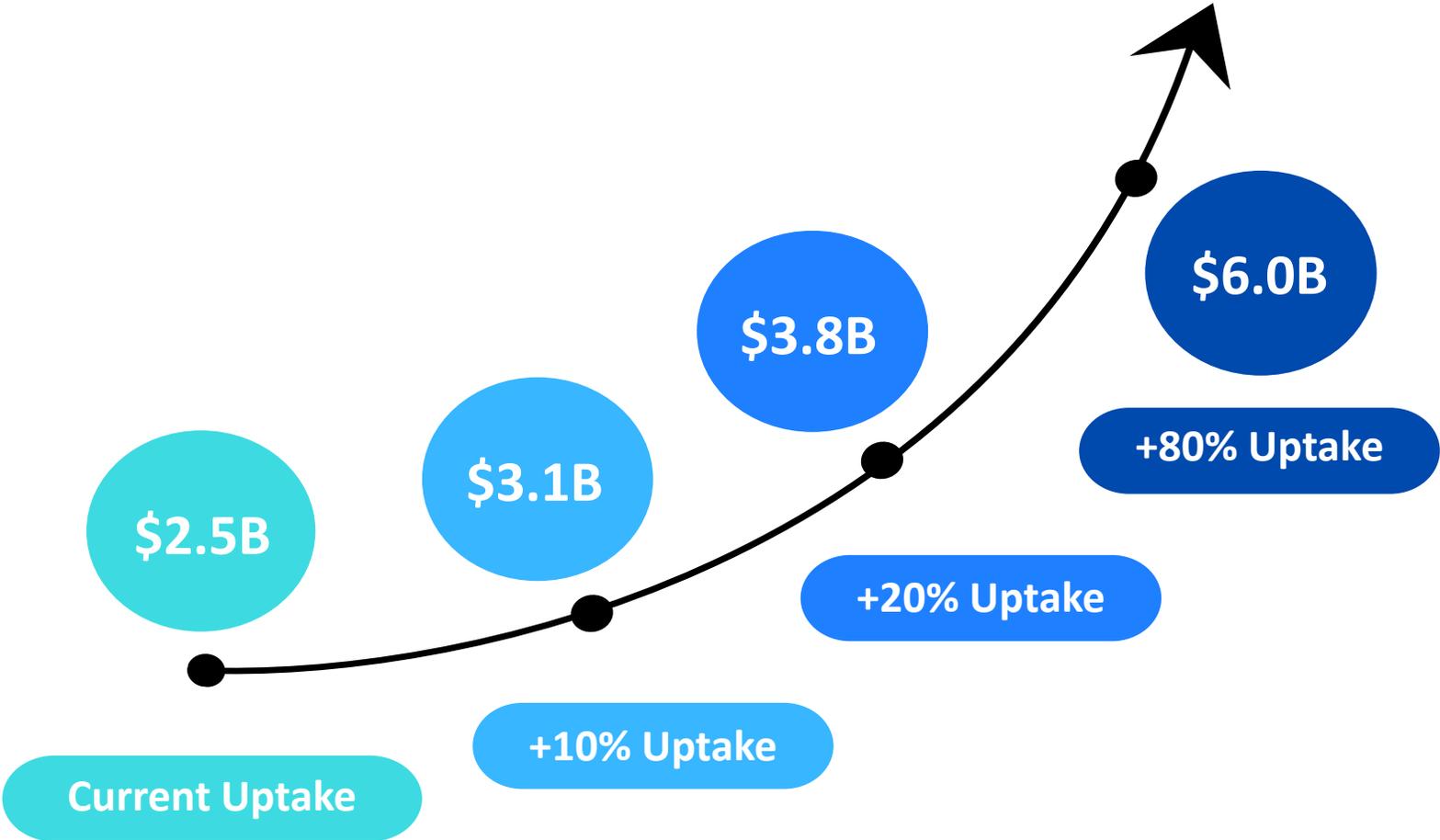


Decreased health
care costs



Productivity gains

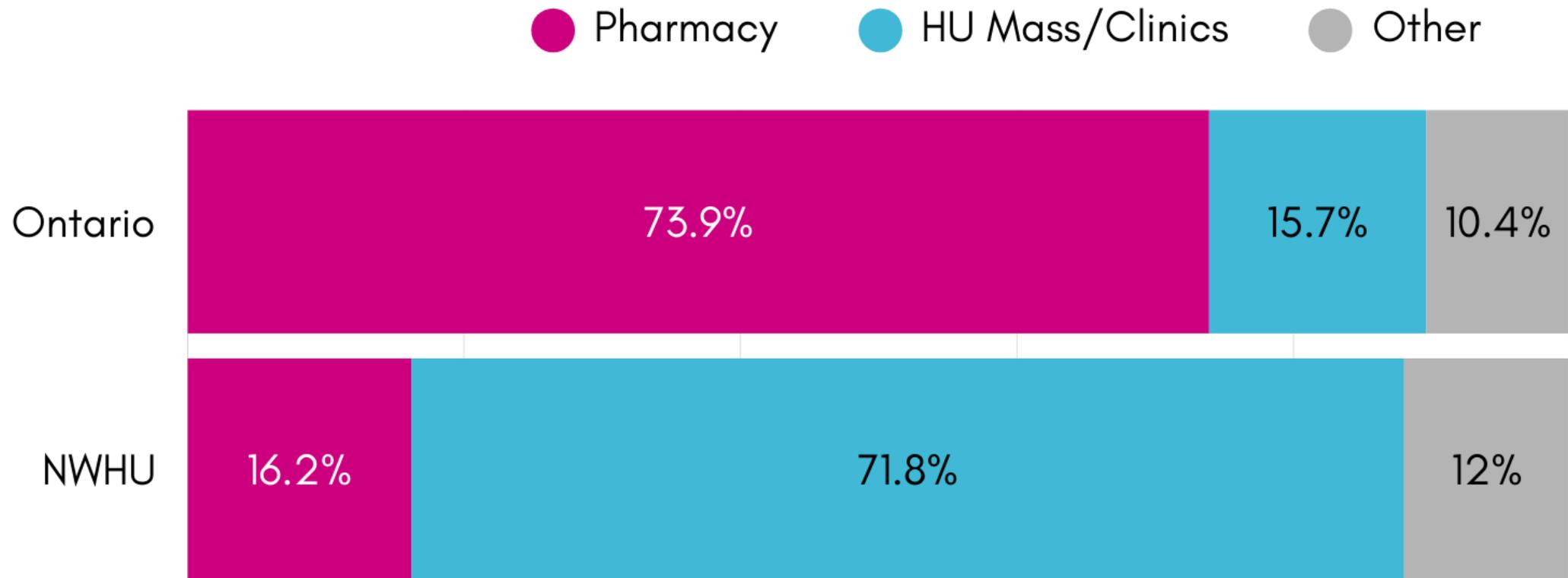
VACCINES ECONOMIC SAVINGS CANADA



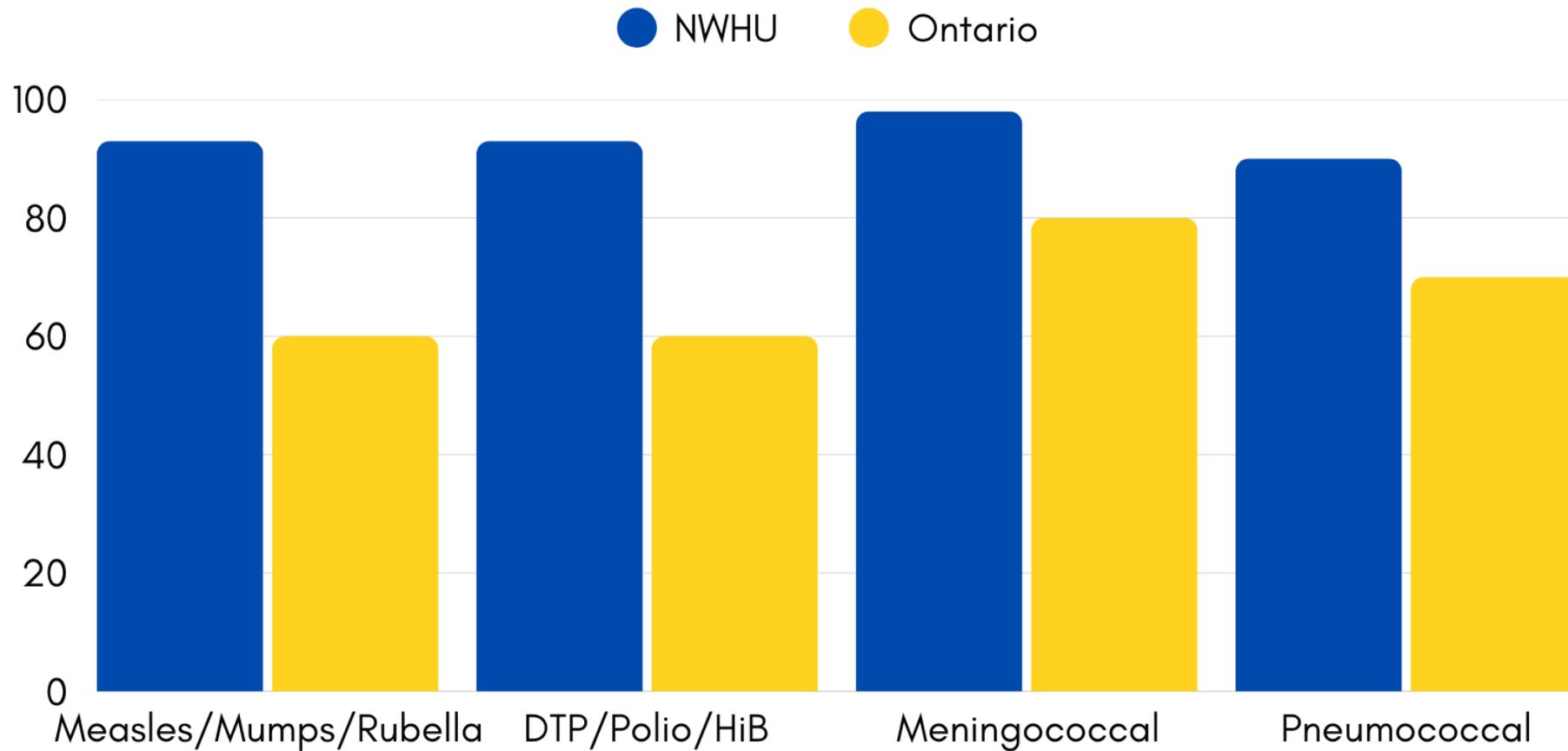
“In 1736, I lost my 4-year-old son to smallpox. I long regretted that I had not given it to him by inoculation.”

-Benjamin Franklin

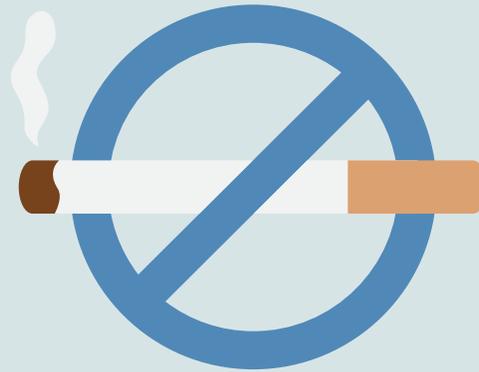
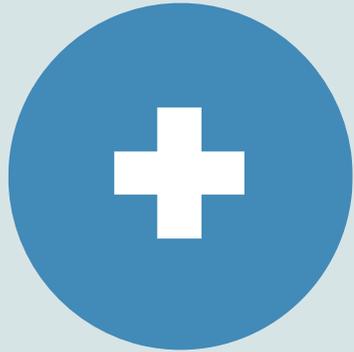
COVID VACCINE ADMINISTRATION



VACCINATION COVERAGE



SMOKING



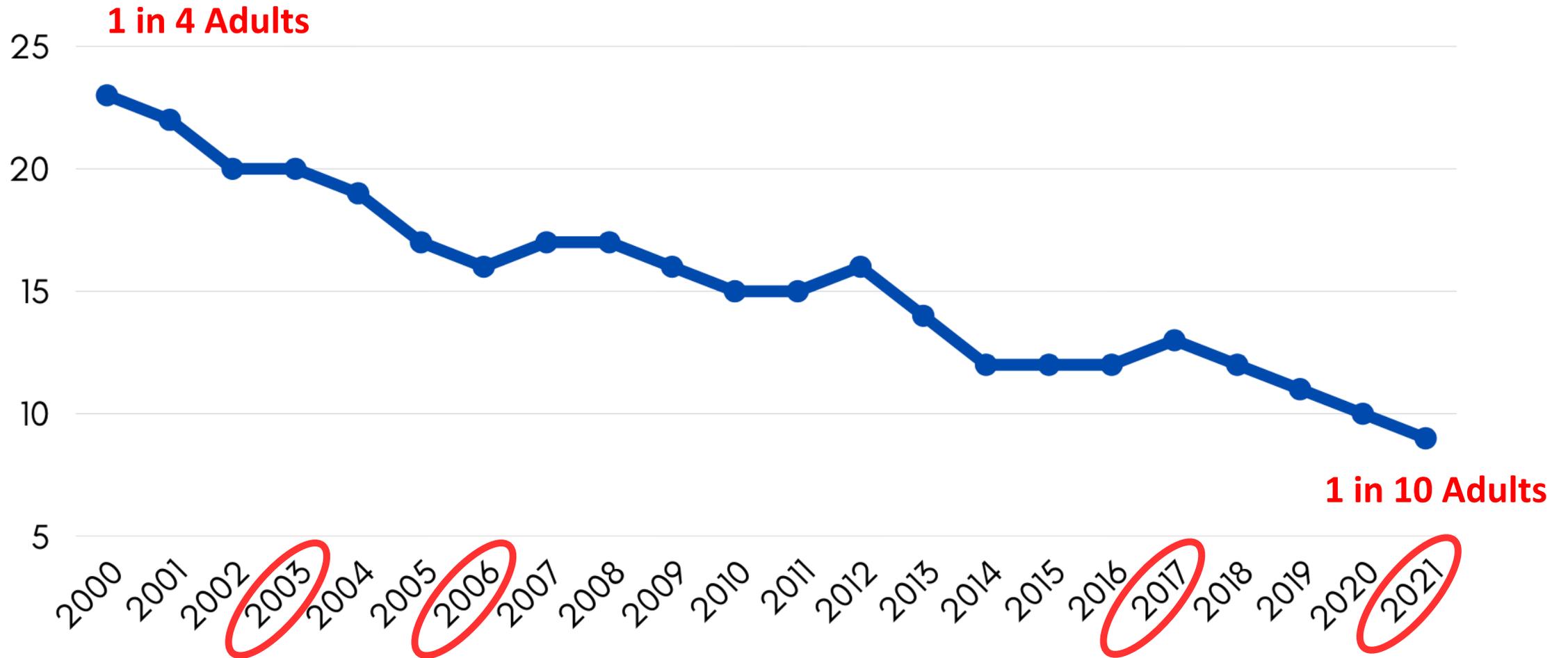
SMOKING

2003: Municipal By-Law 11-03, Sioux Lookout

2006: Smoke-Free Ontario Act

2017: Smoke-Free Ontario Act, Extended Protection

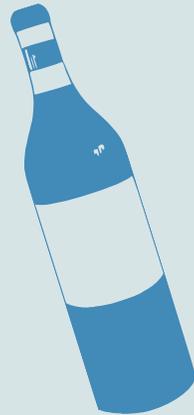
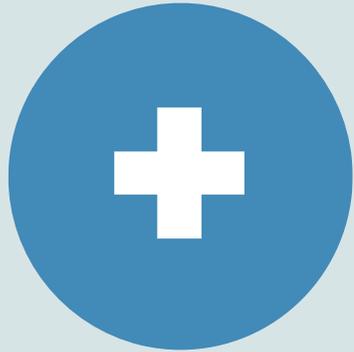
SMOKING % IN ONTARIO



\$ VALUE SMOKING REDUCTION

- Reducing smoking prevalence has saved Ontario **\$4.2 billion** over ten years.
- Those savings translate to **one-third** of Ontario's current annual Public Health budget.

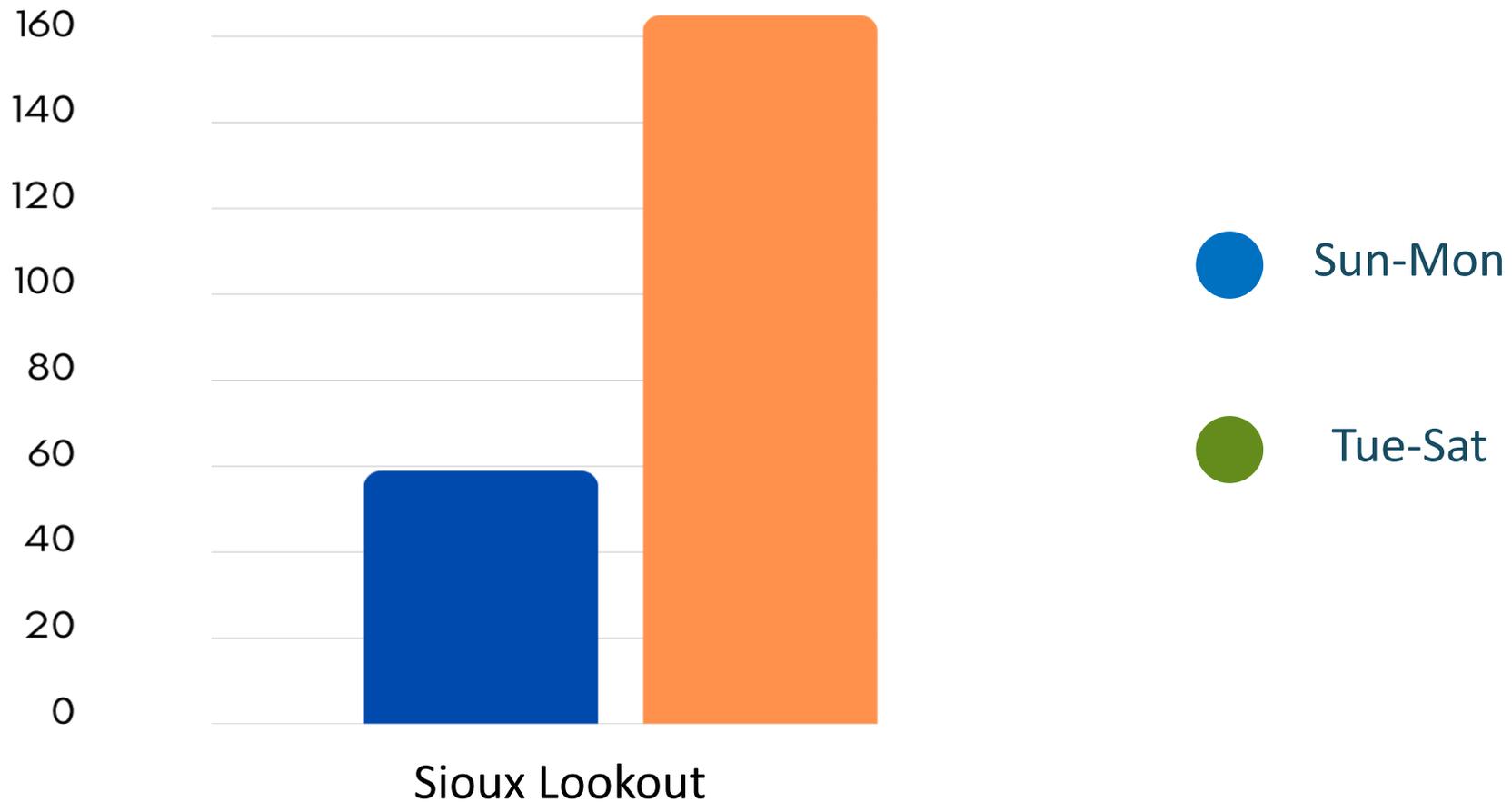
ALCOHOL AVAILABILITY



PROJECT 1:

LCBO Sunday and Monday closures in
Sioux Lookout in 2022-2023

ALCOHOL-RELATED OPP CALLS FOR SERVICE, SUN-MON VS TUE-SAT



\$ VALUE OF SUN-MON CLOSURES

Annual savings of \$1.5 million

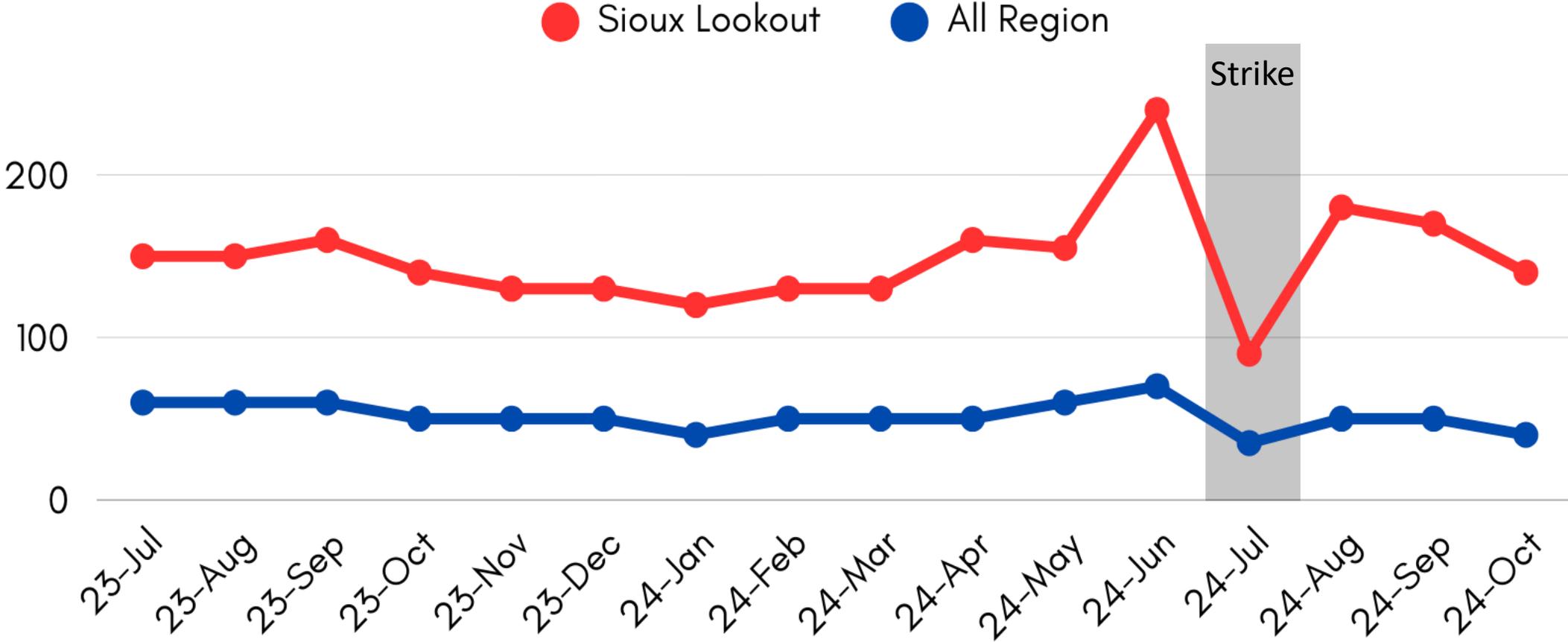
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20-Bed additions facility

PROJECT 2:

Impact of province-wide LCBO strike
in 2024

ALCOHOL-RELATED OPP CALLS



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION BEST BUYS

- Restricting the physical availability of alcohol
- Increasing taxes on alcoholic beverages
- Restricting alcohol advertising

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Public health leads vaccination efforts, which save lives and result in significant economic gains.
- Anti-smoking policies combined with public health action improve lives and save dollars.
- Limiting the availability of alcohol improves lives and saves dollars.

“Public health measures lack the drama of pulling someone back from the edge of death, but they save lives by the millions.”

-The Great Influenza, by John M. Barry

And they save dollars by the millions.

Public health, municipalities, and the Province can work together to create policy informed by public health evidence and driven by public health programs, which will support healthier populations and stronger economies in our communities.

SOURCES

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- Government of Ontario. (2024). Chief Medical Officer of Health: Annual report 2024.
- Mukherjee, S. (2022). The Song of the Cell: An exploration of medicine and the new human. Scribner.
- Northwestern Health Unit. (2024, August 19). Briefing materials – Delegation to the Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, AMO Conference.
- University of Waterloo. (2020). Ontario – Tobacco Use in Canada.
- Public Health Ontario. (2020). Rapid review: Economic benefits of smoking cessation.
- Northwestern Health Unit. (2025). Examining the impact of alcohol availability on OPP, EMS, and ER in the NWHU catchment.
- Municipality of Sioux Lookout OPP. (2025). Annual Billing Statement
- World Health Organization. (2024). Tackling NCDs: Best buys and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2nd ed.).
- Barry, J. M. (2020). The Great Influenza. Penguin Books.

THANK YOU!

Presented by Doug Lawrance,

Mayor of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout
& Chair of the Board of Health, Northwestern Health Unit



SIoux LOOKOUT
Hub of the North



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

www.nwhu.on.ca

Public Health Matters: A Strong Economy Supported by Healthy Communities

Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA)
Ontario's Rural Leaders Conference
January 19, 2026

Andrew Pinto MD CCFP FRCPC MSc

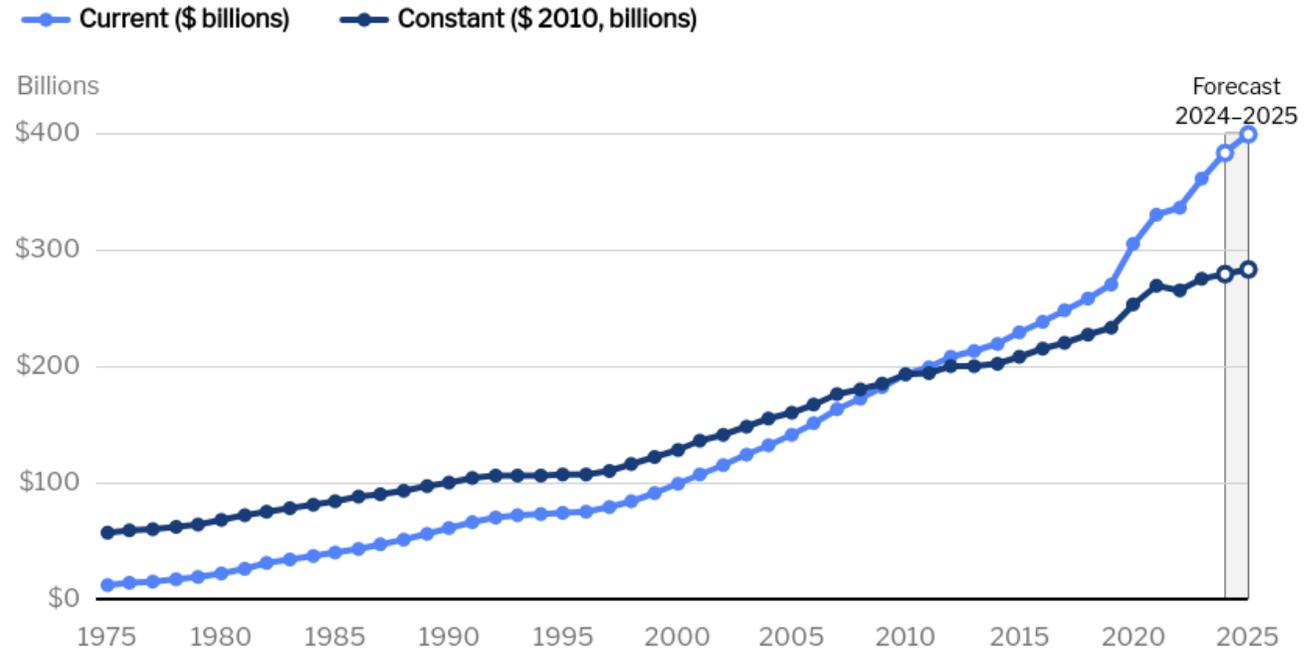
Upstream Lab, MAP/Centre for Urban Health Solutions, Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, Unity Health Toronto
Department of Family and Community Medicine, Fac. of Medicine, University of Toronto
Department of Family and Community Medicine, St. Michael's Hospital
Dalla Lana School of Public, University of Toronto





Health care spending is expected to reach \$399 billion in 2025

Health care spending in current and constant (2010) dollars, Canada, 1975 to 2025



Line chart of health care spending for Canada in current and constant (2010) dollars showing an increase over the last 50 years.

Note
GDP: Gross domestic product.

Source
National Health Expenditure Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

© 2025 Canadian Institute for Health Information

<https://www.cihi.ca/en/national-health-expenditure-trends/nhex-trends-reports/nhex-trends-2025-snapshot>

By Glen P. Mays and Sharla A. Smith

Evidence Links Increases In Public Health Spending To Declines In Preventable Deaths

DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0196
HEALTH AFFAIRS 30,
NO. 8 (2011): -
©2011 Project HOPE—
The People-to-People Health
Foundation, Inc.

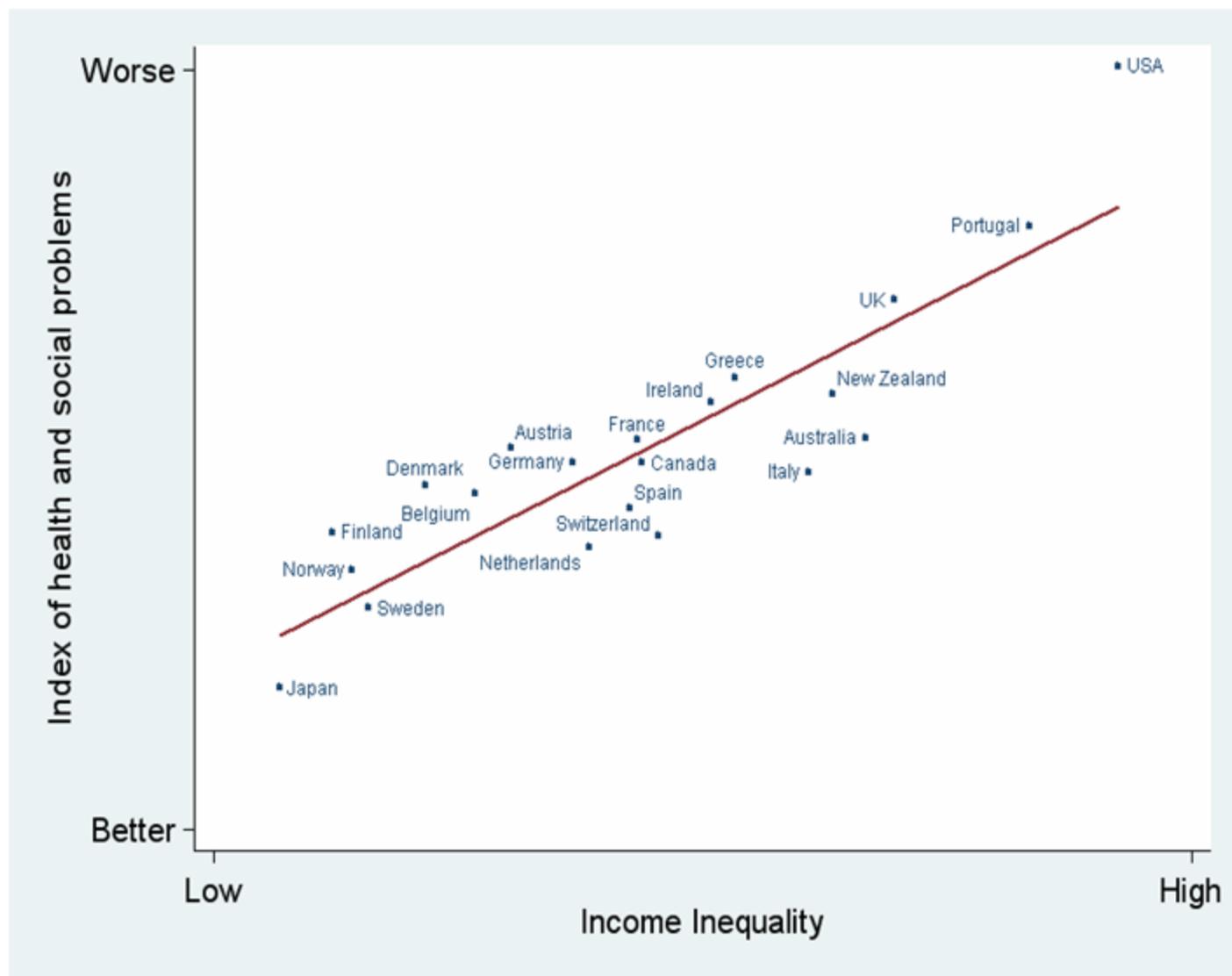
Effects Of Local Public Health Spending On Community Mortality Rates

Mortality rate	Percent change per 10% increase in spending
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births	-6.85***
Heart disease deaths per 100,000 population	-3.22**
Diabetes deaths per 100,000 population	-1.44**
Cancer deaths per 100,000 population	-1.13**
Influenza deaths per 100,000 population	-0.25
All-cause deaths per 100,000 population	-0.29
Alzheimer's deaths per 100,000 population	0.25
Residual deaths per 100,000 population	0.18

Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

Index of:

- Life expectancy
- Math & Literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness – incl. drug & alcohol addiction
- Social mobility



How does a healthier population contribute to microeconomic growth?

- **Labour productivity** - a more efficient workforce, higher earnings
- **Labour supply** – longer workforce participation, lower need to exit workforce to care for ill dependents
- **Educational achievement** – early-learning and supports throughout school years
- **Savings and investment** – increased retirement savings and investment in physical capital, with longer life expectancies

1) Public health can help society move “upstream”, reducing health costs

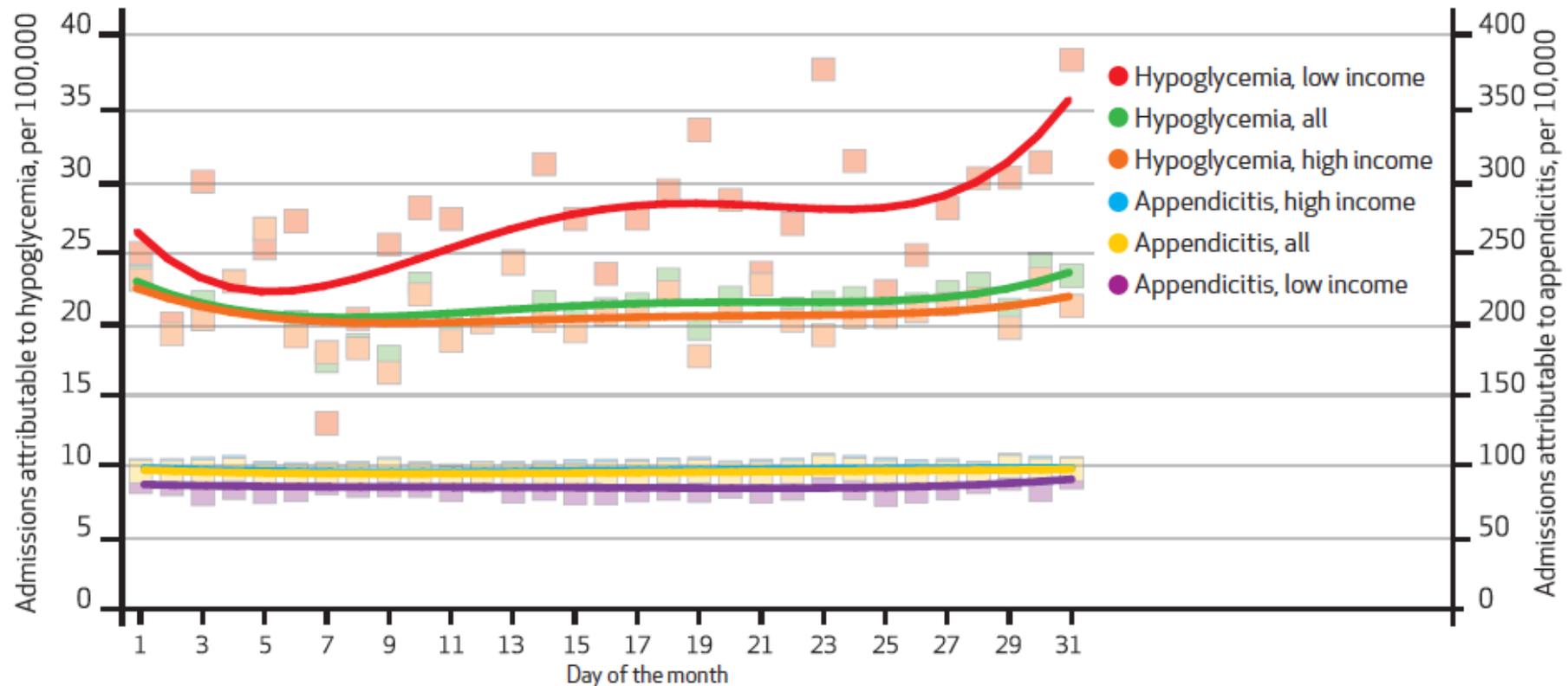
- Healthcare use is concentrated in a relatively small group of “high-cost users”
- Becoming a “high-cost user” is highly associated with low income, food insecurity, and living in more deprived areas

Fitzpatrick T et al. Am J Prev Med 2015; 49(2): 161-171

- Taking an upstream approach – screening and intervening on social needs – has been associated with reduced health use and costs

Smithman et al. BMC Health Serv Res 2025; 25: 1258

Admissions Attributable To Hypoglycemia And Appendicitis Among Patients Ages Eighteen And Older To Accredited California Hospitals On Each Day Of The Month, By Income Level, 2000-08



SOURCE Authors' analysis of data from the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development. **NOTES** "Low income" and "high income" are defined in the text. Data for hypoglycemia relate to the left-hand y axis. Data for appendicitis relate to the right-hand y axis.

Seligman et. Al.,. 2014; Health Affairs

Homelessness in rural, Northern Ontario surging, outpacing rest of province, report says

Laura Stone
Globe & Mail
Jan 13, 2026

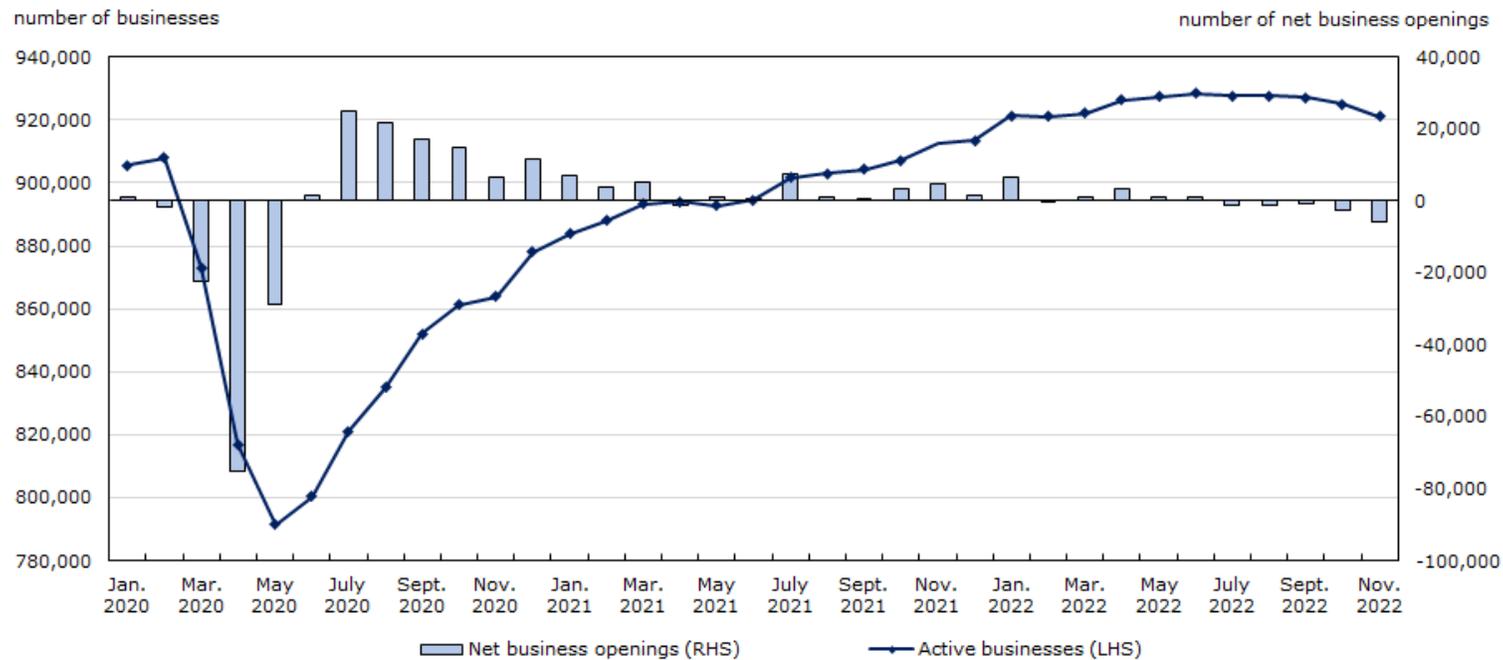
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-homelessness-rural-northern-ontario-surge-report/>



Latimer et al. JAMA Network Open 2019; 2(8): e199782

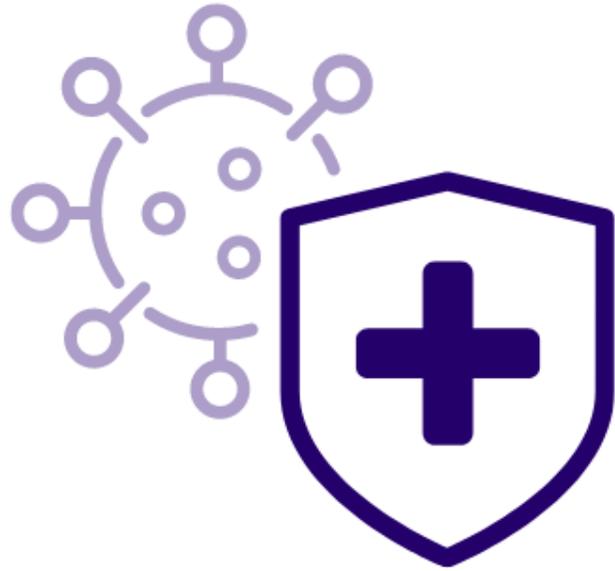
2) Public health is a vital emergency response system

Chart 2
Number of active businesses in Canada, 2020 to present



Notes: RHS refers to right hand scale and LHS refers to left hand scale.
Source: Statistics Canada, table 33-10-0270-01.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2023004-eng.htm>



PREPARED

Pandemic Preparedness Engaging
Primary Care and Emergency Departments

PRÉPARÉ

Préparation à une pandémie impliquant les
soins primaires et les urgences

Canada Biomedical Research Fund



Canada

Canadian Hub for Health Intelligence and Innovation in Infectious Diseases (HI3)



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

3) Public health brings evidence to policy discussions in other sectors

Recommendations for equitable COVID-19 pandemic recovery in Canada

Nav Persaud MD MSc, Hannah Woods MSc, Aine Workentin BSc, Itunu Adekoya MSc, James R. Dunn PhD, Stephen W. Hwang MD MPH, Jonathon Maguire MD MSc, Andrew D. Pinto MD MPH, Patricia O'Campo PhD, Sean B. Rourke PhD, Daniel Werb MSc PhD; for the MAP Task Force to Promote Health Equity during Pandemic Recovery

■ Cite as: CMAJ 2021 December 13;193:E1878-88. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.210904



Improving legislation that governs employment and working conditions in Ontario can positively impact important social determinants of health

Submission to the Changing Workplaces Review

Submitted: September 18, 2015

Authors:

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Gary Bloch, MD CCFP

Physician, Department of Family and Community Medicine, St. Michael's Hospital; Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto; Member, Health Providers Against Poverty; Co-Chair, Poverty and Health Committee, Ontario College of Family Physicians

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Tim O'Shea, MD FRCPC MPH

Associate Professor Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases McMaster University; Associate Medical Director Hamilton Shelter Health Network

Conclusion

- Many studies suggest public health results in a high ROI
- In addition:
 - Public health helps shape our way of thinking, towards a more “upstream” approach, ultimately reducing healthcare costs
 - Public health keeps us prepared for future emergencies, and can help shorten the time to recover
 - Public health contributes to healthy public policy, in sectors beyond healthcare

Questions?



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