

MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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

DESTINATAIRE : Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa

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FILE NUMBER: ACS2023-OPH-HPS-0001

SUBJECT: Update on Audit of the Governance of the City's Pandemic Response

OBJET : Mise à jour sur la vérification de la gouvernance de l'intervention pandémique de la Ville

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform the Ottawa Board of Health about the results of an audit by the City of Ottawa's Auditor General.

BACKGROUND***Audit Timelines and Scope***

The Audit of the Governance of the City of Ottawa's (or "the City") Pandemic Response was included in the 2021 work plan of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), approved by Council on April 27, 2021.

On September 20, 2021, the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit approved a [recommendation](#) to support the inclusion of a limited-scope audit for Ottawa Public Health (OPH) as it pertains to the governance interface relating to the partnership between OPH and the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

The OAG conducted an audit to assess the effectiveness of the governance structure and associated mechanisms in place to support the City of Ottawa's response to the pandemic. Given that this was a public health emergency and required a joint pandemic response, the OAG also assessed the collaboration between OPH and the City as part of their audit. As such, the scope related to OPH was limited to the governance interface between the two organizations. The OAG did not review OPH's governance, emergency management structures, decision making, and related activities with respect to the pandemic.

Upon request from the City of Ottawa and the OAG, OPH staff participated in several meetings to assist the OAG in their audit and provided documents to inform the audit.

Governance Structure and Authority

Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, the Ottawa Board of Health is responsible for fulfilling the requirements for fundamental public health programs and services established by the *Ontario Public Health Standards and Protocols*. In addition to expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities outlined in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, other legislation and the *Ontario Public Health Standards*, the Board of Health can provide a policy framework within which OPH staff can define the health needs of the community and design programs, services and policies to meet these needs. The Ottawa Board of Health is also responsible for advising City Council on other issues related to health matters within its jurisdiction, upon Council's request.

DISCUSSION

Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA), the Medical Officer of Health has a statutory duty to respond to health hazards/communicable diseases during an emergency and, as per Section 7 of the HPPA, OPH emergency operations are required to meet the requirements under the [Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol, 2015](#). Many of those same functions are reflected in the rubric of the City's obligations under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA). The

Office of Emergency Management has a coordinating role and various City Departments/Services are critical stakeholders in providing support for tasks under the City of Ottawa Emergency Management Plan.

Having completed its Audit of the Governance of the City of Ottawa's (or "the City") Pandemic Response, the OAG has shared and discussed its key findings and recommendations with OPH as it pertains to OPH's governance role within the City's pandemic response. The [Auditor General's report](#) was published on February 8, 2023.

Overall, the audit found that the governance interface was successful and the OAG made one recommendation aimed at improving future responses by more clearly defining roles and responsibilities of the two organizations – the City and OPH. OPH welcomes these findings and agrees with the OAG's recommendation.

OPH has since worked collaboratively with the City of Ottawa, including the Office of Emergency Management, to discuss the findings, as well as to prepare the joint management response to the OAG and to work together to address the OAG's recommendations.

'Original signed by'

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