



Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Momentum in Action

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Message from the 2023 President

In 2023, APHEO's regular operations continued to resume alongside the public health sector's ongoing transition to the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many new faces joined APHEO throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2023 offered these members opportunities to become involved in APHEO's key activities. Experienced APHEO members played a crucial role in leading working groups and supporting advocacy efforts. It is through these collective opportunities that we continue to make meaningful contributions to public health epidemiology in Ontario. And so, I want to thank each and every member, whether new or old, for your continued commitment to supporting and strengthening APHEO during the past year.

Key highlights in 2023 included:

- APHEO members shaping system-level change through representation on numerous provincial working groups, including the Ontario diseases of public health significance (DOPHS) Investigation Management and Surveillance System (ODIMSS) Steering Committee, and the Public Health Digital Platform Advisory Group;
- APHEO adding an Ontario Health Liaison role to the organization; APHEO workgroups restarting regular meetings and activities after being suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic; and
- APHEO became officially incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act.

Thinking about the successes and achievements of the past year, I am filled with optimism for the future of public health epidemiology in Ontario. Despite the uncertainties that lie ahead, I am confident in our members' ability to overcome obstacles and drive positive change. Together, let us continue to innovate, collaborate, and advocate for our role in Ontario public health.

To conclude, on behalf of APHEO's 2023 Executive Committee, I am pleased to present APHEO's 2023 Annual Report. The report provides a high-level description of our key activities over the year that fulfilled our mandate. It also provides a year-end review of our finances and membership.



Erica Sawula
2023 APHEO President

Key Activities

The past year, 2023, was meaningful for the organization. Some of our key activities include:

SHAPING SYSTEM-LEVEL CHANGE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

APHEO is seen as a key partner in Ontario public health, and therefore, contributed to shaping system-level changes throughout the year.

- In response to a letter that APHEO submitted to the Ministry of Health in June 2022 (Re: Requested epidemiology supports for the integration of all diseases of public health significance (DOPHS) into the new expanded solution), an APHEO representative was requested to sit on the provincial Ontario DOPHS Investigation Management and Surveillance System (ODIMSS) Steering Committee. This role was filled by Danielle Hachborn from Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.
- As the Ministry of Health underwent Public Health Digital Platform Discovery work, they requested an APHEO representative to take part in a Public Health Digital Platform Advisory Group. This role was filled by Emma Tucker from Halton Region.
- In 2023, the Public Health Agency of Canada commissioned the National Collaborating Centres for Public Health to engage with the Canadian public health community in order to update the 2008 Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada. Interested APHEO and OPHEN members attended a virtual consultation session where they provided feedback to ensure that the updated core competencies aligned with current needs and priorities of the public health system.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

In 2023, APHEO strategically considered and strengthened relationships with specific agencies and organizations.

- APHEO added an Ontario Health Liaison role to the organization. Hanna Dias, a Senior Research Associate (Epidemiologist) at Ontario Health, provides information and updates to APHEO regarding health assessment and surveillance activities being conducted by the organization. In the future, this role will also allow the exploration of opportunities to work on shared priorities.
- After careful consideration and in reviewing the alignment of our strategic and operational priorities with the needs of our membership, APHEO withdrew from our role as a Constituent Society with the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA). However, APHEO may support select OPHA initiatives in the future. Through membership vote, the OPHA Representative on the APHEO Executive Committee became a member-at-large position supporting APHEO's work in provincial consultations related to data and digital engagement.

DATA ADVOCACY

Arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a continued desire for timelier health information amongst decision-makers and the public; however, there are still significant gaps in available population health information.

- In January 2023, a letter that was sent on behalf of APHEO to the Ministry of Health, expressing concern over their decision to exclude public health epidemiologists and analysts from the Salesforce in-app Report Builder in the Ontario DOPHS Investigation Management and Surveillance System (ODIMSS; formerly CCM Expansion).
- In response to a letter that APHEO submitted to the Ministry of Health in June 2023 (Re: Urgent Need for Up-to-Date IntelliHealth Vital Statistics Data for Ontario Public Health), Dr. Michael Hillmer, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Digital and Analytics Strategy Division at the Ministry of Health, and two managers of the Data Access and Release Unit at the Ministry of Health, met with the APHEO Executive Committee on August 8, 2023 to discuss the importance of our request. In follow-up, APHEO provided some priority areas to help inform their planned IntelliHEALTH enhancement and expansion project. This exercise was led by APHEO members John Barbaro and Kristen Wheeler – thank you!

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, APHEO continued to facilitate interactions with experts in the field of public health epidemiology within Ontario and across Canada through various platforms such as the forum/listservs, work groups, and key events.

- Normal operations and workgroups of APHEO that were suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic have begun to resume. APHEO members had many opportunities to influence the direction and practice of public health epidemiology in Ontario by being involved in these working groups. Thank you to the chair(s) of the following working groups for their leadership and commitment throughout the year:

Table 1: Active APHEO Working Groups and Chair(s) in 2023

WORKING GROUP	2023 CHAIR(S)
CCHS Analysis	Suzanne Fegan
CHSCY Analysis	Sarah Carsley and Busola Ayodele
CIWG - Environmental Health	Cameron McDermaid
CIWG - Healthy Eating Active Living	Suzanne Fegan
CIWG - Mental Health	Kayley Henning
CIWG - Reproductive Health	Natalie Causarano and Gillian Alton
CIWG - Substance Use	James MacIntosh
Core Indicators	Sherri Deamond and Virginia McFarland
GIS Interest Group	John Cunningham
Indigenous Data Principles	Dorian Lunny and Erica Sawula
Small, Rural and Northern Health Units	Renate van Dorp and Erica Clark
Terry Delmore Award Selection Committee	Ainslie Butler
Wastewater Surveillance	Rebecca Stuart

- The APHEO Annual General Meeting took place (virtually) on June 5, 2023. Dr. Kieran Moore, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, was a guest speaker at the event and provided an overview on the CMOH Report 2022 “Being Ready: Ensuring Public Health Preparedness for Infectious Outbreaks and Pandemics”.
- APHEO’s Indigenous Engagement workgroup (now titled the Indigenous Data Principles workgroup) hosted two workshops in 2023 for APHEO members. The first workshop was facilitated by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), and introduced participants to the First Nations principles of OCAP® and First Nations data sovereignty. The second workshop was facilitated by Mamow Ahyamowen, a Northern Ontario First Nations epidemiology alliance of First Nations health and social service organizations. The workshop, titled “(Re)Envisioning the Data Cycle: Insights From a Northern Ontario First Nations Epidemiology Partnership”, allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of ways that colonial worldviews can affect the data cycle, as well as strategies that have been used to mitigate and resist this imposition.

IMPROVING AND STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

In 2023, APHEO improved upon existing governance systems and practices in order to enable the organization to better meet its mission and strategic areas, and make confident and timely decisions.

- APHEO became officially incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act! We received our official Certificate of Incorporation on July 5, 2023. Incorporating APHEO as a non-profit organization in Canada offers several benefits, including:
 - o Legal protection: Incorporation protects the directors and officers of the non-profit from personal liability for the organization’s debts or legal issues;
 - o Credibility: Incorporation can enhance the credibility of the organization, making it easier to attract funding, volunteers, and community support;
 - o Increased accountability: Non-profits in Canada are required to file annual reports and financial statements, increasing accountability and transparency; and
 - o Ability to enter contracts: Incorporation allows a non-profit to enter into contracts in its own name, rather than relying on individuals to act on its behalf.
- Through membership vote, the APHEO Constitution was updated to include information about incorporation and a Code of Conduct. In addition, Procedure 1.6 (Executive Committee Nomination Process) was revised and the new Policy and Procedure 4.3 (Harassment and Cyberbullying) was approved.

Financial Summary

Between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023, APHEO’s revenue through memberships totaled \$18,970.00. Expenses for the year totaled \$15,352.08, and included administrative fees such as insurance and website and software expenses; legal fees associated with incorporation; and professional development. This resulted in a surplus of \$3,617.92. APHEO’s total assets as of December 31, 2023 were \$124,172.59.

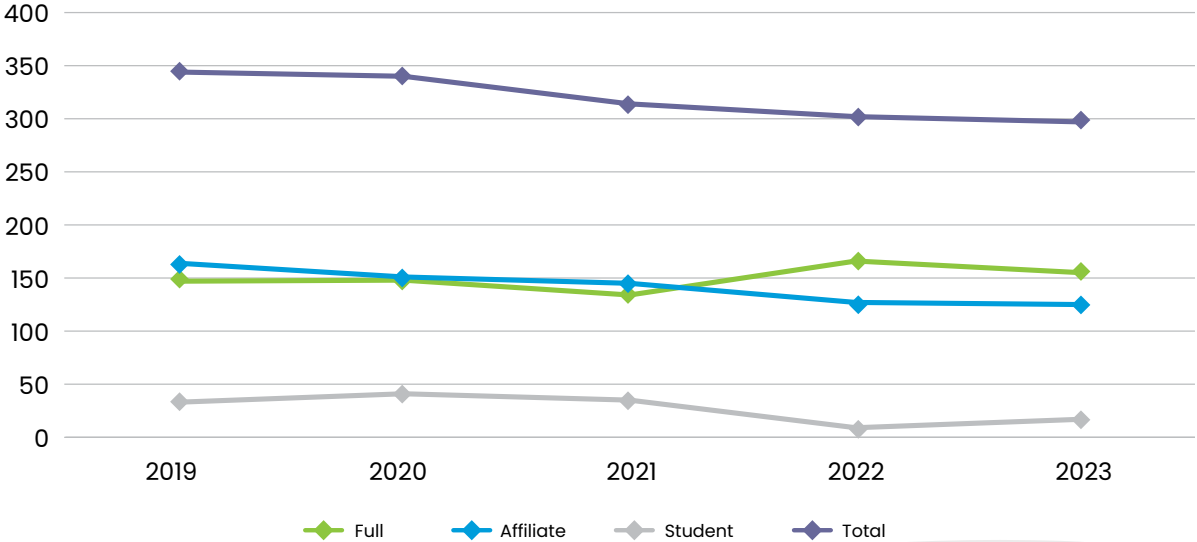
Table 2: 2023 Financial Summary

Total Revenue	\$18,970.00
Total Expenses	\$15,352.08
Surplus/Deficit	\$3,617.92
Total Assets	\$124,172.59

Membership

As APHEO continued its resumption of regular operations in 2023, the emphasis was on encouraging current members to get involved in working groups and other key activities, rather than tracking membership status and doing outreach to postsecondary institutions. There has been a decrease in the total number of APHEO memberships over the past 5 years, which may be attributed to a reduction in epidemiologists and analysts hired on contract to support pandemic work.

Figure 1: APHEO Memberships over the Past Five Years



Celebrating Success!



The Terry Delmore Award of Excellence is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions in the advancement and/or promotion of the discipline and professional practice of public health epidemiology in Ontario. The recipient of the 2023 Terry Delmore Award of Excellence was Emma Tucker for her dedication to mentorship; her roles with aPHa and APHEO; and her commitments to advocacy and policy. Emma’s nominations for the award also highlighted that her engagement and advocacy have raised the profile of APHEO at other provincial organizations, which helps the organization as a whole better succeed in furthering the professional practice of public health epidemiology in Ontario. Thank you to Emma for her noteworthy contributions to the advancement and promotion of public health epidemiology in Ontario!

2023 Executive Committee

Table 3: 2023 Executive Committee

Past President	Erica Clark	Huron Perth Public Health
President	Erica Sawula	Thunder Bay District Health Unit
Vice-President	Carina Bee	York Region Public Health
Secretary	Dorian Lunny	Northwestern Health Unit
Treasurer	Alison Rothwell	Halton Region Public Health
Member-at-Large	Sara Smith/ Suzanne Fegan	Six Nations Health Services/ KFL&A Public Health
aPHa Representative	Emma Tucker	Halton Region
OPHA Representative/ Member-at-Large	Danielle Hachborn	Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit