

 Annual Report PUBLICHEALTHGREYBRUCE.ON.CA



Lake Huron Odauwah Gummauh

Giigonke Piinsaugen Chief's Point ⁻

Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation Saukiing

Georgian Bay Waussau-Gummauh

Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation Neyaashiinigmiing

Collingwood

Alliston

Saukiing Anishnaabekiing
Saugeen Ojibway Territory

Arthur

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Goderich

We acknowledge this territory as an important meeting place for many Indigenous peoples spanning countless generations. We acknowledge the water, the forests, the open spaces, and the animals that roam here.

As part of our work to protect and promote health in this region, we are dedicated to learning from and engaging in meaningful dialogue and actions with our Indigenous neighbours. We acknowledge our pledge to better our relationships with the original stewards of this territory and all who call it home.

We recognize this land in the spirit of reconciliation - an intentional act that honours the history of Turtle Island and the original caretakers of this territory, now referred to as Grey and Bruce counties.



Grey Bruce Public Health 2024 Board of Health



Sue Carleton Board Chair Grey County



Kenneth Craig Bruce County



Kevin Eccles Grey County



Luke Charbonneau Board Vice-Chair Bruce County



Brian Milne Grey County



Sue Paterson Grey County



Chris Peabody Bruce County



Nick Saunders Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Provincial Appointee



Helen-Claire Tingling Provincial Appointee



Chad Richards Provincial Appointee



Beverly Wilkins Provincial Appointee



Dear readers,

2023 was a fascinating year for us at Grey Bruce Public Health. Our staff met the challenge of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with open minds and hearts, diving right into the overwhelming task of catching up and adapting to a new landscape.

This past year has been a rewarding and exploratory one. Our organization, like all other public health units in the province, has been working diligently to locate critical data for vaccine backlogs, harm reduction initiatives, food insecurity reports, and so much more. We've been continuing to strengthen our relationships with partners, delivering world-class service to clients in clinics and outreach programs, and advancing our projects and strategic plans.

The return of our school health programs was such a welcome and rewarding opportunity. Providing Grey Bruce residents with dental and vision screenings, sexual health clinics in secondary schools, and updating parents on the importance of ISPA routine immunizations has contributed to a sense of normalcy we all longed for during the pandemic in the year prior. I believe the opportunity for staff and educators, parents, and students to interact in this manner enhanced our craft of protecting and promoting health.

The ongoing opioid crisis gripped much of southern and midwestern Ontario during 2023 and had many public health units striving to provide support and mobilize new resources to communities and populations in need. Working in collaboration with our Grey Bruce SOS (Supportive Outreach Services) team helped maintain a steady flow of knowledge contributing to the physical and mental well-being of many.

To say our team rose to the challenges associated with this past year is a profound understatement. I've said it many times, and I will not waver in repeating it - the team we're so fortunate to be part of, here at Grey Bruce Public Health, are among the most passionate group of professionals I've had the pleasure of calling my colleagues. It is the privilege of my career to work alongside such a talented group.

In our 2023 annual report, we've compiled a summary of our work over the past year, highlighting our many achievements, challenges, and opportunities. I am pleased to recognize the hard work of our team as we strive towards a better health for all.



Dr. Ian Arra Medical Officer of Health & CEO Grey Bruce Public Health

Iam Amra



- **07** Vision, Mission, Values
- **08** Projects
- **10** People
- **11** Programs
- **17** Partnerships
- **20** Financials





THIS IS WHAT ME DOO





Working with Grey Bruce communities to protect and promote health.



Vision

A healthier future for all.



Respect, Integrity, Transparency and Excellence.

Projects

Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP)

Grey Bruce Public Health led a Locally Driven Collaborative Project, **aimed at improving the understanding of and enhancing evidence-based strategies for preventing substance use and related harms among Ontario youth.**

Entitled "Implementing an evidence-informed public health approach to health promotion around substance use and preventing substance-related harms among youth aged 15-24 in Ontario," the project involved gaining an understanding of the strategies currently being used by health units and other stakeholders in Ontario to prevent teens and young adults from using substances and experiencing substance-related harms.

The project team then identified ways to improve the overall effectiveness of substance use prevention efforts and address gaps.

The goal is for the project's findings to assist in developing and refining preventive interventions, enable better monitoring and evaluation of prevention strategies, and provide public health units and key stakeholders with the information needed to strengthen their practices and optimize outcomes in substance use prevention.

The core project team included staff from GBPH and co-applicant health units Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and Kingston Frontenac Lennox & Addington Public Health. Staff from Unity Health Toronto, the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, York Region Health Unit, Porcupine Health Unit, Public Health Ontario, and the Office of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health were also part of the core project team.

The study presents recommendations for improving efforts to prevent and delay substance use among youth.



GBPH teams are engaged in **10 matrix and priority projects**, each aimed at improving the health of Grey-Bruce residents.

Matrix projects are undertaken by multidisciplinary teams, with members drawn from various GBPH programs. The matrix projects aim to:

- Decrease vaping rates among local students through various strategies and supports;
- Assess climate-related health risks and vulnerabilities in Grey-Bruce and, in response, develop a comprehensive public health strategy to address the identified issues, both internally and externally;
- Map and report on GBPH projects that address public health-related issues, such as mental health promotion, injury prevention, and chronic disease prevention, with interventions across the lifespan;
- Assess community need, risks, and priorities related to sexual health services and adjust programming as required, while planning for long-term program sustainability;
- Establish a GBPH Indigenous Working Group, which will guide Public Health in ensuring Indigenous knowledge, experience, and values are respected and acknowledged during the planning and implementation of projects or decision-making processes.

Priority Projects

GBPH's Health Promotion team is undertaking a project that aims to create more supportive food environments in each of the approximately 99 licensed childcare centres in Grey-Bruce.

A Public Health Dietitian and Infectious Diseases team inspectors work together with Grey and Bruce counties to **monitor and advocate for the improved use of provincial tools to assess menu planning and supportive food environments in the childcare setting.** This collaboration increased communication and improved awareness of tools that support adherence to the nutrition recommendations in the Childcare and Early Years Act. As of Dec. 1, 2023:



The goal for this project in 2024 is to continue monitoring the use of the tool and promote updated provincial resources to maintain a supportive food environment in childcare settings.

Other priority projects at GBPH strive to strengthen the community's response to the opioid crisis; prevent falls and related injuries across the lifespan, boost road safety, and promote active transportation; promote the Ontario Seniors' Dental Care Program in Grey-Bruce; and bolster emergency management.

People

GBPH promotes programs and services, raises awareness of public health issues and topics, and provides training, educational materials, and other resources to people in Grey-Bruce.

This is accomplished by issuing media releases, participating in interviews with media outlets, supplying content for magazines and educational materials, utilizing social media and other online tools, offering training sessions, and attending community events. In 2023:



Saugeen First Nation Youth Centre event, a National AIDS Awareness event at Saugeen First Nation, and Truth & Reconciliation Day at Saugeen First Nation.

Camp Education Day at Neyaashinigmiing, a

Coldest Night of the Year, International Overdose Awareness Day events, We Remember Them Memorial, A Night to Remember, and community barbecues and socials.

Student Welcome Week at Georgian College



Two agriculture-focused youth events – *Roots of Bruce* and *Grown in Grey* – with an interactive display that focused on illness and prevention for those in contact with farm animals.

Orey Brace

Client Satisfaction Survey

Local LGBTQ+ Pride parades.

Effective Public Health Practice is a Foundational Ontario Public Health Standard that requires all our programs and services to ensure a culture of quality and continuous improvement. GBPH's Client Satisfaction Survey and Policy were developed in alignment with the principles of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario's Client-Centered Care Best Practice Guideline.

In 2023, the survey was updated with our new branding, and included demographic questions as an equity approach to help us find out more about who we serve and any unique needs. A suite of communication tools was also developed to promote the survey which can be accessed electronically on the GBPH website or in hard copy as required.

Client feedback is important to us.

we use feedback to continuously improve our programs and services.



Tell us about your experience by filling out our Client Satisfaction Survey. www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBPHSatisfaction

If you would like to tak to someone about your Feelback, compliment.complaint, or suggestion please contact: feedback@publichealthgreybruce.on.ca 0519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456

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Programs

Protecting and promoting the health and well-being of everyone in Grey-Bruce is at the heart of what we do.

Grey Bruce Public Health's team of public health professionals manages and operates programs that support people across the lifespan – from babies who receive critical vaccines to students who access services at Student Health Centres, and from new parents who register for the Healthy Babies Healthy Children home-visiting program to eligible seniors who obtain free dental care.



Environmental Health

The Environmental Health program conducts inspections and provides education related to food safety, recreational water, and drinking water safety, investigates animal exposure incidents, responds to indoor air quality complaints, oversees a vector-borne diseases program, and educates the public on health risks, such as radon, West Nile Virus, Lyme disease, and extreme weather.



Mosquito surveillance conducted in all 17 Grey Bruce municipalities.



Responded to 109 adverse water quality incidents (AWQI) in 2023.



Routine high and moderate-risk food inspections completed in 2023.



People received Certified Food Handler training in 2023, compared to 14 in 2022.





Foundational Standards

Foundational Standards underlie and support all Grey Bruce Public Health Programs to ensure they are informed by evidence, local population health data, and that they support people to reach their full potential. The team applies health equity as a foundational principle of public health practice and values that everyone has equal opportunities for health and can attain their full health potential without disadvantage due to social and ecological determinants of health. GBPH engages in partnerships and projects to address public health issues and build community capacity to reduce health inequities.



Released numerous reports using Statistics Canada data:

- Grey Bruce Population Overview
 - Grey Bruce Income Education & Labour
 - Grey Bruce Households & Families
- Grey Bruce Culture



Created many tracking dashboards

and counties.

- Grey Bruce Sporadic Diseases and Sexually Transmitted Infection data dashboards
- Updated the Respiratory Infection Tracking dashboard
 Canadian Census dashboard for local municipalities
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Harm Reduction

The Harm Reduction program supports clients who use substances through a Needle Syringe Program, which provides sterile drug-use equipment, promotes the proper disposal of used equipment, and offers connections to local mental health and addiction services.

The program serves as the lead for Naloxone distribution in Grey-Bruce, providing kits and training to community partners and the public. It also provides general education and support on substance use disorders, stigma, and harm reduction strategies and implements the Grey Bruce Opioid Overdose Early Warning System to ensure rapid, co-ordinated, multi-sector responses to local opioid-related events.











Naloxone kits distributed in 2023:

- GBPH received 174 reports of suspected opioid-related overdoses in 2023 that required intervention from emergency services.
- Naloxone was used 111 times in incidents connected to an overdose alert and the medication successfully reversed 106 overdoses.



Health Promotion

The Health Promotion program focuses on promoting and improving population health through initiatives related to nutrition and food systems, smoking/vaping cessation, injury and fall prevention, substance use, physical activity, mental health, built environments, and climate change.



Public Health Dietitians utilized the Ontario Nutritious Food Basket survey tool to monitor food affordability.

 Data on 61 food items from 12 local grocery stores was collected. The food cost for a reference family of four in Grey Bruce was \$1192.26/month in 2023.





Tobacco Cessation/Enforcement

- 33 of the 86 clients enrolled in the STOP program, which launched at GBPH in August. STOP, a partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, provides people with up to 26 weeks of free quit support and Nicotine Replacement Therapy.
- 88.9% of individuals reported daily smoking upon enrollment in the local STOP program. That number dropped to 42.9% three months after enrollment.
- Tobacco Enforcement Inspectors followed up on 85 school offence reports in 2023.
- 137 tobacco vendor display/promotion inspections carried out in 2023.
- 265 youth test shopping vendor compliance inspections completed in 2023.



Healthy Babies, Healthy Children

Healthy Babies Healthy Children is a voluntary home-visiting program designed to support families needing extra parenting support – from pregnancy until their child transitions to school.

The Healthy Growth & Development program focuses on prenatal health, positive parenting, mental health, breastfeeding, and early childhood development.



Grey-Bruce families supported through the HBHC home-visiting program in 2023, with 8,390 client interactions recorded.



Front-line staff received breastfeeding education sessions.



Families received information related to preconception, pregnancy, labour and delivery, breastfeeding, and caring for their baby via a free online prenatal platform.



Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC)

The Grey Bruce Public Health IPAC program works with long-term care and retirement homes and congregate living organizations to support their infection prevention and control programs and practices.

The program provides IPAC-related education and training, develops IPAC programs, policies, and procedures, supports assessments and audits of IPAC programs and/or practices, provides recommendations to strengthen IPAC programs and practices, works with partners and congregate living organizations to develop outbreak management preparedness and planning, provides coaching/mentoring of IPAC services delivery within settings, supports settings to implement IPAC recommendations, and provides outbreak management supports.



IPAC services provided to long-term care and retirement home, and congregate living settings.





Collaborated with the VPD and Infectious Diseases teams to provide an outbreak preparedness and awareness workshop in September with attendees from across the long-term care (19), retirement home (13), and congregate living (15) sectors.



Infectious Disease

The Infectious Diseases program conducts case management investigations and follow-ups related to Diseases of Public Health Significance (DOPHS), manages outbreaks in and provides support to long-term care homes and other higher-risk settings, inspects childcare programs to ensure measures are in place to reduce the spread of infections and prevent outbreaks, inspects personal service settings, such as hair and nail salons and tattoo shops, to ensure compliance with infection control best practices, consults on infection control practices, and operates sexual health clinics.



at eight pointments

773

Sexual health clinic appointments included cervical cancer screenings, a service introduced at GBPH clinics midway through 2023.



investigations into DOPHS cases, excluding COVID-19 and influenza, in 2023, of which 664 were new confirmed cases.

up approx. 100 cases from 2022.



Personal service settings and 70 childcare programs inspected in 2023.



ID Outbreak Snapshot

The Infectious Disease team managed an extensive, complex, multi-step follow-up investigation after a staff member of a local large-scale employer tested positive for active **tuberculosis** in 2023. The person had contracted the infection while out of country.

The potentially life-threatening disease, which sickens about 10 million people around the world annually but is rare in Canada – typically affects the lungs and airways. TB is caused by a bacteria that spreads from person to person through the air when someone with lung TB coughs, sneezes, or spits.

As a result of Public Health's investigation:

- 40 occupational exposure contacts were identified and contacted.
- Two TB skin-testing clinics were organized and held by GBPH.
- Five ID staff supported the clinics.
- 21 individuals had a TB skin test completed.
- Eight people, referred to other Health Units, had a TB skin test.
- Three positive TB skin tests confirmed. Two of the individuals followed up with their primary care providers. All three positive contacts had additional TB exposure risk factors identified.

School Health

The School Health program engages with local school boards, schools, teachers, students, and parents to provide programs and resources that support overall student well-being.

Student Health Centres, available in all local secondary schools, offer students education and interventions related to the spread of infectious diseases, smoking/vaping cessation, and mental health. The School Health team partners with District A-9 of *Lion's Club International* and school boards to offer free in-school vision screenings for senior kindergarten students in Grey-Bruce.

The team also provides annual training as part of a Youth Mental Health and Addictions Champions (YMHAC) program, co-ordinates the local *Roots of Empathy* program, provides curriculum support, and works with school boards and schools to influence the development and implementation of health-related policies and supportive environments.



Student Health Centres available in 11 high schools in Grey-Bruce.

• 104 students accessed Student Health Centres in 2023, with a total of 298 visits recorded.



88% (1,394) of eligible senior kindergarten students participated in the vision screening program in 2022-23.

• Of those screened, 40% (562) were identified with visual concerns.



Oral Health

The Oral Health program conducts dental screenings at all Grey-Bruce elementary schools and operates dental clinics in Owen Sound, Markdale, Wiarton, and Walkerton for children enrolled in the Healthy Smiles Ontario Program and Children's Oral Health Initiative, and seniors enrolled in the Ontario Seniors' Dental Care Program.



5,835 students at 87 local schools participated in the dental screening program in 2023.



2,522 clients received dental care at GBPH clinics in 2023.

The team performed 508 restorations, 441 extractions, and 12 root canals and referred 114 people to a denturist for partial or complete dentures.



Grey-Bruce children enrolled in the Healthy Smiles Ontario program in 2023.



new patients enrolled in the Ontario Seniors' Dental Care Program in Grey-Bruce in 2023.



children from Saugeen First Nation and Neyaashiinigmiing were screened and provided with preventative services as part of the Children's Oral Health Initiative.



Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) program staff administer routine and recommended vaccines, review student immunization records to ensure compliance with the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA), support students in meeting ISPA requirements, hold community and ISPA vaccine clinics, manage the publicly funded vaccine inventory and programs in Grey-Bruce, ensure compliance with vaccine storage/handling guidelines, and work to improve local vaccination rates and promote the benefits of vaccination.



6,000 suspension letters issued this summer to students who were not in compliance with ISPA.



50%

Increased ISPA compliance among junior kindergarten students from 40% to 90% in 2023.



Partnerships

Grey Bruce Public Health partners with Indigenous communities, all levels of government, school boards, schools, agencies, organizations, local and provincial working groups, and other stakeholders to protect public health, strengthen the local response to public health-related issues, deliver services to vulnerable and high-risk clients, and foster a healthy, safe, and vibrant community.

Indigenous Partners

GBPH values its collaborative relationship with Saugeen First Nation, the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre in Owen Sound, the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre, and other Indigenous partners.

- At the communities' request, GBPH offers sexual health and harm reduction services at Saugeen First Nation and Neyaashiiningmiing. GBPH also holds community events and outreach activities in both communities.
- The Vaccine Preventable Diseases team works with both First Nations communities and the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre to increase vaccine access for Indigenous residents.
- GBPH's Oral Health team partners with Saugeen First Nation and Neyaashiinigmiing to provide dental screening and preventive services for residents up to age seven enrolled in the Children's Oral Health Initiative. The Oral Health team met with Band Administrative staff and council representatives, the Saugeen Aboriginal HBHC Coordinator, and parents/caregivers, and attended the Neyaashiinigmiing School & Daycare, G'ShawdaGawin Daycare, and Binoojiinh Gamig Daycare events to promote the COHI program and distribute oral health supplies and resources. The team collaborated with a local Indigenous artist to develop a COHI banner to help promote the program.
- GBPH worked with the Kikendaasogamig Elementary School at Neyaashiinigmiing to provide vision screening for students in a culturally appropriate way.
- GBPH is working with Indigenous partners to create a land acknowledgement short film, which will be posted to the public website and can be shown at the start of GBPH meetings and events.

Schools & School Boards

GBPH collaborates with school boards, schools, and teachers in Grey-Bruce, along with Georgian College and other post-secondary institutions in Ontario.

- GBPH's Sexual Health and Harm Reduction teams partner with Georgian College to provide oncampus sexual health, Naloxone, and safe substance use services and education to students.
- Health Promotion staff provides physical literacy training to Early Years staff and Georgian College students.
- The Tobacco Enforcement team partners with the School Heath team to divert youth caught smoking or vaping on school property from the justice system and into the healthcare system by connecting them with their school health nurse for counselling and nicotine replacement therapy as needed and providing them the opportunity to discuss any other health and wellness concerns. Since the program's inception, 32 youth have been directed to their school health nurse.
- GBPH co-ordinates the local Roots of Empathy program, delivered to elementary school children who are coached to recognize and connect with the vulnerability and humanity of a baby who visits their classroom throughout the school year with their parent(s), along with a trained Roots of Empathy instructor. GBPH recruits instructors and parents to participate in the program and collaborates with Roots of Empathy International, school boards, principals, and classroom teachers.

- GBPH partners with the Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board and Bluewater District School Board and trains teacher/adult leads to co-ordinate the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario's Youth Mental Health and Addictions Champions (YMHAC) program in Grey-Bruce. Teams of eight to 10 Youth Champions are trained in the fall at each participating school to develop and deliver peer-led mental health and anti-stigma initiatives within their schools. In the 2022-23 school year, 12 Bruce Grey Catholic and five Bluewater District schools offered the program. More than 100 peer-led mental health initiatives were delivered in Grey-Bruce schools in 2023, reaching thousands of students.
- Public Health Dietitians mentored a dietetic student from the Post-Degree Diploma in Dietetic Education and Practical Training program at Brescia University College as part of a 10-week combined Community Health and Research placement.

Priority Populations

GBPH collaborates with partners on working groups and partners with community organizations on initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting the health and well-being of vulnerable residents.

- GBPH works with community partners to offer a Supportive Outreach Service (SOS) in Grey-Bruce. With fixed sites in Meaford, Durham, Dundalk, Hanover, and Owen Sound, and mobile sites, a multidisciplinary SOS team meets people where they are at in terms of physical location and their state of readiness in their journey. GBPH offers harm reduction supplies and education, Naloxone and Naloxone training and referrals at SOS.
- GBPH serves on:
 - The local Community Drug & Alcohol Strategy.
 - The local Opioid Working Group, which works to strengthen and update the Grey Bruce Opioid Response Plan and Early Warning System to improve a rapid and collaborative response to opioid-related events in the community.
- The Grey Bruce Poverty Task Force, which champions collaborative responses to local poverty and related issues.
- The Grey Bruce Elder Abuse Prevention Network, which delivers education and awareness and advocates for supports and services for vulnerable older adults, and works to build a strong community response to assist older adults who may be experiencing or are at risk of experiencing mistreatment.
- The Environmental Health team regularly works with county housing, municipalities, landlords, and tenants to assist them in dealing with issues such as infestations, mold, and potable water.
- The HBHC team partnered in 2023 with the United Way of Bruce Grey to provide webinars, aimed at improving the financial literacy of HBHC clients.
- The VPD team collaborated with 42 Anabaptist communities, partnered with S.O.S., Safe and Sound, and local paramedic services to support vaccination in high-risk groups.
- GBPH collaborates with partners as a member of the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership, which works to reduce barriers for newcomers and immigrants moving into our communities.

Government, Municipal & Healthcare Partners

- GBPH is the lead agency and a member of the steering committee for the Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC), a collective of not-for-profit service, government, health, and education organizations that seeks to mobilize community makers to share vital local rural data. This shared data is intended to better inform regional programming, policies, funding, and social services to support prosperity, sustainability, and the well-being of the community.
- GBPH collaborates with provincial and regional committees to support tobacco and vaping cessation efforts.

- The Health Promotion team partners with municipal recreation and community service departments to coordinate activities, promote innovation, and foster initiatives that cultivate and endorse a more active community through the PLAY in Bruce Grey Network.
- The Environmental Health team collaborates with: the agricultural sector and provincial and federal agencies to ensure the protection of the roughly 600 international agricultural workers in Grey-Bruce; Public Health Ontario, municipalities, and local couriers to ensure equitable access to Public Health Ontario's well water testing program in Grey-Bruce; the Ontario Association of Veterinary **Technicians and Canadian Food** Inspection Agency to conduct animal investigations; the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, municipalities, and businesses to ensure the safety of small drinking water systems; and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and numerous businesses to promote and protect food safety.
- Healthy Babies Healthy Children collaborates with the Children's Alliance, Early Learning Planning Table, FASD Leadership Table, Inter-agency Committees, the STAR table, the Grey Bruce Anabaptist Working Group, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Saugeen First Nation to support the growth and development of young Grey-Bruce children.



Financials 2023 Budget

Total: \$17,644,257.00

Provincial Grants	\$14,081,507
County of Grey	\$1,750,427
County of Bruce	\$1,249,299
Other funding, fees, and recoveries	\$563,024



Financials 2023 Expenses

Total: \$17,259,735.00

Cost-Shared General Programs & Services	\$12,883,243
COVID-19 and COVID-19 Vaccine	\$533,919
100% Provincially Funded Programs	\$2,382,354
One time funding	\$1,328,567
Other programs and expenditures	\$131,652



