

**Report to
Rapport au:**

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

**Submitted on September 8, 2022
Soumis le 8 septembre 2022**

**Submitted by
Soumis par:**
Dr / Dre Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health / Médecin chef en santé publique

**Contact Persons
Personnes ressource:**
**Andrew Hendriks, Director, Health Protection / Directeur, Protection de la santé
613-580-2424, x. 24151, Andrew.Hendriks@Ottawa.ca**

**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: ACS2022-OPH-OPS-0002

SUBJECT: Recovery Planning Status Update

OBJET: Mise à jour sur l'état de la planification du rétablissement

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

RECOMMANDATIONS 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.

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 presented Ottawa Public Health (OPH) with challenges but also opportunities for how the health unit could work differently with partners and the community to achieve population health outcomes. Commencing in the summer of 2021, OPH developed a plan to engage with employees, leadership and other internal and external stakeholders to collect information and ideas on what lessons learned through the pandemic and what program and service enhancements the health unit might explore in the future.

Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) Recovery Planning had one overarching goal: to build a stronger, sustainable local public health system that collaborates across health and social sectors.

The plan included three key components:

- Reimagine – Identify opportunities to advance and strengthen OPH's programs, services and processes to support the community post-pandemic
- Recharge – Support employee wellness
- Respond/ Restore – Restore prioritized services and programs with a focus on supporting the community recovery and ongoing COVID response

The health unit also set out a plan to restore core programs and services that were suspended or reduced during the COVID-19 response while continuing to support community recovery, and expanded on its Wellness@Work program, offering employees and leaders wellness tools and information and, more recently, opportunities to recharge and reconnect with peers.

This report provides an overview of OPH's recovery planning activities that have taken place over the past six months, specifically highlighting progress in engaging with internal and external stakeholders, what we learned, and what initial plans have been put in place to explore some ideas more fully. This report will also offer a high-level overview of some recovery activities planned for fall 2022.

DISCUSSION

Throughout spring and summer 2022, OPH continued to advance recovery planning across the organization.

The recovery plan included a five-step roadmap (Document 1, attached) to reach a point where COVID-19 related work is embedded in OPH's routine work and where core public health programs and services have increased capacity to serve the community. Through Q2, the health unit transitioned from Step 2 to Step 3 of the roadmap.

As part of Step 3, OPH continued to assess COVID-19 response levels and facilitated consultations with employees, City of Ottawa partners and other key local partners and stakeholders to inform recovery planning and identify community and population health needs now and into the future. OPH was also able to successfully ramp up many of its core services, reaching pre-COVID-19 service levels more quickly than anticipated as a result of demobilizing some aspects of the COVID-19 response as the pandemic evolved.

Reimagine: OPH's long-standing goal has been to build on lessons learned from COVID-19 and hear from employees and the community to ensure the health unit is well positioned to support our community needs post-pandemic.

The purpose of the Reimagine phase is to collectively reflect on how we did our work differently throughout the COVID-19 response, leverage our strengths, and adapt our work to best meet the needs of our community. Facilitated group discussions with the Board of Health, OPH leadership, employees, and external stakeholders were the main engagement activities to generate Reimagine ideas, which yielded over 3000 comments and ideas.

Most of the ideas aligned to current OPH operations and strategic goals and are being considered for planning and implementation now and into the coming months as quality improvement initiatives.

With a goal to include employees through all stages of the Reimagine process, themes that emerged from this engagement were shared back with employees through an interactive Virtual Data Walk using Engage Ottawa. The Data Walk was an innovative method to share back what we heard throughout the Recovery Planning process and allow employees to help identify priority areas for actions and provide feedback and comments to inform next steps for operational and strategic planning this fall.

Some of the themes that have emerged from this engagement include:

1. Continue to build and strengthen strategic partnerships and collaboration by evaluating OPH's partnerships, streamlining internal processes, and being intentional to evolve inclusive engagement approaches.

2. Consider the unique role of public health in offering direct client services vs. collaboration and support for partners to provide a service.
3. Foster an organizational culture of learning and growth, have a diverse workforce that is reflective of our community, and promote wellness.

Two-hundred and forty (240) employees participated in the activity, with over 1700 page views. Employees who participated in the Data Walk identified ‘influencing healthy public policy’, ‘fostering an organizational culture that promotes wellness’, and ‘learning and growth’ as preferred areas for organizational action. These areas, along with other reimagine ideas that have emerged over the past six months, will be reviewed and assessed by service areas and presented to leadership for possible future recommendations to the Board of Health for 2023 and beyond.

Our community partners and community engagement initiative also generated a significant number of ideas and suggestions on how we can work with communities and sectors in the future. We heard that OPH should commit to sustainable and accountable engagement with equity deserving groups and integrate community voices into decision-making. Important elements include: establishing commitment to planned and coordinated on-going engagement work with communities, community leaders and community partners; demonstrating accountability, transparency and action through documenting tangible actions and reporting back to the community on progress; and co-designing new ways of engaging equity-deserving groups focused on building trust and ensuring people feel that they are part of the process.

In addition, efforts to engage with the business community continued throughout the pandemic, which highlighted the positive outcomes associated with proactive and reactive communications, prompt responses to inquiries, support for issues management, as well as opportunities to collaborate on new resources. The sector continues to express concerns over the uncertainty that may come with future surges in COVID-19, which highlights the impacts of past surges on their financial stability, consumer confidence, staffing levels and mental health. However, they have signaled the importance of continuing to work collaboratively with OPH to amplify supports to the business community, with an understanding that economic prosperity is intrinsically linked to both resident and community health. As a result, OPH will continue to prioritize engagement with the business community, including regular touch points with key stakeholders and participation in task forces that bring economic partners together to collaborate and drive actions based on community need.

Through these engagement activities and the recent integration of new data and findings, including OPH's recent Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Audit and Emergency Response Evaluation, we recognize there are some ideas that will require further analysis, discussion with community members and health system partners, and could inform broader organizational strategic directions. This information will be considered as part of our planning for a renewed strategy for 2023 to 2026.

Recharge: OPH's Wellness@Work (W@W) initiatives continued during this period, with an emphasis on encouraging employees to take vacation and breaks to recharge after the prolonged pandemic response and rise in operational demands. Overtime hours have dramatically reduced since January 2022 and are now tracking at the same rate as pre-COVID times. Since the summer of 2021, employee vacation rates are back to normal levels and even exceeding prior years, indicating that staff are attempting to rest and catch up on lost vacation time. However, sick leave continues to increase and year-to-date figures for 2022 are higher than previous years.

Wellness workshops and group debrief sessions were offered, along with ongoing promotion and distribution of wellness and mental health in the workplace resources and supports. This included sharing resources and webinars on loss, grief, and healing in the workplace, finding joy in the workplace and mental health / emergency preparedness.

OPH also recognized the importance of taking time to celebrate employees' many successes and contributions by inviting employees to take part in the Key to the City ceremony. Further, after two years, OPH hosted an in-person department-wide employee recognition event to thank employees and celebrate their achievements throughout the pandemic response. These celebrations were both well attended and very meaningful for employees because, for many, this was the first time they could come together as a team to support each other and celebrate their successes.

Looking forward to the fall and recognizing that employees will require ongoing support, the W@W committee will work with OPH's leadership team to monitor key indicators of wellness. Some of the key areas of W@W being advanced include: creating a culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance (i.e. taking breaks, lunch and vacation leave), promoting social connections and self-care, wellness and mental health resources, committing to timely and transparent two-way communication, and promoting ongoing employee recognition.

Restore: Restoring core services has always been a key component of the OPH Recovery Roadmap since we know many Ottawa residents rely on a wide-range of

OPH services aside from our COVID-19 related work. Therefore, OPH developed a restoration plan that allowed for flexibility in decreasing some components of the COVID-19 response and gradually increasing some of our core public health work. In the Fall of 2021 and Spring of 2022, there was work done to restore some of our highest priority programs such as Dental Health, Healthy Growth and Development, Sexual Health Case Management, and Mental Health and Substance Use Health.

In June 2022, OPH made several adjustments to its COVID-19 response, resulting in an overall reduction in COVID-19 spending. This process included determining which services and staff complement could be decreased based on Provincial guidance and community need, maintaining some level of COVID-19 operations, including prioritizing services that protect populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19, as well as the ability to provide access to additional booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine, and having capacity to respond to future COVID-19 resurgences. For many teams, such as case management, outbreaks, and immunization, demobilizing the COVID-19 response has been taking place in a phased approach over the last several months, while for other teams, the shift to decreasing COVID-19 will depend on a review of what services need to continue into 2023.

OPH remains committed to restoring more programs and services but must remain flexible to be able to respond to ongoing community needs. The recent COVID-19 surge and Monkeypox response have resulted in OPH needing to deploy resources across the organization based on need, which may in turn affect OPH's ability to fully restore some of our core work. Over the summer months, OPH has also had to respond to new emerging priorities such as the 4th dose of COVID-19 vaccines and a new COVID-19 vaccine for children under five.

Looking ahead, OPH also needs to plan for future resurgences of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases that can lead to outbreaks, health risks and more strain on the health system. Further, OPH continues to restore additional essential services such as food and water safety inspections, childhood immunization catch-up, and supports for equity deserving groups such as priority neighbourhoods.

NEXT STEPS - For moving forward with Recommendations

OPH will continue to advance its Recovery plans for the remainder of 2022 and into 2023. This work includes reviewing internal and external stakeholder ideas and seeking opportunities to advance and strengthen programs and services for a future post-pandemic state. Timely actions will be taken in areas that are more operational in nature. Ideas that align with OPH's current strategic goals will be assessed for

development along with ideas focused on collaboration, equity, and community involvement that may inform OPH's future strategic planning activities for the new Board of Health in the next term.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

No public consultation was undertaken in preparing this report, however recovery planning consultations were as described in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

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 – Ottawa Public Health Recovery Roadmap

DISPOSITION

This report is presented to the Board of Health for information.

Document 1

Ottawa Public Health Recovery Roadmap

