Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario

To view an archived recording of this presentation please click the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxN5yIL9rHY

Please scroll down this file to view a copy of the slides from the session.

Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario

Project STEPP

Skills, Training and Education for Public Health Professionals

Findings from the Training Needs Survey

Victoria Babysheva

Monica Nunes

October 28, 2026

PHO Webinar

Disclaimer

This presentation was created by its author and/or external organization.

It will be published on the Public Health Ontario (PHO) website for public use as outlined in our Website Terms of Use.

PHO is not the owner of this content. Any application or use of the information in this document is the responsibility of the user.

PHO assumes no liability resulting from any such application or use.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe key public health workforce training and education needs identified by people leaders across Ontario.
- Recognize priority competency areas for workforce development, including healthy public policy development, population health assessment, communication, health equity, and surveillance.
- Explain how workforce training needs assessment findings can support workforce planning and professional development decisions.
- Identify opportunities to apply Project STEPP findings to inform learning, capacity-building, and workforce development initiatives within their organizations.

Rationale

PHO needs a clear evidence base to prioritize professional development for Ontario's public health workforce

Workforce focus

Assesses the needs of regulated and non-regulated public health professionals

Actionable evidence

Connects priority topics, training levels, and preferred delivery formats

Outcome: a coordinated and adaptable approach to workforce training

Project Focus

Purpose and Objectives

Identify the training needs of public health professionals in Ontario to inform PHO educational initiatives that strengthen practice and on-the-job performance.

1. Assess training needs
2. Identify critical skill gaps
3. Determine training levels
4. Understand preferred formats

Evaluation Questions

1 Priority skill gaps

Which skill areas represent the most critical gaps among public health professionals that require targeted training to improve performance of teams across Ontario's public health sector?

2 Training level

What levels of training (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced) are needed in key skill areas to support the practical application of knowledge and enhance team performance?

3 Learning format

What training formats and methods are preferred by public health professional teams to improve their skills in practice?

Use of findings: inform and prioritize training topics and levels

Methods

Survey period: December 4, 2025, to January 16, 2026

1

Online survey

People managers overseeing public health teams

2

Skills gap analysis

Hennessy-Hicks Training Needs Analysis[1]

3

Competency categories

Public Health Interventions[2] and draft Foundational Standards[3]

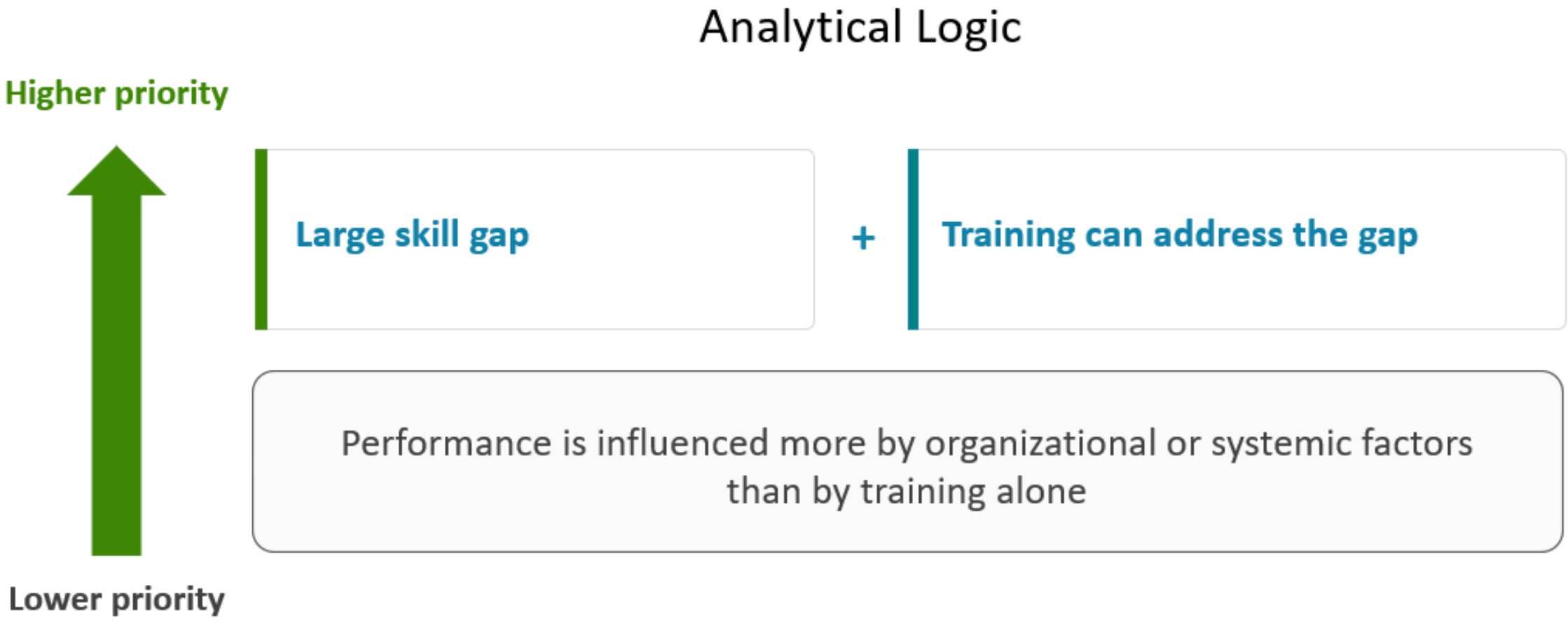
4

Priority ranking

Skill gap balanced against what training alone can address

1. Hicks C, Hennessy D. Hennessy-Hicks Training Needs Analysis (TNA) questionnaire and manual [Internet]. Birmingham: University of Birmingham; 2011 [cited 2026 Apr 17]. Available from: https://epapers.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/3453/10/HenneseyToolkit.pdf
2. Summers A, Kearon J, Maaten S, Gabriel C, Harvey A, Sangster Bouck M, et al. Development of a classification of common interventions to describe the work of local public health agencies. Can J Public Health. 2025;116(6):943-50. Available from: https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-025-01016-6
3. Ontario. Ministry of Health. Ontario public health standards: requirements for programs, services, and accountability [working draft]. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2025.

Methods (continued)



Survey Content

1. **Region**
   Where respondents were located

2. **Importance**
   The importance of each Foundational Standard and Intervention for the work their teams are doing

3. **Performance**
   How teams were performing

4. **Training role**
   How important training alone is in improving team performance

5. **System factors**
   The importance of organizational factors (e.g., resources and supports) in improving team performance

6. **Learning need**
   The level of training needed

7. **Format**
   Preferred learning formats

8. **Comments**
   Additional feedback and future needs

Response Overview

1,300
email invitations

696
accessed the survey

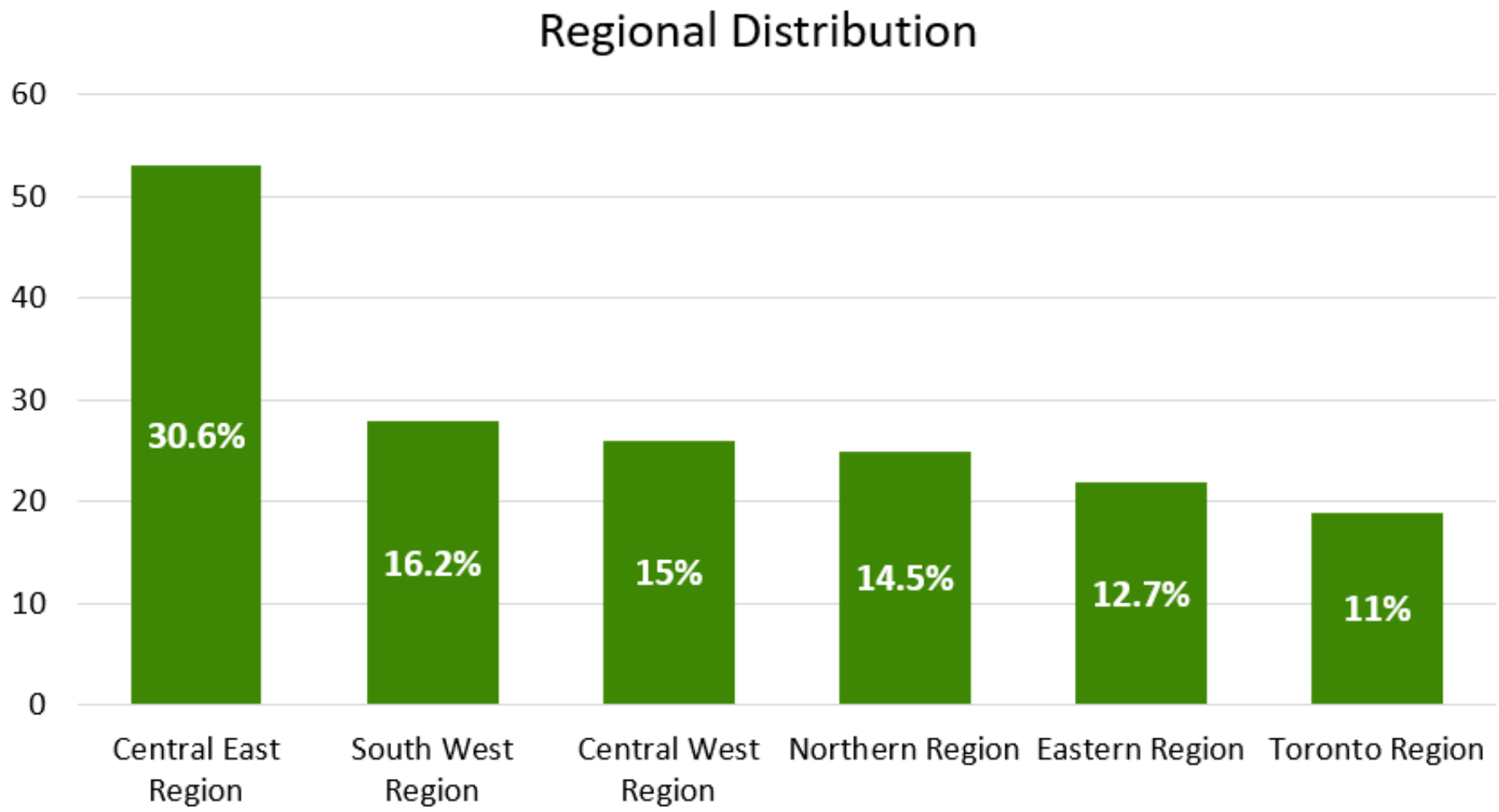
173
completed responses

53.5% accessed

13% completed

Completed questionnaires represented all six PHU regions in Ontario

Respondents



Respondents' Teams: Areas of Work (n=173)



Respondents' Teams: Areas of Work (n=173) (continued)



Provincial Priority Areas for Training

1	Healthy Public Policy Development	85 respondents
2	Population Health Assessment	98 respondents
3	Communication	125 respondents
4	Surveillance	99 respondents
5	Health Equity	122 respondents

Provincial Training Needs by Topic: Full Landscape

Topic (Foundational Standard or Intervention)	Overall Ranking	Responses
Healthy Public Policy Development	**1**	**85**
Population Health Assessment	**2**	**98**
Communication	**3**	**125**
Surveillance	**4**	**99**
Health Equity	**5**	**122**
Investigations	6	56
Quality, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange	7	106
Community and Partner Mobilization	8	107
Planning and System Coordination	9	118
Education and Skill Building	10	110
Case, Contact and Outbreak Management	11	65
Vector Control	12	29
Inspections	13	58
Clinical Services	14	73
Health Resource Inventory Management	15	49

Regional Findings

Healthy Public Policy Development ranked first in five regions



Regional Findings (continued)

Eastern region

Health Equity ranked first. Quality, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange ranked second.
This profile differed from the provincial ordering.

Across regions

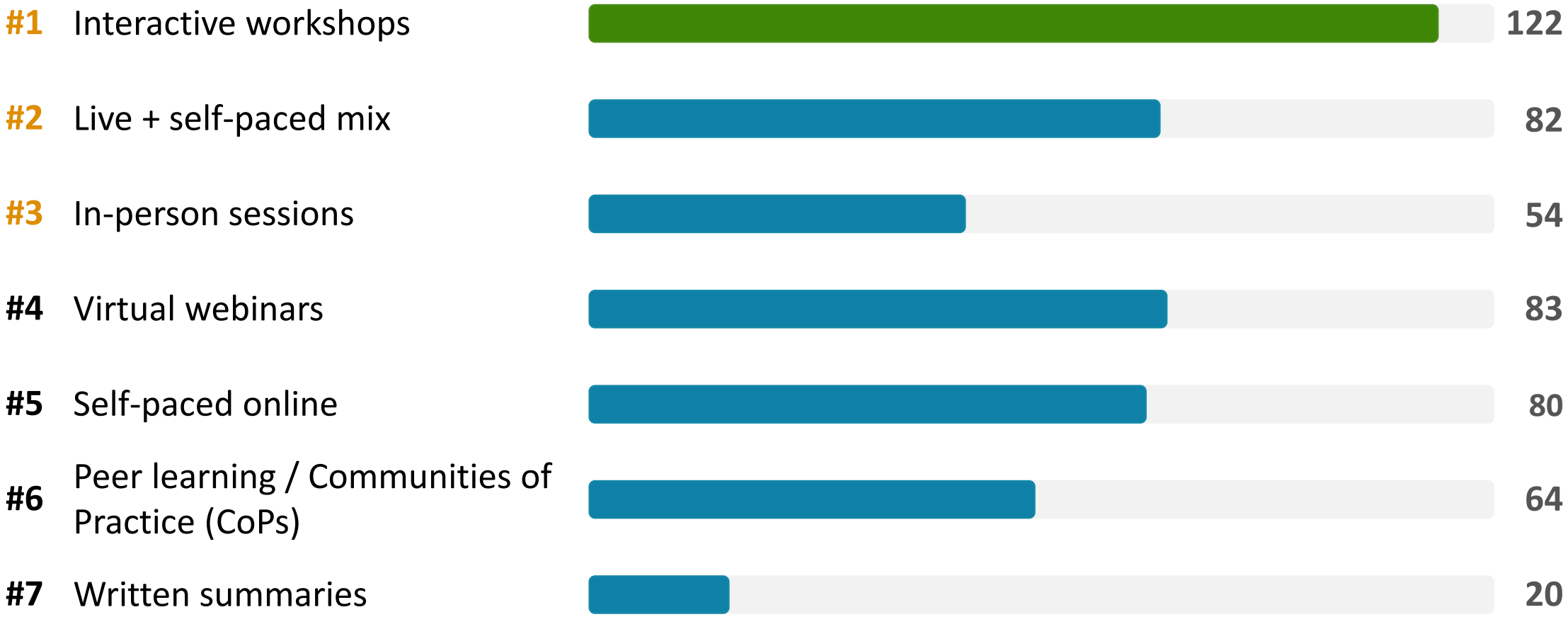
The same core topics appeared repeatedly, but their order varied. Differences suggest variation in baseline capacity and program context.

Design implication

Use consistent core content across Ontario while allowing adaptation to regional and program-specific needs.

Regional variation points to local context

Preferred Training Formats



Learners prefer applied and flexible formats

Anticipated Future Needs

Digital, data and analytics

AI, machine learning and automation
Data visualization
Advanced analytics

Technical and program practice

Clinical, IPAC and program-specific skills
One Health and vector-borne diseases
Emerging public health topics

Communication and influence

Risk communication and misinformation management
Community engagement and CoPs
Policy, advocacy and government relations

Future needs combine technical and relational capability

Anticipated Future Needs (continued)

Workforce development and practice improvement

Soft skills and facilitation
Quality improvement (QI, Lean)
Foundational public health orientation
Public health system navigation

Ethics, equity and governance

Ethics, privacy and governance (AI, data and Indigenous governance)
Equity and cultural safety
Indigenous partnerships

Future needs also extend to workforce systems

These needs span both technical public health functions and broader system-level capabilities

Recommended Model



From Findings to Implementation

Delivery	Expand hybrid, recorded, and on-demand options. Use online modules for foundational and frequently updated content
Application	Prioritize highly interactive formats for practice-based skills. Embed cases, simulations, and peer discussion
Pathways	Build entry, intermediate, advanced, leadership, and specialist learning pathways with standardized onboarding
Knowledge Retention	Move beyond one-off sessions. Use multi-session learning and reusable materials for reinforcement and access

Key Takeaways

What STEPP enables

Prioritize

Training topics

Align

Training levels

Target

Learner groups

Adapt

Regional delivery

Core needs are consistent enough to coordinate provincially, while regional differences require flexibility in content depth and delivery

For More Information About This Presentation, Contact:

Victoria Babysheva

Evaluation Specialist

victoria.babysheva@oahpp.ca

Public Health Ontario keeps Ontarians safe and healthy. Find out more at **PublicHealthOntario.ca**

Ontario