



OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH
2022
ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Mayor

Public health is the organized efforts of society to protect, promote and restore the people's health. To that end, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) works collaboratively with partners across multiple sectors to influence the conditions that impact health, reduce inequities, and to advance healthier public policies.

In 2021, OPH worked with City, health care and community partners to set up Neighbourhood Vaccine Hubs in communities where data showed there was lower COVID-19 vaccine uptake. These hubs were an example of the kind of evidence-based policy making that guides OPH's approach towards addressing public health barriers and inequities.

The Neighbourhood Vaccine Hubs model proved so successful that in 2022, OPH expanded the program by partnering with an ever-growing range of partners and service providers to deliver Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs. These centres were set up in communities across the city and allowed residents to access a range of services, including immunization, mental health and substance use health support, dental screening, Parenting in Ottawa drop-ins as well as social services including financial assistance, housing and employment services.

Throughout 2022, OPH also continued to respond to the community's greatest needs by delivering public health programs and services that had been paused or reduced due to the pandemic response.



This evidence-based approach, culture of collaboration and responsiveness to local community needs are hallmarks of the public health sector and exemplify the importance of maintaining the close relationships between local public health units and the communities they serve.

I want to thank Dr. Etches and the entire OPH team for their tremendous work throughout 2022. I look forward to working with them and the new Board of Health Chair, Councillor Catherine Kitts, over the coming years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Sutcliffe". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Sutcliffe
Mayor
City of Ottawa

Message from the Chair of the Board of Health

I am honoured to have been elected as Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health and, as I begin this term in this new role, I want to thank my predecessor, former Councillor Keith Egli, for his work in Chairing the Board of Health and guiding Ottawa Public Health during the 2018-2022 term – some of the most challenging times public health has faced over the past century.

As I learn more about the work of public health, I am impressed by the breadth and scope of the work, the professionalism and dedication of the Ottawa Public Health team, and the undeniable effectiveness and value of OPH programs and services.

In addition to rising to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic response over the past few years, this report provides an overview of the ongoing work the OPH team accomplished to implement the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan wrap-up report, presented to the Board of Health in November 2022, is a testament to OPH's accomplishments, as are the highlights featured in this report. With that work as a backdrop, I look forward to working with OPH staff and new Board of Health colleagues to develop and adopt a new



2023-2026 Strategic Plan to guide us through the years ahead.

This report provides a snapshot of the partnerships, collaborations and work of Ottawa Public Health to reduce barriers and to protect and improve the health of Ottawa residents. I am excited to work with Board colleagues, Dr. Etches and the entire OPH team to continue to respond to community needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Catherine Kitts'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Catherine Kitts, Chair
Ottawa Board of Health

Message from the Medical Officer of Health

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) saw its share of successes, challenges, and opportunities in 2022.

We started the year with the peak of Omicron and the biggest response we ever mounted to COVID-19, working with the City's Emergency Operations Centre and community partners to increase uptake and coverage of COVID-19 booster vaccination. At the same time, our Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Team worked in close collaboration with many healthcare and congregate care partners to review outbreak measures and align practices to support the functioning of the health system.

Through strong collaboration, we worked with City and community partners to support various emergency responses, such as the convoy occupation in Ottawa in early 2022 and the May 21 storm that affected virtually every area of our City and left 180,000 residents without power.

As well, from late spring through summer, we partnered with various community partners to provide testing and vaccination for another infectious disease newly spreading in Canada and Ottawa, which prevented the MPOX outbreak from becoming widespread in our community. In the fall, we collaborated with health system partners to help address gaps in routine immunization, particularly among children who do not have access to primary care.



All of this has demonstrated the importance of partnerships and collaboration and shown us that we are stronger together.

I am grateful to our many partners and to the OPH team for their hard work, collaboration, and willingness to come together to find innovative solutions in responding to the health and wellness needs of our community.

As we return to more work on chronic disease and injury prevention and continue to prioritize mental health and substance use health, we have been listening to community members, partners and employees to extend positive ways of working into the future and I am grateful for their engagement and input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Etches', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vera Etches,
Medical Officer of Health



Key Accomplishments from the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

2022 marked the last year of Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. Throughout the four year strategic plan, OPH made positive progress towards its strategic priorities, as identified in the [end of term report](#) presented to the Board of Health in November 2022. Below are some examples of key accomplishments from 2022 for each strategic direction.

Promote mental health and reduce the health and social harms of substance use

OPH continues to work with many partners to improve the health status of the people of Ottawa as it relates to mental health, addictions and substance use health. Highlights from 2022 include:

- Preventing overdose deaths, suicide, stigma and mental health, addictions and substance use health issues through capacity building training to intermediaries that work with at risk populations.
- Ensuring equitable and safe access to mental health, addictions and substance use health services through interventions with residents in priority neighbourhoods, with 948 meaningful interactions at the neighbourhood hubs.
- Supporting the wellbeing of families and advancing the prevention of adverse childhood events through the interventions of the Healthy Growth and Development (HGD) program with 7,629 postpartum screens in 2022, representing roughly 80% of Ottawa births.
- Increasing access to substance use health supports and infectious disease services for Ottawa residents who are experiencing barriers accessing services, including people experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. This mobile clinic is run in collaboration

with Recovery Care, Ottawa Inner City Health, and Pathway to Recovery. The results of a patient engagement survey rated the mobile van as a 5-star service by 96% of respondents.

Drive prevention across the health system

In addition to the ongoing COVID-19 response and the response to MPOX, as described further in this report, OPH continued actively working with Ontario Health Teams (OHTs). In 2022, the Ottawa Health Team/Équipe santé Ottawa (OHT-ESO) maintained its ongoing COVID-19 community response and vaccination outreach. The Ottawa East Health Team and the Prescott Russell in development Team announced their alliance to form the Archipel OHT, which is now comprised of more than 80 partners. The Ottawa West Four Rivers OHT advanced a Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health action plan, focused on navigation and urgent care. The Kids Come First Health Team was awarded a CIHR grant to support [1Call1Click.ca](https://www.1call1click.ca).

Influence the social and physical environments that support health and well-being

OPH continued to influence the social and physical environments that support the health and well-being of Ottawa residents. In addition to the expansion of the Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs mentioned further in the report, OPH coordinated a working group with other public health units to develop a briefing note recommending standardized sociodemographic data (SDD) be included in Ministry reporting databases. Having sociodemographic (including race-based) data systematically collected and analyzed will allow for enhanced program planning - to ensure that services are aligned to meet the needs of Ottawa's diverse

populations in communities where services are most needed. The recommended set of standard minimum SDD received endorsement from the Association of Public Health Epidemiologists of Ontario (APHEO) Executive Committee and the Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH).

OPH also engaged in work to support the development of healthy built and natural environments, facilitated by the co-location of two OPH staff with the City's Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development department, which saw the Province approve the City of Ottawa's new Official Plan. OPH continued to advance climate change adaptation and mitigation by supporting the City of Ottawa's Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment, the launch of OPH's Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessment on extreme heat, and the release of urban heat island maps in the City's mapping application GeoOttawa.

Maximize potential in people, processes and resources

OPH is continuously improving its processes and resources and investing in its people. In 2022, OPH's Wellness at Work Committee hosted two self-care pursuits - the Spring Pursuit, which included 33 teams and 350 employees, and the Fall Pursuit, which included 25 teams and 230 employees. These activities challenged employees to take time in their day for self-care. OPH also hosted a half-day recognition event to celebrate employees' accomplishments and to allow for team building and social networking. In the fall of 2022, OPH employees completed the Wellness Pulse Check with an 80% response rate among temporary and permanent employees. Finally, in June 2022, Dr. Etches and the entire OPH team were honoured with the Key to the City for their contributions to the pandemic response.



OPH has been raising awareness and increasing employees' and leaders' capacity to recognize and challenge racism, cultural biases and institutional practices that impact the health of racialized employees and communities. To that end, 28 anti-racism education sessions were held, attended by 659 employees including 110 in leadership roles, and 6 sessions focused on anti-Indigenous racism, which were attended by 254 employees.

OPH also facilitated 14 check-in sessions throughout the year for Indigenous, Black and racialized employees to provide a supportive and safe space to discuss and unpack their experience with racism and explore strategies to enhance their well-being. These sessions had 184 attendees. The preliminary evaluation demonstrates that racialized employees find these check-ins valuable as they allow them to

have a space to discuss their lived experiences and share it with others. Attendees also reported that the check-ins are helping them feel less isolated, more heard and validated.

As part of its recovery planning, OPH gathered input from diverse groups to identify community and population health needs and priorities through consultations with OPH employees, City of Ottawa partners, and other key local partners. These consultations resulted in quality improvement initiatives, the development of re-imagine proposals, and will inform the development of OPH's new Strategic Plan.

Finally, OPH advanced its use of digital solutions to improve and evolve the way the health unit works, as described further in this report.



Key Highlights from 2022

Ongoing COVID-19 Response

Sustained COVID-19 vaccination efforts continued throughout 2022, helping protect Ottawa residents against COVID-19 and preventing serious illness and death. In response to the Omicron variant surge, which emerged in late 2021, operations were ramped up early in 2022 to increase uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine booster. In the summer, when the first COVID-19 vaccine was approved for children six months to four-years-of-age, OPH held clinics to support this youngest age group in getting vaccinated. In the fall, OPH began offering first booster doses to five- to 11-year-olds and rolled out bivalent COVID-19 boosters, helping ensure residents remained protected into the fall and winter months.

OPH operated a complement of clinics throughout the City, in collaboration with community and City partners, to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccination for all Ottawa residents. Universal mass community clinics were located across the City, providing

access to a large number of residents. Tailored family friendly and after-school COVID-19 clinics were held to support children and their families in getting vaccinated. Pop-up clinics offered on-site COVID-19 vaccination to various organizations, workplaces and at public events. Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs were strategically located in priority neighbourhoods, providing low barrier access to COVID-19 vaccination.

OPH also worked collaboratively with congregate care settings to run clinics and ensure some of the people at greatest risk of severe illness were vaccinated. OPH offered on-site vaccination training to build capacity within congregate settings to administer vaccinations. Homebound COVID-19 vaccination was also made available to residents across the City who faced barriers accessing our COVID-19 vaccination community clinics. In 2022, OPH administered over 392,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses through its various clinics.

The surge in COVID-19 outbreaks in the final weeks of 2021, driven by the emergence of the Omicron variant, set the stage for the remainder of the 2021-2022 respiratory outbreak season. In healthcare and congregate settings, where the risk of exposure and severe outcomes of COVID-19 are high, OPH responded to 510 outbreaks in the first half of 2022. OPH prioritized booster immunizations in all 28 Long-Term Care homes and 80 Retirement homes, coordinated outbreak testing to ensure early detection in congregate settings, and continued to work with key partners including acute care partners, Champlain Regional IPAC Hub, and Home and Community Care Support Services Champlain (HCCSS), and the City of Ottawa's Community Paramedics and the Community and Social Services Department to monitor, assess and strengthen the local response to outbreaks in high-risk settings in supporting the health and safety of Ottawa's most vulnerable.

In the third quarter of 2022, OPH responded to an unprecedented and unanticipated COVID-19 resurgence. Over the summer, there were 265 outbreaks in high-risk settings. OPH used a risk-based approach to support facilities in outbreak, leverage the Regional IPAC Team to facilitate preventative and educational site visits, and provide influenza education through communities of practice. The resurgence of other respiratory illnesses, including Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), made for a more complex start to the 2022-2023 respiratory outbreak season with multi-agent outbreaks occurring at many facilities. In last quarter of 2022, OPH responded to 376 outbreaks, including 19 influenza outbreaks.

In total, OPH managed and supported 1151 outbreaks in 2022. Throughout the year, OPH continued to help prevent, identify and man

age outbreaks in support of people at greatest risk of severe illness.

Surveillance of COVID-19 continued in 2022, although restricted testing eligibility as of late December of 2021 meant newly reported cases were less reflective of the true burden of health in Ottawa. Case surveillance and reporting continued with an ongoing emphasis on COVID-19 wastewater signals, hospitalizations, test percent positivity and outbreaks. These data provided the basis for public health messaging to maintain awareness in the community and promote preventative practices. This was particularly important during increased community transmission indicated by the increased wastewater signal in the spring of 2022 and the lifting of mandatory mask mandates in the spring. COVID-19 vaccine surveillance continued with the addition of bivalent vaccine in September of 2022 and an addition of measures to better assess ongoing protection from boosters.

By the end of April 2022, most Provincial mask mandates and pandemic restrictions were removed. In response, COVID-19 public health messaging needed to pivot. OPH identified a growing need to empower the public with the tools and skills to assess their own level of personal risk and adjust their health behaviours accordingly.

OPH launched the term "layers of protection", an innovative concept that helped keep residents focused on COVID-19 risks and empowered them to make decisions for themselves and their families. The COVID-19 Snapshot was another strategy used to empower residents with easy-to-understand visual concepts of data and information about levels of risk. Launched in spring 2022, this communication tool shared data and key messages to help people understand monitoring

indicators and adapt to the flux of COVID-19 risk in the community. Using creative graphics, videos, web, and social media, the snapshots proved to be informative and led to the development of a stand-alone dashboard and the inclusion of Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) data points in fall 2022.

The team continued to create and maintain a designated COVID-19 webpage, visited by nearly half a million users in 2022. In 2022, OPH also developed language portals for our COVID-19 webpage, providing information in Somali, Arabic and Simplified Chinese allowing us to reach a diverse audience. We further adapted our web content to be more accessible by modifying our website's top navigation menu to highlight multi-lingual resources and added a custom Google Translate widget to each webpage.

OPH continued to see success in social media with its Twitter account remaining the most-followed local public health account in North America in 2022. Nearly 2000 social media posts were written in 2022, garnering roughly 16 million views. Using text, graphics and video content on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, the team utilized an evidence-based approach to produce targeted social media campaigns focused on COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 5 to 11 and for youth 12 and over. OPH developed the Kids Vaccine Hero Days, a communication campaign for parents of young children. This campaign focused on family friendly clinics, with special themed days, staff in superhero costumes, mascots like Spartacat from the Ottawa Senators, and a family friendly atmosphere with fun signage, bandages, and activities for children.

The team also supported reaching diverse ethnocultural audiences through the creation of 64 videos in both English and French as



well as another 6 in American Sign Language. We connected with a diverse population of citizens to create vaccine-related first-person testimonials addressing vaccine hesitancy and vaccine confidence. These videos featured community members from the communities that were the intended audience, and were developed in languages such as Arabic, Somali, Nigerian Pidgin, Spanish and French. Ads were featured on CHIN Radio in Arabic and Mandarin to ensure a broader reach of important COVID-19 information.

OPH would like to thank its many City, health sector, regional and community partners for their partnerships and collaboration in continuing to meet the needs of the community throughout 2022.

MPOX Response

In the spring and summer of 2022, OPH mobilized a comprehensive response to the emergence of MPOX (formerly referred to as monkeypox). OPH applied a health equity lens to our MPOX vaccination roll-out, with a focus on gay and bisexual men who have sex with men, which included pop-up clinics at

health care partner sites, bathhouses, bars, sports leagues, major queer events such as the Bingham Cup International Inclusive Rugby tournament and Capital Pride, as well as on-site at post-secondary institutions. We engaged Indigenous partners and shelter partners to ensure access. We adapted to respond to barriers expressed from the community by offering more evening and weekend appointments, piloting outdoor clinics, and diversified our pop-up clinic options to ensure we reached eligible community members. We offered MPOX vaccine at several of our COVID-19 clinics as well as OPH's Sexual Health Clinic to ensure broader geographic access. We also distributed educational and promotion materials, including posters and digital social media assets, to businesses and community organizations that serve the gay and bisexual community.

OPH's promotional efforts focussed on meeting the community in digital spaces as well, including dating and social apps such as Grindr, Squirt and Scruff, as well as through traditional social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram. We hosted an Instagram live event with a biochemist and science communicator who answered common myths and misinformation about the vaccine. We collaborated with drag queens on promotion opportunities and are continuing our outreach to sub-communities including those who identify with the Bear, Kink, and Leather communities.

This response would not have been possible without the amazing collaboration of many community partners. OPH would like to thank MAX Ottawa, the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance, Centertown Community Health Centre, Wabano, the Aids Committee of Ottawa, the prep clinic, Club Ottawa Bathhouse, T's bar, Gay Ottawa Volleyball,



the Rainbow Rockers Curling league, the organizing committee of the Bingham Cup, our partners at Capital Pride, as well as the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College, and La Cité.

Through this response, OPH was able to provide approximate 6154 doses of MPOX vaccine to Ottawa residents, and follow-up with 42 people who tested positive and required additional supports from OPH and community partners.

Expansion of Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs

During the pandemic, OPH worked closely with community and City partners as well as members from various communities to understand barriers and increase access to COVID-19 vaccine in populations with lower uptake. This led to the initiation of Neighbourhood Vaccination Hubs where residents could drop in to speak with a public health nurse, ask questions and access COVID-19 vaccination. These hubs were in neighbourhoods most impacted by COVID and that faced more

disadvantages. These hubs offered convenient schedules and familiar locations where people could access services closer to where they live.

Building on the success of this initiative, additional health and social services were added to these hubs to continue to bring services closer to where people live, to address gaps, and reduce barriers, thus rebranding Neighbourhood Vaccination Hubs as Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs. There are currently 15 Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs offering services at no cost and with no appointment required. Services and resources are offered in English, French, Chinese, Arabic and Somali, with multilingual staff on-site helping to bridge communication gaps.

Services available at the Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs include:

- COVID-19, flu, school and routine childhood vaccines
- Dental screenings and dental health promotion
- Support with mental health, addictions and substance use health through wellness tips and assistance to book short-term counselling
- Support with all areas of parenting through a public health nurse
- Integration of community and social services including financial assistance, housing, employment services and referrals.

This work would not have been possible without the collaboration of so many community partners including the Ottawa Health Team, Community Health and Resource Centres, ACB Wellness Resource Centre, AMA Community Centre, Bellevue Community Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association,

the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), St. Aidan's Anglican Church, Newcomer Health Centre as well as our City colleagues from the Community and Social Services Department. In addition to community partners, this also would not have been possible without input from residents themselves.

In 2022, Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs provided:

- 12,948 COVID-19 vaccines, 3,293 Flu vaccines, 948 school-based vaccines and 493 routine childhood vaccines;
- 948 meaningful interactions with clients with mental health, substance use health, and addiction inquiries;
- 304 dental health screenings;
- 214 families with parenting tips on healthy growth and development;
- 124 client interactions for financial assistance, housing, employment services and referrals

OPH will continue to engage with partners and communities to collaborate and coordinate innovative and tailored approaches and maximize partnerships that support equitable and convenient access to health and social services for the diverse residents of Ottawa.

Diversity Audit and Health Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

OPH undertook a diversity audit, completed by Dr. Ariff Kachra from Strat-Ology, which aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the health unit's Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression (ARAO) policy and action plans, assess the state of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at OPH, and provide recommendations for institutional and structural changes within the organization. Strat-Ology found that the overall culture

at OPH is interested and engaged in improving DEI, which provides an enabling context for change.

In terms of the State of DEI, the report described a 'divide' in perspectives. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Board members and leaders who participated in the audit believe that more diversity at OPH will allow the organization to better serve the community and achieve its health equity goals. The report also shared Human Resource (HR) leaders' impression that the organization is moving forward since they receive few formal DEI-related complaints.

Although racialized staff acknowledged improvements in diversity within the organization over the last 2 years, every racialized staff member shared multiple occurrences of incidental and systemic racism and discrimination. Further, racialized staff highlighted the lack of representation within leadership, challenges in being promoted due to bias and a lack of transparency, and the risks of being negatively labelled when contemplating reporting instances of racism and discrimination.

Strat-Ology suggested a strategic shift is required to focus on system level actions, such as the development and implementation of new structures and processes that will drive DEI at OPH, and the redesign of existing policies and procedures that discriminate and exclude equity deserving groups. To support this DEI approach, Strat-Ology recommended eight actionable areas of change, as detailed in a September 2022 [report](#) to the Ottawa Board of Health.

To respond to these recommendations, the newly formed Health Equity, Diversity and

Inclusion (HEDI) team developed an internally focused action plan to address the structures and processes identified by Strat-Ology to drive DEI and address systemic racism within OPH. As the service becomes more established, an externally focused action plan will be shared, outlining community actions and collaboration with partners.

Digital Solutions

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) made significant progress in 2022 towards leveraging digital solutions to continuously improve and evolve our core work to maximize impact.

Key highlights and accomplishments towards the goal of implementing a departmental Electronic Public Health Record (EPHR) solution include the development and soft launch of a partner engagement system for the Communications and Community Engagement team, the implementation of an electronic medical records system for the Sexual Health and Harm Reduction programs and the procurement of digital radiography and practice management solutions at all four OPH Dental Clinics.

OPH worked actively with the Ministry of Health and other public health units to contribute to and influence the design of provincially mandated technology systems, with specific focus in 2022 on replacement of the current legacy system for reporting diseases of public health significance.

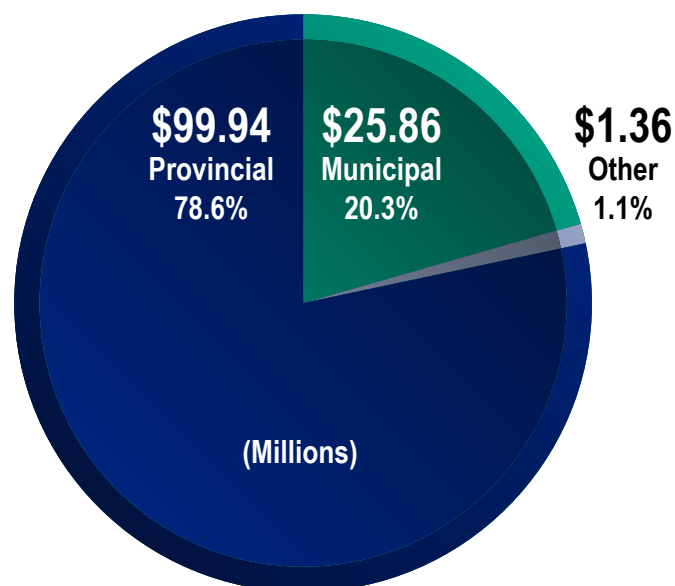
Digital solutions played a key role in supporting and providing options to OPH employees, both to work remotely and to transition back to the workplace throughout the year as COVID-19 restrictions were eased.

2022 Ottawa Public Health Budget

We would like to thank our funders, partners, learners and volunteers, whose support is invaluable to the work we do.

Funding Sources	Amount (in millions)
Provincial	99.948
Municipal	25.868
Own Funds	0.275
Fees and Services	1.093
Total Revenue	127.184

Operating Results	Amount (in Millions)
Expenditure by Program	
Cost Shared Core Programs	66.073
COVID-19 - One-Time	49.955
Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program	3.136
Healthy Babies Healthy Children	4.562
Total Provincial Programs	123.726
Supplementary Programs	
100% City Programs	2.985
Miscellaneous Programs	0.473
Total Supplementary Funded Programs	3.458
Total Revenue	127.184



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Call

613-580-6744

TTY: 613-580-9656

Toll free: 1-866-426-8885

Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4 pm

Email

healthsante@ottawa.ca

Write

Ottawa Public Health
100 Constellation Drive
Ottawa ON K2G 6J8