



**MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE**

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**TO: Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit**

**DESTINATAIRE : Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa**

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**SUBJECT: Ottawa Public Health's Participation in the City's Anti-Racism Strategy**

**OBJET : Participation de Santé publique Ottawa à la Stratégie de lutte contre le racisme de la Ville**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memo is to inform the Ottawa Board of Health of Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) participation in the City's [Anti-Racism Strategy](#), which is being presented to the City's Finance and Economic Development Committee (FEDCO) on June 7, 2022, rising to Council on June 22, 2022.

## BACKGROUND

As noted in the City's of Ottawa September 2021 [What We Heard Report](#) – *Findings from the External Consultation*, “the Anti-Racism Secretariat (ARS) conducted extensive engagement with Ottawa residents and community stakeholders to guide the development of the City of Ottawa’s first Anti-Racism Strategy. A broad and comprehensive multi-phase engagement plan was implemented to ensure residents and community partners/stakeholders could participate in identifying concrete actions that each City Department can commit towards removing systemic barriers in City programming, services, and policies within the priority areas.”

“**Six cross-cutting themes** emerged organically across all external engagement, strategic priorities, and diverse intersectional identities: systemic racism, accountability, transparency, continuous engagement, accessibility, and race-disaggregated data.”

“Engagement findings are also organized by the **six strategic priorities** of: employment equity; economic development; governance; housing; health outcomes; and youth development. These priorities emerged during public consultations and meetings with community groups held in 2019 and were used to inform the proposal for an Anti-Racism Secretariat at the City of Ottawa.”

## DISCUSSION

The City of Ottawa developed an Internal Anti-Racism Committee to promote and support the work of the Anti-Racism Secretariat within each department and invited a representative from each City department to take part. The City reviewed the findings from the consultations, and each department was asked to contribute actions to the Strategy, based on the department’s area and scope of work. OPH was asked to contribute actions to include in the health outcomes and youth development recommendations. Seven OPH employees from a variety of programs were supported by anti-racism training from a City consultant to ensure the application of an anti-racism lens when developing tangible actions to address health outcomes and youth development recommendations.

Given the ongoing pandemic response and work relating to recovery and reimagining the future of public health, as well as the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) audit currently underway within the health unit, OPH opted to scope current contributions to the City’s Anti-Racism Strategy to actions currently approved within the organization’s workplans, knowing that new action plans will be arising as the OPH Senior Leadership Team is committed to responding to the recommendations in the DEI audit report. Since there are no applicable youth development actions underway at OPH at this time, none have been proposed as OPH contributions to the City’s Anti-Racism Strategy for now.

OPH will have the opportunity to include additional actions to the City's Strategy in the future.

With respect to the DEI audit currently underway within the health unit, a report on findings will be brought forward to the Board of Health in September. Further, OPH's own anti-racism action plans will be finalized in the upcoming months, which will be informed by the DEI audit recommendations as well as the re-imagine planning exercise, which involves community engagement.

Below are the health outcome recommendations that resulted from the community consultations and have been adopted as part of City Anti-Racism Strategy. Beneath each recommendation are the OPH actions included in the City's Anti-Racism Strategy.

**Recommendation 1:** Collect and publicly report on socio-demographic and race disaggregated data to improve access to health services

OPH Actions:

Support behavior, culture and system changes through engagement, feedback, and increased knowledge to support the standardized collection of sociodemographic data by:

- I. Sharing lessons learned from COVID. Connecting with Ottawa Public Health teams, scoping anticipated collection barriers and supports needed, and using post-engagement survey results to inform training and support plans.
- II. Liaising with local community groups (Ontario Health, OHTs, hospitals) to build trust and support the data collection process, including policy and procedures development, messaging and outreach, and maintaining open channels of communication - for their input on process.
- III. Engaging and collaborating with peer Ontario public health units & provincial partners (Ontario Health, OHTs, hospitals) regarding the development of a standardized suite of measures for data collection
- IV. Developing policy, procedures, and an action plan with related training and support resources
- V. Monitoring and supporting data collection and supporting teams

**Recommendation 2:** Improve quality and accessibility of culturally responsive health services for racialized people.

OPH Actions:

- I. Commit to achieving representation of equity-deserving groups by ensuring that all members have equitable access to employment opportunities. This includes instances of recruitment, selection, staff development, performance evaluation, retention, and promotion.
- II. Support the Guiding Council for the development of a Mental Health and Addictions Crisis response focused on Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities.
- III. Implement two training sessions each year for faith leaders on Mental Health and Substance Use Health.

**Recommendation 3:** Strengthen partnerships with community organizations working to improve health outcomes for Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities.

OPH Actions:

- I. Strengthen relationships with community organizations serving racialized groups by developing new relationships and further partnering with existing organizations.
- II. Implement Neighbourhood Wellness Hubs to provide consistent support beyond the pilot program with further partners. Leverage Neighbourhood Wellness Hubs to further engage the community and increase access to services.

## **NEXT STEPS**

OPH will:

- Support and promote the City's Anti-Racism Strategy, within the organization and externally with partners, to raise awareness of its existence and the work being done by the City to address racism in Ottawa.
- Provide updates to the City's Anti-Racism Secretariat with regards to the actions included in the Strategy as part of the yearly reporting schedule to FEDCO and the Council.
- Continue to collaborate with the City's Anti-Racism Secretariat and include additional actions that align with OPH's strategic priorities, informed by OPH's DEI audit and community input, once these are developed and approved by the Board, to further support the Strategy's recommendations.
- Continue to update the Board of Health on progress, including a report on findings from OPH's DEI audit and the organization's response.

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