

# Corporate Communications Annual Report 2022

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**To:** Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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**Medical Officer of Health & CEO**

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## Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Board of Health receive this report for information.

## Key Points

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- Corporate Communications leads Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health's (WDGPH or the Agency) compliance with the communications components of the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS).<sup>1</sup>
- 2022 was a year of transition away from the intense pace of Public Health communications during COVID-19 response in 2020 and 2021 as evidenced by:
  - Across social channels in 2022, WDGPH sent 82 percent fewer messages and received 84 percent fewer messages than in 2021.
  - WDGPH was mentioned in the media 1561 times in 2022, down from a high of 8,401 mentions in 2021.

- The website had 82 percent fewer pageviews in 2022 (1.9 million) than in 2021 (over 10 million).
- Despite an expected decline in communications channel metrics as the Agency transitioned to standard messaging, Communications is engaging with a larger audience than pre-pandemic, with growth of approximately 500 percent across communications channels (i.e., website pageviews, social media followers, media mentions) since 2019.

## Background

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The *Ontario Public Health Standards* (OPHS) states:

*Promoting and protecting the public's health requires effective communication. Various communication strategies may be needed to ensure the greatest impact, depending on the population, local context, available resources, and local and provincial priorities.*<sup>1</sup>

In compliance with this directive, Communications collaborates with subject matter experts and supports Agency program areas to develop impactful communications that are accessible, accurate and understandable to improve knowledge, build awareness and support the well-being of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) communities.

## Discussion

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### Introduction

In 2020 and 2021, Communications provided a critical role in sharing accurate, timely and rapidly changing information about COVID-19, resulting in frequent messages and a measurable increase in WDGPH's communications metrics.<sup>2,3</sup> The focus on COVID-19 response continued into the beginning of 2022, but slowly tapered as the emergency response to COVID-19 lessened.

This report illustrates Communications transition from COVID-19 emergency response messaging to supporting the re-opening of public health programs and services throughout 2022. Through communications planning and promotion, using a variety of digital and traditional strategies, Communications helped engage local audiences, supported community partners, and met the strategic mission and goals of the Agency.

## Traditional News Media

Communications provides media with access to information and spokespeople in a timely manner. In 2022, WDGPH's primary spokespeople were Dr. Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO and Dr. Tenenbaum, Associate Medical Officer of Health. Communications and other senior leaders occasionally acted as spokespeople.

News media highlights for 2022 include:

- WDGPH was mentioned in the media 1561 times, a sharp decline from 2021 (8,401 mentions), consistent with the changing nature of the pandemic response.
- WDGPH was featured or mentioned in several major regional and national news outlets including CTV, CBC, Toronto Star, TVO and Global News.
- Dr. Mercer (and in her absence, Dr. Tenenbaum) continued to provide a weekly segment with CTV Kitchener, which will continue in 2023.
- In March 2022, Dr. Mercer, along with Dr. Charlotte Yates, President of the University of Guelph, contributed an op-ed to the Toronto Star in celebration of International Women's Day.
- Communications sent nine media releases in 2022, including letters and statements. (See Table 1).

**Table 1: WDGPH Media Releases, 2022**

Date	Media Release/Statements/Letters
January 14	<a href="#">Letter to the Community from Dr. Nicola Mercer on the return to in-person learning</a>
April 6	<a href="#">Media Release: WDG Public Health adds additional vaccine clinics for fourth doses</a>
April 7	<a href="#">Media Release: WDG Public Health relaunches its dental programs and services</a>
May 19	<a href="#">Media Release: WDG Public Health begins mosquito larvicide program to reduce mosquito populations known to carry West Nile virus</a>
June 17	<a href="#">Media Release: First case of Monkeypox identified in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph</a>
July 25	<a href="#">Media Release: COVID-19 vaccine for children 6 months to 5 years will begin to arrive in the region this week</a>
August 12	<a href="#">Media Release: WDG Public Health confirms first rabid bat of 2022</a>
August 31	<a href="#">Statement from Dr. Matthew Tenenbaum on International Overdose Awareness Day</a>
September 12	<a href="#">Media Release: Omicron (Bivalent) booster now approved in Ontario</a>

## Social Media

In 2022, WDGPH's primary social media channels were:

- [Twitter: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [Facebook: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [Instagram: @WDGPublicHealth](#)
- [LinkedIn: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health](#)

With COVID-19 messaging on the decline, WDGPH posted less on social media in 2022 (1,225 posts) than in 2021 (6,942 posts), resulting in a corresponding decrease in impressions, engagements and post link clicks (See Table 2). However, Communications successfully retained the audience gained during its COVID-19 response (See Table 2) using targeted paid ads for COVID-19 vaccine clinics, posting a variety of public health content organically and sharing community partner content.

**Table 2: Social Media Channel Performance Summary, 2022 vs. 2021**

Social Channel	Impressions*	Engagements**	Post Link Clicks***	Audience****
Facebook	<b>2M</b> ↓52%	<b>73K</b> ↓66%	<b>19K</b> ↓71%	<b>10K</b> ↑2%
Instagram	<b>619K</b> ↓72%	<b>7K</b> ↓82%	<b>2.8K</b> ↓72.5%	<b>7K</b> No change
Twitter	<b>963K</b> ↓95%	<b>34K</b> ↓92%	<b>8.5K</b> ↓88%	<b>14.5K</b> No change
LinkedIn	<b>22.5K</b> ↓11.5%	<b>1.7K</b> ↓38%	<b>1.5K</b> ↓40%	<b>2.1K</b> ↑19%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.7M</b> ↓85%	<b>116K</b> ↓87%	<b>29K</b> ↓79%	<b>34K</b> ↑1%

\*Impressions refers to the number of times that any content associated with the page was displayed to users during the reporting period. This includes both organic (non-paid) and paid activity.

\*\*Engagements refers to the number of times that users reacted to, commented on, shared, or clicked on posts during the reporting period. This includes both organic (non-paid) and paid activity.

\*\*\*Post Link Clicks is the number of times that users clicked on links from Agency posts during the reporting period. For Instagram, the metric measures bio link clicks.

\*\*\*\*Audience refers to the number of users who like/follow the page as of the last day of the reporting period.

## Public Website

The WDGPH website experienced a similar decline in metrics due to the transition away from frequently changing COVID-19 content, however, the top five visited pages in 2022 were still COVID related (See Table 3). Drop-in vaccine clinics were frequently shared on social media and media outlets continued to report on the status of cases in the WDG region. In 2022, Communications and program areas began to review and update website content to ensure the website is an effective communications tool for WDGPH and for WDG communities to find the information, program, or service they need.

**Table 3: Top Pages Visited by Pageviews, 2022**

Page	Pageviews
Status of Cases in WDG Dashboard	390K
Outbreak Bulletin	110K
COVID-19 Booster Doses	90K
Drop-in COVID-19 vaccination clinics	73K
Status of Vaccinations in WDG Dashboard	58K

## Blog

Since its inception in 2014, the Stay Well WDG blog continues to be a valuable communications tool, offering easily digestible and long-lasting content that drives people to the website. Six new blogs were published in 2022 (the top one being “Why do I need a booster? Your booster dose questions answered”), however, previous years’ blogs were visited most (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Top Blog Posts Visited by Pageviews, 2022**

Page	Pageviews
How to say “no” to norovirus in your home	8.6K
What happens when you can’t afford dental care	8.3K
Is your well water safe or is it making you sick?	3.6K
The simple facts everyone should know about hookah	3.4K
11 ways to keep cool in the summer heat	2.6K

## Library Services

The librarian supports the third Foundational Standard, “Effective Public Health Practice”, specifically the first section, “Program Planning, Evaluation, and Evidence-Informed Decision Making” by assisting public health professionals to find, organize and use information to support evidence-based research, programs and services.

The librarian provides literature searches, services and copyright support to the Medical Officer of Health and public health staff and management.

In addition, in 2022 the librarian was involved in the following projects:

- Writing and coordinating the Community Stakeholder Bulletin for the COVID-19 response Liaison team, publishing the final edition on May 26, 2022.
- Tracking and documenting important milestones in the COVID-19 response and vaccination campaign with monthly timelines and summaries, up to and including June 2022.
- Maintenance of the read-only archive for important documents related to the COVID-19 response.
- Updated the agency copyright and plagiarism policies and forms.

## Client Service

Communications provides both electronic and hard copy comment cards to the public to foster two-way communication and to help maintain a proactive approach to client service. Client feedback results are monitored against the Agency’s client service standards to ensure reception and other service areas can respond appropriately with improvements or changes. Highlights of the 2022 client service comment cards are as follows:

- Nine electronic comment cards were received in 2022, a significant decrease from the 60 received in 2021, however, print card submissions increased by 18 percent from last year.
- In 2021 respondents reported satisfaction levels with WDGPH of only 35 percent. This reflects antivax sentiments from individuals who were reluctant to get vaccinations except they needed them for work or other reasons and individuals who were not satisfied because of service restrictions due to the all-Agency Covid response.
- Satisfaction levels eventually more than doubled in 2022 with 79 percent reporting they were very satisfied (68%) or satisfied (11%) with their experience,

citing the professionalism and kindness of staff, particularly the vaccine and dental team.

- Of those who reported being not satisfied (3.5%) and very unsatisfied (14%), issues cited were the safety of COVID-19 vaccines and frustration with changes in services offered.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents selected the reason for their visit to WDGPH as vaccination-related and 18 percent reported dental. There was one specified harm reduction services visit, and the remainder did not specify a reason.

## Health Equity Implications

Effective communication is crucial to achieving health equity in WDG communities. Communications strives to ensure that all clients are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy and that messages are communicated in a way that is inclusive and equitable. Communications uses plain language, provides accessible formats, tailors messages with an understanding of various audiences, shares information through a variety of channels and collaborates with and supports community partner efforts. Through effective communications, The Agency fosters trust and transparency, provides equitable access to information and resources, engages with community partners, and works to promote and protect the health of WDG populations.

## Conclusion

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The day-to-day work of Communications involves sharing information with and engaging internal and external audiences (See Appendix A) with the goal of delivering the right messages through the right channels to achieve WDGPH's strategic, operational and communications goals. Communications ensures consistent, clear, and concise messaging, monitors and tracks media and social media coverage and provides expertise to effectively engage with WDGPH's diverse audiences. In doing so, Communications helps the Agency build positive relationships within its communities, effectively manage risk and reputation, and ensures WDGPH is a credible and trusted source of public health information.

# Ontario Public Health Standards

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## Foundational Standards

- Population Health Assessment
- Health Equity
- Effective Public Health Practice
- Emergency Management

## Program Standards

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being
- Food Safety
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Growth and Development
- Immunization
- Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control
- Safe Water
- School Health
- Substance Use and Injury Prevention

## 2023 WDGPH Strategic Directions

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- People & Culture:** WDGPH has an organizational culture of engagement, inclusion and agility.
- Partner Relations:** WDGPH collaborates with partners to address priority health issues in the community.
- Health System Change:** WDGPH is positioned to be an agent of change within the broader health sector.

## References

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1. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability. [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2023 April 6]. Available from: <https://tinyurl.com/ynz5pn6f>
2. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Corporate Communications Annual Report 2020. [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2023 April 17]. Available from: <https://tinyurl.com/yw3jy6ew>
3. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Corporate Communications Annual Report 2021. [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2023 April 17]. Available from: <https://tinyurl.com/b35em4pn>



# Appendices

## Appendix A

### AUDIENCES & COMMUNICATIONS VEHICLES

Communications works to meet the needs of a variety of audiences using the most appropriate communications' vehicles for the message.

Audience	Communications Channels
<p><b>Board of Health</b></p> <p>The Board of Health is comprised of elected representatives from Wellington and Dufferin Counties, and the City of Guelph; as well as local representatives appointed by the provincial government. BOH members regularly have opportunities to share Public Health messages with residents of their communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Report</li> <li>• Stay Well Informed E-Newsletter (internal)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public</b></p> <p>The residents of Wellington County, Dufferin County and the City of Guelph, both clients and non-clients, are the intended audience of many of the Agency's communications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• Media Releases</li> <li>• Community Report</li> <li>• Print Materials</li> <li>• Digital Screens and Signage</li> <li>• Paid Ads</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physicians &amp; Health Care Providers</b></p> <p>Physicians are an important audience for the Medical Officer of Health. Communications distributes information to this group on her behalf.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physicians Advisories &amp; Updates, distributed through RAVE.</li> <li>• Letters (e.g., infection control)</li> <li>• Program Materials</li> <li>• Forms and Resources</li> </ul>

<p><b>Government</b></p> <p>The Board of Health consists, in part, of government representatives from local municipalities. The Communications Team and other WDGPG staff have established working relationships with other municipal staff and share information with them as needed.</p> <p>At times, there are opportunities to share information with MPPs and other provincial government officials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Report</li> <li>• Letters</li> <li>• Advisories</li> <li>• Marketing Materials</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Partners</b></p> <p>WDGPH participates in many partner groups. The Communications Team often provides communications expertise either directly by participating on a committee or indirectly by supporting a staff representative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• Marketing Materials</li> <li>• Joint Media Releases</li> <li>• Newspaper Advertisements</li> <li>• Reports</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff</b></p> <p>The Communications Team provides staff with opportunities to share information internally.</p> <p>The Communications Team offers opportunities for staff to learn more about communications tools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Intranet</li> <li>• Staff Newsletter</li> <li>• Templates</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Consultation and Collaboration</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media outlets (print, radio, T.V.)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Releases</li> <li>• Media Advisories</li> <li>• Photo Opportunities</li> <li>• Story Pitches</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Newspaper Advertising</li> <li>• Radio Advertising</li> <li>• Community Board</li> <li>• Twitter</li> </ul>