

# Communications Activity Report 2025

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**To:** Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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## Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Board of Health receive this report for information.

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## Key Points

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- The Communications team at Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDG Public Health or the Agency) leads compliance with the communications components of the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS).<sup>1</sup>
- WDG Public Health saw a 56 percent increase in social media impressions and more than a threefold increase in social media engagement in 2025. Facebook accounted for most of this growth, with 75 percent more impressions and five times more engagements compared to 2024.
- The Agency website eclipsed 611,000 views in 2025. The top three most-viewed pages were each related to information about local measles transmission during the 2024/2025 Ontario measles outbreak.
- Public Health media mentions increased slightly in 2025, owing in part to continued weekly interviews with the Medical Officer of Health on CTV Kitchener.
- Looking ahead for 2026, Communications has completed a relaunch of the WDG Public Health website for improved security, user experience, navigation and integration of Agency resources, such as Dashboards and Reports, for key audiences.

## Background

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Communications includes three Communications Specialists and one registered Librarian supporting the organization's internal and external communication needs:

- Leading the Agency's compliance with the communication requirements outlined in the Foundational Standard of Effective Public Health Practice under the Ontario Public Health Standards, specifically in the areas of Research, Knowledge Exchange and Communication.<sup>1</sup>
- Responding to community needs and informing the public how the Board of Health protects and promotes both individual and community health, pursuant to the Standard's Transparency Framework goal to "promote awareness, understanding, and public confidence in Ontario's public health system."<sup>1</sup>
- Working with program areas and subject matter experts to craft clear, accurate and accessible communications to meet the Program Standards for improving public knowledge, either through developing and implementing local communications strategies or adapting national/provincial communications strategies where local assessment has identified a need.<sup>1</sup>

## Discussion

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In 2025, Communications continued to proactively inform and engage audiences with timely, relevant and effective messaging, providing the community with guidance through several significant public health events. The following sections highlight key communications activities.

### Traditional News Media

Communications prioritized timely media relations with a focus on both proactive and reactive media opportunities throughout 2025. Dr. Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO, and Dr. Tenenbaum, Associate Medical Officer of Health, served as the Agency's primary media spokespersons. Communications staff and other senior leaders also acted as spokespersons where relevant.

Highlights of 2025 news media efforts include:

- The Agency was mentioned in the media 714 times, a three percent increase from 2024.
- Weekly interview segments with CTV Kitchener continued throughout the year, covering timely public health topics on a major local news program.
- Communications prepared and distributed 11 media releases (see Table 1).

**Table 1: WDGPH Media Releases, 2025**

Date	Media Release/Statements
March 3	Measles circulating in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph
April 22	Measles cases rising in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph
May 1	Public measles exposure – April 21
May 6	Public measles exposure – May 6
May 7	WDG is now a risk area for measles transmission
June 23	Take precautions during hot weather
July 16	West Nile Virus found in dead bird
July 31	First case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus confirmed in horse in Wellington County
August 13	WDG Public Health confirms first rabies-positive bat of 2025
October 1	WDG Public Health opens online booking for fall flu & COVID-19 vaccines
October 21	WDG Public Health and Wellington County encourage residents to test their homes for radon

## Social Media

WDG Public Health is currently active on the following social channels:

- [X: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [Facebook: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [Instagram: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [Threads: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [LinkedIn: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health](#)
- [Bluesky: @wdgpublichealth.bsky.social](#)
- [YouTube: @WDGPublicHealth](#)

Social media remained an indispensable tool for delivering timely public health messaging in 2025, especially surrounding measles transmission in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. With the exceptions of LinkedIn and Bluesky, where the strategies dictate different content focuses, the most engaged-with post on each channel was related to the local measles situation.

Other health topics that garnered high social media engagement included radon testing, health alerts related to the local drug supply, and information about other reportable diseases (e.g., rabies and Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus). Communications' use of social media to effectively publicize these and other topics led to a 56 percent increase in total impressions and a 328 percent increase in total engagements – the largest such increases since COVID-19 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Social Media Channel Performance Summary, 2025 vs. 2024**

Social Channel	Impressions*	Engagements**	Post Link Clicks***	Audience****
Facebook	<b>2.8M</b> ↑75%	<b>195.1K</b> ↑500%	<b>33.9K</b> ↑272%	<b>12.2K</b> ↑3%
Instagram	<b>595K</b> ↑24%	<b>4.9K</b> ↑6%	<b>N/A</b>	<b>7.6K</b> ↑4%
X	<b>96.2K</b> ↓40%	<b>5.2K</b> ↓38%	<b>1.4K</b> ↑16%	<b>13K</b> ↓5%
LinkedIn	<b>59.7K</b> ↑68%	<b>4.7K</b> ↑47%	<b>4.1K</b> ↑57%	<b>3.3K</b> ↑27%
Totals	<b>3.6M</b> ↑56%	<b>210K</b> ↑328%	<b>39.5K</b> ↑203%	<b>38K</b> ↑5%

\*Impressions refers to the number of times that any content associated with the page was displayed to users during the reporting period. This includes both organic (non-paid) and paid activity.

\*\*Engagements refers to the number of times that users reacted to, commented on, shared, or clicked on posts during the reporting period. This includes both organic (non-paid) and paid activity.

\*\*\*Post Link Clicks is the number of times that users clicked on links from WDGPH posts during the reporting period. For Instagram, the metric measures bio link clicks.

\*\*\*\*Audience refers to the number of users who like/follow the page as of the last day of the reporting period.

Social media highlights in 2025 vs. 2024 include:

- Approximately 1.2 million more total social media impressions year-over-year.
- Better than a threefold increase in overall engagements with just a five percent growth in total audience, showing Communications' continued commitment to providing followers with content that is meaningful to them.
- LinkedIn continued to see solid growth across key metrics, evidence of a strong professional development network and effective thought leadership content strategy.
- X (formerly Twitter) saw modest decreases in impressions and engagement. These trends can be attributed to deprioritizing certain public health messages due to the platform's recent algorithm changes and an increasingly fractured audience.
- Paid social in 2025 generated a 635 percent increase in engagements with lower cost per click rate and far lower cost per engagement rate compared to regular posts in 2025. Key campaigns included the Parent Insight Survey, Dental Needs Survey, and 2025 Online Prenatal Program promotions.

The most viewed posts across all platforms in 2025 were:

- [Measles circulating in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph \(Facebook, March 3, 2025\)](#) – 407,511 impressions
- [At Least 21 Drug Poisonings & One Fatality in the Past Week \(Facebook, August 29, 2025\)](#) – 137,033 impressions
- [WDG Public Health and Wellington County encourage residents to test their homes for radon \(Facebook, October 21, 2025\)](#) – 128,221 impressions

Posts with the most engagement (where the audience interacts by commenting, liking or sharing) across all platforms in 2025 were:

- [Measles circulating in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph \(Facebook, March 3, 2025\)](#) – 56,866 engagements
- [Measles cases continue to increase in WDG \(Facebook, May 8, 2025\)](#) – 22,205 engagements
- [WDG Public Health and Wellington County encourage residents to test their homes for radon \(Facebook, October 21, 2025\)](#) – 17,616 engagements

Facebook continues to account for the majority of impressions and audience engagement across all WDG Public Health social media channels. Audience-building is ongoing for Bluesky and Threads, as Communications continues to explore and refine strategies for engaging audiences for on these newer platforms.

### Public Website

In 2025, the WDG Public Health website saw a 10 percent increase in traffic from the previous year, garnering over 611,000 views. The Outbreak Bulletin was the most-viewed landing page for the third consecutive year (see Table 3).

Additionally, both the second- and third-most viewed pages were related to measles exposure in WDG, continuing the trends seen across the Agency’s social media channels.

**Table 3: Top Pages Visited by Pageviews, 2025**

Page	Views
<b>Outbreak Bulletin</b>	41.7K
<b>Measles Exposures in the Community</b>	24.2K
<b>Media Release: Measles circulating in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph</b>	14.5K
<b>Flu and COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics</b>	13.7K
<b>School and Childcare Immunizations</b>	13.2K

### Blog

The Stay Well Blog remains a valuable resource for the Agency’s audience, totalling over 26,000 views and over 19,500 active users in 2025. Posts from previous years dealing with evergreen or recurring public health topics (e.g., norovirus prevention) continue to engage the community and attract visitors to the WDG Public Health website (see Table 4).

In terms of new content from 2025, the most-viewed blog focused on advice for accessing affordable dental care, featuring a call-to-action to complete WDG Public Health’s community dental survey. Other popular content topics included human trafficking awareness and smoke-free environments (i.e., awareness around tobacco, vaping and cannabis).

Going forward, Communications will continue to consult with staff to explore opportunities where the Stay Well Blog can act as a supplementary platform for existing programs, by hosting content that aligns with timely topics and/or includes calls-to-action for Agency initiatives. This

strategy affords better integration of the Agency’s overall communication efforts and ensures content is relevant to audiences on an ongoing basis.

**Table 4: Top Blog Posts Visited by Views, 2025**

Blog Post	Views
<a href="#">How to say “no” to norovirus in your home (from 2017, updated 2025)</a>	7.9K
<a href="#">What happens when you can’t afford dental care? (from 2024, updated 2025)</a>	921
<a href="#">Human Trafficking: A hidden crisis in our community (from 2025)</a>	806
<a href="#">Supplying the habit: How youth are getting vapes despite the rules (from 2025)</a>	786
<a href="#">The simple facts everyone should know about hookah (from 2017)</a> <i>(this post was recently removed due to outdated content)</i>	764

## Library Services

The librarian supports the third Foundational Standard, “Effective Public Health Practice” specifically the first section, “Program Planning, Evaluation, and Evidence-Informed Decision Making” by assisting public health professionals to find, organize and use information to support evidence-based research, programs and services.

The librarian provides literature searches, information services and copyright support to public health staff and management. Topics supported in 2025 include youth vaping, vaccines and immunizations, measles, norovirus, food insecurity, food safety, children’s health and harm reduction.

In 2025, the librarian joined the Ontario Public Health Libraries Association website committee, contributing to a curated collection of search tools, databases, and grey-literature (non-academic) resources that help public health professionals across Ontario find and use evidence in their work.

## Looking Ahead

### Forecasting Trends

The Communications team anticipates the need for messaging will grow and evolve in the following areas:

**Vaccine hesitancy:** the agency continues to encounter a vocal minority opposed to Agency messaging around vaccination in the community and on social media. To address related concerns and counter persistent misinformation, Communications is continuing to plan and deploy evidence-based educational messaging on the effectiveness of vaccines, as well as supporting promotion of community initiatives like the Youth Vaccine Champions program.

**Extreme weather:** as seen in recent years, warnings from Environment Canada due to extreme heat and extreme cold are being issued more frequently for WDG. With this being the new reality, the need for external communications around community infrastructure related to extreme weather will continue to increase. In 2026, Communications is supporting Environmental Health's location mapping project that compiles location information for warming and cooling spaces across different municipalities in WDG.

**Role of artificial intelligence (AI):** as discussed in previous reports, Communications uses AI applications to streamline and organize administrative tasks, including drafting content and designing visuals.<sup>2</sup> The team continues to explore new applications and efficiencies that apply to daily activities, guided by WDG Public Health's core values of transparency, equity and innovation. Communications will produce an agency-wide guide to using AI in communications activities.

Another emerging health trend relates to the Canadian Medical Association's 2026 Health and Media Tracking Survey showing that 52 percent of Canadians are now turning to AI for health information, including using AI search results for actual advice on treatment (48 percent). These numbers are concerning because the CMA suggests there is a five-times greater likelihood of experiencing health harm for those who use AI health advice compared to those who don't.<sup>3</sup>

While the public's use of AI for personal health is not something we can track locally, considering this national trend, there is a need for messaging to reinforce that although AI can be useful in making the healthcare journey more efficient and accessible, it should never be a substitute for expert care.

### Public Website Redesign

In February 2026, WDG Public Health launched a new website, the Agency's first major website upgrade in nearly a decade. The project began in May 2025 and was led by Communications and IT in partnership with an external vendor, with the goal of improving security, functionality, accessibility and user-experience.

Key improvements include:

- upgrading the website platform from Drupal 7 to Drupal 11.
- strengthening accessibility beyond current standards
- simplifying site navigation and enhanced search functionality
- implementing a mobile-first website design and improved mobile navigation
- integrating local Public Health data dashboards into the main website
- introducing a dedicated Professionals section for healthcare providers, community partners and businesses

As the Agency's primary channel for sharing public health information, the website upgrade provides a more modern and user-friendly website for residents, partners and professionals to access information, services and resources. Communications and IT will continue working with staff to ensure the website meets the needs of WDG communities.

## Health Equity Implications

Communications supports health equity by providing the community with access to clear, timely and relevant information. When beginning or collaborating on a new project, Communications prioritizes online accessibility, simplified language, multiplatform availability, and AODA-compliant visual design to minimize barriers to information. These efforts help contribute to a more inclusive public health approach across the region.

In 2025, Communications supported a number of initiatives with a health equity focus, including promotion of the dental survey to help understand gaps in access to affordable dental care, raising awareness about human trafficking and the demographics most at risk, and as previously mentioned, relaunching the Agency's public website to integrate improved accessibility features.

## Conclusion

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Communications played a critical role in advancing WDG Public Health's mandate in 2025 by delivering timely, transparent and evidence-informed information to WDG communities. Through strategic media relations, engaging web and social media content, and ongoing library and knowledge support, Communications enhanced public awareness and access to reliable health information during significant public health events, including local measles transmission. The completion of a major website redesign further positions the Agency to meet evolving audience needs with improved accessibility, security and integration of data and resources. Together, these efforts demonstrate Communications' continued commitment to innovation, accountability and health equity in support of the Board of Health's strategic priorities.

## Ontario Public Health Standards

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### Foundational Standards

- Population Health Assessment
- Health Equity
- Effective Public Health Practice
- Emergency Management

### Program Standards

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being
- Food Safety
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Growth and Development
- Immunization
- Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control
- Safe Water
- School Health
- Substance Use and Injury Prevention

## 2024-2028 WDGPH Strategic Goals

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More details about these strategic goals can be found in [WDGPH's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan](#).

- Improve health outcomes
- Focus on children's health
- Build strong partnerships
- Innovate our programs and services
- Lead the way toward a sustainable Public Health system

## References

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1. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability. [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2026 February 19]. Available from: <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-ontario-public-health-standards-en-2021.pdf>
2. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Board of Health. BOH report – BH.01.MAY0725.R15 Corporate Communications Annual Report 2024 [Internet]. 2025 May 7. [cited 2026 Mar 23]. Available from: <https://wdgpublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/2025-11/bh.01.may0725.r15 - comms.pdf>
3. Canadian Medical Association. 2026 CMA Health and Media Tracking Survey [Internet]. 2026 Feb [cited 2026 Mar 23]. Available from: <https://digitallibrary.cma.ca/link/digitallibrary1645>