

## MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH

Meeting Date: December 3, 2025

Location: ZOOM (Virtual)

### ATTENDANCE

#### **Members in Attendance:**

George Bridge (Chair), Rodrigo Goller, Campbell Cork, David Anderson, Duncan Bull, Guy Gardhouse, Steve Cavell, Robin Sedgwick, Ralph Manktelow, Erin Caton, Linda Busutil and Chris White.

**Members with Regrets:** Anil Kaul.

**Ex-Officio Member:** Dr. Mercer, Medical Officer of Health & CEO.

#### **Staff in Attendance:**

Rita Isley, David Kingma, Kyle Wilson, Paul Medeiros, Karen Mulvey, Lisa Hebden, Tia Tuinstra, Kassy Raymond, Dana Galehdari, Conor Barrett, Chuck Ferguson, Sonja Vukovic, Katrina Olsen, Shelda Morphy, Jessica Tomasik, Danielle Pellegrini, Karen Wismer, Emerson Rajaram, Kelvin McDermott, Gabriel Agunsoye, Phil Wong, Justin Angevaare, Tyler Black, Laura Campbell, Rivalia Naidoo, Rachel Coghlin, Jacob MacKinlay, Lisa Needham, Ali Fournier, Michael Whyte, Robert Richardson, Kyley Alderson, Lil Marinko, Laura Kelly (Recording Secretary).

#### **Guests in Attendance (via Zoom):**

Joanne Shuttleworth (Media), Adam Donaldson (Media), and Taylor Pace (Media).

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair George Bridge called the meeting to order at 2:02. 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 NOVEMBER 5, 2025.

**MOTION: "To approve the Minutes of November 5, 2025 as presented."**

**Moved: R. Goller**

**Seconded: C. White**

**CARRIED**

## 5. MOH/CEO VERBAL REPORT

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

### Vice President Announcement

- P. Medeiros was formally announced as the new Vice President of Health Protection and Emergency Preparedness.

### Influenza Update

- Staff and community members were reminded not to visit long-term care or retirement homes when ill, to avoid spreading illness outside the home, and to consider receiving their influenza vaccination. There has been an increase in influenza cases in our community over the past few weeks and this year's flu season may be worse than usual due to the new subclade "K" variant.

### Affordability and Well-Being

- At this time of year, it is appropriate to highlight the keynote presentation for this month's Board meeting. The Monitoring Food Affordability Report highlights increasing challenges related to affordability in the WDG community. It was noted that this time of year can also heighten feelings of loneliness. Where possible this is a great time of year to be generous to charities which support those in need as well as being generous with your time to those who may be isolated (e.g. seniors, students, new Canadians)

## 6. PRESENTATION(S)

- L. Needham presented in conjunction with Board of Health report BH.01.DEC0325.R32 - (see 8.0 BOH Report(s) for summary).
- K. Mulvey presented in conjunction with Board of Health report BH.01.DEC0325.R34 - (see 8.0 BOH Report(s) for summary).

## 7. BUSINESS ARISING

- NONE

## 8. CONSENT AGENDA(S)

- [BH.01.DEC0325.C14](#) – Children's Health Services Program

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

**Moved: E. Caton**

**Seconded: G. Gardhouse**

**CARRIED**

## 9. BOH REPORT(S)

### **BH.01.DEC0325.R32** – Monitoring Food Affordability 2025 Report

- Dr. Mercer emphasized the critical importance of the report and the need to remain aware of the statistics, circumstances, and real-life impacts it reflects.
- L. Needham presented on screen and summarized the report as follows:
- Food insecurity significantly affects mental, physical, and social health and increases strain on the health care system. Current data show the highest recorded prevalence of food insecurity in WDG in the past 20 years, with many residents unable to consistently afford nutritious food after accounting for housing and other essential expenses.
- WDG Public Health and community partners continue to advocate for policy solutions such as adequate social assistance, fair wages, reduced precarious employment, and guaranteed basic income, while also supporting groups addressing poverty and food insecurity across WDG.
- In response to an inquiry about programs or resources for individuals with food allergies or celiac disease, it was noted that while food banks try to accommodate these needs, they are limited by available donations. Social assistance offers some support; however, current subsidies do not fully cover the costs of specialized dietary requirements.

**MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.DEC0325.R32 – Monitoring Food Affordability 2025 Report as presented, for information."**

**Moved: E. Caton**  
**Seconded: D. Anderson**  
**CARRIED**

### **BH.01.DEC0325.R33** – Oral Screening and Healthy Smiles Ontario

- In 2024/25, WDGPH delivered comprehensive preventive oral health services across WDG, including school-based screenings with fluoride varnish, HSO clinic services (sealants, scaling, hygiene education), a daycare screening and varnish pilot, community outreach at hubs such as Shelldale and EarlyON, and portable clinics in Palmerston to support rural access.
- Future priorities focus on expanding in-school and community preventive dental clinics and scaling the daycare fluoride varnish program to additional sites, reinforcing WDGPH's commitment to equitable and accessible oral health care for children.

**MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.DEC0325.R33 – Oral Screening and Healthy Smiles Ontario as presented, for information."**

**Moved: D. Bull**  
**Seconded: R. Goller**  
**CARRIED**

**BH.01.DEC0325.R34 – Avian Influenza (HVAI) Vaccine Initiative**

- WDGPH led Ontario in delivering the Arepanrix™ H5N1 vaccine, administering 29 two dose series (24 to individuals from outside the region), and will continue working with the Ministry of Health to ensure access for eligible high-risk occupational groups, noting that while public risk remains low, isolated human cases and detections in animals warrant continued vigilance.
- In response to a question from a board member, Dr. Mercer and K. Mulvey noted that WDGPH was the first to offer the vaccine due to the small eligible population, proximity to the veterinary institute, and the agency's ability to implement the program efficiently; WDGPH also supported neighbouring health units, and the Province expressed appreciation.
- In response to questions about susceptibility related to migratory birds, Dr. Mercer explained that migratory birds are considered the way that the virus spreads and this presents a significant concern for large commercial poultry operations and even small backyard flocks; early action helps limit spread.
- Regarding vaccine cost and wastage, K. Mulvey confirmed that some wastage was anticipated and acceptable given the February 2026 expiry and the need to ensure accessibility; further details will be provided in a spring vaccine wastage report.

**MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.DEC0325.R34 – Avian Influenza (HVAI) Vaccine Initiative as presented, for information."**

**Moved: D. Anderson**

**Seconded: R. Sedgwick**

**CARRIED**

**BH.01.DEC0325.R35 – Data and AI Governance at WDGPH**

- WDGPH strengthened its data governance foundations by standardizing demographic questions through the new Survey Guide, improving interoperability and consistency across programs, and establishing environmental guidance to ensure AI use aligns with public benefit and sustainability.
- Beginning in 2026, WDGPH will phase in the NIST AI Risk Management Framework to guide agency-wide AI governance, supporting a structured approach to identifying, assessing, and managing AI-related risks.
- In response to a question from a board member, J. Angevaare noted that while AI is rapidly disrupting industries, its intersection with social determinants of health requires careful consideration from an equity, access, and community-wellbeing perspective; emerging issues such as unhealthy attachments and new social behaviours may require future monitoring.
- Board member L. Busutil acknowledged the team's work and inquired whether AI could become a public-health concern; Dr. Mercer emphasized that significant societal shifts, similar to past transitions to computerization, will create uncertainty leading to stress for individuals as the full impact of AI on the workforce and day to day tasks continues to evolve.

**MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.NOV0525.R35 – Data and AI Governance at WDGPH as presented, for information."**

**Moved: E. Caton**  
**Seconded: R. Manktelow**  
**CARRIED**

**BH.01.DEC0325.R36 – LTCH/RH 2025-26 Fall Vaccine Campaign Mid-Year Update**

- WDGPH's 2025–26 LTCH/RH Fall Vaccine Campaign—targeting influenza, COVID-19, and RSV—uses a personalized, collaborative support model, with most homes administering vaccines in-house; as of October 31, 12 homes have completed all three vaccines and 23 have begun their campaigns.
- Despite challenges such as outbreaks, RSV billing limitations, and consent coordination, the campaign remains a key strategy to protect vulnerable residents, with WDGPH continuing to refine its approach to ensure accessible, equitable immunization across all homes.

**MOTION: "To receive Board of Health report BH.01.DEC0325.R36 – LTCH/RH 2025-26 Fall Vaccine Campaign Mid-Year Update as presented, for information."**

**Moved: C. White**  
**Seconded: C. Cork**  
**CARRIED**

**10. COMMITTEE REPORT(S)**

- NONE.

**11. CORRESPONDENCE**

- NONE.

**12. APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES**

**MOTION: "To approve the closed session minutes of November 5, 2025, as presented."**

**Moved: D. Bull**  
**Seconded: G. Gardhouse**  
**CARRIED**

G. Bridge, Chair, wished WDGPH staff a happy holiday season from the Board of Health. Dr. Mercer thanked the Board for their support throughout 2025, as the Agency looks forward to 2026.

### **13. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION: "To adjourn the meeting."**

**Moved: D. Anderson**

**Seconded: E. Caton**

**CARRIED**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:59 pm.

APPROVED this 4<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2026.

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Board of Health Chair

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Medical Officer of Health, CEO