



EQUITY PREVENTION IMPACT

OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH'S 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN





Land Acknowledgement

Odàwàng kì ombàkonigàde ega wikàd kà m̀igiwàniwang Màm̀iwini Aishinàbe-wakì.

Pimàdizìg Màm̀iwini Anishinàbeg k̀agigekamig k̀i abig ondaje ak̀ing. Odanishinàbewiziwiniwà obimàdjiwowiniwà ogì nanegàdjichigadànàwà nanàj ako nongom iyo abinàs.

Kichi Odenaw Odàwàng okikàdjìyàwàn pimàdizìn Màm̀iwini Anishinàben kaye okikàdjitònàwà iyo ak̀i.

Ottawa is built on unceded Algonquin Anishinabe territory.

The peoples of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation have lived on this territory for millennia. Their culture and presence have nurtured and continue to nurture this place.

The City of Ottawa honours the peoples and the land of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation.

A message from the Board of Health Chair and Medical Officer of Health for Ottawa Public Health

Together, we are pleased to release the new, four-year strategic plan: **Equity, Prevention, Impact: Ottawa Public Health's 2023-2027 Strategy**.

The Ottawa Public Health 2023-2027 Strategic Plan continues work advanced during the pandemic. This includes prioritizing the needs of Ottawa's diverse communities, eliminating barriers to achieving health and wellbeing, and recognizing the importance of building genuine and lasting relationships with partners and residents to shape relevant and effective approaches.

A range of diverse inputs were gathered and analyzed to support the strategic planning process. Consultations with employees, community members and partners, as well as a review of the State of Ottawa's Health 2023 report and grey literature were carried out to gain insight about the strategic areas and public health issues to focus on in 2023-2027.

The Strategy demonstrates Ottawa Public Health's dedication to equity, prevention, and impact which guides our efforts as we work in partnership to achieve our Strategic Goals.

- **Equity-driven:** Being equity-driven means bringing public health services and interventions closer to communities facing the greatest barriers. It means building trust with communities to be a part of the solution in influencing the conditions and environments around them to support the health and wellbeing of all.

- **Prevention-focused:** Being prevention-focused means leveraging all available opportunities to shift our work to address root causes of poor health, to create the conditions that support a healthy community and individual decisions. This work must be done in collaboration with partners and policy decision-makers.
- **Impact-maximizing:** Being impact-maximizing means strategically allocating public health resources effectively to reach a broader audience and effect the greatest amount of change. This also means having the right people, skills, and resources to do the work.

This Strategy provides a framework to collaboratively examine and influence the systemic barriers to health and wellbeing in Ottawa and addresses key public health challenges.

We are excited to work in partnership over the next four years to make real inroads towards achieving health and wellbeing within the vibrant, diverse, and resilient communities of Ottawa.



Catherine Kitts, Chair
Ottawa Board of Health



Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health for
Ottawa Public Health

Who We Are

For over 125 years, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has worked in service of individuals and communities in Ottawa with the overall mission of protecting and promoting health. OPH is made up of a diverse team of professionals including public health nurses, dental hygienists, public health inspectors, dietitians, health promoters & communicators and epidemiologists.

Our Mandate

Public health works to prevent illnesses, injuries and poor health. OPH delivers a range of mandated core programs and services that are outlined in the **Ontario Public Health Standards**. The programs and services are designed to meet the health needs of the communities in Ottawa. We work with local communities and partners to create equitable opportunities for all residents to be healthy and thrive, regardless of any social or economic reasons.

Ottawa Public Health's Impact

The OPH 2019-2022 Strategic Plan provided a framework to focus on the most important and pressing work to drive positive health outcomes in the community. Examples of OPH's impact through this Strategy include:

- Completed a research study to assess the views and experiences of Ottawa's African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities with respect to mental health as well as identified gaps and strategies for improving and advocating for mental health services, leading to the development and implementation an action plan.
- Provided education on the administration of naloxone as well as the distribution of naloxone kits to help prevent opioid overdose deaths through partnerships and the Ontario Naloxone Program.
- Provided epidemiology and surveillance data on COVID-19 people testing positive, hospitalizations and outbreaks, as well as vaccinations and vaccine coverage for Ottawa residents.
- Informed residents, healthcare partners, community organizations and businesses of emerging information throughout the pandemic through our webpages, social media feeds, media requests and prevention-based campaigns.
- Created Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs to deliver public health programs, such as Parenting in Ottawa, dental screenings and mental health resources, in addition to employment and social services.
- Embedded a health lens in the City of Ottawa Official Plan through our co-location with the City Planning, Real Estate, and Economic Development department to ensure the city's development will promote health.
- Completed a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) audit of OPH, which is informing changes to hiring and human resource processes and led to the development of an employee-based DEI community of practice.
- Led a working group to make recommendations to the Ministry of Health for standardized

socio-demographic data (SDD) collection to be able to orient services to areas of greatest need.

- Delivered case and contact management and infection prevention and control investigations to address the spread of COVID-19 in Ottawa.
- Managed 2784 outbreaks with a total of 32,311 cases attributed; investigated

1,212 suspect outbreaks in facilities where early intervention helped to break the chain of transmission and prevent the further spread of infectious disease in our high-risk congregate facilities and supported over 4,700 outbreak related calls as part of initial outbreak investigations.

Strategic Planning

Aligned with the appointment of the new Board of Health, OPH initiates its strategic planning cycle every four years. This cycle provides an opportunity to evaluate areas where OPH can enhance our focus and drive innovation in order to create the conditions for all people and places in Ottawa to be healthy and thriving. Strategic planning encompasses a comprehensive review and refresh of the existing strategy to adjust to evolving community needs and changes in our environment. The Strategy is also reviewed annually to respond to emerging public health challenges.

OPH is committed to ensuring strategic priority setting is informed by a range of inputs.

Over the past year, OPH has undertaken a situational analysis and partner engagement to guide the development of its 2023-2027 Strategy. This involved soliciting input from a range of perspectives, including employees, community members, partners and Board Members, as well as considering findings from the State of Ottawa's Health 2023 Report and key sources of grey literature.

Equity, Prevention, Impact.

Through a common understanding of the vision, mission, commitments and strategic goals, the OPH 2023-2027 Strategic Plan provides a framework for informed decision-making to drive progress towards improved health and wellbeing of all people and places in Ottawa.

Ottawa Public Health's strategy demonstrates that we are driven by equity, focused on prevention, and measured by our impact.

Equity-driven: Being equity-driven means bringing public health services and interventions closer to communities facing the greatest barriers. It means building trust with communities to be part of the solution in influencing the conditions and environments around them to support the health and wellbeing of all.

Prevention-focused: Being prevention-focused means leveraging all available opportunities to shift our work to address root causes of poor health to create the conditions that support a healthy community and individual decisions. This work must be done in collaboration with partners and policy decision-makers.

Impact-maximizing: Being impact-maximizing means strategically allocating public health resources effectively to reach a broader audience and effect the greatest amount of change. This also means having the right people, skills and resources to do the work.

Our Vision and Mission

Vision: All people and places in Ottawa are healthy and thriving

Mission: We work together with the community to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of all people in Ottawa

Our Commitments

Our commitments are embedded in everything we do and are required to advance the OPH 2023-2027 Strategy. Our commitments influence all aspects of program and service delivery.

Reconciliation: We are guided by the principles of respect, relationship, reciprocity and reflection as we work in partnership with Urban Indigenous Peoples – including First Nations, Inuit, Métis peoples and communities – to promote social justice and advance Indigenous rights and wellbeing.

Health equity: We identify and address systemic barriers to increase health equity in urban, suburban and rural communities in Ottawa.

Healthy and inclusive workplace: We foster an equitable, diverse, and inclusive workforce in service to the community and promote a psychologically healthy and safe workplace culture.

Meaningful engagement and relationships: We build genuine and lasting relationships with partners and residents to collaboratively foster a healthy community.

Evidence-informed: We apply best available evidence, including community voice and local data, to identify issues impacting the community and continuously improve and innovate our work.

Impactful: We aim to strengthen our organizational performance and optimize our resources to better serve the community, while tracking our progress through measurable outcomes.

Our Strategic Goals

Our strategic goals address key public health challenges and work to build our organizational capacity in service to the community.

Equity-Driven

In working to improve population health outcomes and opportunities, we collaborate to eliminate health inequities, systemic racism, discrimination and oppression.

Why it matters?

Findings from the State of Ottawa's Health Report 2023ⁱ demonstrate:

- Ottawa is becoming more diverse with a 7% increase in those who identify as being from a racialized group in 2021 (35%) compared to 2016 (28%).
- Self-rated health and mental health is approximately 20% lower in neighbourhoods with the lowest compared to those with the highest income.
- The percentage of children vulnerable in at least one Early Development Instrument domain ranged from 4% to 52% across Ottawa neighbourhoods, with the prevalence of vulnerability generally increasing in neighbourhoods with lower socioeconomic status.
- During the pandemic, residents of Ottawa who tended to fair worse with regards to their mental health included people with disabilities, young adults, people who identify as racialized, those with lower household income and those who identify as LGBTQ2S+.
- High school students (grades 9 to 12) of socioeconomic disadvantage or those identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ reported poorer mental and emotional wellbeing compared to their counterparts.
- The rate of active tuberculosis disease (TB) in Ottawa has increased over the last six years and it is higher than the average for Ontario-less-Ottawa (4.6 per 100,000). Among Canadian-born individuals in Ottawa, Inuit people are disproportionately affected by TB. In 2022, 8% of the cases of TB in Ottawa were in individuals who identify as Inuk. Indigenous peoples in Canada are disproportionately affected by TB due to ongoing impacts of colonization and health inequities.
- The structural and systemic inequities and barriers that pre-existed the COVID-19 pandemic influenced its epidemiology and vaccine uptake. The rate of COVID-19 infection was higher among residents of less-advantaged communities. These communities are not inherently more susceptible to COVID-19, but underlying social realities, such as systemic racism, barriers to health information and services, and/or



participation in occupations without access to paid sick leave contributed to people's exposure to COVID-19.

- The population rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths was also higher in communities with less socioeconomic advantage, as described by the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study socioeconomic status (SES) index. Population hospitalization and death rates were almost three times higher in quintile 5 neighborhoods (lowest socioeconomic status) compared to those in quintile 1 neighbourhoods (highest socioeconomic status).

Create Conditions to Live Well and Thrive

Influence changes in the built, natural and social environments that promote health and wellbeing, and address the impacts of climate change. Essential to this is the interconnection between health and nature.

Why it matters?

Findings from the State of Ottawa's Health Report 2023 demonstrate:

- In the most recent estimates from 2017/2018, 67% of adults over the age of 18 identified that they met the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. In 2019, 21% of children aged 5 to 11 were active at least 5 days in the past week. In 2021, only 18 % of students in grades 7 to 12 reported being active every day in the past week.
- In Ottawa, 58% of residents aged 18 and older report a height and weight that would classify them as being overweight or obese. This is relatively unchanged over the past 5 years but the percentage of the population that is overweight and obese has increased over the past 15 years. This percentage is higher among men and those aged 45 and older.
- In Ottawa, 42% of renter households paid 30% or more of their household income on shelter costs compared to 14% of owner households.
- Three-year estimates from the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Canadian Income Survey indicate that 13% of Ottawa households face food insecurity, with approximately 4% being marginally food insecure, 6% being moderately food insecure and 3% being severely food insecure.
- In Ottawa, 69% of people had a somewhat to very strong sense of community belonging in 2019 to 2020, which is similar to past years.
- In 2019, 13% of children in Ottawa aged 5 to 11 years and 11%¹ youth aged 12 to 17 years used active forms of transportation to travel to school.



¹ Interpret with caution due to high variability in response.

Additional data sources demonstrate:

- In Ottawa (from 2017-2021) there was a median of 106 emergency room visits per year directly related to exposure to extreme heat, such as dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.ⁱⁱ
- The built environment impacts people’s physical activity and health, through factors such as the types of local services and amenities and the layout and design of transportation networks.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Safety and well-being is impacted through injuries and deaths from vehicular traffic and street characteristics. In Ottawa, from 2017 – 2020, there were an average of five pedestrian deaths; two cyclists deaths; 11 motor vehicle deaths and 3,314 injuries each year.^{iv}

Promote Wellbeing and Reduce Harms

Advance innovative and comprehensive approaches to promote mental health and substance use health while reducing stigma; and decreasing harms associated with substance use and addiction across the lifespan.

Why it matters?

Findings from the State of Ottawa’s Health Report 2023 demonstrate:

- An estimated 60% of residents of Ottawa rated their mental health as very good or excellent in 2019/2020, an approximate 8 to 10% decrease from previous years.
- An estimated 12% (100,600 people) rated their mental health as fair to poor. Self-rated mental health tends to be lowest among females, those aged 20 to 44, those in the lowest two income quintiles, those living in an urban setting, renters, and those living alone.
- Self-harm is among the leading causes of injury-related hospitalizations among those aged 15 to 44. This is similar to what has been seen in previous reports.
- The COVID-19 pandemic created additional strains on mental health and substance use health. In November 2021, only 43% of residents of Ottawa rated their mental health as very good or excellent. This is lower than the estimates prior to the pandemic. In November of 2021, about a quarter (24%) of residents of Ottawa also reported that in the past two weeks they wanted to reach out for mental health support but did not know where to turn.



- Emergency department visits for opioid-related overdoses among residents of Ottawa more than doubled from 443 in 2019 to 982 in 2021, highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on opioid use. Similarly, deaths more than doubled from 65 in 2019 to 148 in 2021, exacerbating an increase in opioid-related harms that began in 2017.
- An estimated 69% of the population aged 19 and older in Ottawa are at no or low risk of alcohol related harms, 15% are at moderate risk and 16% are at high risk.

Focus on Prevention

Gather, analyze and share evidence on local health needs and inequities with the healthcare system to strengthen clinical prevention. We will engage with healthcare system partners to help inform decision-making.

Why it matters?

Findings from the State of Ottawa’s Health Report 2023 demonstrate:

- By 2030, it is estimated that older adults, aged 65 and over, will account for 20% of the population. This shift in demographics has significant implications for health resource planning to support an aging population.
- 14% of the people living in Ottawa, or approximately 122,000 people, do not have access to a regular health care provider. This proportion is higher among those who have immigrated in the past 10 years with 38% not having access to a regular health care provider.
- Hospitalization rates are between 15 to 30% higher in the neighbourhoods with lowest socioeconomic advantage compared to those with the highest advantage.
- Routine childhood immunization rates among 7-year-olds in 2018-2019 surpassed national coverage goals of 95% for rubella and meningococcal C conjugate (MenCC) and were below the goals for diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis, measles, mumps, Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib), pneumococcal disease, and Varicella. Among 17-year-olds living in Ottawa, pre-pandemic immunization coverage rates were below national goals of 90% for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. These coverage estimates are limited to immunizations reported to public health.



Enrich our Workplaces

Foster a diverse, inclusive, equitable and healthy workforce grounded in a culture of learning and growth. We will support and develop employees and optimize and innovate our processes to better serve the community.

Why it matters?

- In 2021, 35% of the population living in Ottawa identified as racialized, a 7% increase compared to 2016 (28%). Black, Middle Eastern, and South Asian were the most frequently reported racialized groups. According to the 2021 Census, 3% of the population in Ottawa identified as Indigenous, including First Nations, Inuk (Inuit) and Métis. It is important that our workforce is representative of the communities we serve and that we can represent multiple ways of knowing.^v
- OPH's Diversity Audit^{vi} identified the following key findings:
 - Overall culture at OPH is interested and engaged in improving diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), which provides an enabling context for change.
 - OPH's Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Board of Health 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.
 - Every racialized staff member shared multiple occurrences of incidental and systemic racism and discrimination. Racialized staff also 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.
- Our workforce demonstrated unwavering dedication to the community and resiliency throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As the community recovers, we must ensure our workforce recovers as well. What we want to achieve for the communities of Ottawa is also what we want to achieve for the community that is OPH.
- OPH innovated programs and services throughout the pandemic to continue to provide essential public health interventions. Effective public health practice must continue beyond the pandemic to support employees to do their job efficiently and effectively in order to best serve the community.



Measuring our Impact

OPH is committed to making meaningful changes over the next four years. These strategic efforts aim to address complex challenges, leading to improved health and wellbeing of the people and places in Ottawa and greater health equity. Recognizing that addressing such intricate challenges requires collective effort, OPH will actively collaborate with community members and partners to maximize impact. This inclusive approach

involves engaging employees, community members and partners to build action plans identifying the specific short and long-term objectives, tactics, outcomes, and measures for each strategic goal. Our progress will be evaluated through defined measures, outputs and outcomes, which will be reported to the Board of Health twice annually, ensuring transparency and accountability.

ⁱ Ottawa Public Health. State of Ottawa's Health: 2023 Report. Ottawa (ON): Ottawa Public Health; 2023.

ⁱⁱ National Ambulatory Care Reporting System 2017-2021, IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO, Ontario Ministry of Health. ICD-10CA T67 or X30 for Ottawa residents. Date Extracted: May 29, 2023.

ⁱⁱⁱ Public Health Agency of Canada. The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2017. Ottawa (ON): Public Health Agency of Canada; 2017.

^{iv} City of Ottawa. 2020 Ottawa Safety Report. Ottawa (ON); 2020.

^v Ottawa Public Health. State of Ottawa's Health: 2023 Report. Ottawa (ON): Ottawa Public Health; 2023.

^{vi} Dr. Ariff Kachra. Diversity Audit: Ottawa Public Health's Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Policy. Ottawa (ON): Strat-ology Consulting Inc; 2021.