



Board of Health Meeting  
Dr. Vera Etches – Verbal report  
November 4, 2024

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

Tonight, I will provide updates on fall respiratory illnesses, Homelessness Addictions and Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs and health and housing, as well as a staffing announcement.

### **Update on Fall Respiratory Illnesses**

The levels of COVID-19 circulating in our community remain high, and we're seeing an increase in both RSV and influenza activity that is typical for the start of the respiratory virus season. We expect respiratory virus activity will continue to rise throughout November and into December.

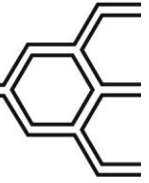
Illness due to respiratory viruses can have significant impacts on how we live, work and play.

I want to encourage everyone to continue to maintain social connections and physical activity throughout the season. These activities are important to our overall health, including mental health. Vaccinations can help us stay well to pursue the connections we need.// **Je veux encourager tout le monde à continuer à maintenir des liens sociaux et à faire de l'activité physique tout au long de la saison. Ces activités sont importantes pour notre santé globale, y compris notre santé mentale. Les vaccinations peuvent nous aider à rester en bonne santé pour entretenir (garder) les liens dont nous avons besoin.**

I encourage everyone to receive the updated COVID-19 vaccine and their annual influenza vaccine.

This year's COVID-19 (KP.2 variant) and influenza vaccines campaign began at the end of September starting with the populations in hospitals and long-term care homes, vaccination for people at higher –risk of severe illness & priority populations continued throughout October at local pharmacies, community health care providers and Ottawa Public Health's community clinic and neighbourhood health and wellness hubs.

As of October 28<sup>th</sup>, eligibility for both COVID-19 and influenza vaccines is open to everyone six months of age and older.



Pharmacies are now the main providers of these vaccines and receive supply directly from the Ministry of Health. As vaccines are widely available in the community, OPH will continue to focus our vaccination capacity with clinics focused on supporting residents experiencing barriers, families with young children under 5 years of age and newcomers without other access.

To protect ourselves and others, we also can't forget about layers of protection like staying home when sick, wearing a well-fitting mask, and frequent hand washing, which are crucial to limiting the spread of respiratory viruses. // Pour nous protéger et protéger les autres, nous ne pouvons pas oublier les couches de protection - comme rester à la maison quand nous sommes malades, porter un masque bien ajusté et se laver souvent les mains, ceci est essentiel pour limiter la propagation des virus respiratoires.

Similar to previous years, we anticipate an increase in respiratory virus outbreaks during this season. In these cases, our team will support facilities with older adults and people living in congregate settings by providing guidance on Infection, Prevention and Control (IPAC) measures and oversight of outbreak management. OPH will continue to work closely with the Regional IPAC Hub and Champlain acute care partners for knowledge dissemination and collaborate on practice challenges, such as addressing staffing issues, adapting to changing guidance.

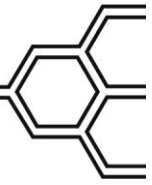
## **RSV**

Infants and children, older adults, people with weakened immune systems and complex health conditions are at higher risk for respiratory syncytial virus or RSV.

While the RSV vaccine has been administered to high-risk infants for nearly 20 years, the Ontario Ministry of Health has recently expanded its eligibility for RSV prevention program, meaning more infants receiving this protection, and decreasing the risk of severe illness, including hospitalization.

OPH is working to promote uptake of this vaccine by temporarily re-directing some of our vaccination capacity, supporting health care partners to share information on the program and to vaccinate those eligible and distributing vaccines.

Ottawa birthing hospitals and CHEO have the monoclonal antibody to immunize newborns, infants, and high-risk children at their sites. Eligible infants and high-risk children who don't receive their RSV immunization at birth can access it through their regular health care provider.



Ottawa Public Health is also offering RSV immunization appointments for infants without a regular healthcare provider at our community clinics, as well as providing a weekly clinic through the Ottawa Birth & Wellness Centre.

OPH has been active in distributing vaccines for the Older Adult High-Risk RSV vaccine program since August beginning with Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes, and then to Hospitals, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Akausivik Inuit Family Health Team and Ottawa Inner City Health. We have also partnered with Wabano to offer clinics for Indigenous older adults.

Some retirement homes have limited capacity to vaccinate their residents, therefore, with provincial funding expected OPH has supported vaccination protection by sending public health nurses to 23 retirement homes so far this season and will continue this work.

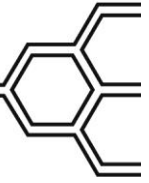
I encourage residents to learn more about this year's respiratory virus season by accessing the latest updates, including our surveillance dashboard that uses wastewater, testing and hospitalization information to describe the current state of the season, on our website at [OttawaPublicHealth.ca](http://OttawaPublicHealth.ca) "front slash" RespVirus.

### **HART Hub Application, Health & Housing and the Drug Toxicity Crisis**

OPH continues to advance its Strategic Goals: Creating Conditions to Live Well and Thrive, and Promote Wellbeing and Reduce Harms, through collaboration with healthcare and housing partners. Since our last meeting, our team has contributed to informing local partners' applications for the proposed provincial Homelessness, Addictions, Recovery and Treatment Hub (HART Hubs) applications, and supporting transition plans for impacts related to the anticipated closure of the Somerset West Community Health Centre Consumption Treatment Site.

**Les candidatures aux hubs, soumises par nos partenaires, visent à mettre en relation les gens de notre communauté avec des soutiens adaptés aux traumatismes et plus accessibles, tout en connectant les personnes directement à des logements avec services de soutien et des services de santé communautaires.**

Ottawa is the largest geographical city in the province of Ontario, with a population of over one million people and growing. Local health data demonstrates the need for increased services, like the HART Hubs, to support the array of people in Ottawa who



need wrap around, intensive mental health and substance use care, along with services that focus on housing stabilization.

To further advance solutions related to the intersection of health services and housing, Ottawa Public Health, and the City's Community and Social Services Department will be co-hosting an Ottawa Health and Housing Leaders' Forum in early December.

This forum will bring together Ottawa leaders in the health and housing sectors to develop a common vision of the health and housing needs and the current care models for people with mental health and addictions who are housing insecure and/or living in supportive and community housing.

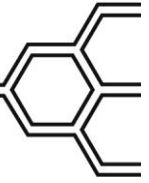
In this forum, leaders will be encouraged and supported to prioritize areas for action, which will inform discussions with other leadership tables in Ottawa and with the province.

Since the provincial announcement of the CTS closures in August, OPH continues to collaborate closely with partners under Ottawa's Overdose Prevention and Response strategy, and with residents and businesses in communities most affected, to identify gaps and potential solutions to mitigate impacts resulting from the CTS closure.

Research demonstrates that providing prevention, early intervention, access to treatment and services, including a harm reduction approach, as well as collecting data to understand needs, along with a focus on community safety can help reduce harms from substance use, promote wellbeing and positive mental wellbeing.

L'un des rôles clés de la santé publique est de surveiller la santé des habitants d'Ottawa. A ce titre, SPO a récemment fourni une surveillance enforcée lors de l'interruption de Services relatifs à la consommation et au traitement dans la communauté.

This surveillance provided a unique insight into what the experiences were for the community during the service disruptions and have helped inform recommendations to address the future closures. For example, partners are interested in growing a coordinated approach to outreach, as well as enhanced peer and staff outreach, that is easily accessible and available for more hours of the day, as well as a need to continue to look for safe spaces for individuals to be during the day and overnight. These two identified needs of enhanced coordinated outreach and safe spaces is currently being



worked on from OPH, CSSD and our many partners to address how we can enhance these priorities in our community.

### **Welcome New AMOH**

I would like to welcome Ottawa Public Health's newest Associate Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Emil Azuma Prikryl, whose appointment was approved by City Council following the last Board of Health meeting and whose appointment by the Minister of Health is pending.

Emil comes to Ottawa Public Health as a recent graduate from Northern Ontario School of Medicine University's Public Health and Preventive Medicine residency program.

Prior to his residency, Emil completed undergraduate degrees in music and physics in Toronto and Ottawa, followed by medical studies at the University of Ottawa. He completed a master's degree in public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Emil has worked with various public health organizations at the local, provincial and federal level, including Algoma Public Health, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Vancouver Island Health Authority, the BC Centre for Disease Control, and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Nous attendons avec impatience les contributions d'Emil à l'équipe de Santé publique Ottawa. Bienvenue Emil !!**

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