

**Report to  
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health  
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa  
4 June 2025 / 4 juin 2025**

**Submitted on June 16, 2025  
Soumis le 16 juin 2025**

**Submitted by  
Soumis par:**  
**Dr. Trevor Arnason, Interim Medical Officer of Health / Médecin chef en santé  
publique**

**Contact Person  
Personne ressource:**  
**Cameron Keyes, Director, Quality, Epidemiology, Strategy and Technology /  
Directeur, Qualité, Épidémiologie, Stratégie et Technologie  
Cameron.Keyes@Ottawa.ca**

**Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE      File Number: ACS2025-OPH-KPQ-0001**

**SUBJECT:    Ottawa Public Health's Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 – Update from  
Quarter Four of 2024 to Quarter One of 2025**

**OBJET :     Plan stratégique de Santé publique Ottawa pour 2023-2027 – Mise à  
jour du quatrième trimestre de 2024 au premier trimestre de 2025**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Board of Health for Ottawa Public Health:**

- 1. Receive for information Ottawa Public Health's Strategic Plan for 2023-2027  
Update from Quarter Four of 2024 to Quarter One of 2025, as outlined in  
Document 1.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil de santé du Bureau de santé de la Ville d'Ottawa :**

- 1. Recevez pour information la mise à jour du Plan stratégique de Santé publique Ottawa pour 2023-2027 du quatrième trimestre de 2024 au premier trimestre de 2025, tel que décrit dans le document 1.**

## **BACKGROUND**

Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) [strategic plan](#) for 2023-2027 was approved by the Board of Health in June of 2023. The most recent [action plan](#) was approved by the Board of Health in December of 2024. The Board of Health receives progress reports on the strategic plan twice a year. This report provides an overview of progress for each of the five goals during quarter four (Q4) of 2024 to quarter one (Q1) of 2025.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Status of Strategic Goals**

Progress is being made across all strategic goals, though some initiatives are encountering manageable challenges. The summary below highlights accomplishments and/or challenges within each of the five goals. Previously, OPH used a red/yellow/green status system to indicate performance of each goal. While this approach aimed to provide a clear and accessible format, it often simplified the nuanced context behind each status. Moving forward, progress reports now focus on summarizing key accomplishments and challenges to offer a rich representation of the strategic plan's implementation. Additional details on accomplishments and challenges are outlined in Document 1.

### **Goal 1: Equity-Driven**

This period has been one of significance, reflecting both continued progress and an evolution in perspective in how OPH advances the identified objectives within goal 1. Two key shifts have been introduced in our continued effort to drive health equity-centred work across the organization and improve outcomes for equity-denied groups (EDGs):

- OPH is creating intentional links between our ongoing work to inform healthy public policy and our work to improve population health equity across public health programs and services. This approach creates coherence between OPH's efforts to strengthen capacity internally with respect to health equity work, and

the efforts that are moving forward to decrease health inequities at the population level.

- Drawing from the findings of an internal assessment of OPH teams' involvement to improve health equity, the challenges they face, and the gaps they reported, OPH's Health Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (HEDI) team is shifting how it supports teams, coordinates and connects OPH's health equity capabilities, and invests in progress on equitable health outcomes for EDGs.

OPH continues to strengthen organizational capacity to address health equity. This will be advanced in multiple phases, starting from the creation of tailored health equity action roadmaps linked with specific programs and services. This will be followed by systematic health equity-centered operational planning, performance measurement, and continuous quality improvement. These efforts reflect OPH's growth as an anti-racist / anti-oppression organization that prioritizes the pursuit of equitable health outcomes for the community. OPH is committed to improve health equity with humility, learning through action, and openness to adjust how we advance health equity both through internal capacity development and through intentional health equity-focused partnerships and collective impact.

## **Goal 2: Create Conditions to Live Well and Thrive**

OPH made significant strides in influencing changes in the built, natural and social environments to promote health and wellbeing, while addressing the impacts of climate change. This period saw notable achievements across objectives through strategic partnerships, innovative approaches and community engagement, despite resource constraints.

- OPH continued to enhance municipal partnerships by integrating a health, equity and wellbeing lens into municipal policies impacting the built environment. Key accomplishments included working with the Planning, Development and Building Services department to inform [Draft 2 of the new Zoning By-law](#), which was presented to joint Committee on March 31, 2025. In addition to informing the provisions, OPH provided a [supporting document](#) outlining how the draft advances health and well-being and implements the new [Official Plan](#).
- In collaboration with the Community and Social Services Department (CSSD), OPH co-hosted a Health and Housing Leaders Forum. Over 30 local leaders discussed actions needed to address data collection and sharing, service integration, and funding alignment in the health and housing sector. Since the

forum, OPH has advanced data sharing between health and housing partners through its membership at Somerset West Community Health Centre's HART Hub Executive Committee and Data Table.

- OPH strengthened its emergency management capacity by developing and delivering training to employees, including trauma-informed approaches to support clients during emergencies and Incident Command System training. Community engagement activities focused on emergency preparedness, such as publishing articles in local e-magazines and outreach activities in collaboration with community partners. OPH hosted the Forum on Supporting Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults, fostering collaboration with community organization to enhance preparedness and reduce impacts of emergencies on priority populations.
- OPH received HealthAdapt funding for three projects that align with the recommendations from the [Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessment \(CCHVA\) report](#). These projects include cooling options analysis for social housing, equity-based climate adaptation communications and engagement and fire hydrant water fountains in equity-based locations.

Despite challenges such as staffing and capacity gaps, these and other achievements reflect OPH's strategic approach to fostering long-term sustainability, community engagement, and healthy public policy approaches in creating health-promoting environments.

### **Goal 3: Promote Well-being and Reduce Harms**

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, OPH presented an [Update on Ottawa's Overdose Prevention and Response Strategy](#) to the Board of Health. The report highlighted that there have been many new initiatives to further Ottawa's Overdose Prevention and Response Strategy across all seven pillars; however, there continues to be an urgent need for additional supports to more effectively address the ongoing toxic drug crisis and the interconnections between a lack of safe, supportive and affordable housing, poverty, trauma, and additional harms that people can experience from substance use.

OPH is supporting the Board of Health Chair to draft a letter to the Ontario Minister of Health, as recommended in the report. This letter emphasizes the need for sufficient and sustainable funding to implement long-term, well-supported solutions across all pillars of the Overdose Strategy. The approach of providing temporary or pilot funding leads to challenges with planning, staffing and ultimately decreased quality of care.

Important work under the seven pillars of the strategy is being carried out by over 50 partners in Ottawa, including the following initiatives led by OPH:

- Healthy Growth and Development completed the first round of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions in Q4 2024. During a nine-week series, participants meet in a virtual group setting with a public health nurse and learn skills to help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety by changing thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. OPH is the first Ontario public health unit hosting a French CBT group. Since the launch of the CBT program, 178 clients have registered, with 88 meeting the eligibility criteria and participating in a CBT session. During this reporting period, 64 clients participated in the program. A session for fathers will take place in the Fall.
- The Ottawa proposal to the Health Canada Emergency Treatment fund was successful. This project includes OPH, CSSD and nine additional community partners and will provide enhanced outreach and connections to safer spaces to areas of Ottawa most impacted by the toxic drug crisis. As part of this project, OPH was able to procure naloxone that can be used by partners that are unable to attain it through the Ontario Naloxone Program or the Ontario Naloxone Pharmacy Program. One notable partner is OC Transpo, whose Special Constables will have access to this life saving medication, ultimately benefiting the entire community.
- Party Safer initiatives are increasing as event season approaches. Resources were presented at the Nightlife Council (NC) Meeting, and the NC strongly supported the need to integrate Party Safer and other resources into the City's Nightlife Safety Plan. Through collaboration with the NC, OPH has fostered new collaborations with key organizations, expanding the reach of safety resources across various sectors like tourism, education, and entertainment. The NC plans to promote OPH's Party Safer resources in venues and events, increasing community awareness and engagement in safer nightlife practices, which could improve public health and safety in the long term.

#### **Goal 4: Focus on Prevention**

Goal 4 is committed to engaging healthcare system partners and using an equity lens to gather, analyze, and share evidence on local health needs and inequities. Improving access to primary care and clinical prevention interventions requires a multi-faceted approach and collaboration across the health sector. Through its role in population health assessment and surveillance and convening community partners, OPH can bring

attention to the available evidence on primary care attachment and barriers to accessing care and preventive care interventions that promote health equity. It is crucial to clearly define this role to effect change without creating unrealistic expectations on OPH.

To maximize impact moving forward, OPH will adopt a systems-level approach and support policy- and decision-makers through sharing evidence and community perspectives on the complex factors influencing health outcomes. Recently, OPH contributed to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) review of the Accepting New Patients policy. OPH engaged in the policy review process by providing input that emphasized prioritizing patients from priority populations as well as those with greater health needs. OPH recommended CPSO use equitable and person-first language and explicitly acknowledge racism as a form of discrimination. By advocating for equitable attachment, OPH supports the effective targeting of preventive care interventions, which reduces the incidence of advanced diseases, improves population health, and addresses existing disparities in healthcare access, particularly for priority populations.

### **Goal 5: Enrich our Workplaces**

Fostering a diverse, inclusive, equitable and healthy workforce grounded in a culture of learning and growth requires the engagement of all OPH staff and teams to make progress on the strategic goal and embed changes in organizational culture. While all OPH teams have been advancing key initiatives, organizational change takes time. Balancing workload with opportunities to engage in wellness initiatives can be challenging within some service areas.

As part of fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce, work to implement the microaggressions procedure and ensure organization wide training and awareness of the procedure are ongoing. To date at least 60%<sup>[1]</sup> of staff and leaders have completed the mandatory microaggressions training in-person or virtually.

OPH is re-invigorating its focus on leadership post-pandemic. Investing in leadership development cultivates a culture of continuous growth, where leaders are empowered to make impactful decisions, inspire teams, and drive positive change. Strong leadership is the cornerstone of a thriving organization, promoting resilience, collaboration, and innovation.

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Data based on total number of employees (including casuals) from People Insight as of February 2025.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to provide existing leaders and those who identify interest in future leadership positions opportunities to strengthen and further develop their leadership competences. These initiatives include:

- In March, 17 participants completed the pilot OPH Leadership Development Program. Initial assessments indicate the program met its objectives and participants indicated they are committed to applying their newly acquired skills. Participants also recommended that all new OPH leaders participate in the program. A final follow-up evaluation will be conducted in September to gather insights on the long-term impact of the program. Feedback from participants will inform future leadership development programming.
- OPH launched a succession planning process in 2025 to identify and prepare interested employees for career growth through an evidence-based, systematic and transparent professional development process. The objective of OPH's succession plan is to support employee career growth aspirations and create a talent pool with employees who have the right knowledge, skills and competencies to progress in their career. A learning and development plan will be developed after analyzing the employee data.

### **Next Steps**

Looking ahead, OPH remains dedicated to achieving the strategic plan's goals and objectives and continuously improving the health and well-being of the people and places in Ottawa. The next report on the strategic plan will be submitted to the Board of Health in December of 2025.

### **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

### **CONSULTATION**

The OPH 2023-2027 Strategic Plan was informed by employees, community partners, clients, City of Ottawa partners, and the current and previous Board of Health.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to receiving the information in this report.

**RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Accessibility was considered in the writing of this report.

**ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

This report provides an update on progress to advance the Strategic Plan.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1: Equity, Prevention, Impact: Ottawa Public Health's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan – 2024 Quarter 4 to 2025 Quarter 1 Update

**DISPOSITION**

This report is presented to the Board of Health to provide information on progress to advance the strategic plan during Q4 2024 to Q1 2025.