

Coming Together Through Challenge and Change

Public Health at Work in Algoma
2020 Report to the Community



Our Vision

Together, we create and sustain healthy communities.

Our Mission

Together with our communities, Algoma Public Health is a leader in promoting and protecting health and well-being.

Our Values

Excellence - Respect - Accountability & Transparency - Collaboration



Algoma
PUBLIC HEALTH
Santé publique Algoma

A Message from the Board of Health Chair

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. COVID-19 has since had a profound impact on the health, social, and economic wellbeing of Algoma residents, schools, businesses, and essential workers.

However, despite the public health measures keeping us safely 2-meters apart and the many challenges faced, we've **come together** in new ways to reduce our risk to COVID-19 and strengthen our **resilience** across the district.

Algoma Public Health (APH), along with community partners and the residents of Algoma, worked together to minimize serious illness and death, as well as societal disruption, from COVID-19.

While focusing on the pandemic response, the work of public health also shifted to ensure the maintenance of highest risk, core public health programs and services to support our communities.

This report to the community gives you a few of the many highlights of 2020.

Lee Mason

Chair, Board of Health

Dr. Jennifer Loo

Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO

2020 Board of Health

Member	Appointed By
Lee Mason (Chair)	Town of Bruce Mines, Village of Hilton Beach & Townships of Hilton, Jocelyn, Johnson, Laird, Macdonald, Meredith & Aberdeen Additional, Plummer Additional, Prince, St. Joseph, Tarbutt
Ed Pearce (1st Vice Chair)	City of Elliot Lake
Deborah Graystone (2nd Vice Chair)	Province of Ontario
Louise Caicco Tett	Sault Ste. Marie
Sally Hagman	Town of Blind River, Town of Spanish, Township of the North Shore
Micheline Hatfield	The Municipality of Wawa, Township of White River, Township of Dubreuville
Dr. Heather O'Brien	City of Sault Ste. Marie
Dr. Patricia Avery	Province of Ontario
Brent Rankin	Town of Thessalon, Municipality of Huron Shores
Matthew Scott	City of Sault Ste. Marie
Adrienne Kappes	Province of Ontario
Karen Raybould	Province of Ontario



Health Protection

Jump Starting our COVID-19 Pandemic Response

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a global pandemic. Ontario confirmed its first presumed positive case of COVID-19 on January 25, 2020. Sadly, on March 17th, Ontario confirmed its first death related to COVID-19, which was followed by the declaration of a provincial emergency.

On March 11, 2020, APH activated its **Incident Management System (IMS)** and began to apply prioritization to programs and services, to ensure a strong response to COVID-19 in our community.

We confirmed our first COVID-19 positive case on March 17, 2020 in Algoma, starting our community's pandemic journey, and by March 22nd, APH launched a major communications campaign to advise of physical distancing, staying home after travel, and isolating if sick.

Our pandemic goals were twofold:

1. Minimize severe illness and death related to COVID-19, and
2. Minimize societal disruption, including the preservation of health care services.

The core activities for our COVID-19 response included:

- Surveillance of COVID-19 indicators;
- Synthesis of new evidence to inform local decision-making and public communications (e.g. website, social media, phone line supports);
- Public health measures, such as basic hygiene, masking and physical distancing, especially since we did not have COVID-19 vaccines or therapies yet;
- Supporting municipal emergency response efforts and enforcing provincial legislation;
- Infection prevention and control measures in public settings and workplaces; and
- Case, contact and outbreak management, in partnership with local stakeholders.

COVID-19 by the Numbers for 2020:

73 cases of COVID-19 managed among Algoma and non-Algoma residents temporarily in Algoma.

188 high-risk close contacts provided contact management.

3 outbreaks where APH was the primary health unit were managed.

General COVID-19 phone line responded to approximately **1244** calls per month.



"Algoma Public Health is a good source for COVID guidelines and news. I feel secure knowing I can have confidence in them"

(Public health survey respondent, 2021)



Health Protection

Applying a Health Equity Lens to COVID-19

Health equity was at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, recognizing that the pandemic would have an effect on the health and social wellbeing of many Algoma residents, especially priority populations.

Supports for Isolation:

APH's COVID-19 phone line team helped clients affected by COVID-19 by coordinating lodging for isolation, safe transportation, groceries, essential goods, methadone support, nicotine replacement therapy, and mobile testing across Algoma. This added public health coordination of services ensured priority populations and those impacted by COVID-19 had wraparound support while in isolation, and was done through the partnership of many agencies (e.g., United Way – Harvest Algoma, Red Cross, SSM & District Social Services Administration Board (SSM-DSSAB), Emergency Medical Services, police, etc.).

In partnership with SSM-DSSAB, and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, local hotel rooms were made available for isolation, to support the unsheltered population and those unable to isolate alone.

Partnership with Priority Populations:

- APH partnered with First Nation communities, as well as a number of First Nation and Metis stakeholders, to ensure pandemic plans aligned with Indigenous values, needs and preferences. We collaborated routinely with Indigenous partners to co-develop processes that supported relationship building, reduced health impacts related to COVID-19, and reduced inequities during the vaccine rollout.
- APH also worked with with Mennonite and Amish communities in Algoma, through routine community visits to share COVID-19-related information, guidance, and health promotion and protection information.



Health Promotion

Sounding the Alarm on Opioid Poisoning

Algoma experiences a significantly higher opioid-related death rate when compared to Ontario, and has a higher rate of hospitalizations related to drug toxicity than Ontario, with opioids being a major cause.

In 2020, there were 43 opioid-related deaths per 100,000 in Algoma, as compared to 14.9 per 100,00 in 2019. This is higher when compared to Ontario, where there were 16.4 opioid-related deaths per 100,000 in 2020. In 2020, the opioid-related death rate in Algoma was 2.6 times higher when compared to Ontario.

Algoma Public Health works with first responders and community partners to reduce the health burden of substance use in Algoma.

What does public health look like in action?

- Opioid surveillance and distribution opioids surveillance bulletins to partners
- Public alerts when opioid poisonings or emergency visits are above threshold (e.g., media releases)
- Harm reduction messaging
- Needle Exchange Services and Naloxone distribution and training across the district
- Education to reduce stigma and discrimination faced by those who use substances

4430 Visits to the needle exchange program for harm reduction supplies and support services.

5 Opioid surveillance bulletins circulated.

5163 Naloxone kits distributed across the district.



LEARN MORE



[A Call for Provincial Re-Commitment to the Opioid Crisis](#)

[Substance Use & Harm Reduction](#)

Health Promotion

Celebrating 25 Years of the Algoma Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program!

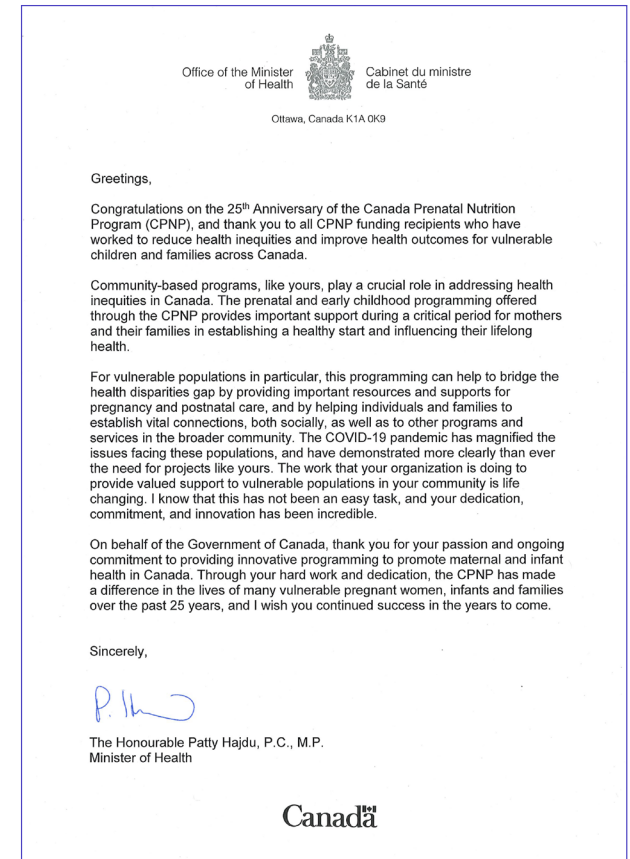
The Algoma Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) reached a **25th year milestone** in the fall of 2020, and the amazing efforts of all partners were acknowledged by the Federal Minister of Health, the Honorable Patty Hajdu.

Since its inception, the APH Healthy Growth and Development program has collaborated with Algoma Family Services, community businesses and organizations to delivery this program.

The goal is to support families in Algoma to achieve optimal preconception, pregnancy, newborn, child, youth, parental, and family health, through a lens of health equity.

CPNP provides an opportunity to reach and support pregnant and postnatal women experiencing financial challenges. Through this program, women are able to access milk, food, vitamins, transportation and health information, as well as connection to social and formal supports.

Although the pandemic posed challenges, we were able to provide the CPNP program to more families in 2020. Traditional drop-ins moved to virtual service delivery by phone, and enrollment in this program increased.



[Video: CPNP Celebrates 25 years in Algoma](#)

Health Promotion

Nurturing Healthy Growth and Development

The Healthy Growth and Development (HG&D) program supports families and children in achieving optimal health through programming focused on preconception health, healthy pregnancies, healthy sexuality, infant feeding, healthy parenting, and delivering the Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program.

This includes screening, child and parent skill building, and working with partners.

Many Algoma families face challenges when it comes to having healthy pregnancies, addressing mental health, and accessing primary care.

During COVID-19, the HG&D program continued to prioritize clients and families and accepted referrals for families identified with risk (prenatal, postpartum and early childhood) until the child transitioned to school.

What does public health look like in action?

- Lactation consultants provided virtual and in-person breastfeeding support.
- Public health nurses conducted 48-hour calls to parents/guardians after discharge from a hospital birth, with consent, to assess risk and provide support, information, and service coordination, and conduct a HBHC screening.
- HBHC supported enrolling clients in smoking cessation services, and education through online, self-directed prenatal classes called [InJoy](#).
- Sexual health information line remained available for individuals wanting information on birth control, pregnancy, pregnancy options, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and sexual health services.

74.1% of all babies born in Algoma received a 48-hour postpartum HBHC screen.



LEARN MORE



[Healthy Growth and Development Program](#)



Health Promotion

Supporting our Schools & School-Age Children

COVID-19-related school closures in early 2020 raised concern for children's mental and physical health and wellbeing, and increased inequities by removing access to important in-school supports. This reinforced the need to prioritize the safe return to in-person learning for school-aged children.

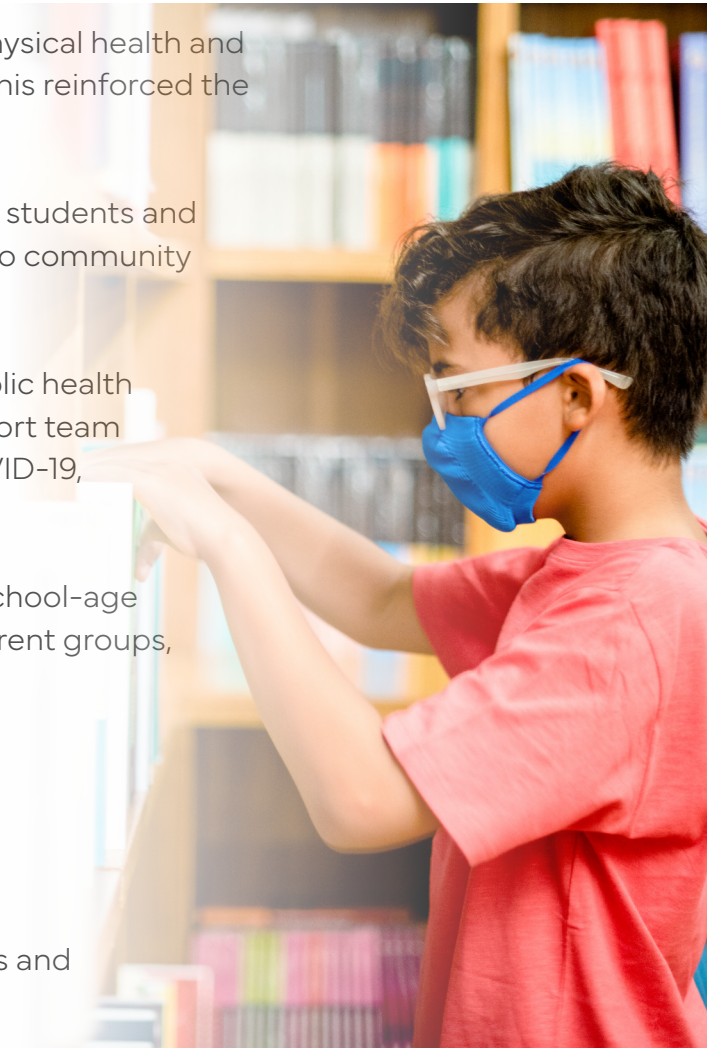
School environments are one of the most important protective factors for the wellbeing of students and their families. Schools promote healthy growth and development, and connect guardians to community resources and supports.

In 2020, Ontario launched the School Focused Nursing Initiative to maintain dedicated public health nurses for COVID-19 response in the schools. APH created a School Health COVID-19 Support team dedicated to helping schools operate safely, mitigate exposure to and transmission of COVID-19, and stay open for in-person learning.

APH uses a comprehensive health promotion approach to work to improve the health of school-age children and youth in Algoma, in collaboration with school boards, principals, educators, parent groups, student leaders, and students.

What does public health look like in action?

- Sharing information and resources (e.g., daily screening tools)
- Providing infection prevention and control strategies and assessments
- Supporting case and contact management and managing outbreaks to keep educators and students safe at school
- Responding to questions and concerns from schools, parents and students



APH works with **4 school boards**, representing **69 schools** and **15, 379** students aged **4 to 17** in Algoma.



LEARN MORE



[Public health in your school](#)

Public Health in All of Us

Public Health is more than individual behaviours. It is the organized efforts of society to keep our communities healthy and safe.

Throughout 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged individuals, businesses, and communities across Algoma. We worked together during these times of great change and uncertainty to protect the health of our community and support one another. Public health was championed in our communities every day, in big and small ways (e.g., staying home when sick, wearing a mask, grabbing groceries for a neighbour at risk, etc.).

Our [Public Health Champion awards](#) honoured Algoma residents who demonstrated exemplary kindness, compassion, and community spirit while helping others overcome the challenges of COVID-19.

The 2020 Public Health Champions included:

Health Protection Champion

Leila Macumber, *Serpent River First Nation*

Mental Health & Wellness Champion

Student Success and Advancement Teams, *Algoma University*

Re-Open Safely Champion

Sault Ste. Marie YMCA
Town of Blind River

Amplifier Champion

Dr. Sean Robinson and **Dr. Jamileh Shaffaf** and *The Wawa Family Health Team*
Dr. Cathy Groh, *Elliot Lake Family Health Team*
Mayor Christian Provenzano, *City of Sault Ste. Marie*



2020 Funding of Local Public Health

Municipal Levies <i>District of Algoma</i>	\$ 3,559,000
Public Health Funding <i>Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care</i>	\$11,306,000
Community Health Funding <i>Ministry of Children & Social Services, North East Local Health Integration Network, Algoma Family Services</i>	\$6,629,000
Fees, Other Grants & Recoveries	\$813,000
Total for 2020	\$22,307,000

Financial Facts! Did you know ...

Public health is funded by provincial and municipal taxpayer dollars.

In 2020, public health programs and services cost Algoma residents **\$190/person** for the year, or **52 cents/person/day**, based on a 2020 census population estimate of 117,698 for the District of Algoma Health Unit.

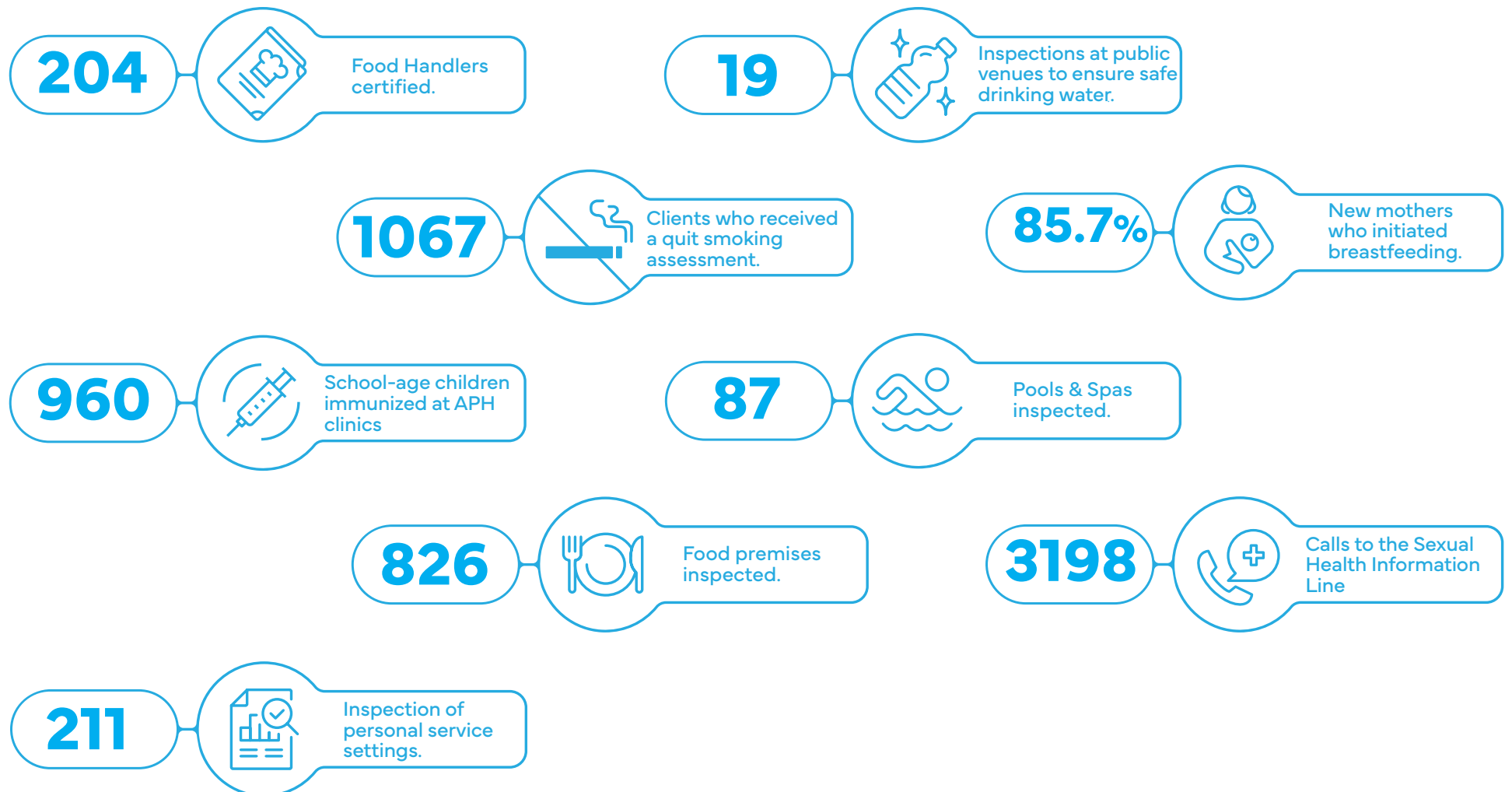
An exceptional value for programs and services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic!

In 2011, public health accounted for 2.2% of Ontario health system expenditures. Over almost a decade, this proportion has only grown to approximately 2.4% of provincial health system expenditures. Learn more about the [Public Health Systems in Canada: Ontario](#) (2021).

2020 Public Health by the Numbers

Algoma Public Health works in our communities every day with individuals, families and community partners to promote and protect health and prevent disease and injury.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic response to keep our communities safe changed or suspended some public health programs and services, lots of prioritized public health action continued. This is a quick snapshot of what we accomplished in 2020!



Connect with Public Health

Join the Conversation



@algomahealth

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