



OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Mayor

Throughout 2021, Ottawa Public Health was once again at the forefront of our City's response to COVID-19 – most notably, working with City of Ottawa's Emergency Operations Centre and community partners to implement the largest bilingual vaccination campaign in Ottawa's history.

In the spring of 2021, OPH worked with local partners to grow the COVID-19 response focused on specific neighbourhoods with the goal of minimizing barriers, increasing access to vaccination and increasing overall supports in certain communities. In the fall of 2021, OPH worked with local school boards to organize and implement school-based vaccine clinics for education workers, students, their families and surrounding communities. These are just two of the many examples of successful initiatives that reminded us of the importance and value of having local public health experts who know and understand our community and who are able to monitor the local situation and partner with local agencies on targeted approaches to achieve the best possible results for the people of Ottawa.



Throughout 2021, Ottawa Public Health once again rose to every challenge. On behalf of Ottawa City Council and the entire City of Ottawa, I would like to thank Dr. Etches and her team at Ottawa Public Health for their work throughout the year and for their dedication to the health and well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

Jim Watson,
Mayor
City of Ottawa

Message from the Chair of the Board of Health

As Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health, I have been tremendously proud to witness the work of Ottawa Public Health's well-organized, well-motivated and professional team of individuals who did everything they could to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 on our community throughout 2021.

It was another unprecedented year that saw the rollout of the largest vaccination campaign in our City's history and ever greater collaboration and partnerships with local agencies to support those most impacted by the pandemic while also reinstating some critical public health programs and services that were paused or reduced at the start of the pandemic; re-imagining how OPH works with and supports Ottawa's schools and school communities; and beginning the work of recovery planning.

As always, the team at Ottawa Public Health has faced these challenges with professionalism, thoughtfulness, kindness, empathy and compassion - for each other and for the population they serve.



I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Etches and the entire Ottawa Public Health team as well as its partners, learners and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to protecting and promoting our community's health and well-being.

I also want to sincerely thank the people of Ottawa for their patience and cooperation as, together, we undertook the massive vaccination campaign and navigated the ever-evolving pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Egli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

Keith Egli, Chair
Ottawa Board of Health

Message from the Medical Officer of Health

Ottawa Public Health's core purpose is to work with our community to improve, promote and protect the health and well-being of the people of Ottawa. Throughout the pandemic, our objectives have been to decrease morbidity and mortality, to maintain essential services with a focus on hospital capacity, and to minimize societal disruption.

COVID-19 has shone a light on the health inequities in our community and we have shown that we can make an impact by working in partnership with community leaders and multi-sectoral partners and by building on the strengths in neighbourhoods and communities. In addition, the pandemic has underlined that our work can be most effective when focused where needs are greatest, while continuing to support the population as a whole. I am grateful to the various community partners, local hospitals and the broader health care sector for their collaboration, as well as to the business sectors for their engagement throughout 2021.

I am so proud of the team's work in the stressful environment of the pandemic. I am proud of the professionalism that they have maintained in facing the challenges brought by COVID-19.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Ottawa for their resiliency and



for being kind and caring for each other. My thanks to the Board of Health for their support and leadership, and to City Council and the City of Ottawa for the support and collaboration provided in so many ways, not least of which was the deployment of workers and various logistical efforts, most notably standing up the City's Emergency Operations Centre to support the largest vaccination campaign in our City's history.

This Annual Report provides an overview of Ottawa Public Health's re-aligned Strategic Priorities as well as key highlights from 2021. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Etches', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vera Etches,
Medical Officer of Health



Annual Strategy Action Plan

Over the past year, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has continued to make positive progress towards the implementation of its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. Approved by the Board of Health in June 2019, Protecting Our Community's Health: Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategy, was designed as a road map for implementing and achieving OPH's vision. To ensure its ongoing relevance, the Strategy Action Plan is revised and updated annually. This is critical in the current context given the need for balancing the ongoing COVID-19 response, incorporating lessons learned, supporting community recovery, and restoring prioritized core services.

The development of a focused annual action plan involves having employees and partners reflect on the current priorities and determine which goals, objectives and activities require sustained, increased, or decreased efforts in the next year and assess what new priorities have arisen. In 2021, this was informed

by meetings with cross-sector partners and stakeholders, members of the public, insights from OPH employees, leadership and the Board of Health, as well as a review of key documents.

In November 2021, the Board of Health approved an updated action plan to guide OPH's work toward strategic priorities in 2022. While the proposed 2022 Action Plan builds on the pre-pandemic mission, vision, and commitments articulated in the 2019-2022 Strategy, it proposes important updates considering the evolving context. Not only is this expected to support the health unit in leveraging lessons learned during the response, it also seeks to enhance OPH's responsiveness to new or changing needs and to increase the impact of its work in the year ahead. Under this refreshed action plan, OPH has adopted two new goals, merged two goals, and maintained three others:



- **Goal 1:** Drive Innovative and Coordinated Approaches to Mental Health (MH) and Substance Use Health (SUH) Across the Lifespan
- **Goal 2:** Healthy Communities by Design
- **Goal 3:** Advance and Monitor Population Health Through a Health Equity Lens **(new)**
- **Goal 4:** A Healthy and Agile OPH Workforce and Workplace
- **Goal 5:** Continuously Improve and Evolve our Core Work to Maximize Impact **(revised)**
- **Goal 6:** Collaborate and Engage Strategically with Ontario Health Teams, Partners, Stakeholders, Communities and Clients to Help Strengthen the Health System **(new)**

OPH is also assessing how to best recover and meet the evolving needs of the community and apply what we have learned through the pandemic as we look to the future. To that end, the action plan also includes one transformational initiative:

- **Transformational Initiative 1:** Reimagine and plan for our post-pandemic future.

This transformational initiative is helping set the stage for a new, multi-year Strategic Plan and will help set the foundation for transforming the health unit's work in the future. Work under this transformational initiative will include developing a new Strategic Plan to inform future priorities, continuing to guide OPH strategies and decision-making, and helping to further evolve the health unit's mission of working with the community to improve, promote and protect the health and well-being of the people of Ottawa.

Key Highlights from 2021

Ottawa Public Health's Work with Local Ontario Health Teams

Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) launched in April 2019 as a new way of organizing and delivering care in Ontario. Under this model, clients and patients will receive all care from one coordinated team of providers. OHTs are an opportunity for local health units to collaborate with health system partners to improve the population's health.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has been an active partner in all four Ottawa-area OHTs; these are the Ottawa Health Team-Équipe Santé Ottawa (OHT-ESO), Ottawa East OHT/ÉSO de l'est d'Ottawa, Kids Come First Health Team/Équipe Santé les enfants avant tous, and Ottawa West Four Rivers OHT, with the latter receiving formal approval by the Ministry of Health in September 2021.

Ottawa's COVID-19 community response and vaccination outreach in neighbourhoods was greatly enhanced through our OHT partnerships. We would like to thank the Community Health Centres and Community Resources Centres for their tireless efforts in supporting neighbourhood outreach.

The past year also saw important gains through Ottawa-area OHTs to improve access to mental health and addictions services. Counselling Connect/Counseling on connecte, an OHT-ESO initiative, launched in 2020 and continued to expand in 2021, bringing together several community-based providers under a single booking platform to enable same day or next day counselling appointments. Further, in June 2021, Kids Come First / Les enfants avant tous launched phase one



of 1call1click.ca, a unique service that helps children and youth in Eastern Ontario get the right mental health and addiction care, when and where they need it.

Working with the Ottawa East OHT, the OPH Healthy Growth & Development Team (HGD) continued its participation in the Best Practice Spotlight Organization initiative. In 2021, the HGD Team successfully completed implementation of the Person- and Family-Centred Care best practice guidelines (BPGs) and initiated plans to implement the Perinatal Depression BPGs.

The pandemic response has informed and motivated new ways of working across health and social systems. Continued collaboration will be critical in re-orienting the health system to reduce the health inequities that COVID-19 has so clearly shown us and in addressing the health of our entire population.

Sincere thanks are extended to our local community health, hospital, primary care and other community partners for their collaboration.



COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

As members of the City of Ottawa's Emergency Operations Centre, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) continued to lead the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, the largest vaccination campaign in Ottawa's history. Community wide immunization started on February 28th at the Albion Heatherington pop-up clinic, targeted for those 80 years of age and older, quickly expanding to other channels including community clinics, after-school clinics, homebound vaccination, mobile and pop-up clinics, neighbourhood vaccination hubs, hospital clinics and First Nations, Inuit and Métis clinics.

Since then, over two million doses have been administered. The team worked with existing stakeholders and built new partnerships across the health, business, and educational sectors to achieve this success. At a high-level, key milestones include:

Total doses administered: 2,033,273

Community clinics

Total doses administered: 1,103,018

After-School clinics

Total doses administered: 4,298

Neighbourhood hubs

Total doses administered: 11,569

Mobile and pop-up clinics

Total doses administered: 52, 295

Hospital clinics

Total doses administered: 246,935

Pharmacies

Total doses administered: 472, 770

Primary Care

Total doses administered: 40, 228

Other channels

Total doses administered: 102,160

For the distribution and administration of vaccine, OPH followed the provincial vaccination plan and ethical framework. A large focus of this work has been the neighborhood hub model in Q5 neighborhoods. This work started in September and has consisted of operating up to 10 different neighborhood hubs 5 days per week. This was in addition to hyper-local clinic options to remove barriers to access in specific neighbourhoods with low vaccine uptake. These options ranged from clients being able to fill out an accessibility form to request accommodations, working with pharmacies, pop-up clinics in workplaces, faith-based organizations and community settings or other community groups in neighbourhoods. This enabled the OPH team to focus on narrowing the gap in uptake between Q1 and Q5 neighbourhoods and to strive for a more equitable vaccination coverage.

We continue to see additional doses being strongly recommended for certain populations and unequal coverage rates across various populations. To tackle some of these challenges and opportunities, the team increased the availability of after-school clinics, offering an additional option for parents to have their children vaccinated.

OPH is grateful to the many City and community partners that contributed to the COVID-19 vaccination efforts in Ottawa and to the residents who rolled up their sleeves to get vaccinated.

COVID-19 Case and Contact Management

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) provided dedicated case and contact management, in accordance with Ontario Ministry of Health guidance, to reduce COVID-19 transmission. OPH maintained a dedicated staffing complement, including deployed City staff and federal/provincial callers to manage multiple



surges in COVID-19 cases. The COVID-19 Case and Contact Management (CCM) Team worked 7 days a week and focused on:

Supporting residents of Ottawa who tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts:

- Provided case management support to 37,286 Ottawa residents who tested positive for COVID-19. CCM includes collecting and documenting information about risk factors and symptoms, providing individual health teaching, self-isolation guidance, resources and connecting clients with internal and external resources.
- Completed contact tracing outreach to over 80,000 residents who were exposed to COVID-19 (close contacts), providing testing recommendations and self-isolation guidance and support.
- Supported people who tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts with information through a variety of sources including on the phone from a Public Health Nurse (PHN),

comprehensive COVID-19 CCM webpage, as well as via letters.

- Monitored 1,164 hospitalized clients, including those admitted to the ICU. In collaboration with hospital partners, PHNs gathered information from hospital databases to capture the severity of illness and burden of COVID-19 in our community to inform local decision-making.
- Reduced barriers to care by completing 1,154 referrals to community health centres for wrap-around supports to residents from priority populations. Through referrals, clients received a variety of support services including self-isolation, mental health, food, financial, housing, testing, vaccination, and primary care support services, as well as system navigation.
- Maintained a dedicated COVID CCM telephone line to answer questions and provide support for anyone who tested positive and their close contacts.

Supporting Ottawa's business community and sports teams:

- Created an internal team dedicated to investigating exposures in community settings, including businesses and workplaces. The Team worked with business owners, event organizers and coaches to identify clusters of COVID-19, complete timely follow up, conduct contact tracing and health teaching to prevent future transmission.
- Created a community exposure webpage for earliest possible notification to residents of

Ottawa potentially exposed to COVID-19 to seek testing, isolate and prevent transmission.

Maintaining an adaptable workforce, maximizing processes, and leveraging automation:

- Transitioned from the local COVID-19 Ottawa Database (COD) to the provincial CCM System. OPH leveraged CCM functionalities, including Virtual Assistant Outreach, to reach individuals who tested positive within 24 hours of reporting.
- Adapted to multiple changes in COVID-19 CCM guidance in response to local and provincial trends, such as the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants of concern.
- Established a dedicated Quality Assurance team to ensure data for Ministry of Health and public reporting was accurate and up to date. Client file reviews were conducted daily to ensure timely follow up, to assist the epidemiology team and to identify areas for enhanced training and case management practice improvements.

Thank you to our partners for their support, knowledge, and resources in meeting the needs of our community including the Government of Ontario, City of Ottawa, hospitals and health care agencies, community health centers and social services providers, surrounding Public Health Units, as well as testing and vaccination partners. We also acknowledge the residents and businesses of Ottawa for their efforts and support in keeping our community healthy, safe, and well.



Emergency Management

In 2021, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) was engaged in all phases of emergency management (prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) to serve the residents of Ottawa. OPH's strong relationship with the City of Ottawa's Office of Emergency Management and Emergency Operations Centre sustained several activities, such as continued deployment of City staff and infrastructure to the pandemic response, a successful vaccination campaign, and engagement as a member of the Human Needs Task Force to assess and meet the needs of Ottawa's priority populations who were disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

OPH responded to several extreme heat incidents and, as a member of the City's Extreme Heat Working Group, collaborated with several City departments. Cooling centres were stood up to provide air-conditioned spaces for residents. Public health staff were onsite to perform health inspections, review COVID-19 precautions, and provide psycho-social support. As well, COVID-19 tools were adapted

and updated to screen those presenting at the various locations.

In mid-December, OPH entered enhanced operations internally and stood up an Omicron Incident Management System (IMS) structure to limit rates of morbidity and mortality among Ottawa residents, maintain essential services during a period of high COVID-19 community transmission, support employee wellness, promote and support community wellbeing and mental health in the context of COVID-19.

As members of the Spring Freshet Taskforce, OPH supported preparedness work to enhance the City's readiness for possible spring flooding and engaged when the City entered situational awareness to monitor impacts and consequences on operations.

To enhance OPH employees' capacity to carry out emergency management roles, OPH provided training in various areas including, IMS training and Crisis Prevention Institute Verbal Intervention Training.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to City colleagues and to partners in the community who continued to serve Ottawa residents, all while navigating the challenges that COVID-19 brought to their own lives and to their daily work. We also acknowledge the residents of Ottawa, whose lives were impacted in so many ways, for pulling together and caring for each other to keep our City strong.

Working with Schools and School Boards

Throughout 2021, Ottawa Public Health's COVID-19 School Support Team (CSST) worked closely with Ottawa's school boards, public schools, private schools, student transportation operators, principals, staff, parents, guardians and students to help keep schools open and as safe as possible.

Further, the team worked closely with school principals and school communities as Public Health Nurses (PHNs) were assigned to work directly with schools to help build school capacity to address COVID-19. PHNs supported approximately 167,000 students and staff at 316 schools: 245 elementary, 41 secondary, and 30 combined elementary/secondary. Nurses were available to answer questions, engage in consultations and assessments, and support schools in meeting the Ministry of Health's guidance on COVID-19 management in schools. All public and private schools in Ottawa had access to CSST support 7 days a week through the School Health Intake Line (email or phone) to report individuals who tested positive for COVID-19, ask questions related to COVID-19 or other health topics, or to express concerns.

The CSST played a key role in enhancing access to COVID-19 testing and vaccination for the school-aged population. This included: knowledge translation strategies, such as hosting



numerous parent council meetings about testing; delivering "Vaccine 101" presentations in several schools; and frequent communications through a variety of channels. Working with OPH's Immunization Team, the CSST helped deliver 73 after-school vaccination clinics for the 5-11 age group. The team also provided onsite school testing clinics in collaboration with the Children Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and OPH's Community Engagement Team (CET).

In April 2021, OPH began working with the Ottawa Paramedic Service to facilitate access to testing and reduce barriers for school communities using a paramedic service bus as a mobile testing site. The CSST's PHNs and the CET provided on-site education, demonstrated the use of rapid antigen tests, answered questions, and went door-to-door to promote access to the testing bus.

The team also collaborated with external testing partners to implement Take-Home Testing Kits, becoming the first jurisdiction in Ontario to enable access to Take-Home Testing Kits in every school. OPH promoted the initiative and carried out distribution, collection and

replenishment of the kits in the schools. The Ministry of Health acknowledged OPH for its innovation in enhancing testing and vaccination in the school-aged population.

OPH would like to extend thanks to our partners including the four Ottawa School Boards, private schools, post-secondary education institutions, CHEO, and the City of Ottawa whose ongoing support and efforts allowed us to achieve this success and keep the school community as safe as possible throughout the pandemic.

Managing COVID-19 Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings

In 2021, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) investigated 194 COVID-19 outbreaks in congregate living settings such as shelters, temporary housing, group homes, supportive living, correctional facilities and rooming houses. This included follow-up with 1,340 people who tested positive.

OPH developed new relationships and strengthened existing ones with partners across this sector through frequent communications to provide support in navigating rapidly evolving guidance and information. This included regular cross-partner meetings, preventive site visits, frequent check-ins with facilities in outbreak, and a sector-wide Community of Practice session to answer questions from partners in an open forum.

To support outbreak management in group homes, supportive living, rooming houses, and temporary housing, OPH worked with Community Health Centres and Ottawa Paramedic partners to facilitate testing and symptom assessment of staff and clients, including through 114 mobile testing clinics. OPH also worked to connect facilities with urgently needed personal protective

equipment and rapid tests and provided advice on navigating staffing shortages. OPH's preventive site visits helped with education of facility employees related to infection prevention and control (IPAC) and additional site visits to facilities in outbreak ensured appropriate control measures were in place.

OPH worked closely with Ottawa Inner City Health, the City of Ottawa's Community and Social Services Department, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Service Coordination Support, the Human Needs Taskforce, acute care facilities and community shelters, consulting on case and contact management, testing strategies and other outbreak control measures.

To help prepare community shelters for outbreak season, OPH completed site visits to review practices and provided on-site flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

Given its closer collaboration with congregate living settings throughout the pandemic, in December 2021, OPH released a report on [COVID-19 in Congregate Living Settings](#), highlighting lessons learned during the pandemic and bringing attention to ongoing challenges in the sector that pose barriers to infection prevention and control.

In addition, the team continued to support outbreak management in various other settings throughout 2021, such as workplaces, hospitals, long-term care and retirement homes, schools and childcare facilities.

OPH would like thank partners, including Community Health Centres, Ottawa Paramedic Services, Ottawa Inner City Health, the City of Ottawa's Community and Social Services Department, Ministry of the Solicitor General, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Service Coordination Support, the

Human Needs Command Centre, acute care facilities and community shelters for their collaboration and work over this past year navigating through these ever changing and trying times. Your commitment to keeping our most vulnerable residents as safe as possible has been remarkable.

Engagement with Priority Populations

The Community Operations service area was established in 2020 to focus on neighbourhoods and populations disproportionately impacted by COVID that faced barriers to prevention, testing and vaccination. Building on this work, in 2021, the vaccine rollout incorporated neighbourhood and ethnocultural based approaches to address inequities where individuals faced barriers in accessing COVID-related vaccination and information.

Using a community engagement approach, the team worked closely with partners to identify barriers to vaccination and implemented measures to reduce these barriers. Community partnerships and resident feedback were integral to this work and led to OPH continually adjusting its programs and services to address community needs. Feedback included suggestions for locations, hours of operation, and strategies to address language, transportation and other barriers. The following are highlights of some of the strategies implemented:

- Creating a presence in neighborhoods and reaching people where they are by conducting door-to-door outreach to share vaccination and clinic information. This was done collaboratively with partners to help address barriers. Setting up vaccine information tables in high-traffic areas (e.g., in communities and malls) as well as at community functions to promote the neighbourhood vaccine
- hubs and create opportunities for community members to ask questions of multilingual OPH staff in the heart of their community.
- Reserving vaccine appointments in community immunization clinics and handing out corresponding pre-booked appointment cards in neighbourhoods where there were challenges using the online booking system.
- Increasing vaccine confidence by working with community partners to enhance service providers' knowledge and capacity to discuss COVID-19 vaccines with residents.
- Increasing access to information in multiple languages by working with partners to provide virtual, multilingual townhalls that featured the voices and perspectives of health professionals from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. As part of this initiative, OPH hosted 22 virtual townhalls in 8 different languages (English, French, Swahili, Creole, Arabic, Kirundi, Somali, Bengali).



- Addressing language barriers by deploying multilingual staff to work in communities where their language skills matched the language needs of the community being served and by creating multilingual communication products, services and supports.

The team focused on building valuable partnerships, including:

- Forming a Community of Practice, which connected partners working with priority populations across the city to share best practices. Through this initiative, partners met regularly to share information, leverage and share resources around vaccination in high-priority communities, and identify and address systemic barriers from a community perspective. Information was then shared with key decision-making tables within OPH.
- Working closely with the Ottawa Health Team, Emergency Operations Centre and the immunization program to offer vaccination options to reach residents living in high priority neighbourhoods to increase coverage equitably with other neighbourhoods. This included selecting familiar and accessible locations within neighbourhoods to increase convenience. A variety of vaccination options were offered in high-priority neighbourhoods, including 23 hub locations in 10 of the less advantaged neighbourhoods with the lowest vaccine coverage, 156 mobile clinics that operated in places of worship, community spaces and workplaces, 74 Pop Up clinics and door-to-door vaccination in 15 Ottawa

Community Housing complexes.

- Working with Faith Leaders and Places of Worship to disseminate proactive and reactive communications. Communications focused on movement in the Provincial Roadmap to Reopen, mental health training, reminding congregations about being COVID-wise during notable religious holidays, highlighting the implications for Places of Worship with respect to vaccination requirements, and recommendations for workplace vaccination policies as well as providing links to OPH guidance/resources.
- Collaborating with Bruyère to provide culturally safe vaccine clinics for community partners supporting higher risk clients, including newcomers and the AIDS Committee of Ottawa.
- Partnering with the Ottawa Disability Coalition and the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Office, which led to a COVID-19 forum for people with disabilities including American Sign Language for Ottawa's Deaf and hard of hearing community. This partnership also led to clinic improvements, such as allocation of additional accessible parking spaces and adapting processes to better support individuals living with disabilities.
- Working with internal and external childcare sector partners, the Ottawa Public Library, the city's Community and Social Services Department and various other community agencies to facilitate client supports for COVID-19 vaccine appointment booking, vaccine information and resource sharing, as well as accessing/printing proof of vaccination documentation.

Sincere thank you to all of the Community of Practice partners, including: Boys and Girls Club, Carlington Community Health Centre, Centertown Community Health Centre, Eastern Ottawa Community Resource Centre, Lowertown community Resource Centre, Nepean, Rideau, Osgoode Community Resource Centre, Orléans Cumberland Community Resource Centre, Ottawa Food Bank, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, Pinecrest-Queensway, South-Nepean Community Health Centre, Rideau Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, Somerset West Community Health Centre, Southeast Ottawa Community Health Centre, Vanier Community Resource Centre and the Western Ottawa Resource Centre.

Outreach to Ottawa's Business Community & Other Sectors

Throughout 2021, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) continued to work with a variety of sectors, such as workplaces, businesses and various sectors including sports and recreation, special events, places of worship, child care, post-secondary institutions, non-profit community organizations and others, to increase knowledge and skills to prevent transmission of COVID-19, promote COVID-19 vaccination and understand community needs.

To support this work, OPH developed and maintained COVID-19 resources, webpages and policies, responded to inquiries and hosted information sessions. Some highlights of engagement activities included:

- Hosting webinars and information sessions, including a webinar developed and delivered in partnership with the Ottawa Coalition

of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA), to assist businesses with reopening safely following Provincial Stay-at-Home Orders.

- Drafting and disseminating Letters of Instruction and Section 22 Class Orders to address risk of COVID-19 transmission and support requirements set out in the *Reopening Ontario Act*.
- Scheduling regular and ongoing engagement with partners to understand gaps, assess information needs, and ensure they had the appropriate guidance to operate as safely as possible.
- Developing the Business Reopening Toolkit with City partners to provide guidance and resources to businesses to prepare for safe reopening.
- Supporting the development and implementation of vaccine policies and mandates with partners and stakeholders, including contributing to the COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Employers.

This engagement and support provided a consistent touchstone for businesses and organizations during uncertain times, encouraged the implementation of public health measures to increase community safety, and strengthened OPH's ongoing relationships with key partners.

OPH is grateful to Ottawa's business community and other sectors for their engagement, collaboration and efforts to ensure businesses, workplaces and community settings were as safe as possible.



Mental Health and Substance Use Health

As a part of the COVID-19 response, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) continued to work with school boards, hospitals, community health, workplaces, multicultural and racialized community partners, and the general community in the delivery of mental health and substance use health programs and services.

Using data, best and emerging evidence, and in consultation with living experience partners, OPH adapted services to meet the needs of the community. Mental health and substance use health needs remain a high priority and OPH continues to advance its work through strategies such as stigma reduction, fostering resilient communities, suicide prevention and life promotion, embracing emerging harm reduction initiatives, and collaboration and further integration across the system.

These are some of the highlights of OPH's work relating to Mental Health and Substance Use Health in 2021:

- Addressing the mental health impacts of racism by launching the new

- **“have THAT talk” About Racism and Allyship videos**, which use a story telling approach to discuss different forms of racism, the impact of racism on mental health, and provide strategies to cope and take care of one`s mental health.
- Building on the recommendations from the 2020 **Mental Health of Ottawa’s Black Community**, OPH developed its first ACB and racialized populations Mental Health Strategy, which includes the creation of OPH’s first Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Workplace Policy and the development and implementation of faith leader training to increase faith leaders’ capacity to better support their community with mental health support, crisis response, and suicide prevention.
- Supporting families with increased vulnerabilities during the prenatal period and new families up until the transition to school through the healthy growth and development program.

- Enhancing positive coping strategies, resilience and help-seeking behaviours with an emphasis on children and youth. Interventions were developed and implemented through close collaboration with all Ottawa school boards and OPH's school health team as well as working with the Youth Services Bureau's Bridges program in supporting youth by providing health promotion teaching, including nutrition support for youth diagnosed with eating disorders.
- Reducing the risk of suicide through collaboration with **Suicide Prevention Ottawa** in the delivery of suicide prevention training and life promotion interventions for youth, post-secondary students, and for intermediaries supporting those most at risk of suicide.
- Advancing the goals of the **Ottawa Community Action Plan** by providing back-bone support and working in collaboration with partners to implement actions in the community to reduce harms from substance use.
- Maintaining access to critical frontline harm reduction services, by partners and OPH, by adapting programs and services like supervised consumption services, needle and syringe program, take-home naloxone kits. Ensuring access to COVID-19 testing and vaccination for people who use drugs and are experiencing homelessness/ precarious housing. Preventing and responding to overdoses in the community through naloxone training and other interventions, both directly through OPH and in collaboration with other harm

reduction partners, including a focus on training, services, and tools for people in the construction industry.

- Surfacing solutions to the overdose crisis by participating in the Getting to Tomorrow: Ending the Overdose Crisis, a national Health Canada funded public health initiative that brings communities together to build consensus and a shared understanding for change. It provided an opportunity to come together, as a community, to talk about the impacts of the unprecedented overdose crisis in Ottawa and across the country and to discuss ways to advance a public health and human rights framework to respond.

OPH would like to thank all of our partners who deliver mental health, substance use health, harm reduction and social service programs and services, as well as the individuals and organizations with lived and living experience whose expertise has informed and shaped the work of OPH and partners. These partners and individuals have proven to be truly innovative and adaptive during this challenging time.

COVID-Related Communications

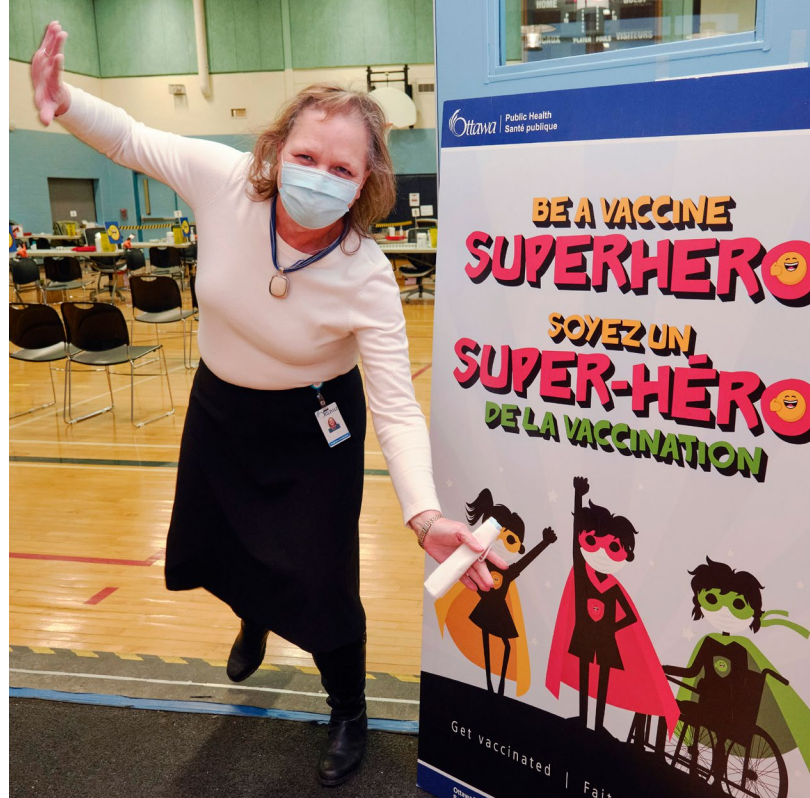
From the start of the pandemic, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) created and maintained a designated COVID-19 webpage. This webpage continued to be updated almost daily throughout 2021. As residents' information needs grew, OPH's tools evolved to cover 17 new webpages on COVID-related topics such as vaccines, masking, symptomatic/high-risk contacts, being Social WISE, schools and childcare. In 2021, the main OPH COVID-19 page was visited by 870,772 web users.

In February 2021, in response to increased call volumes, the OPH Communications team launched the OPH COVID-19 virtual assistant, affectionately named “Bruce”. Bruce has been assisting users get answers to frequently asked questions and locate resources on the OPH website faster while also alleviating pressure on OPH’s call centre. In 2021, Bruce had 77,389 engaged conversations with web users on over 100 different topics.

OPH developed and implemented multiple communications campaigns to promote COVID Wise behaviours and to build confidence and trust in COVID-19 vaccination with older adults, young adults and parents. The strategies implemented included video products, social media campaigns and stakeholder outreach, including through elected officials and media partners.

OPH developed the Community Immunity: ‘Steady As She Goes’ campaign to support residents in managing the long-term reality of living with and managing COVID-19. This campaign included messaging to encourage residents to keep up with COVID-19 prevention and control practices in their daily lives.

In addition to providing the latest information on the local situation, the OPH webpage includes reports and data, infographics, fact-sheets, FAQs, downloadable handouts, forms and checklists, videos and other resources - all of which are available in both official languages and many of which are available in multiple languages. The team also supported the creation of 57 videos in 16 different languages as well as another 12 in ASL/LSQ (Sign Language) to reach many residents who speak and use languages other than English or French with information on COVID-19 and vaccines.



In response to the increased demand for mental health supports and services, OPH developed a dedicated COVID-19 and mental health and substance use health webpage. This page hosts a directory of services available to residents to support mental health and wellbeing, as well as new resources including videos and fact sheets available in multiple languages. This page welcomed over 18,000 unique users in 2021.

In 2021, OPH participated in 57 media availabilities, always ensuring that statements included French content and that staff were able to respond to media questions in both official languages.

Between the vaccine booking line, COVID information line and OPH information centre, the team: handled more than 467,220 phone calls with the ability to provides services in over 170 different languages; handled over 20,400 emails; and processed over 51,225 vaccine receipts. The OPH media team handled over 2700 media inquiries during this same period.



OPH would like to thank our local and regional partners who have assisted in promoting clear and effective communications to Ottawa residents. This includes local media, local hospitals, community health centres, primary care providers, and those serving and supporting racialized individuals and newcomers. This work would not have been possible without strong collaboration and partnerships.

Restoring Core Public Health Services

At the start of the pandemic, many OPH programs and services were suspended as a result of staff needing to be redeployed to the pandemic response. The redeployment of OPH staff from other critical public health services increased the risk of negative health outcomes, particularly for less advantaged populations. Therefore, notwithstanding the ongoing pandemic response, in 2021 OPH worked to reinstate some critical public health services, as surge capacity demand allowed.

The sequence and prioritization of programs and services being restored was determined based on community needs and waitlists for OPH services. As of December 31, 2021, OPH had restored some programs and services in the areas of harm reduction, healthy growth and development, mental health and substance use health, dental health services, chronic disease and injury prevention, and some non-COVID immunization work. In 2022, OPH will continue to examine what core public health programs and services need to be further restored and/or adapted based on community health needs.

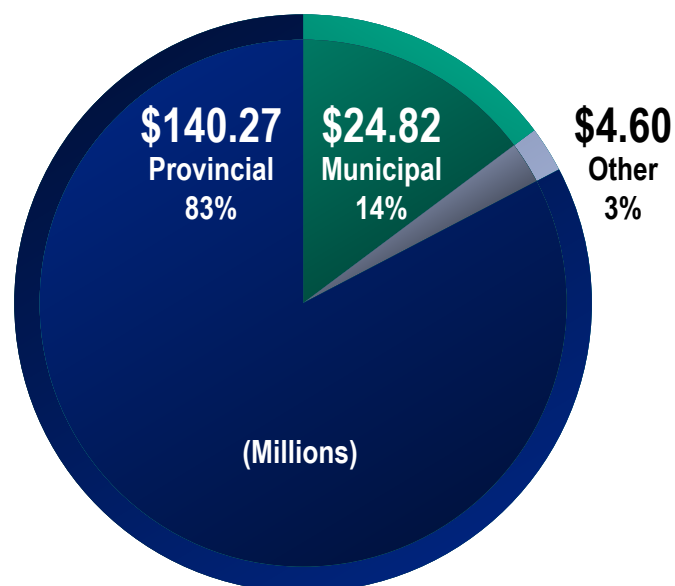
Other work also continues, such as policy work that addresses the built environment and climate change, the follow-up of non-COVID infectious diseases, and the focus on the mental health strategy and Ottawa Community Action Plan.

2021 Ottawa Public Health Budget

We would like to thank our funders, partners, learners and volunteers, whose support is invaluable to the work we do.

Funding Sources	Amount (in millions)
Provincial	140.27
Municipal	24.82
Federal	3.74
Fees and Services	0.86
Total Revenue	169.68

Operating Results	Amount (in Millions)
Expenditure by Program	
COVID-19 - Base	44.33
Cost Shared Core Programs	18.52
COVID-19 - One-Time	92.17
Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program	2.76
Total Provincial Cost Shared Programs	157.77
Supplementary Programs	
Healthy Babies Healthy Children	4.56
100% City Programs	3.13
Miscellaneous Programs	4.22
Total Supplementary Funded Programs	11.91
Total Revenue	169.68



Connect with us

Connect

Web (OttawaPublicHealth.ca)

Twitter ([@ottawahealth](https://twitter.com/ottawahealth))

Facebook ([/ottawahealth](https://facebook.com/ottawahealth))

Call

613-580-6744

TTY: 613-580-9656

Toll free: 1-866-426-8885

Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4 pm

Email

healthsante@ottawa.ca

Write

Ottawa Public Health

100 Constellation Drive

Ottawa ON K2G 6J8