

**Report to  
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health  
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa  
16 April 2018 / 16 avril 2018**

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**Submitted by  
Soumis par:**

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**Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE      File Number: ACS2018-OPH-HPS-0002**

**SUBJECT: OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND  
RESPONSE**

**OBJET: INTERVENTION ET PLANIFICATION DES MESURES D'URGENCE DE  
SANTÉ PUBLIQUE OTTAWA**

#### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this report for  
information.**

#### **RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa prenne  
connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.**

#### **BACKGROUND**

## **Legislative Foundation – Emergency Preparedness and Response**

The authority for the Board of Health to deliver services related to emergency preparedness and response derives from several sources.

Boards of Health in Ontario are responsible for the delivery of health programs and services in accordance with the *Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability*. The *Emergency Preparedness Program Standard* and the *2008 Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol* (awaiting final 2018 publication) address specific requirements. Under the OPHS, emergency management is a foundational standard and there is a requirement that “the board of health shall effectively prepare for emergencies to ensure 24/7 timely, integrated, safe, and effective response to, and recovery from emergencies with public health impacts, in accordance with ministry policy and guidelines”.

In addition to meeting provincial standards, Ottawa Public Health’s (OPH) *Emergency Plan* complies with all applicable federal and provincial legislation, including but not limited to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, the *Clean Water Act, 2006* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The plan also meets the requirements of the Canadian Standards Association, Accreditation Canada and Emergency Management Accreditation Program. The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) retains delegated authority to implement the plan, its related programs and its measures. Finally, the plan complements the City of Ottawa Emergency Management Program, which in turn derives its legislative authority from the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.

OPH’s responsibilities within the OPH Emergency Plan include: identification and assessment of vulnerable populations, management of communicable diseases and infectious disease outbreaks, immunization and prophylaxis, population health surveillance and ensuring food and water safety, which includes issuing Drinking Water Advisories.

### **Education Requirement**

The *Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol (2008)* specifically requires that Board of Health members receive annual education and training on emergency preparedness and response. This report fulfills the above-noted education-related requirement.

### **Ottawa Public Health Emergency Management Program**

The OPH Emergency Management Program, led by the Rapid Response and Readiness Branch, strengthens the organization's preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies. OPH meets requirements through its routine operations, its on-call program, which ensures that there are always an A/MOH, a Duty Officer, Managers, and PHIs and PHNs on call 24/7, and the ability to redeploy employees for effective response to an emergency while maintaining core critical services.

The MOH uses established OPH escalation criteria when determining whether the organization needs to enter enhanced operations to support a municipal response to a specific public health threat. Use of the Incident Management System (IMS), provides standardized organizational structures, functions, processes and terminology for use at all levels of emergency response in Ontario. It also lends scalability to these responses by allowing us to address situations when usual operations are not sufficient to meet a particular demand requiring redeployment of resources internally. Communications tools are in place to notify and mobilize employees. OPH in turn supports these employees with procedures, training and technology.

During emergencies, various plans and protocols address risks identified through the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) process, such as the *Ottawa Interagency Influenza Pandemic Plan*, *OPH Drinking Water Advisory Protocol*, *OPH Anthrax Response Protocol* and others. At the same time, the *OPH Continuity of Operations Plan (CoOP)* ensures that the organization maintains core critical public health services to ensure continued access to these services during an emergency.

Providing a public health lens on emergency preparedness, OPH is an integral contributing member of various taskforces and committees with City and external stakeholders to support emergency responses in the region and across the province. Examples of partnerships involving OPH collaboration include: the City of Ottawa Flood Taskforce, the Emergency Management Program Advisory Committee, the Inter-Agency Network INTERSECT, the Hospital Emergency Preparedness Committee of Ottawa, the Ottawa Interagency Influenza Pandemic Planning Committee and the Ontario Public Health Emergency Managers Network.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Activities in 2017 and 2018 (to date)**

The year 2017 and Q1 of 2018 saw OPH involvement in a wide variety of emergency responses, both as the lead department and in support of broader City-coordinated actions. Activities ranged from performing health risk assessment for residents

evacuated during residential fires, to reaching out to Ottawa residents through home visits during large-scale flooding, to address the public health needs of Ottawa residents.

Cumulative staff hours contributing to enhanced responses in 2017 have exceeded 18,000 hours, surpassing all of 2016 (9,626 hours) by almost 100%. These hours include employees who were deployed from non-critical services to assist in an enhanced response, based on the Continuity of Operations plan, as well as increasing staffing levels to appropriately respond the needs of Ottawa residents. These hours were dedicated to the following OPH-led and OPH-supported emergency responses:

- Opioid Prevention and Response
- Donald Street Fire
- Northview Fire
- Rideau Street Drinking Water Advisory
- Ottawa River Flood
- Interim Supervised Injection Service
- Hope Evacuation
- Jasmine Street Fire
- Network Infrastructure Failure
- St. Joseph Boulevard Boil Water Advisory
- Riverside Drive Fire and Evacuation

More than 90% of response hours in 2017 were devoted to three major enhanced operations: the Opioid Cluster Preparedness, Interim Supervised Injection Service and Ottawa River Flood responses.

In addition to leading and supporting enhanced operations during emergency response, OPH took part in the Citywide Emergency Exercise in May 2017. This was a valuable opportunity to work collaboratively with other City departments using the IMS while also allowing OPH to exercise its Emergency Plan and CoOP.

Participation in enhanced responses and the Citywide Exercise helped identify priorities

for ongoing program development, such as enhanced training to ensure OPH responders are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to respond to emergencies with public health impacts. OPH developed a *2018 OPH Emergency Preparedness Professional Development Plan* to address this need. The plan includes foundational emergency preparedness training, IMS training and specific training for Public Health Inspectors and Public Health Nurses. OPH has also scheduled a collaborative emergency preparedness staff training session with Public Health Ontario, for April 2018.

Communication is a key element of emergency response. OPH used the Emergency Response Messaging System (ERMS) to transmit more than 170 communications during 2017 and Q1 of 2018, ensuring that key stakeholders received timely information about emerging public health issues of immediate concern. Examples of messaging included updates on mumps activity in Ontario, cautionary information on administration of two polio vaccine formulations, warnings about West Nile Virus and Lyme disease, opioid overdose warnings and extreme weather advisories/warnings.

In the event of an emergency with public health impacts, Board of Health (BOH) members are made aware of the situation through updates received from the MOH and designated staff as per the OPHS, and based on local needs. The BOH works closely with the MOH to ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent and mitigate health risks to residents through the BOH's strategic policy, fiscal and labour relations oversight of OPH. The BOH's role during an emergency is to maintain awareness of the situation, and remain abreast of OPH's actions, both when OPH responds independently and when a response is integrated within a City emergency response.

### **Next steps**

In the coming year, OPH will assess the new *Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol*, when it is released, and align resources accordingly.

Work in 2018 will include strengthening municipal partnerships, such as our involvement with the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) Taskforce, providing psychological first aid training in collaboration with the Community and Social Services Department, and continuing to build inter-professional knowledge networks with other health units across Ontario.

OPH will solicit and coordinate support from all service areas, and continue to proactively develop standardized processes for use during enhanced responses.

Reviewing plans, developing emergency exercises, promoting professional development and collaborating on business continuity will continue to be priorities in 2018.

### **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

### **CONSULTATION**

The purpose of this report is administrative in nature and therefore no public consultation is required.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

OPH conducts an annual HIRA to identify emerging and potential risks for which OPH needs to be prepared.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

There are no accessibility implications to receiving this report.

### **DISPOSITION**

This report is provided for information.