

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
21 September 2020 / 21 septembre 2020**

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**Submitted by
Soumis par:**

Dr. / Dre Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health / Médecin chef en santé publique

**Contact Person
Personne ressource:**

**Cameron Keyes, Director, Knowledge Exchange, Planning and Quality / Directeur,
Échange de connaissances, planification et qualité
613-580-2424, x.23537 Cameron.Keyes@Ottawa.ca**

Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2020-OPH-KPQ-0006

**SUBJECT: OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2019-2022 –
YEAR-ONE REFRESH**

**OBJET: PLAN STRATÉGIQUE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE OTTAWA POUR 2019-
2022 – RAFRAÎCHIR APRÈS UN AN**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this report for information and approve the re-alignment of Ottawa Public Health's strategic work, as described in this report and outlined in Document 1, attached.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa prenne connaissance de ce rapport à titre d'information et approuve la réorientation du

travail stratégique de Santé publique Ottawa, telle que décrite dans ce rapport et exposée dans le document 1, ci-joint.

BACKGROUND

[Protecting Our Community's Health: Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategy](#) was approved by the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit in June of 2019. It was designed with the notion of delivering and executing on the strategy through focused annual action plans.

The past year's action plan had five goals and three transformational initiatives, namely:

Goal 1: Drive innovative approaches to mental health and substance use

Goal 2: Healthy communities by design

Goal 3: Streamlining through digitizing

Goal 4: A healthy workplace and workforce

Goal 5: Continuously improve our core work to maximize impact

Transformational initiative 1: Community and Client Engagement

Transformational initiative 2: Ontario Health Teams

Transformational initiative 3: Public Health Modernization

Additional information about these goals and initiatives, as well as Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) commitments to Reconciliation, quality, engagement and impact can be found on pages 3 to 6 of Document 1, attached.

A year has passed since the launch of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and OPH has made positive progress towards its implementation. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Quarter 1 2020 has had a significant impact on the context in which OPH operates and the type of strategic work in which the organization engages.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Health with an updated action plan that reflects the changed landscape as well as OPH's ongoing response to the pandemic, as described in this report and outlined in Document 1, attached.

DISCUSSION

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan was designed as a road map for implementing and achieving OPH's vision. It described the organization's high-level goals and articulated the steps required to attain them over a minimum of three years. At the time of the strategy's launch, there was agreement that the action plan should be revised and updated on a yearly basis to ensure ongoing relevancy, considering internal and external conditions, and its alignment with organizational priorities. The need to revisit and refresh the action plan is especially critical given the emergence of COVID-19 and its impacts on healthcare and public health.

The purpose of this update is threefold:

1. To ensure strategic elements of OPH's pandemic response are embedded into its action plan.
2. To assess current strategic work and determine what activities need to be stopped, paused or continued.
3. To revise strategic measures.

Approach

OPH's approach to this year's action plan review is informed by select stakeholder interviews with partners, members of the public, stakeholders across sectors, employees, leadership and the Board of Health, as well as a review of:

- Surveillance and epidemiology reports;
- Internal and external documents, including (but not limited to) lessons learned documents, Wave 1 evaluations, environmental scans, and City, Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario guidance; and
- Responses to the IMS In Action Review and Wellness@Work employee pulse check.

A review of this data has shown that the pandemic crisis has significantly impacted all levels of OPH's operating environment, directly and indirectly affecting the way the health unit works with/within the:

- City of Ottawa (organization), as well as the health unit's own internal environment

- City of Ottawa proper, with its one million plus inhabitants and the local economy
- Regional, provincial, national, and international arenas
- Public health and healthcare sectors
- Housing and social services sectors.

SWOT Analysis

High-level conclusions drawn from interviews, surveys and document review are reflected in an analysis of OPH's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), a pictorial representation of which is presented on page 9 of Document 1, attached. The SWOT sets the stage for OPH's action plan update, which aims to effectively balance strategy with operations.

OPH's main weakness is a limited workforce capacity, begotten by current pandemic demands. Beyond the sheer volume of work brought on by COVID-19, the health unit's capacity is impacted by a range of workplace and workforce considerations, including:

- **Decreased Labour Supply** - Availability of full-time employees to continue with community health needs (i.e., core services) is limited due to COVID-19 deployments and reassigned employees.
- **Health and Safety Protocols** - New health and safety protocols, triggered by COVID-19, have required adjustments to service and client flows, job roles, and processes.
- **Change Fatigue** - The forced nature of COVID-triggered changes and the impact of those changes on employees' personal and professional lives.
- **Employee Learning and Unlearning Needs** - Employees have had to learn new methods of operating in public environments as well as unlearn former approaches.

Other factors affecting OPH's capacity can be found on page 10 of Document 1, attached. In addition, the *Public health system evaluation and lessons from the first peak of COVID-19* report, produced for the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health, highlights some of these weaknesses and outlines opportunities to strengthen the public health system to allow for a sustained response to COVID-19.

Aligning Strategy, Core Services and Pandemic Work: A Sustainable Balancing Act

Pandemic-imposed demands, constraints and considerations have required the organization to stretch already limited resources to deliver a pandemic response alongside core services. As such, it is important that the majority of OPH's strategic work align with the pandemic response and that the health unit limit work outside of these efforts.

Upon close examination, it becomes apparent that many of the weaknesses, threats and trends, outlined on page 9 of Document 1 attached, had existed to a lesser extent prior to the arrival of COVID-19. As such, they are already reflected in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. Consequently, much of OPH's current strategic work and the work planned for the near future is well aligned with pre-pandemic vision and intentions.

Moreover, much of the health unit's current work aligns directly with its existing goals.

Goal 1

OPH has and continues to make the mental well-being of the Ottawa community a priority, especially given the significant impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of healthcare workers and on the population at large. This includes developing a Mental Wellness and COVID-19 webpage, partnering with health organizations, school boards and partners to protect those most vulnerable and to promote resources and supports to address the needs of Ottawa's diverse population.

Goal 2

Pandemic activities feed into OPH's objective to use public health control measures to protect the community and prevent infection; provide equitable protection for underserved and priority populations; and influence the physical environment, which enables people to live healthier lives.

Goal 3

The relevancy of the goal to streamline and increase accessibility through digitization has only grown in importance as the pandemic has increased the need to:

- Automate inefficient and manual processes to compensate for the scarcity of time and resources it has affected.

- Provide the tools and technical training necessary for employees to work remotely.
- Leverage technology to further the capacity, quality, availability and accessibility of health services and better connect with clients, colleagues and the broader health system.

Goal 4

Workforce and workplace health have remained a top priority during the pandemic response and will continue to drive next steps as OPH focuses efforts on enabling a safe and inclusive work environment and on providing the necessary support, training and tools to enable:

- Smooth transitions to new work settings and new roles
- Work-life balance
- Opportunities for employees to safely connect with peers, supervisors and leadership.

Goal 5

The pandemic work fits well within the parameters set out by OPH's goal of continuous quality improvement, driving the health unit to adjust its structure in response to organizational requirements and inspiring the organization to continuously refine its approach so as to optimize its impact on the community. Going forward, OPH will only build on this work as it continues to promote an environment of ongoing learning and improvement.

Transformational Initiatives

Finally, it is worth noting that pandemic work also aligns with the stated Transformational Initiatives, furthering OPH's efforts to:

- Embed a coordinated approach to engagement across the various layers of our operating environment, thus ensuring decisions are rooted in the voice of clients and partners. (*Community and Client Engagement*, Transformational Initiative 1)
- Support the coordination of health care providers and service delivery to drive prevention across the health system. (*Ontario Health Teams*, Transformational Initiative 2)

- Prioritize digital solutions for strengthening public health action and streamlining reporting. (*Public Health Modernization, Transformational Initiative 3*)
- Help strengthen centralized technical guidance and establish regional centres of excellence to enable knowledge and resource sharing. (*Public Health Modernization, Transformational Initiative 3*)
- Build and enhance relationships with other public health units and clarify and align roles between public health and health system partners across Ontario. (*Public Health Modernization, Transformational Initiative 3*)
- Strengthen intergovernmental relationships and capitalize on local public health expertise to influence government agendas, identify new opportunities, and assist in determining solutions to government issues. (*Public Health Modernization, Transformational Initiative 3*)

Proposed Annual Action Plan

Given much of the current strategic work and the work OPH has planned for the near future is well aligned with the health unit's existing goals and transformational initiatives, and in light of the fact that pandemic-imposed demands, constraints and considerations have required the organization to stretch already limited resources to deliver a pandemic response alongside core services, staff is recommending that:

- Action plan goals and transformational initiatives remain intact
- Measures undergo subtle modifications to reflect the integration of the ongoing pandemic work.

For a review of transformational initiatives, as well as a detailed look at the proposed action plan's objectives, outcomes and key activities by goal, please refer to pages 12 to 19 of Document 1, attached. Current and newly proposed measures can be found on page 20.

COVID-19 Update

Progress towards Ottawa Public Health's strategic goals and initiatives has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and the extensive response it has necessitated. However, it is important to note that strong advancements continue to be made in important areas of core work, including case management, communications, surveillance and digital solutions.

The pandemic crisis will likely continue to dictate OPH priorities for the foreseeable future, nonetheless the health unit is committed to ensuring its action plan remains as proactive, clear and strategic as possible.

Next steps

Staff will continue to provide quarterly updates to the Board of Health on progress made to the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. The next report will be submitted to the Board of Health in December 2020.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

This report is administrative in nature and therefore no public consultation is required.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendation outlined in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

Accessibility was considered in the writing of this report.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report provides an update on OPH's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and proposed some re-alignment of the strategic work in light of the health unit's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – “Protecting our Community’s Health - Ottawa Public Health’s Strategy Refresh”

DISPOSITION

This report is presented to the Board of Health for information and for approval of the re-alignment of Ottawa Public Health's strategic work in light of COVID-19.

Staff will continue to provide quarterly updates to the Board on the implementation of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. The next report will be submitted to the Board in December 2020.