

Chair's Verbal Report
Board of Health Meeting of September 19, 2022

Capital Pride Events

For the past 20 years, Ottawa Public Health has been actively involved in the Ottawa Pride Festival. OPH has been and continues to work alongside 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities to eliminate barriers and address systemic discrimination to ensure access to welcoming, safe, supportive, diverse, and inclusive environments - free of stigma and discrimination.

Again, this year, OPH partnered with Community and Social Services to mark the launch of Pride Week in Ottawa by raising the Pride Flag in front of the Mary Pitt Centre at 100 Constellation. The event was held the morning of Monday, August 22nd, and was [livestreamed on YouTube](#), allowing the community and employees to participate virtually. As Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health, I was proud to be there to take part in that ceremony.

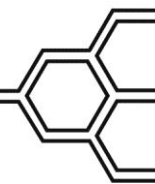
I was also proud, on Sunday, August 27th, to participate in the Pride Parade alongside OPH colleagues, friends and family members. The Pride Parade is always fun and colourful and it was all the more so this year by the fact that we were not riding atop a float but rather, we were all walking together, which made it easier to interact with fellow parade participants and spectators.

I want to thank everyone who attended and participated in this event and special thanks to OPH staff who helped organize this activity to promote inclusion and well-being with the rainbow community in Ottawa.

International Overdose Awareness Day (Aug 31)

On August 31st, 2022, Dr. Etches and Ottawa Public Health staff came together with community partners, persons with lived experience and family and friends from across Ottawa at the Canadian Human Rights Monument to commemorate International Overdose Awareness Day.

International Overdose Awareness Day is a day to raise awareness, to challenge stigma, and to remember people who have lost their lives due to overdose.



Dr. Etches spoke at the event, alongside speakers from the Sandy Hill Community Health Center, the National Overdose Response Services – a service OPH is promoting to better keep people safe if they are using substances alone, Ottawa Paramedic Services, Ottawa Intercity Health and many persons with lived experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the overdose crisis. We have seen an unprecedented number of overdose deaths - a 112% increase in opioid-related deaths in Ottawa from 2019 to 2021. Systemic health inequalities and toxic drug supply have contributed to too many lives being lost unnecessarily. Dr. Etches stressed we must build systems accountable to implement evidence-based approaches to prevent more loss by better meeting peoples' health and social service needs. We know that stigma continues to be a significant barrier to accessing essential health care services.

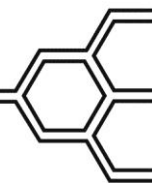
It is for this reason that Ottawa Public Health and our partners continue to collaborate with leaders in health care and social services to promote person-centred approaches, address stigma and drive system-level evidence-informed change. Working together to adopt a public health approach to substance use, we can begin to address the systemic inequities and barriers facing people in our communities most affected, including work on determinants of health like childhood development and housing.

Working on Wellness Festival 2022 (formerly known as Recovery Day) (Sept 16)

On September 16th, 2022, Ottawa Public Health participated in the first ever Working on Wellness (WOW) Festival - formally known as Recovery Day Ottawa. Organized by the Community Addictions Peer Support Association and supported by community partners, the WOW Festival brings Substance Use Health, Mental Health and Physical Health communities together under one tent to support wellness for all people.

Ottawa Public Health has been working very closely with CAPSA and other community partners for several years including building understanding of the Spectrum of Substance Use Health and promoting the use of Person First Language, as well as on content for the Have THAT Talk about Substance Use Health webpage, which is used by organizations to promote the health of employees.

Although we have made great strides, OPH is seeking new avenues to address structural barriers while increasing education, training and awareness of stigma and person first language. Changing structural stigma requires acting and engaging differently than in the past. For this reason, Ottawa Public Health is grateful for the opportunity to continue working with CAPSA through a new joint workplan. This joint



workplan will be executed by one of our Ottawa Public Health Nurses who will be joining the team at CAPSA for an innovative secondment over the next year. This will have an immediate impact on the work itself and its uptake in the community. It will also serve as a living education for both organizations on how to create the needed change within the system.

Ottawa Public Health would like to thank the organizers of the WOW Festival. Together we recognize and applaud every person who is working towards wellness, as well as their family and friends, service providers, allies and community partners who have been and continue to support them on their journey.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Orange Shirt Day

September 30th is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. First recognized in 2021 – so just last year - this day honours the survivors of residential schools and the children who never returned home. It's also an opportunity to bring awareness to the painful legacy and impacts of the residential school system.

To mark the day, buildings across Canada will be illuminated in Orange from 7pm on September 30th until sunrise on October 1st, including the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill and other federal buildings.

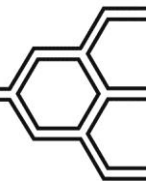
September 30th is also Orange Shirt Day, an Indigenous-led grassroots commemorative day intended to raise awareness of the inter-generational impacts residential schools have had on individuals and families and to promote the concept of “Every Child Matters”. The orange shirt represents the stripping away of culture, freedom and self-esteem experienced by Indigenous children over generations.

I would encourage everyone to wear orange on September 30th and to use that day as an opportunity to learn, reflect and advance reconciliation efforts.

Awards / Recognitions

On October 3rd, the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition (OBMHC) will be receiving the United Way Community Builder of the Year Award at City Hall.

The Community Builder Award is presented to community leaders and volunteers throughout the year. Once annually, United Way honours individuals, organizations and/or initiatives that reflect significant contributions to the social services sector and the community more broadly.



I'm happy to share that OPH's very own, **Hodan Aden**, has been an instrumental leader in the creation, development and sustainability of the OBMHC. She was one of the founding members of the OBMHC and now sits on its [Executive Committee](#).

Hodan has been a leader in the African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) community for many years and was the lead on the landmark research study "[Mental Health of Ottawa's Black Community](#)," which contributed to the creation of the OBMHC and to OPH's Mental Health Strategy and initiatives.

Further, **Nuradiin Mohamud**, another member of the OPH team who currently co-leads the health unit's mental health and substance use health ACB strategy, has also been an incredible leader in the ACB community for many years. Nuradiin represents OPH at the OBMHC main table of partners and his approach and dedication to this file has opened many more doors for the organization and for our communities, leading to meaningful impacts!

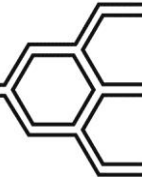
On October 6th, the Mental Health and Well-Being Research and Training Hub (MeWeRTH), in partnership with the Department of Psychology at Carleton University, will be co-hosting **Psychology Mental Health Day** in person at the Richcraft Atrium at Carleton University.

MeWeRTH has established the "*Courage to Speak Award*" to recognize the bravery and inspiration of speakers to share their journey. This year, as part of the Psychology Mental Health Day event, MeWeRTH will be presenting the *Courage to Speak Award* to OPH's own **Benjamin Leikin**!

Ben will be speaking at the event and the keynote speaker will be Dr. Natalie Durant-Bush from the University of Ottawa, who will be discussing the mental health of athletes.

All are welcome. More details and registration are available on the Carleton [Mental Health and Well-being Research and Training Hub](#) – website address is www.carleton.ca/mentalhealth

Please join me in congratulating Hodan, Nuradiin and Ben on these well-deserved recognitions!



Provincial Funding

As noted in the Q2 Budget status report listed as item 8.10 on today's agenda, during this summer's conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Minister of Health confirmed that the Province would continue to reimburse local public health units for COVID-19 extraordinary costs. She also announced that the Province would continue the mitigation funding through 2023. Members will recall that this funding offsets the decrease in provincial funding that was expected with the implementation of a reduction in provincial cost-shared contribution from 75% to 70%.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Province and the Minister of Health for this commitment and for recognizing the importance of providing sustainable, predictable funding for local public health units and their crucial work.

That concludes my verbal report. I would be happy to take any questions.