



Equity, Prevention, Impact: Ottawa Public Health's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan

2025 Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Update

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Preamble

[Ottawa Public Health's \(OPH\) 2023-2027 strategic plan](#) was approved by the Board of Health on June 8, 2023. The strategic plan includes five strategic goals to drive progress in targeted areas for change. This strategic update is informed by the performance measures identified in the action plan. The accomplishments profiled below represent only a portion of the important work OPH is advancing.

Goal 1: Equity-Driven

In working to improve population health outcomes and opportunities, we collaborate to eliminate health inequities, systemic racism, discrimination, and oppression.

Summary of Highlights and Challenges

Highlights

Sociodemographic Data

- Advanced the collection, use and disclosure of sociodemographic data (SDD) across key program areas including Healthy Babies Healthy Children, immunization, tuberculosis, sexual health and dental services. The recent release of data, [Analysis of Sociodemographic Data provided by Clients of OPH's Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program November 2022 to May 2025](#), marks a key milestone in OPH's commitment to ethical and purposeful data collection and use.

Health Equity Action Roadmaps

- Co-created a Health Equity Action Roadmap (HEAR) for the Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention, and System Integration unit. The HEAR provides clear direction and practical tools to help the team further embed health equity across all stages of the program's continuum—including program ideation, feasibility, design, marketing, and client engagement. Seven additional client-facing programs will develop HEARs in 2026 and 2027.

Diverse Partnerships and Engagement

- Hosted a Diversity Café focused on exploring ways that OPH engages with equity-denied communities and partners. The conversation explored successes, organizational learning, opportunities to improve reach and

coordination of engagement and resources required to implement these improvements.

Challenges

Sociodemographic Data

The absence of a central provincial or local system for standardized, coordinated SDD collection has necessitated ongoing resource-intensive tailoring of approaches by team or service area to suit the nature of client encounters, data systems and workflows.

Goal 2: Create Conditions to Live Well and Thrive

Influence changes in the built, natural, and social environments that promote health and well-being, and address the impacts of climate change. Essential to this is the interconnection between health and nature.

Summary of Highlights and Challenges

Highlights

Built Environment

- The [New Zoning By-law Draft 2](#) was tabled at the Joint Planning and Housing Committee and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. As a key tool for shaping Ottawa's built environment and implementing the [new Official Plan](#), the Zoning By-law influences health by determining what types of housing, services and amenities can be built and where. OPH submitted a [supporting document](#) outlining the public health benefits of the new Zoning By-law. OPH has informed a range of zoning provisions including enabling home-based low risk food businesses and protecting outdoor play areas of daycares from traffic-related air pollution. OPH's input helps shape zoning that supports walkable, inclusive neighbourhoods.
- OPH continues to support secondary planning processes underway in both the urban expansion lands and intensification areas within the urban area. Secondary plans are the detailed land use documents that guide how specific neighbourhoods will grow and change over time, translating the Official Plan into local development rules. These multi-year initiatives offer a critical opportunity to embed health and equity into the design of evolving and future neighbourhoods.

- OPH contributed to the City's [tree equity score analysis](#). The results inform where trees are most needed in the community to reduce priority communities' exposure to heat, helping to reduce heat-related illnesses and promote exposure to nature.

Health and Housing

- Continued to build strategic relationships with housing partners, including participation in the Somerset West Community Health Centre Homeless and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub Executive Committee and the University of Ottawa's Housing and Homelessness Steering Committee.
- In June, City Council received the Office of the Auditor General [Supportive Housing Audit](#), which presented four recommendations aimed at addressing identified gaps and improving the delivery of supportive housing in Ottawa. The audit identified OPH as a key collaborator in developing an integrated supportive housing workplan, with a focus on identifying opportunities to increase health-related supports and coordinate housing services to better serve people with complex needs. OPH is expected to contribute to system-level planning and performance measurement as part of a working group launching in late 2025.
- Continued to influence decision-making with the Ministers of Health and Municipal Affairs and Housing to invest in Ottawa Community Housing, Salus Corporation and South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre's Healthy@Home Proposal.

Knowledge Exchange

- Delivered a healthy urban policy presentation to the City of Kingston, Ontario. This event was part of a research project, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which aims to support the City of Kingston's update of its Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan. The invitation reflects OPH's recognized leadership in integrating health into municipal planning. The workshop featured insights from City of Kingston representatives who visited Helsinki, Finland to learn about their approach to healthy cities.
- Presented on The Ontario Public Health Convention panel on intersectoral action on underhousing and homelessness, helping build capacity across public health units to integrate health and equity lenses into housing policies.

Food Security

- Completed the 2025 Nutritious Food Basket data collection. The results were provided to the Board of Health at its November 3, 2025 meeting through the

[Monitoring Food Affordability in Ottawa: 2025 Nutritious Food Basket memo.](#)

Infant formula costing is a new addition in 2025 to OPH's monitoring food affordability process. In alignment with provincial infant formula costing methodology, OPH added two new income scenarios to the data set—Family of Two, Ontario Works, Parent with Infant (Breast-fed) and Family of 2, Ontario Works, Parent with Infant (Formula-fed). OPH also added a stronger link between housing and food insecurity in the monitoring food affordability data by working with the Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) to incorporate subsidized housing to select one income scenarios.

- Contributed to the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) through participation on the Internal PRS Working Group and the Food Security Action Group. OPH provided support to CSSD to plan a key PRS deliverable, a Food Security Symposium, with the aim of bringing together City staff and community groups with a food security mandate to align priorities.
- Continued to provide data and public health expertise to support community partners that are addressing food insecurity. OPH's food affordability data will be used by community partners including the Ontario Living Wage Network and the Ottawa Food Bank in upcoming public reports this fall.

Enhancing Emergency Management Capacity

- Led a seasonal respiratory surge exercise as required by the Ministry of Health, including internal and external partners, and completed follow-up actions.
- Engaged in phase 2 of the Inclusive Risk Communication During Emergencies or Disasters research project with the University of Ottawa.

Climate Change

- Following the Climate Change Health Vulnerability Assessments (CCHVAs), established a cross-departmental internal working group to monitor and advance climate adaptation actions.
- Supported and contributed to the development of the City of Ottawa's [Climate Ready Ottawa Strategy](#), including to the background and supportive materials. This is a strategy that includes long-term objectives and a five-year action plan, which was approved by City Council on November 12, 2025. The implementation of this strategy uses a distributed leadership model. OPH informed this work with the CCHVAs and through a staff person being co-located with the team to embed a health lens. OPH will collaborate in a subset

of actions related to a cooling strategy, community climate preparedness and extreme weather preparedness and response.

Challenges

Built Environment

During the reporting period, OPH continued to review development applications to a limited extent to support implementation of health-promoting policies of the new Official Plan. There is ongoing opportunity to strengthen OPH's capacity in supporting the review of development applications.

Goal 3: Promote Well-being and Reduce Harms

Advance innovative and comprehensive approaches to promote mental health and substance use health while reducing stigma; and decreasing harms associated with substance use, addiction, and suicides across the lifespan.

Summary of Highlights and Challenges

Highlights

Overdose Prevention and Response

- Increased Naloxone availability and partnerships as OPH continues to onboard new Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP) partners. OPH is above the target rate of two per year. In Q2 2025, two new ONP and one satellite location were signed on, and in Q3 four new ONPs were onboarded, which included Wabano and two local shelters.

Suicide Safer Ottawa

- Developed and hosted a public event, which was open to the general community and targeted partners from emergency services, social services and healthcare, to recognize World Suicide Prevention Day. The event aimed to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and highlight local suicide prevention efforts. Over 100 partners and community residents were reached. The event featured presentations from OPH, PLEO/The Royal (Youth Nominated Support Team), Canadian Mental Health Association, and the Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support team. Attendees also had the chance to visit six community booths offering resources and interactive activities. The event was

well received, with strong engagement and positive feedback from both participants and partners.

- Delivered safeTALK and suicide prevention training reaching 341 frontline intermediaries across Ottawa, equipping those who work closely with vulnerable communities with the skills to recognize and respond to suicide risk. These participants, spanning roles in health, social services, education and community outreach now serve as vital connectors and contribute to local suicide prevention efforts. Of those trained in safeTALK, 97% reported feeling prepared to talk openly and directly to a person about thoughts of suicide.

Stigma

- A total 502 participants completed online stigma training, of which, 96% report that they have the necessary skills to apply person-first language and 97% intend to use information they learned in the training.

Equity-Driven Mental Health Promotion

- The team's community-led approaches to reducing barriers, improve outcomes and build resilience led to equipping 1,880 intermediaries through targeted capacity building sessions and knowledge exchange events. These were designed to foster resilient communities with a focus on equity-denied groups including newcomers, low-income families and South Asian and Black communities. With 95% of participants planning to apply what they learned, the training has proven to be a powerful catalyst for knowledge building and equity driven service delivery.

Party Safer

- With strengthened partnerships, updated resources, refreshed branding and inclusion in the City's Special Events By-law as a recommended initiative, PartySafer.ca has become a key resource for promoting safety and readiness before, during and after events throughout Ottawa. In Q2 and Q3, 4,126 individuals were reached at various community events including large festivals. One thousand and thirty-six participants completed in-person one-on-one overdose prevention and response training with a total of 1,325 naloxone kits distributed. Additionally, in Q3 285,875 people were reached with Party Safer social media health promotion messaging.

Gambling

- Collaborated with Youth Gambling Awareness Project (YGAP) and Carleton University to develop a [comprehensive resource](#) that equips parents and

caregivers with effective strategies to discuss gambling and sports betting with children and youth. The [Sports Betting & Online Gambling: Know your odds resource](#) was also introduced to support emerging adults ahead of the 2025–2026 academic year.

- Launched the [have THAT talk About Gambling website](#) as a resource to raise awareness of the Continuum of Gambling—a framework that highlights the range of gambling behaviors and their potential impacts. By promoting safer gambling practices and providing essential support resources, the site empowers individuals and families to recognize risks early and take informed action.

Violence and Abuse Prevention

- Launched a comprehensive [violence and abuse prevention website](#) that serves to educate the community on the different forms of violence and abuse, facilitate early intervention and connect individuals to critical support services through a trauma-informed and equity-driven approach.

Healthy Growth and Development

- Healthy Growth and Development re-launched the revitalized Pregnancy Circles following a pilot project. In 2025, 12 sessions have been offered and 58 participants (92 referrals year-to-date) registered during the reporting period.
- In 2025, OPH offered eight virtual Steps to Wellness Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions for mothers, each spanning 9 weeks. A total of 250 individuals completed the online registration process, with 89 participants (126 year-to-date) meeting eligibility criteria and actively participating in the sessions during the reporting period. In partnership with McMaster University, OPH is offering CBT sessions for fathers, with the aim of recruiting at least 24 participants.
- The Archipel Postpartum Wellness Clinic continues with support from Monfort Renaissance. Since May 2025, 14 clients have been registered to the clinic. The clinic provides mental health support for marginalized clients who do not have a primary healthcare provider.

Mental Health, Addictions, and Substance Use Health Community Dashboard

- Increased timely access to data through the Q2 and Q3 2025 [Mental Health Addictions and Substance Use Health Community Dashboard](#) refresh.

Challenges

Consumption and Treatment Services

Effective October 1, 2025, OPH closed its Supervised Consumption Services as the Ontario Ministry of Health did not grant permission to apply for an exemption renewal request to Health Canada. OPH will continue to offer all other harm reduction and clinical services at 179 Clarence St., Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm, including harm reduction supply distribution, naloxone training and take-home kit provision, sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection testing and treatment, referrals, supports and system navigation. OPH continues to work closely with community partners and service providers to ensure that individuals who rely on harm reduction services are supported. OPH remains focused on meeting the needs of clients and the broader community.

Goal 4: Focus on Prevention

Gather, analyze, and share evidence on local health needs and inequities with the healthcare system to strengthen clinical prevention. We will engage with healthcare system partners to help inform decision-making.

Summary of Highlights and Challenges

Highlights

Engagement with Healthcare System Partners

- Prepared a briefing note to provide the City's Strategic Initiatives team with a comprehensive summary of the work that OPH has done, as well as learnings on the issue of primary care access and primary care attachment in Ottawa since January 2023, to support the creation of a [Primary Care Provider Recruitment and Retention Strategy](#), approved by City Council on October 22, 2025.
- Through partnerships within Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), OPH supported the advancement of OHT goals related to primary care access and attachment.

Human Papillomavirus Prevention

- OPH revised its messaging about the human papillomavirus vaccine, shifting the focus from its association with sexually transmitted infections to its role in cancer prevention. Key messages were shared with various healthcare professionals in Ottawa, including dental health professionals, and the public.

Physician and Nurse Practitioner Engagement

- Published three Public Health Update articles:
 - [Advancing Culturally Safer Care for Indigenous Patients: Local Supports](#)
 - [Connect Older Adults, Adults Living with Disabilities, and Caregivers to Community Support Services](#)
 - [Supporting Active Lifestyles: The Whole Day Matters Toolkit for Primary Care Providers](#)

Challenges

Primary Care

Access and attachment to primary care remains a challenge for many Ottawa residents, in particular among equity-denied groups. While the [Ontario Primary Care Action Plan](#) seeks to attach all Ontarians to primary care by 2029, the lack of current access is not only affecting the healthcare system, but adds pressure to meet demand for public health services as well.

Amidst a demand for increased primary care attachment, many individuals and organizations have pointed to OPH for information and guidance on this issue. Primary care attachment data is dynamic and complex. Other healthcare system partners, such as Ontario Health and OHTs, are better positioned to discuss and disseminate local trends.

Goal 5: Enrich our Workplaces

Foster a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and healthy workforce grounded in a culture of learning and growth. We will support and develop employees and optimize and innovate our processes to better serve the community.

Summary of Highlights and Challenges

Highlights

A Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable Workforce

- The Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) Advisory Circle hosted a Learning Circle focused on Reflecting on Two-Eyed Seeing in OPH Practice: Opportunities and Lessons Learned to foster shared understanding of Two-Eyed Seeing in public

health, promote cultural safety and awareness and to build capacity in working with Indigenous partners and communities.

- Hosted a series of experiential learning opportunities through Blanket Exercises to support the advancement of the ICS Organizational Assessment recommendations aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of the history of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Employee Recognition Event

- Hosted the annual Employee Recognition Event on June 10, 2025, which received positive feedback from employees. The Employee Recognition Event is an opportunity to come together as a team to recognize the dedication, passion and impact of employees over the past year.

Equitable Learning and Development

- Continued monthly OPH Leadership Series sessions which aim to build leadership skills and capacity. Topics included managing priorities and team building.
- Launched a data informed approach to succession planning focused on supporting employee leadership development.

Challenges

Microaggressions

In the past two quarters there were 26 unique consults on the OPH Microaggression Procedure and four microaggression reports. To further assess the microaggression procedure and the consults, an evaluation is being conducted. Additional conversations are needed to develop a plan to support employees who are experiencing microaggressions.