

# 2025 alpha Fall Symposium

## Speakers' Biographies

(IN ORDER OF FIRST APPEARANCE)

FRIDAY, November 7

---



### Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang is the Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health for Public Health and Paramedic Services in the Region of Waterloo, one of the fastest growing communities in Ontario with a population of 700,000. From 2004 to 2017, Dr. Wang served as the Region's Associate Medical Officer of Health, focusing on infectious diseases, environmental health, emergency preparedness and population health assessment. In her current role, Dr. Wang is responsible for all Public Health and Paramedic Services programs in the region, overseeing over 600 staff and a budget of over \$110 million.



### Hon. Doug Ford

Doug Ford is the Premier of Ontario. He was elected as the MPP for Etobicoke-North in 2018. Previously, Doug Ford served as Toronto city councillor from 2010-2014, and was vice-chair of the Budget Committee, where he delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. While on city council, Ford served on the board of Build Toronto, and was a director of the Canadian National Exhibition. He also served on the Civic Appointments Committee and the Government Management Committee at Council. A dedicated community leader, successful businessman with Deco Labels and passionate advocate for the people, Doug's commitment to public service runs in the family. Three generations of Fords have served the people of Ontario in elected office. Doug is a life-long resident of Etobicoke. His commitment to public service includes over 20 years of dedicated work with the Toronto West Rotary Club and serving as a member of the Royal Canadian Legion.



### Hon. Sylvia Jones

Sylvia Jones is the Member of Provincial Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon. She is currently Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, where her focus is building a more connected and convenient health care system for all Ontarians. Over the last year, Minister Jones has worked with health care partners from across Ontario to: introduce and pass the Your Health Act to ensure Ontarians have faster access to publicly-funded surgeries and procedures, while growing the health care workforce, introduce and pass the Convenient Care at Home Act to modernize and better integrate home care services, and break down barriers to make it easier and faster for health care workers trained in Ontario, other provinces, and internationally to register and start working in Ontario. She has lived in Dufferin-Caledon for over 30 years with her husband, David.



### Robin Jones

Robin Jones has been the Mayor of the Municipality of the Village of Westport since 2014 and serves on the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville Council. Mayor Jones has been elected to the Board of Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) since 2018 and was elected as Chair of Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA) in 2021. She was elected Warden of the Counties for 2017 & 18 and also elected as Chair of the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus in 2018. She is a member of the Board of Management for both Maple View Lodge and St. Lawrence Lodge. Prior to entering political life, Mayor Jones had a 33 year career in policing, holding senior positions with the Waterloo Regional Police, the Ontario Provincial Police and finished her policing career as Chief of Nishnawbe-Aski Police. In 2007, she was seconded to the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and was the Provincial Negotiator for First Nations Police Services throughout Ontario. In 2021, Robin was appointed by the Government of Ontario to the Ontario Arts Council.



### **Chris Cull**

Founder of Inspire By Example, Chris Cull's inspiring achievements in health sciences are rooted in his personal transformation from opioid addiction to recovery and advocacy. In 2014, Chris overcame a near decade long addiction to opioids and cycled across Canada twice to raise awareness for mental health, addictions and the opioid crisis. He documented his journey exploring the impacts of the opioid crisis across Canada in his first film, Inspire. A motivational speaker, filmmaker, healthcare worker and policy consultant, Chris uses his experience to advocate for mental health and addictions. He has shared his expertise and advised numerous institutions, including but not limited to, the Ontario Health Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, Harvard University, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM), the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), the Canadian Minister of Health, the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the World Health Organization. Chris also works as the Emergency Department Peer Support Specialist for Mental Health and Addictions at Lakeridge Health Oshawa.



### **Michael Sherar**

Michael Sherar leads Public Health Ontario, the provincial agency that provides evidence to inform policy, undertakes public health capacity building, and provides integrated public health laboratory and surveillance systems. Prior to joining PHO, Michael held several senior management positions in the public sector. He was previously the interim Transitional Lead and Chief Corporate Officer for the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC), where he led planning for TSHC to assume operating responsibility for seniors' social housing buildings from the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. Prior to TSHC, Michael spent 17 years at Cancer Care Ontario (CCO), nine of which as President and CEO. He led the expansion of CCO's mandate, built an effective infrastructure to support health system improvement in Ontario and led the smooth transition of CCO to become a division of Ontario Health.



### **Nicole Visschedyk**

Nicole Visschedyk is the Director of Capacity Building and Indigenous Engagement at Public Health Ontario. Nicole has more than 15 years of experience in public service, holding progressive positions in a number of Ontario ministries, including her most recent position as a Senior Manager, of the Indigenous Equity Branch, Treasury Board Secretariat. Prior to entering the Ontario Public Service, she worked as a journalist writing for media outlets such as The Hamilton Spectator and The National Post. Nicole is Métis and was fortunate enough to grow up with many cultural traditions of the Métis people. Her Métis community is near Penetanguishene, Ontario. Nicole holds a BSc. from the University of Guelph that included several years of work in a biochemistry laboratory. She completed her Master's degree in Journalism. In her spare time, Nicole has volunteered as board member on several boards, including Chair of the Ontario Cycling Association.



### **Marnie MacKinnon**

Marnie MacKinnon leads the development, implementation, and evaluation of innovative quality improvement initiatives aligned with PHO's strategic priorities. Her work focuses on fostering collaboration with key partners to establish shared goals and metrics. This approach aims to enhance public health performance across Ontario, with an emphasis on continuous quality improvement. With over 20 years of experience in health care policy, program design, and implementation, Marnie is dedicated to driving system-wide impact by leveraging strategic opportunities to enhance health systems and outcomes. Prior to joining PHO, Marnie served as Executive Lead of Strategic Projects at Ornge Air Ambulance and as Director of COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation at the Ministry of Health. Her leadership portfolio also includes roles at The Change Foundation and Cancer Care Ontario. Marnie graduated from McMaster University and has pursued professional training in health care leadership and leading strategic change from the University of Toronto and negotiation and dispute resolution from the University of Windsor.



### **Dr. Sarah Wilson**

Sarah Wilson, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC is the Deputy Chief, Medical and Systems Support, Communicable Disease Control at Public Health Ontario. Dr. Wilson is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Public Health and Preventive Medicine, an Associate Professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and is a Senior Adjunct Scientist at ICES (formerly known as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences). She has been a voting member of Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) since 2020.



### **Kaitlynn Almeida**

Kaitlynn Almeida is the Manager of Quality Improvement at Public Health Ontario, where she leads a team dedicated to developing and implementing quality improvement initiatives for the public health system. She is an enthusiastic and adaptive public health professional with a Master of Public Health degree from Queen's University, and a strategic thinker passionate about driving system-level improvements through collaboration. Kaitlynn brings several years of experience in stakeholder engagement, provincial program implementation, and quality improvement. Prior to joining PHO, she held various roles at Cancer Care Ontario (now part of Ontario Health) and Ottawa Public Health. Her previous positions include Manager, Performance and Accountability, Regional Cancer Programs at OH-CCO, and Senior Specialist, COVID-19 Testing Implementation at Ontario Health, among other impactful roles.



### **Tammy DeGiovanni**

Tammy DeGiovanni is a dynamic health leader with over 25 years of experience. Tammy's career began as a Registered Nurse across diverse settings. She then moved into leadership roles in pediatric acute care, including the organization-wide implementation of an electronic health record. She is now the Senior Vice-President of Clinical Services and Chief Nurse Executive at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, overseeing all clinical programs, nursing and health professional practices. Tammy serves on the CHEO Board and various regional and provincial committees to advance healthcare system changes. She collaborates with the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Health Sciences as a guest lecturer and works with the CHEO Research Institute to integrate evidence-based care. Additionally, Tammy has been Vice-Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health for six years and is active in community organizations related to the arts, schools, sports, and her neighborhood. Tammy has a strong focus on governance structures that help teams achieve their mandates, aligning with the goals of Public Health Boards across the Province.



### **Dr. Kit Young Hoon**

Dr. Kit Young Hoon has been the Medical Officer of Health for Northwestern Health Unit since 2014. She is a Public Health and Preventive Medicine specialist certified by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. She was trained at McMaster University and her qualifications include a Master of Science from McMaster University and Master of Public Health from Lakehead University. She is a graduate of the medical school of the University of the West Indies and has worked clinically in Canada, United Kingdom and Trinidad. She resides in Kenora and encourages her public health colleagues to visit and enjoy the beauty of Northwestern Ontario.



### **Dr. Piotr Oglaza**

Dr. Piotr Oglaza is a passionate advocate for public health, with more than two decades of experience providing public health and medical guidance to diverse communities across the southeast region. After several years of practising family medicine in Sharbot Lake and Verona, Dr. Oglaza completed a Public Health and Preventive Medicine residency at Queen's University, and since 2018 has worked in the region as the Medical Officer of Health and CEO, currently at Southeast Public Health. In his free time, he enjoys reading Second World War history books, martial arts and fitness training.



### **Nicole Britten**

Nicole Britten is a health services professional with a master's degree in public health and a strong background in health system strategy, policy analysis, and advocacy. She currently serves as Manager of Strategic Policy and Projects at Peel Health Services, where she leads work focused on advancing strategic partnerships and supporting health system integration initiatives. Nicole started her health services career as a health promoter at Peel Public Health supporting chronic disease and injury prevention initiatives. In her current role, she helps to shape how municipal health services contribute to broader system-level approaches and leads advocacy efforts to ensure programs can be responsive, equitable, and aligned with community needs and provincial priorities. Her work emphasizes collaboration across sectors to improve health outcomes and strengthen supports for residents with complex and intersecting needs.





### **Paul Sharma**

Paul Sharma is the Director for the Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention division at Region of Peel-Public Health. Before Peel, Paul was the Manager of the Oral Health programs at Middlesex-London Health Unit and previously Manager in the Department of Oral Health at the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit. Paul is also appointed as an Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto. Paul currently sits on the Executive of the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD) serving as President. As well, Paul sits on the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) Board of Directors representing OAPHD. Paul's first position in health care was working as a registered dental hygienist in Toronto primarily providing services to individuals living with HIV. Paul has also been involved in dental hygiene education in a teaching and management capacity. Paul has completed his Masters of Science in Dental Public Health from King's College, University of London, in London, England.



### **Dr. Karima Velji**

Dr. Karima Velji is Chief of Nursing and Professional Practice and an Assistant Deputy Minister for Ontario. She is leading the integrated health human strategy for the province of Ontario which includes a focus on education expansion/clinical support (including creation of two new medical schools), scope of practice expansion (including pharmacy minor ailment program and RN prescribing), expediting pathways for interjurisdictional and international practitioners (including launching practice ready assessment program and operationalizing the As of Right legislation) and retention/distribution programs (including locums, clinical scholars and extern program). She is a Registered Nurse and has held senior leadership positions in several academic health science centres and boards. She is cross-appointed to a number of universities and has received an honorary degree from Loyalist College. Dr. Velji is a sought-after consultant for system level projects and has led external reviews of several organizations. She is a surveyor with Health Standards Organization (HSO), Accreditation Canada.



### **Trudy Sachowski**

Trudy Sachowski, appointed to the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) Board of Health by the Municipality of Machin and the City of Dryden, is a true champion for public health having dedicated countless hours over the past several years to public health and in the neighbouring sectors of healthcare and education. Since her appointment to the Northwestern Board of Health, Trudy has remained steadfast in her commitment to her role in improving the health outcomes of the people of Northwestern Ontario and across the province. As the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (Ontario) North West Region Board of Health Section representative, Trudy enthusiastically provides leadership and advocacy for local public health. Prior to her current position as the Past Chair of the alPHA Board of Directors Trudy served on the alPHA Executive Committee as Chair, President, Vice President, Past President, and Board of Health Section Chair. She believes in the work of public health, and she is driven to contribute her time, knowledge, influence, and passion to move this work forward for the betterment of the people of Ontario.



### **Steven Rebellato**

Steven Rebellato is the Vice President for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. He has his PhD in Public Health from the University of Waterloo. Steven is a part-time Assistant Professor at McMaster University in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, & Impact and Adjunct Professor at the University of Waterloo. Steven is a Fellow at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health in the AMS-Fitzgerald Fellowship in Artificial Intelligence and Human-Centered Leadership. He is the Vice-Chair for the York Hills Centre for Children, Youth and Families in the Region of York.



### **Cynthia St. John**

Cynthia St. John is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Southwestern Public Health, a merged public health agency serving the Oxford, Elgin, and St. Thomas communities. Prior to its 2018 merger, Cynthia was as the Executive Director of Elgin St. Thomas Public Health for 18 years. Cynthia now leads an organization of approximately 200 employees responsible for providing public health programs and services to a population of over 200,000 in southwestern Ontario. Cynthia began her career in the charitable sector having had the privilege of working with exceptional organizations at a local, national, and international level. Organizations include: the YWCA, a Toronto-based Community Health Centre, Dying with Dignity Canada, and Canadian Society of Association Executives. Her areas of expertise include board governance, strategic planning, and business areas such as human resources development, finance, and risk management.



### **Amy Dale**

Amy Dale is Partner with Harrison Pensa LLP. Amy has provided general legal counsel to Southwestern Public Health (and its predecessor Elgin-St. Thomas Public Health) for many years and, more recently, to Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Amy has also provided advice to several health units on issues related to mergers and on public health litigation matters. In addition to her public health law practice, Amy acts as legal counsel to several agricultural marketing boards in the province and also has an insurance defence litigation practice.



### **James LeNoury**

James LeNoury has represented alPHA since 2001. He represented alPHA at the Walkerton Water Inquiry. He has presented regularly at alPHA conferences and written a number of papers for alPHA members. James was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1992 and has specialized in employment and labour law since that time. Prior to attending law school James completed a Masters of Counselling Psychology Degree and worked as a crisis counsellor, and child and family therapist at childrens' mental health centres in Ontario. In his employment and labour law practice he represents a wide range of private and public sector employers and individual employees with respect to employment and labour employment and labour relations legal matters. In recognition of his accomplishment in the Supreme Court of Canada *Wilson v AECL* landmark ruling which affects 10,000 federally regulated employers and 500,000 employees, James was awarded the National HR Employment Lawyer of the Year for 2016.



### **Dr. Robert Kyle**

Dr. Robert Kyle has been the Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for the Regional Municipality of Durham since 1991. Prior to this appointment, he served as MOH for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit since 1987. Dr. Kyle is a Fellow of the RCPSC and the American College of Preventive Medicine. He is an Adjunct Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto and Department of Family Medicine, Queen's University. He is also a member of the medical staffs of Lakeridge Health and Oak Valley Health.

Dr. Kyle is an active member of many provincial and regional health groups and organizations. For example, he is a Past-Chair of Public Health Ontario's Board of Directors, Past-President of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) and Past-Chair and current member of the Public Health and Preventive Medicine Exam Board and Examination Committee of the RCPSC



### **Karen Nesbitt**

Karen Nesbitt is the Director of Policy and Government Relations at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), bringing over 15 years of public sector leadership, primarily from the Ontario Public Service (OPS). A proven policy leader, Karen passionately champions the critical issues facing municipalities, drawing on her OPS background leading complex initiatives, such as social assistance system transformation and major capital projects. Karen holds a B.A. from Mount Allison University.



### **Alicia Neufeld**

Alicia Neufeld is a Senior Manager of Policy at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), where she is responsible for health and human services in addition to a range of other municipal priorities. Before joining AMO in January 2024, Alicia was the Associate Director of the Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat at Toronto Public Health. Prior to that, she spent more than a decade with the provincial government, including many years in strategic policy at the Ministry of Health where she led complex policy files, including the implementation of Medical Assistance in Dying, the development of Ontario's first Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose, and approvals for two rounds of health system transformation.



### Daniela Spagnuolo

Daniela Spagnuolo is a Policy Advisor at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, where her work includes supporting health and human service policy among other policy areas. Daniela has previously worked as a Health Policy Analyst with the College of Family Physicians of Canada, a Research Assistant with Women's College Hospital, and in various roles in food policy research. She currently serves as Community Advisory Committee Chair for a research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council studying innovative community responses and intersectoral collaboration for health and food justice beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Daniela holds a Master of Arts in Public Policy and Administration from Toronto Metropolitan University.



### Loretta Ryan

Loretta Ryan is the Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies. alPHa provides leadership to the province's boards of health and public health units. In this role, she works closely with board of health members, medical and associate medical officers of health, and senior public health managers to represent the interests of local public health and to collaborate with governments and other health organizations to advocate for healthy public policy and a strong, effective, and efficient public health system in Ontario. Previously, Loretta was the Director of Public Affairs for the Ontario Professional Planners Institute where she provided leadership in the development and delivery of the Institute's public policy, government relations, and communications. Notably, she headed up the Institute's Healthy Communities, Sustainable Communities initiative, an area where planning and public health intersect on the built environment. Prior to working there, Loretta was with the Toronto Board of Trade and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Loretta is a Certified Association Executive (CAE) and a Registered Professional Planner (RPP).



Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
PO Box 73510, RPO Wychwood Toronto, ON M6C 4A7  
(416) 595-0006 | [info@alphaweb.org](mailto:info@alphaweb.org) | [www.alphaweb.org](http://www.alphaweb.org)  
Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) [@PHAgencies](https://twitter.com/PHAgencies)