

Chair's Verbal Report – November 4, 2024

Algonquin College Speaker Series Recap:

On October 18th, Algonquin College, in collaboration with OPH, hosted the Future of Health and Wellness Series panel discussion that examined the connection between health and housing. Claude Brule moderated the panel that included Kelli Tonner, Executive Director of the Southeast Ottawa Community Health Centre, Mark MacAulay, President and CEO of Ottawa Salus, and Tim Aubry, professor of psychology in the faculty of social sciences at the University of Ottawa and co-chair of the Canadian Housing First Network Community of Interest. Clara Freire, General Manager of the City of Ottawa's Community and Social Services department provided opening remarks.

The discussion highlighted the importance of pairing health and housing to end the cycle of chronic homelessness that many people find themselves in. Ottawa, like many cities across the country, is facing interconnected housing, drug toxicity and mental health crises that has led to more people living without access to stable housing and without access to stable health care. We heard from our speakers that people from all walks of life experience trauma living in constant crisis and that access to integrated health care is one of the most significant factors for transitioning people out of chronic homelessness.

La solution n'est pas simple, mais elle implique une approche intégrée de soins communautaires et un esprit de pollinisation croisée entre les secteurs. SPO continue de travailler avec des partenaires pour identifier et discuter des besoins en matière de santé et de logement des résidents d'Ottawa confrontés à un logement instable et ayant besoin d'accès aux soins de santé.

OPH is also seeking to collaboratively identify opportunities to improve current care models, system integration and enhance connections across the health and housing sectors to prioritize areas for action. As Chair of OPH, I continue to advocate for funding for our Healthy@Home proposal, which Dr. Etches will speak to later.

Rural Summit:

This past weekend, I, along with many of my Council colleagues, attended the City's Rural Summit. This was the first summit of its kind in 17 years, highlighting Ottawa's unique rural character and contributions, as well as the need for tailored solutions to address rural challenges. During the summit, the Mayor announced several key commitments that the City will pursue in the coming years. Of particular interest to this board, I had the opportunity to share Ottawa Public Health's commitment to developing a Rural Resident Wellness Toolkit in 2025. This toolkit will centralize rural-specific mental health resources and include an online Rural Wellness Resource page, which will help rural residents, particularly youth, find and access support both online and within their communities.

While these resources are being developed, Agriculture Wellness Ontario resources will be added to the existing OPH Business Support Toolkit to support agricultural workers in the interim. Je tiens à remercier tous les habitants des zones rurales qui ont participé au sommet, dont beaucoup sont des agriculteurs et des travailleurs agricoles qui ont pris le temps, pendant l'une des périodes les plus chargées de l'année - la saison des récoltes - de discuter de ces résultats importants lors du sommet.

Budget Remarks:

In tonight's meeting we will be tabling our budget for 2025. This is a budget that is guided by our strategic plan, our requirements under the Ontario Public Health Standards, the public health needs of Ottawa residents and City Council's term priorities.

Les budgets consistent à établir des priorités, à prendre des décisions et à être financièrement responsables en tant que fonctionnaires.

This is particularly important at a time where we hear from residents about their own financial struggles, and we will hear late this evening about the challenges that some families face with food security due to the rising cost of nutritious foods. I believe that the budget you will be receiving tonight reflects sound fiscal management and continues to deliver on what Ottawa residents expect from us.

This year is seen as a transition year for the OPH budget, as we know the Ontario Ministry of Health is reviewing the funding formula review for Ontario public health units and we anticipate hearing more about the results of that review in 2025. As we reflect on this year's budget, we must acknowledge the work to find efficiencies, but also to recognize there continues to be significant population growth pressures on OPH.

I'm looking forward to the discussions we will be having on this budget for the days and weeks to come and I would like to extend a special thank you to Kibria and his team on the great work they've done on this budget.

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