



# Distinguished Service Awards

June 9, 2026

---

# 2026 Award Recipients



## Jamie McPherson

Jamie McPherson is the Mayor of the Municipality of Greenstone, and Chair of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) Board of Health. As Chair, he has brought clarity, integrity, and a community-centred lens to complex decisions. Colleagues and partners look to Jamie for principled judgment and steady guidance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he modelled calm, transparent, evidence-informed governance supporting TBDHU's Medical Officer of Health and senior leadership, strengthening Board oversight, and maintaining public trust at a time of unprecedented strain. In these pivotal moments, he ensured decisions were anchored in evidence, accountability, and long-term system sustainability. At the request of the Minister of Health that boards explore potential mergers, Jamie chaired the joint Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Northwestern Health Unit review. Under his leadership, the process was rigorous, transparent, and collaborative, characterized by respectful engagement with staff, and governance peers. The shared, evidence-based conclusion not to pursue a merger reflected a careful assessment of governance, service quality, financial implications, and community access, particularly across the remote and vast northern geographies. This outcome safeguarded effective, locally responsive public health services and stands as a defining example of results-oriented, responsible governance. As Mayor of Greenstone and an active participant in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, and Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Jamie effectively bridges municipal realities with public health imperatives, advancing the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health in meaningful ways. His leadership has strengthened public health locally, regionally, and provincially, and his impact will endure.



## Dr. Elspeth (“Pepi”) McTavish

Pepi is a highly regarded and trusted public health physician whose contributions have strengthened Ontario’s public health medical leadership, governance, and workforce development — all while simultaneously carrying significant operational responsibility as an Associate Medical Officer of Health in Durham Region. Pepi has provided consistent peer leadership through the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) Section Executive Committee, serving as Central East representative and as Chair. Since 2023, she has been a member of the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health’s Public Health Leadership Table, contributing to system-level dialogue and coordination on priority public health issues across Ontario. She is a trusted, solutions-oriented leader who advances collective priorities, while remaining grounded in the operational realities faced by local public health agencies. As COMOH Section Chair, Pepi focused on strengthening the foundations of alpha by ensuring COMOH Section working groups and communities of practice are appropriately structured and aligned with Ontario not-for-profit governance requirements. This work is critical to maintaining organizational integrity, clarifying accountabilities, supporting consistent decision-making, and enabling sustainable cross-sector collaboration—foundational elements for effective system leadership. Overall, Pepi’s career reflects a rare breadth of practical, front-line credibility—spanning nursing, emergency care, family medicine, and public health and preventive medicine. That experience shows in her leadership style: pragmatic, respectful, evidence-informed, and consistently focused on improving public health practice.



## Dawn Sauvé

Dawn Sauvé has been a transformative force in public health dentistry, dedicating her 38-year career at Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) to advancing oral health equity across northern and Indigenous communities. Her leadership and unwavering commitment have reshaped access to care for some of Ontario's most underserved populations. Since 2006, as Dental Health Program Manager, Dawn has guided strategic planning, program development, and service delivery across a vast and complex region. Supported by the Board of Health, senior leadership, dental team, and NWHU's former dental consultant, she has championed innovative approaches that strengthened services and improved outcomes for children, families, and vulnerable adults. Dawn played a pivotal role in negotiating a special Healthy Smiles Ontario pilot that enabled NWHU to deliver dental services to individuals receiving Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program, and Non-Insured Health Benefits. In 2004, she led NWHU to become the first health unit to pilot the Children's Oral Health Initiative—now active in 10 First Nations communities—and the first to introduce a fluoride varnish program. Her influence extends to research and advocacy. She co-supervised the 2015 NWHU Vulnerable Adults Oral Health Study, which was presented at the Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry, and in 2018 delivered a landmark presentation, *The Gap in our Healthcare System: Access to Oral Health*, at the Ontario Oral Health Alliance Forum at Queen's Park. Dawn helped secure \$1.5 million for two mobile dental offices and four community clinics, and from 2020 to 2025 partnered with Green Shield Canada to deliver over \$500,000 in emergency dental care through the Green Door Project. In 2024, she guided NWHU to become the first health unit authorized to bill under the Canadian Dental Care Plan. Dawn's career stands as a powerful testament to leadership, partnership, and a lifelong commitment to oral health equity.



## Susan Stewart

Susan consistently exemplifies exceptional leadership. She leads with integrity, collaboration, and clear vision; fostering environments that support innovation, inclusivity, and evidence-informed practice. Her ability to bring together diverse stakeholders, build strong partnerships, and inspire multi-disciplinary teams has resulted in meaningful and lasting impacts across programs and services. With 21 years of service in public health at Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health (now Southeast Public Health) Susan consistently delivers significant, tangible results. Her contributions support the development and implementation of initiatives that improve health outcomes, strengthen service delivery, and enhance access to care for communities. Whether through program development, policy influence, or system-level improvements, her work reflects both depth of expertise and a commitment to excellence. At the provincial level, Susan's work advances public health and health promotion. She is a system leader and active participant in local and provincial working groups, including serving as past chair of the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Managers in Public Health Network. Her efforts help shape best practices, inform strategic directions, and support the continuous improvement of public health services across Ontario. Beyond her extensive professional accomplishments, Susan is widely respected for her dedication, professionalism, and passion for public health. She approaches her work with compassion and a strong sense of purpose, consistently advocating for the needs of the populations she serves. Her leadership not only drives results but also inspires colleagues and partners to strive for excellence.



## Professor Adalsteinn (Steini) Brown

Steini has served as Dean of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health since 2017, providing nationally and internationally recognized leadership in public health education, research, and policy. His career spans senior academic leadership, executive roles within the Ontario Public Service, and experience in both start-up and multinational organizations. This breadth of experience has positioned him as a trusted bridge between academia, government, and applied public health practice, an attribute of particular value to Ontario's local public health system and fully aligned with alPHA's mission to support effective governance, leadership, and system excellence. Steini has been a consistent and principled advocate for evidence-informed decision-making. His research and policy work emphasizes the responsible use of data, evaluation, and systems thinking to inform public policy, directly supporting the objectives and realities of local public health agencies. His scholarly contributions include more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, and over 100 reports, editorials, and commentaries, many of which have influenced public health policy and system design at both provincial and national levels. He has also engaged constructively and consistently with alPHA leadership, through collaboration with Loretta Ryan, Chief Executive Officer. Steini was, and continues to be, a valued and reliable partner in advancing meaningful dialogue between academic public health and alPHA's members. Professor Brown's contributions have resulted in clear benefits for local public health, including strengthened research-practice linkages, enhanced access to academic expertise, and increased visibility of local public health perspectives within broader provincial and national policy conversations. His leadership has consistently reinforced the importance of strong, well-resourced local public health infrastructure as a cornerstone of prevention, preparedness, health equity, and population health improvement. His leadership, measurable system-level contributions, and enduring commitment to strengthening local public health capacity and collaboration in Ontario represent service of the highest distinction.



## Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award reflects the commitment of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies to recognize the significant contributions made to public health in Ontario by board of health members, health unit staff, and public health professionals.

Eligibility of the award is open to any of alPHA's members, including medical officers of health, board of health members, members of Affiliate organizations and, occasionally, individuals outside the Association.

The Award is given to those individuals who have demonstrated exceptional qualities of leadership in their own milieu, achieved tangible results through long service or distinctive acts, and shown exemplary devotion to public health at local and provincial levels.

Previous Distinguished Service Award recipients can be found [here](#).

Congratulations to our 2026 Distinguished Service Award recipients!



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 known as Twitter) [@PHAgencies](https://twitter.com/PHAgencies)