



# COVID-19: Respond, Recover, Restore

June 17, 2021

Since March 2020, Public Health Sudbury & Districts has been sharply focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. As immunization rates rise, we are turning the corner to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and what it means for our collective recovery. Public Health is part of this recovery journey as we work toward restoring our full system capacity to create equal opportunities for health for all.

## COVID-19 Pandemic Response Activities

What we have been doing since the beginning of the pandemic

22 815

calls to the  
call centre

411

vaccination  
events

2 113

total cases  
contacted

11 502

contacts identified  
and followed

278

news releases  
and public service  
announcements

144 234

total doses administered

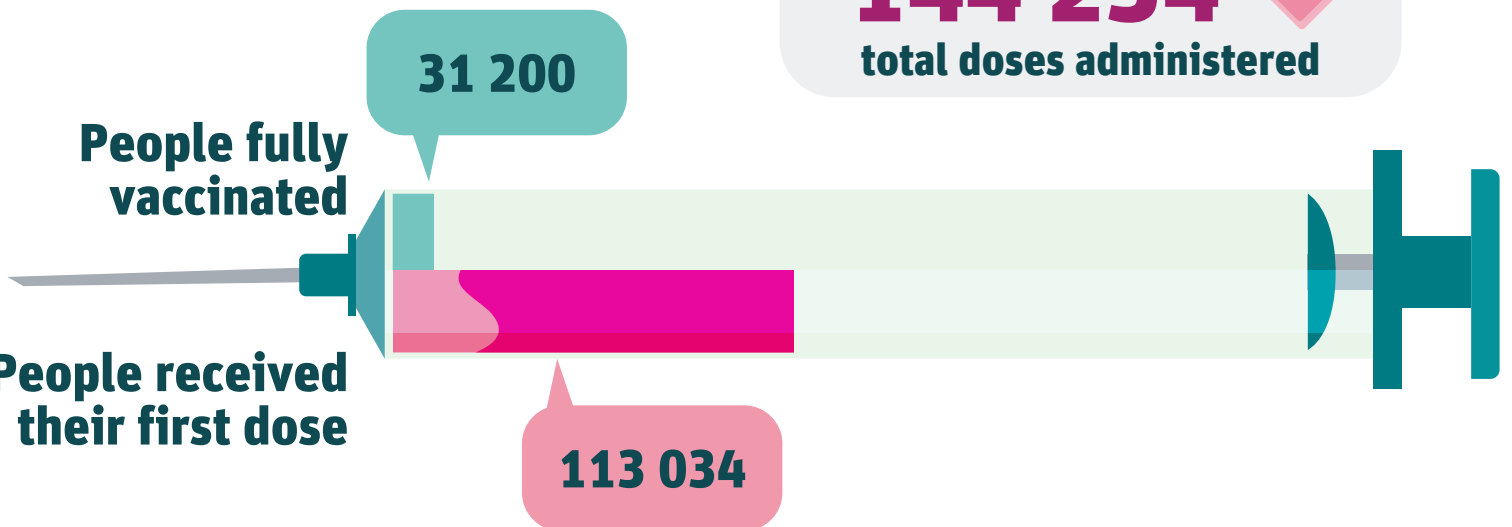


31 200

People fully  
vaccinated

113 034

People received  
their first dose





**758** media requests responded to

**3 890** social media posts

**16 016 062** combined reach for Facebook and Twitter posts



**Resource/financial costs**



**257** Staff pre-pandemic

**339** Additional staff onboarded

**232%** Current working capacity

**139**

volunteers

**101**

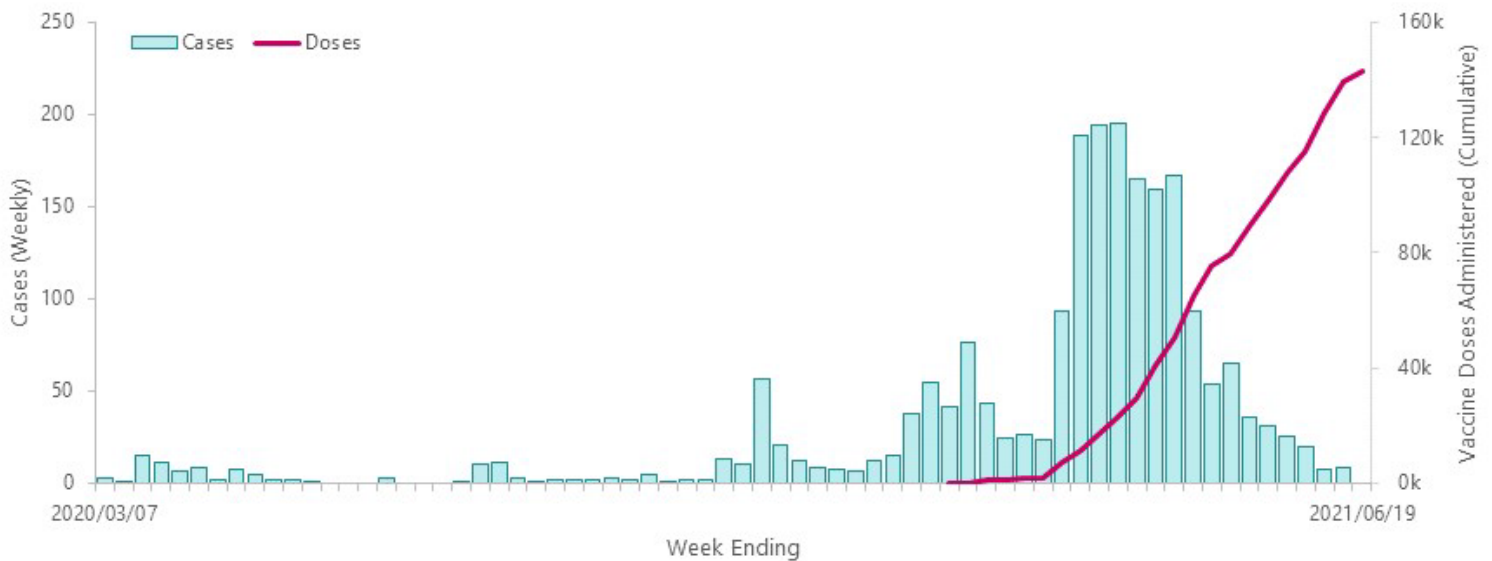
primary care providers supporting

**Financial implications:**

- The current financial impact of our COVID-19 response to April 30th is **\$22,345,504**
- **> 85%** of our operating expenses have been dedicated to COVID-19 throughout the pandemic

## How did we respond to COVID-19

### PHSD Case Counts and Vaccine Doses Administered



#### Data Sources:

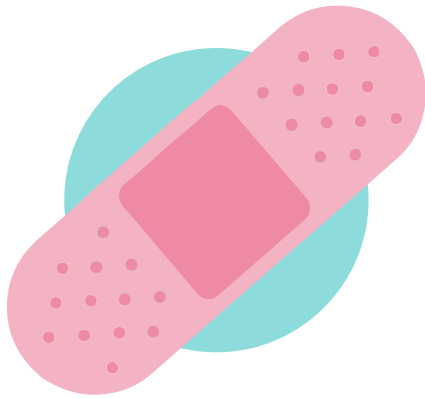
Cases: Ontario Treasury Board Secretariat, Data Catalogue, Confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in Ontario. <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/confirmed-positive-cases-of-covid-19-in-ontario> (Accessed June 15, 2021)

Vaccine Doses Administered: Public Health Sudbury & Districts Internal Data

## A need to recover from the impacts of COVID-19

The pandemic itself and pandemic control measures have impacted the health of our community and we need to recover. The pandemic also has meant changes to Public Health Sudbury & Districts' services, including decreases in referrals from social services and health providers—themselves impacted by the pandemic, severe service reductions or suspensions, and services delivered virtually. There are direct and indirect consequences for health. These are felt immediately but shockwaves will likely extend far into the future. Below are just a few examples of impacts that point to post-pandemic recovery priorities for Public Health.

Public Health prenatal classes during the pandemic have been online, making it more challenging to build strong relationships with new parents. There have been fewer referrals of at-risk mothers to programs, resulting in fewer check-ins with mothers who may be struggling.



Parents of young children have reported more behavioural difficulties during the pandemic. Children have also experienced less physical activity, more injuries at home, and there have been more reports of child maltreatment. The pandemic has meant fewer supports for parents and when services are available, they are virtual. Parents using online parenting programs are having difficulty completing these programs. There have been fewer referrals from social services and health care providers to family programming. The backlog and waitlist for services for parents and children is big and growing.



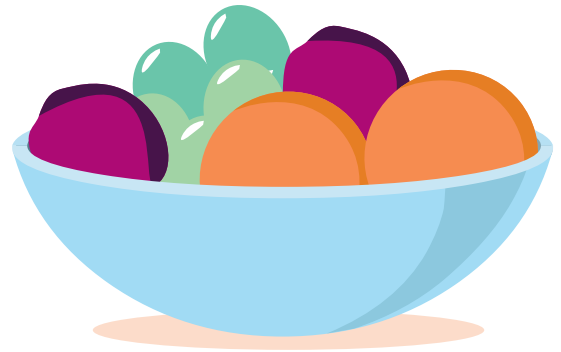
Immunization rates have decreased for young and school aged children. This puts our children and our community at risk of infections and outbreaks of diseases that are preventable by vaccines, such as measles or bacterial meningitis.





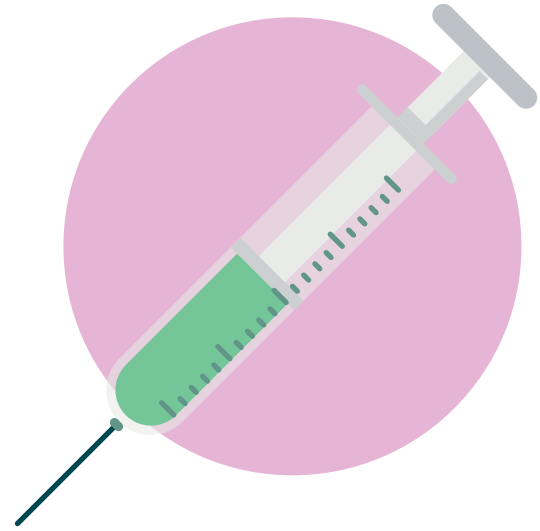
Dental screenings of children have been sporadic during the pandemic and not all children have been reassessed to ensure that their treatment has been completed. Spending more sedentary time at home and reported changes in dietary habits, combined with no dental screening, is raising concerns about the risk of decay in primary teeth going undiagnosed.

Access to healthy foods is at risk. The Good Food Markets and Good Food Boxes have received less support from Public Health since the pandemic. Many students have not benefitted from the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program and the Food Literacy Program, two school-based Public Health nutrition and education programs.



Safe food handling is less assured. Inspections of food premises such as restaurants and grocery stores to ensure safe food handling practices were conducted less frequently during the pandemic. This resulted in a lower number of inspections being posted to the “Check Before You Go!” website.

Substance use and opioid poisonings are growing concerns. In the first five months of 2021, the Greater Sudbury Paramedic Services responded to 338 suspected opioid-related incidents as compared to 228 in the same period in 2020. Opioid deaths increased from 56 in 2019 to 105 in 2020. It was hoped that Supervised Consumption Services would be closer to a reality, but the project has stalled, in part, due to the pandemic. In addition, problematic use of alcohol and cannabis increased during the pandemic.



Almost half of Ontarians report that their mental health has deteriorated since restrictions encouraging self-isolation and physical distancing were put in place. Social isolation, strained finances, and caring for children (especially for women) have been major stressors during the pandemic. A lack or a reduction of services has exacerbated these concerns, forcing people experiencing the trauma of the pandemic to bear the brunt of their struggles alone.



## **Restoring Public Health programs and services – post pandemic priorities**

The pandemic has meant readjustments and impacts for all of us, and we need to find ways to restore our balance and find our new path forward. For Public Health, just as managing COVID-19 cases, investigating contacts, and mounting mass immunization campaigns have been monumental tasks, so too will be our restoration path forward.

First, we need to remember those we have lost, offer our profound thanks to all essential workers who continued to serve at the frontline throughout the pandemic, and take time to restore ourselves and consider the lessons learned and how we would now like our lives to unfold—individually and collectively.

We are rebuilding after a widespread disruption to our social support networks, income, education, and health systems. We can build back better, where restoration means reflecting on and learning from the lessons of the pandemic.

The collective effort required to get through the pandemic together has strengthened our kindness muscles—our ability to feel empathy for others, to be patient and to understand that we are not all healthy and safe until we all have opportunities to be healthy and safe. For Public Health Sudbury & Districts this will mean community engagement to support opportunities for health for all in area communities. Among other things, the pandemic has reinforced our need to:

Build health equity into everything we do, as the pandemic has laid bare the fact that opportunities for health are not the same for everyone—being sick with COVID-19 is a different story if you have no paid sick leave; being homeless and required to isolate is an obvious contradiction; staying at home is a frightening prospect if home is an unsafe place.

Ensure that children, youth, and families are prioritized as their immediate needs have gone unmet and disruptions in schooling have had profound impacts, especially on our kids who were already struggling academically. As we work in partnership to restore our communities, investing in our young people is critical to building a better future.

Put a greater focus on mental health, addictions, and social cohesion, recognizing that the pandemic affects everyone differently. We must meet people where they are at and be prepared to support people how and where they need it the most.

**We have proven time after time that we are resilient. As a community, with hope, belonging, meaning, and purpose we can be proud of how we have responded, be dedicated to recovery, and be committed to restoring a bright future for ourselves, our families and our communities.**

The pandemic has presented challenges for us all. The response has been an unprecedented whole-of-society undertaking. The leadership and contributions of Public Health Sudbury & Districts has been possible through partnership with many others. It is through the strong fabric of our communities, woven together by our relationships with and supports for one another, that we are getting through to the other side. It is through these attributes that we will recover from the pandemic and restore a brighter future for everyone.

