

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
19 September 2022 / 19 septembre 2022**

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**Submitted by
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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2022-OPH-OPS-0001

SUBJECT: Results of the Third-Party Review by Dr. Paul Gully of Ottawa Public Health's COVID-19 Response

OBJET: Résultats de l'examen de tierce partie par le Dr Paul Gully de la réponse de Santé publique Ottawa à la COVID-19

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit:

- 1. Receive, for information, the findings from the third-party review, as outlined in the consultant's report attached as Document 1; and**
- 2. Direct that Ottawa Public Health (OPH) consider how best to advance each of the consultant's recommendations, found in Document 2 attached, within existing planning and operational cycles.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa :

- 1. reçoive, à titre d'information, les constats de l'examen de tierce partie, tels que décrits dans le rapport du consultant joint en tant que document 1; et**
- 2. demande que Santé publique Ottawa (SPO) considère la meilleure façon de faire avancer chacune des recommandations du consultant, qui se trouvent dans le document 2 ci-joint, dans le cadre des cycles existants de planification et de fonctionnement.**

BACKGROUND

In March 2022, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) contracted Dr. Paul Gully to conduct a 3rd party review of how the health unit responded to the COVID-19 pandemic from its onset to early April 2022. This review took place from April to late June 2022 and included document reviews from OPH's response and key informant interviews with internal leaders and employees, as well as four external stakeholders. Initial findings from this review were summarized in a presentation to the Board of Health at its meeting of June 20, 2022.

Dr. Gully's review did not examine the impact of OPH's work on the evolution of COVID-19 but instead focused on how OPH responded and if the response went as planned, based on the information available at the time. This review is not an evaluation nor an audit. It was an opportunity to assess what happened during the COVID response, what OPH did and why, and any related key learnings.

The objectives of this review included:

1. Examining the goals and response of OPH to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Examining whether the response was based on evidence.
3. Examining how the response was received, understood, and acted upon by stakeholders.
4. Making recommendations regarding preparedness for future events of public health significance.

Key areas of focus for this review included:

1. Goals
2. Relationship with emergency response infrastructures

3. Public health policy decisions: how they were made and assessed
4. Communication of risk and communication of policy decisions
5. Interaction with Ottawa communities
6. Interaction with other public health authorities
7. Interaction with political decision makers
8. Involvement of staff and other public health professionals in Ottawa Public Health
9. Human resource issues

This review did not include:

- An evaluation of the effectiveness of disease prevention, control measures or immunization programs.
- Comparisons with other jurisdictions.

The purpose of this report is to present Dr. Gully's final report to the Board of Health (see Document 1 - *How Ottawa Public Health (OPH) Responded to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review*) and to review the key recommendations and next steps.

DISCUSSION

Recommendation 1 - Receive the findings from the third-party review, as outlined in the consultant's report attached as Document 1

In summary, the consultant's report concludes that OPH is a respected organization with underlying values based on equity and inclusivity that advances quality work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OPH played a leadership role in our community. The report points out that throughout OPH's COVID-19 response, it assessed and monitored the response of Ottawans to public health policies and took action to promote trust and understanding of how to protect one's own and others' health and to implement infection prevention and control measures. OPH's communications of information based on data to the public and stakeholders provided a strong foundation to the response.

Specifically, case and outbreak management was an enormous task, which OPH employees confronted and managed well through significant fluctuations in demand and approach. The immunization program required a tremendous amount of work, in collaboration with the City of Ottawa, the community, and traditional and non-traditional

vaccination partners. OPH established goals and objectives, used evidence to guide actions and engaged with stakeholders to identify areas needing adjustments. OPH maintained flexibility in adapting approaches in order support equitable access to vaccines.

From a human resource and workplace wellness perspective, the employees and leadership of OPH responded to the call for action, however there was a toll in terms of stress from long working hours, separation from family and friends, and increased responsibilities.

Recommendation 2 - Direct that Ottawa Public Health (OPH) consider how best to advance each of the consultant's recommendations, found in Document 2 attached, within existing planning and operational cycles

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) proposes that each of Dr. Gully's recommendations be considered and appropriately acted upon. OPH has already begun implementing the recommendations as part of its continuous quality improvement processes, which are part of OPH's 2022-2023 strategy (Goal 5 – Continuous improvement and evolving our core work to maximize impact). Embedding action on the report's recommendations in OPH's Goal 5 work will provide an established mechanism to review and seek opportunities to integrate key learnings and improvements as part of OPH's pre-established strategic and operational planning cycles.

Recommendations will also be implemented through the various emergency response plans and progress on these recommendations will be reported through the annual emergency preparedness plan reporting in 2023. The recommendations are listed in Document 2, attached, along with a high-level summary of actions to date, and planned activities for the future.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

No public consultation was undertaken in preparing this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving the consultant's report and in approving recommendation 2 of this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This Report aligns with OPH's continuous quality improvement processes, which are part of OPH's 2022-2023 strategy (Goal 5 – Continuous improvement and evolving our core work to maximize impact).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 - Final Report by Dr. Paul Gully – *How Ottawa Public Health (OPH) Responded to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review*

Document 2 - Table of Recommendations and Current OPH Efforts to Respond

DISPOSITION

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) will continue to look for opportunities to implement Dr. Gully's report recommendations and will report to the Board of Health through the annual emergency preparedness report.