

# Ontario Health Highlights 2020/21



It is an understatement to say that 2020/21 was a unique and challenging year for Ontario Health. Barely a year into our existence, we were called upon to support the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to work as one unified agency to better connect care for patients across the province.

As these pages highlight, Ontario Health team members and partners across the province stepped up to the challenge, working together in new and innovative ways to deliver impact when Ontarians needed it most.\*

\*Data represents fiscal year ending March 31, 2021



Being diagnosed and treated for cancer during the pandemic was very stressful. But my support system – my doctors, social worker, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, PSWs – was wonderful. They worked together to make sure I was taken care of.”

**Ramie V.,**  
Cancer patient





# Pandemic Response

Ontario Health took on a pivotal leadership role in the provincial fight against COVID-19, providing support with our partners that slowed the spread of the virus and saved lives.

- Established **52 labs** as part of the first province-wide laboratory network, with the ability to process over **100K tests/day** at maximum capacity
- Established **300+ assessment centres at both hospitals and community locations** across the province to ensure access to diagnostic testing as well as a mobile vendor program to support vulnerable populations and outbreak testing
- Shipped **150M+ units of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and swab kits** by Ontario Health regions to more than 6,500 health sector providers across Ontario, keeping our frontline care providers safe
- Recruited **16K Personal Support Workers** to priority employers, supporting urgent and immediate health human resources needs

“At the beginning of the pandemic, PPE was in short supply around the world. At Ontario Health, we worked 10 hours a day, seven days a week, to ensure organizations had the critical supplies they needed to keep their staff and the people they support safe. The operation became a well-oiled machine.”

**Kristen Raiskums**  
Primary Care Advisor  
Personal Protective  
Equipment (PPE)  
Co-Lead, Ontario Health  
Central Region





## Virtual Care

Ontario Health rapidly expanded the province's virtual care capability in response to the demand as a result of the pandemic. No matter where they live in Ontario, people can access Virtual Urgent Care Centres, long-term care homes, hospitals for pre- and post-operative care, and for online mental health supports.

- Supported more than **900K health system users** in accessing online/virtual care, enabling people to safely receive care from their homes
- Enabled **13.7K + primary care providers** to offer virtual visits, increasing safe and convenient access to care to people across the province
- Supported the temporary Ontario Virtual Care Clinic, which provided **25.6K+ virtual visits** that helped unattached patients access care during the pandemic

“When the pandemic hit, a lot of care and support went virtual. It was challenging at first – and some people still don't have the technology or knowledge to navigate it – but it became my new normal.”



**Karen D.,**  
Patient & Family Advisor,  
Ontario Health



# Mental Health and Addiction

The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence was established in March 2020 as a central engine to design, manage and coordinate the mental health and addictions system. The timing was fortunate as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to support this sector.

- Enrolled **2,700 health care workers** in the COVID-19 Front Line Wellness Program, providing both peer and one-to-one psychotherapy supports
- Facilitated **28K enrolments** for internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy, a service offered in response to COVID-19
- Improved **regional mental health and addictions services**, working with local health services to establish or improve mobile crisis response teams, withdrawal management programs, services for health care providers, and programs for priority populations

“I am particularly excited about the development of a data infrastructure for the mental health and addictions sector. With data, the invisible becomes visible, and we can start to continually learn and improve various aspects of the mental health system.”

**Dr. Paul Kurdyak,**  
Vice President, Mental Health and Addictions (Clinical), Ontario Health





# Engagement and Relationship Building

As Ontario Health is a new organization, engaging with external partners is critical to developing trust, particularly with communities in our province that have experienced marginalization, racism and poor health outcomes. Our focus this year has been on building our knowledge, building relationships with our colleagues across the organization who want to engage with Ontarians, and building our capacity for future collaborations.

- Formed a **Patient and Family Advisory Group** to provide Ontario Health's CEO with patient, family and caregiver perspectives on the provincial pandemic response. The members are drawn from patient and family advisory groups from all the legacy agencies, organizations and LHINs, allowing for diversity in health experiences and geographic representation
- Drafted an **Indigenous Engagement Framework**, under the leadership of the Indigenous Cancer Care Unit, to help coordinate and align Indigenous engagement across Ontario Health
- Met regularly with **leadership from First Nation, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous** organizations to build relationships to improve health care with and for Indigenous people in Ontario
- Forged solid relationships with the six **French Language Health Planning Entities** in the province and received vital input to help identify where French language health services can be strengthened.

"I help patients navigate the health care system by developing culturally safe pathways, using community-based approaches that support the patient and family journey. A safe, equitable pathway includes fostering collaborative, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous patients, families, communities and health care allies to ensure a positive patient experience."



**Kathy MacLeod-Beaver,**  
Indigenous Navigator,  
Ontario Health Central East  
Regional Cancer Program





# Equity

As an organization and as individuals, we are fundamentally committed to working in partnership with those with lived experience and on-the-ground knowledge to address racism head on, reduce inequity and ensure effective health care for all.

- Committed to embed equity, inclusion, diversity and anti-racism as a **strategic priority**
- Launched our **Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Racism Framework**, which outlines 11 areas of action to advance equity and address racism, with explicit actions to address anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism
- Embedded **equity into the COVID-19 response** in Ontario Health regions, supporting testing for priority populations, including people experiencing homelessness, migrant agricultural workers, essential workers, low income families and racialized communities
- Implemented a **Black Health Plan**, with a focus on addressing inequities in the pandemic response and beyond
- Supported two **Communities of Inclusion**, for Black colleagues and women team members, to provide networking and peer support

“Through a Community of Inclusion, we want to develop new opportunities for engagement, mentorship and skill-building and to give voice to people who have felt unheard in the past. I am hopeful, as we have strong visionary and empathetic leaders at Ontario Health who are keen to respond to this moment.”



**Samantha Mullings,**  
Senior Advisor,  
Human Resources,  
Ontario Health

# About Us

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Ontario Health was established under the *Connecting Care Act, 2019*, with a mandate to better coordinate and connect the health care system to make it more efficient and support the delivery of the best possible patient-centred care.

Operating as a single, unified agency, Ontario Health brings together the expertise and resources of Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, HealthForceOntario, Health Quality Ontario, Ontario Telemedicine Network, Trillium Gift of Life Network, CorHealth (as of December 1, 2021) and the non-patient care functions of the Local Health Integration Networks (patient care functions now operate under the business name of Home and Community Care Support Services).

**President & CEO: Matthew Anderson**

**Board Chair: Bill Hatanaka**

I am truly proud of everything that Ontario Health accomplished with our partners throughout this extraordinary year. Our team members demonstrated tremendous resilience and commitment to ensure services and resources were available when and where they were needed."

**Matthew Anderson,**  
President & CEO,  
Ontario Health

