

Board of Health Meeting  
Dr. Vera Etches – Verbal report  
Board of Health Meeting of September 16, 2024

Good afternoon, Kwey, Unusakut (oo-nah-sa-coot), Taanishi, Ahnii, Bonjour,

\*\*\*\*\*Je suis en récupération d'une maladie respiratoire. Because I am at the end of recovering from a respiratory illness, I am joining virtually this evening.

I will begin by inviting the team to provide you with an update on the 2024 / 2025 Respiratory Season and relevant timelines. I will also touch on areas of focus for Ottawa Public Health right now including childhood immunization surveillance, and an update on Consumption and Treatment Services Sites and Overdose Awareness Day.

### **Respiratory Update**

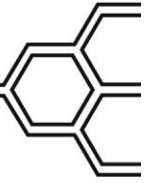
I would like to invite Dr. Laura Bourns, Associate Medical Officer of Health with Ottawa Public Health to present to you about the upcoming 2024 / 2025 Respiratory Season.

### **Childhood Immunizations**

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is mandated to review the immunization records of children attending school or daycare in Ottawa to ensure records are up to date, this is known as immunization surveillance. This ensures OPH can quickly determine which children are protected and which are potentially at risk in the event of an outbreak.

This year, OPH will review student records for 7 and 17 years olds (people born in 2007 – 2017). Starting in early December 2024, families with children whose records are not up to date will receive letters from OPH about required vaccines. These letters provide information on how to access immunization services and how to update records, as well as notice of the risk of suspension from school if information is not updated. A second notice, sent in February, will include the date when suspension will begin if records remain incomplete.

The goal with immunization surveillance is to promote population-level immunization coverage rates that protect individuals and school populations. The letters aim to provide parents/guardians with time to access immunizations required and/or share their immunization information, so that students are not suspended. OPH will be working closely with school boards, students' parents, and guardians to update records and provide access to vaccine services. // **L'objectif de la surveillance de la vaccination**



est de joindre les parents afin de mettre à jour les dossiers de vaccination et d'éviter la suspension des élèves. Mais le but ultime est la protection de la population.

Vaccination services are available through community primary care providers and at OPH's main clinic, our Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs and through our virtual immunization clinic.

### **CTS Announcement and Alcohol Sales (Overdose Awareness Day)**

I had the privilege of attending the International Overdose Awareness Day event in August. The theme this year, "Together We Can," highlights the strength found in unity. People gathered to remember and honour individuals, families, friends, service providers, and all people affected by this persistent crisis. It was evident that the shared efforts to reduce stigma and shame, treat everyone with respect and compassion, and to advocate for meaningful improvements in community well-being, mental health, and substance use health are more important than ever.

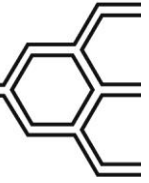
Everyone attending came with different stories, experiences, or perspectives on this crisis. But what ultimately brought us together was our shared desire to protect one another. Together we can prevent overdoses, they are not inevitable. I think back to how far we've come from the incredible grassroots work of organizations like Overdose Prevention Ottawa, and, I see ongoing creativity, such as with the inspiring work of the Block Leaders, of community and neighbourhood advocates, and so many more.

We heard from one speaker about how people currently in the Market and the downtown core are struggling with mental health and addictions issues, did not always live there, many came from neighbourhoods like Stittsville, Alta Vista and Navan.

Un grand nombre de personnes en difficulté aujourd'hui le sont depuis l'enfance, et cela souligne la nécessité pour SPO, les responsables des politiques et nos partenaires communautaires et du domaine de la santé d'assurer des interventions critiques sont disponible tout au long de la vie.

With the recent announcement from the Province of Ontario regarding the future closure of a number of Consumption and Treatment Services across the Province, OPH will continue to advance our work in overdose prevention and response alongside partners.

Santé publique Ottawa s'engage à veiller à ce que les personnes qui dépendent des services de consommation supervisée et de traitement continuent à recevoir le soutien dont elles ont besoin. This work includes engaging and listening to surrounding communities, residents and businesses and various solutions are currently being discussed with partners under the Ottawa Overdose Prevention and Response Strategy. Santé publique Ottawa continuera à travailler avec de nombreux partenaires



dans le cadre de la Stratégie de prévention des surdoses et d'intervention en cas de surdoses d'Ottawa, ainsi qu'avec les résidents et les entreprises des communautés les plus touchées, afin de trouver des solutions.

Our priority remains the health and well-being of **all** Ottawa residents.

Ottawa Public Health is one of many organizations with roles in addressing mental health and substance use health issues. One of OPH's foundational tasks is monitoring and evaluating health status over time to help inform policy makers and community and health partners in their work. OPH also works to provide partners and the public with timely access to information, communications and alerts about emerging trends and issues. This reporting continues and will inform solutions.

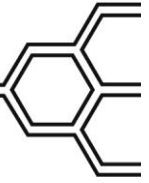
Open substance use in public spaces in Ottawa will continue unless people have somewhere safer to use substances, whether inhaling or injecting, and unless people have access to mental health and addictions treatment when they need it. The Ottawa Overdose Prevention and Response Strategy highlights how important having a place to live is for decreasing the harms of substance use. Therefore, we are pleased to see recognition of the need for deeply supportive housing, paired with mental health and addictions treatment, in the recent provincial announcement investing in new "Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hubs". OPH is working with local partners to explore funding opportunities to increase access to these desperately needed services.

A top priority for Ottawa Public Health is prevention and reducing harms people can experience from substance use, including alcohol.

With the recent Provincial update allowing beer, cider, wine and ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages to be sold in convenience stores, grocery and big-box stores, OPH will monitor the health and social impacts of this change. We do not yet have information following the change less than two weeks ago.

OPH will continue to offer prevention programs with a focus on children, youth and young adults, to reduce the risk of harms associated with alcohol use. Programming includes support for new families through the Healthy Growth and Development program, school aged curriculum support and resources through our School Health Online platform, and partnerships with agencies such as Rideauwood and Le Cap who offer programming in schools, including substance use prevention workshops and addiction treatment.

OPH's Party Safer workshops and training can be accessed on the Stop Overdose Ottawa website, and this program is being implemented in high schools and post-secondary institutions to build skills and strategies to reduce the harms associated with alcohol and other substance use. **Nous continuerons également à travailler avec nos partenaires pour mieux faire connaître les Repères canadiens sur l'alco--ol et la santé**



afin de promouvoir et de protéger la santé et le bien-être de nos résidents. We will keep sharing Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health to inform decision-making.

Lastly, I would like to thank our Harm Reduction and Substance Use Health team for the work they do. One of our partners, the Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre, has recently presented our team with "A Community Leadership Award". Congratulations team, I know your work makes a difference every day!

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