

MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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: **MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH VERBAL REPORT**

OBJET : **RAPPORT VERBAL DU MÉDECIN CHEF EN SANTÉ PUBLIQUE**

*Check upon delivery*

Good evening, bonjour à tous,

Tonight I will touch briefly on a recent report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, two recent presentations by OPH that will be of interest, and an update on developments at the provincial level with regard to health system transformation and the revision of the Ontario Public Health Standards.

First, earlier this month the Heart and Stroke Foundation released a report titled "[Report on Health of Canadians – The Kids Are Not Alright](#)". The document examines how

industry is marketing unhealthy food and beverages directly to children and youth in Canada, and how this affects their food and beverage preferences and choices, and hence their health. The Foundation's report includes a list of recommended actions for various entities, including municipal governments. And they align with the Board's Strategic Direction to *Inspire and Support Healthy Eating and Active Living*.

Recommendations include, among others, reviewing zoning restrictions close to child-focused settings like schools and playgrounds, and restricting food and beverage marketing to children on municipal property such as in childcare settings, libraries, public transit, recreation centres and parks. We are reviewing these recommendations closely to see how they align with work we are already doing in this area.

I also want to advise that we continue to build on our various partnerships with the Champlain Local Health Integration Network. In January, our Associate MOH, Dr. Robin Taylor, was asked to present to the LHIN Board of Directors on the subject of health system impact and planning implications relating to the seasonal influenza pattern in the community. Our surveillance work is useful to the LHIN, as we are able, every year, to advise them with forecasting predictions of the severity and of the timing of the peak activity of flu in the community.

Another presentation I want to mention is the one I made to the Senate of Canada's Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in support of *Bill C-224 – The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*. The Bill proposes amendments to the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to provide an exemption from possession of substance charges for Canadians seeking medical or law enforcement assistance when a person is suffering from an overdose.

As you know, the issue of unintentional overdoses is galvanizing attention at all levels of government in Canada at this time. Statistics, especially from western provinces, are showing an increasing number of overdoses, and even here in Ontario there is cause for concern. Many overdoses occur in the presence of another person, yet less than half of those who witness an overdose call 911. There are a lot of barriers to calling for help after an opioid overdose, including fear of being arrested or of being found in breach of probation or parole. Since the inception of our local Opioid Peer Overdose Prevention Program in Ottawa, over 4 years ago, less than one third of the trained peers who reported using their naloxone kit also called 911, which is – of course – something we strongly urge them to do. So I welcomed the opportunity to share our frontline perspective on this issue, and it was clearly appreciated.

The IPD circulated recently and in the agenda package tonight outlines what we are doing about this issue here in Ottawa. In addition, since that information was provided to you, we have become aware that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has created a task force on the opioid crisis to focus on issues from a local government point of view. We will be closely monitoring the work of that task force too.

Finally, as you know, we are closely monitoring progress on the province's health system transformation agenda. I expect that a draft set of revised Ontario Public Health Standards will be released for consultations this month, and we will certainly ensure that our frontline staff have their say on the proposed new standards, as well that you have the opportunity to see what is being contemplated, and will likely be imposed, by the Ministry. Also, as you know, last month the Minister announced the establishment of a Public Health Expert Panel to advise him on structural, governance and organizational factors aimed at improving the integration of population and public health into the health system. We know that the panel is actively at work, and I would expect that its recommendations, whenever they are put forward, will be of interest to local Boards and Health Units.

In closing, I want to echo Chair Qadri's remarks about Siobhan Kearns. I know Board Members have appreciated her diligent and thorough work on your behalf, and I want to publicly recognize her on behalf of our staff here tonight too. I know that, as a colleague, I have appreciated her ability to connect with co-workers and her jovial, "glass half-full" personality. Certainly, her leadership and wisdom will be missed by all at OPH and we wish much success as she embarks on this new challenge

Merci beaucoup. That concludes my report for this evening.