

Chair's Verbal Report
Board of Health Meeting of November 6, 2023

Fall Prevention Month

November is **National Fall Prevention Month**. Raising awareness of the burden and impact of fall-related injuries is important and encourages everyone to acknowledge their role in preventing falls and fall-related injuries throughout their lives.

Fall-related injuries are a serious public health issue in Ontario and can greatly impact both the individual and their family. Every year since 2011, falls have accounted for over 65% of injury-related hospitalizations among adults aged 65 to 74 and over 80% for those over 75 years.

For older adults, falls are a frequent experience and have immediate physical consequences, including injuries, and represent the leading cause of injury-related emergency department visits and hospital admissions. In addition to the personal impact, falls cost Canadians \$10.3 billion annually from both direct and indirect health care costs.

Of course, older adults are not the only ones at risk of falls or fall-related injuries. Fifty percent of emergency room visits for injured children are due to a fall.

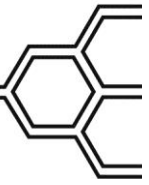
To learn more about these risks and strategies to help prevent falls, people can visit the Injury Prevention and Safety webpage at OttawaPublicHealth.ca.

Radon Action Month

November is also **Radon Action Month**. For those who may not be familiar, radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas released when uranium in soil and/or rock breaks down.

Studies by Health Canada have shown that radon concentrations vary a great deal across Canada, however we know that all areas of the City of Ottawa can be affected by radon, which can seep into a building through dirt floors, cracks in foundations or concrete, sump pumps, joints and basement drains. Well water can also contain trapped radon, which may be released into the air when water is drawn.

Though radon does not tend to be a health issue outdoors, in a confined space it can accumulate to high levels, which can present a health risk. In fact, exposure to high



levels of radon gas over an extended period of time is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. For people who smoke, and those who are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke, this risk is even higher.

Because radon is invisible, odourless and tasteless, the only way to know if a home is affected by this invisible gas is to test for it. And winter is the best time to set up a long-term radon detector.

To learn more about radon, how to test for it and what to do about it, people can visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/radon.

International Inuit Day

November 7th is **International Inuit Day**. Established in 2006 by the [Inuit Circumpolar Council \(ICC\)](#), an international non-governmental organization representing Arctic peoples living in Canada, Greenland, parts of the United States and Russia, it is a global observance day to recognize and honour the indigenous Inuit communities.

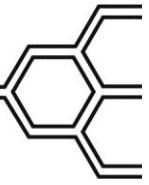
It is a day to promote awareness and understanding of the Inuit way of life, celebrate their contributions, rich culture, history and heritage, and to address issues affecting Inuit communities.

Celebrating International Inuit Day is an excellent way to honour and show support for the Inuit culture and heritage while also committing to understanding and addressing the issues affecting Inuit communities, such as health disparities, education and environmental concerns.

There are many resources available to learn more about International Inuit Day and related topics. Among them, the [Canadian Museum of History](#) features exhibitions and collections that highlight the history and culture of Indigenous peoples in Canada, including the Inuit.

Provincial Review of Ontario's Public Health System

As Board Members know, during the 2023 Association of Municipalities Ontario Conference in late August, the Ministry of Health unveiled a strategy to strengthen Ontario's public health sector. In addition to changes with respect to how public health will be funded through to 2025, the Province is undertaking a review of the requirements for local public health units under the Ontario Public Health Standards and is supporting voluntary local health unit mergers. Recent communications from the Office of the Chief



Medical Officer of Health indicate the desired outcomes include: a cohesive public health system that better aligns with community and system partners to support progress on improving population health outcomes while reducing health inequities; and ensuring that local public health agencies have the critical mass and capacity needed to optimize performance and meet unexpected surges in demand, as well as the skilled personnel and competencies needed to fully deliver core public health services.

Given that Ottawa Public Health already serves a population greater than one million people, we are not discussing the possibility of a merger. However, we are aware that many of our neighbouring health units in the east are exploring options with each other. We will continue to monitor the situation and to look for opportunities to have input into strengthening public health in Ontario.

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