MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH

Meeting Date: September 2, 2026

Location: 160 Chancellors Way, Guelph ON (Trillium Room)

ATTENDANCE

Members in Attendance: George Bridge (Chair), Linda Busuttil, Guy Gardhouse, Steve Cavell, Anil Kaul, Erin Caton, Rodrigo Goller, David Anderson, and Chris White.

Members with Regrets: Ralph Manktelow, Campbell Cork, Duncan Bull, and Robin Sedgwick.

Ex-Officio Member: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO.

Staff in Attendance: Dr. Matthew Tenenbaum, Rita Isley, David Kingma, Paul Medeiros, Brian Herman, Patryk Wardach, Kyley Alderson, Conor Barrett, Yordy Napoles, Spencer Craig, Nate Lesperance, Justin Angevaare, Kelvin McDermott, Elsa Gashi, Rivalia Naidoo, Chuck Ferguson, Katrina Olson, Emerson Rajaram, Alana Byron, Mike Whyte, Sonja Vukovic, Tyler Black, Shelley Nuhn, Jacob MacKinlay, Francesca Boncoddo, Glenna Rogers, April Pollington, Danielle Pellegrini, Shelby Leenders, Gillian Dyck, Ali Fournier, and Laura Kelly (Recording Secretary).

Guests in Attendance (via Zoom): Joanne Shuttleworth (Media), Adam Donaldson (Media), Taylor Pace (Media), and Jean Hopkins (Public).

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair George Bridge called the meeting to order at 2:04. Attendance was noted. Quorum requirements were met.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The WDGPH Land Acknowledgement was read in full by Dr. Nicola Mercer.

3. DISCLOSURE(S) OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

No disclosures were declared at this time.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 3, 2026.

MOTION: "To approve the Minutes of June 3, 2026 as presented."

Moved: L. Busuttil
Seconded: S. Cavell
CARRIED

5. MOH/CEO VERBAL REPORT

Dr. Mercer provided a verbal update including the following highlights:

- Katrina Olson, previously manager of Children's Health Services was introduced as the new Manager of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) following the retirement of Karen Mulvey.
- With students returning to school on September 8, increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic was noted, and drivers were reminded to exercise caution.
- E-scooter safety concerns were discussed. In Ontario, riders must be 16 years of age or older and 16- and 17-year-olds are required to wear a helmet. Many parents and youth are unaware of this age restriction. Some e-scooters are capable of reaching speeds of up to 70 km/h, contributing to concerns regarding serious injuries among young riders. SickKids is reportedly seeing two to three serious injuries per week. The importance of increased awareness among parents and youth was noted.
- Ebola-related travel restrictions are currently in effect for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Sudan until September 28. A mandatory 21-day quarantine requirement for applicable travellers returning home to Canada was noted.
- September 30 marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, honouring residential school Survivors, the children who never returned home, and their families and communities.
- Other upcoming awareness dates include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day on September 9, World Rabies Day on September 28, and Environmental Public Health Week during the last week of September. Continued high volumes of rabies-related inquiries to public health and vaccine administration were noted.

6. KEYNOTE PRESENTATION(S)

- K. Alderson presented in conjunction with Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R20 - (see 9.0 BOH Report(s) for summary).
- M. Whyte presented in conjunction with Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R21 - (see 9.0 BOH Report(s) for summary).

6.1 SUPPLEMENTAL PRESENTATION(S)

- R. Sereshk presented in conjunction with Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R22 - (see 9.0 BOH Report(s) for summary).

7. BUSINESS ARISING

- NONE

8. CONSENT AGENDA(S)

- **BH.01.SEP0226.C10 – Oral Health Services – 2026 Q1 & Q2 Summary**
- **BH.01.SEP0226.C11 – Health Promotion 2026 Q2 Summary**

MOTION: "To receive the Consent Agenda item(s) which have been given due consideration, for information."

Moved: C. White
Seconded: G. Gardhouse
CARRIED

9. BOH REPORT(S)

BH.01.SEP0226.R20 – School Health Promotion: Choices Rewired

- Dr. Mercer introduced the report, and K. Alderson presented on screen and reviewed its findings.
- E. Caton asked about resources addressing problematic device and screen use. It was noted that research and resources continue to evolve, with credible resources available through the WDGPH website, including links to community-based and in-person supports.
- L. Busuttil asked how the initiative is implemented in schools. K. Alderson noted that WDGPH works collaboratively with school boards to promote the strategy through various approaches, including parent newsletters.
- Accessibility for individuals whose first language is not English was discussed. Translation services and other approaches are being explored, including participation in relevant community groups. K. Alderson confirmed that suggestions raised will be brought to school partners for further consideration.
- R. Goller asked about substance-use trends, particularly cannabis use since legalization. K. Alderson noted reported decreasing trends in cannabis and alcohol use among students and indicated the data would be reviewed further. The WHY Survey captures data from Grades 4–12, while trends among the general population, particularly those of legal age, may differ. Increased misuse of cough syrup for intoxication was identified as a growing area of concern.
- A. Kaul asked whether strategies are adjusted in response to changes in reported behaviours. K. Alderson noted that attributing changes to specific interventions can be difficult. Programming is informed by school-level data and developed with community and school partners, including initiatives supporting student mental health.

MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R20 – School Health Promotion: Choices Rewired, as presented, for information."

Moved: D. Anderson
Seconded: L. Busuttil
CARRIED

BH.01.SEP0226.R21 – Poverty Report Series – Chapter Two Release

- Dr. Mercer introduced the report, and M. Whyte reviewed its findings through the vignette of "Laura," a single mother experiencing poverty, emphasizing the importance of accurately and sensitively reflecting lived experiences and considering how leadership decisions can support lower-income individuals. Transportation was identified as a significant challenge for lower-income individuals in rural communities with limited or no public transit.
- L. Busuttil asked whether municipal housing affordability strategies are considered when determining rental costs. M. Whyte confirmed that these strategies and current market rents are considered. The concept of a "rental wage" and challenges associated with higher market rents were also discussed.
- The availability of poverty data at the county and neighbourhood levels was discussed, with Chapter Two to provide a deeper examination of local data and lived experiences.
- S. Cavell noted the financial impact of absent or inconsistent parental support payments, including payments administered through the Family Responsibility Office (FRO). M. Whyte identified this as an area for further research.
- A. Kaul asked how the information will be applied. M. Whyte explained that Chapter One establishes a foundation on poverty, Chapter Two examines local experiences, and Chapter Three explores connections with chronic conditions.

MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R21 – Poverty Report Series – Chapter Two Release, as presented, for information."

Moved: S. Cavell
Seconded: L. Busuttil
CARRIED

BH.01.SEP0226.R22 – From Source to Safety: Drinking Water, Programs and Modernization in WDG

- Dr. Mercer introduced and R. Sereshk presented on screen and provided an overview of the Safe Water report, highlighting WDGPH's drinking water programs and ongoing modernization initiatives to strengthen surveillance, regulatory oversight, adverse-result follow-up, testing accessibility and communication with residents.
- Dr. Mercer highlighted WDGPH's leadership in drinking water program innovation, noting the practical, efficient and cost-effective nature of the modernization initiatives. Discussion included opportunities to further strengthen information-sharing with Conservation Authorities. The report identifies continued collaboration with municipalities, drinking water operators and community partners as a key next step.

- In response to a question regarding private well testing, it was noted that nearly half of WDG residents rely on private wells and that available data are being reviewed to better understand testing participation. Enhanced GIS mapping and data analysis will further support identification of local testing trends and areas where targeted outreach may be beneficial.

MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R22 – From Source to Safety: Drinking Water, Programs, and Modernization in WDG, as presented, for information."

Moved: R. Goller
Seconded: A. Kaul
CARRIED

BH.01.SEP0226.R23 – 2025 Opioid Surveillance Update

- Dr. Mercer introduced and M. Whyte presented a high-level overview of the 2025 Opioid Surveillance Update, highlighting trends in opioid-related emergency department visits and mortality, changes in substances involved in opioid-related deaths, naloxone administration, opioid prescribing, and WDGPH's ongoing surveillance and harm reduction efforts.

- E. Caton asked about the increase in cocaine involvement in opioid-related deaths and whether targeted education or information sessions have been provided to organizations supporting individuals who may be at increased risk. M. Whyte indicated that they would review current activities and provide additional information. The report notes that cocaine was present in 58.3% of opioid-related deaths in 2025, up from 40% in 2024.

MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R23 – 2025 Opioid Surveillance Update, as presented, for information."

Moved: D. Anderson
Seconded: E. Caton
CARRIED

BH.01.SEP0226.R24 – Grade 7 School Immunization Program

- Dr. Mercer introduced the Grade 7 School Immunization Program report, and K. Olson provided an overview of WDGPH's school-based immunization program, highlighting strong vaccine coverage, enhanced access, communication and automation initiatives.

- K. Olson presented a video on screen from WDGPH's YouTube channel entitled What to Expect on Vaccination Day, developed in partnership with St. Peter Catholic Elementary School. The video is part of ongoing efforts to build vaccine confidence and address misinformation. WDGPH's broader approach emphasizes the importance of all publicly funded vaccines and improving awareness and access for students and families.

- Improvements to administrative processes were highlighted, including online consent forms and secure school portals. These tools have streamlined communication and administrative processes, allowing nurses more time to provide individualized support to students, families and schools.
- E. Caton asked whether reasons for adults seeking vaccination are collected. K. Olson noted this information is not routinely tracked. R. Isley added that varying immunization requirements across jurisdictions make systematic tracking challenging.

MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R24 – Grade 7 School Immunization Program, as presented, for information."

Moved: D. Anderson
Seconded: L. Busuttil
CARRIED

BH.01.SEP0226.R25 – WDG Public Health's Parent Insight Survey

- Dr. Mercer introduced the Parent Insights Survey report and provided a brief review, which summarized findings from 1,117 parents and caregivers of children aged zero to six regarding their parenting information and support needs, preferred sources and methods of receiving information, and barriers to accessing services. The findings will inform WDGPH's program planning, communications and partnerships with community organizations.
- L. Busuttil asked about preferences for social media compared with in-person supports. L. Hebden noted that parents value information that is accessible, familiar and trusted, with social media identified as the most preferred method of receiving information, while in-person classes and individual supports also ranked highly. The importance of ensuring families have convenient access to credible information when they need it was emphasized.

MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.SEP0226.R25 – WDG Public Health's Parent Insight Survey, as presented, for information."

Moved: G. Gardhouse
Seconded: E. Caton
CARRIED

10. COMMITTEE REPORT(S)

- NONE.

11. CORRESPONDENCE

- NONE.

12. APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF JUNE 3, 2026

- **To approve the Closed Session minutes of June 3, 2026**

MOTION: "To approve the closed session minutes of June 3, 2026, as presented."

Moved: E. Caton
Seconded: L. Busuttil
CARRIED

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: "To adjourn the meeting."

Moved: G. Gardhouse
Seconded: D. Anderson
CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 pm.

APPROVED this 4th day of November, 2026.

Board of Health Chair	Medical Officer of Health, CEO