



OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH

2019

ANNUAL REPORT





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## Message from the Mayor

**A**s a respected partner in our community and the broader health system, Ottawa Public Health has a key role in preventing and mitigating the burden of avoidable health issues through evidence-based strategies.

There are many examples of Ottawa Public Health's proven ability to work with local partners, stakeholders and community members to advance and protect the population's health, and the importance of having a locally responsive public health unit was evident throughout 2019. From responding to incidents such as the Westboro bus collision, spring floods and communicable disease outbreaks, to working with municipal partners to embed a public health lens in City initiatives such as the new Official Plan and the Strategic Road Safety Action Plan, Ottawa Public Health has always been, and continues to be, a valued and valuable contributor to the health of our community.



I would like to congratulate Dr. Etches and the entire Ottawa Public Health team for everything that they have accomplished in 2019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Watson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

His Worship, Mayor Jim Watson,  
City of Ottawa

## Message from the Chair of the Board of Health

For over 125 years, Ottawa Public Health has provided public health programs and services to individuals and communities in Ottawa. These programs and services are diverse and carefully designed to meet the health needs of Ottawa's urban, suburban and rural communities. OPH works with local communities and partners to create equitable opportunities for health for all residents - regardless of their age, income level, gender, ethnic background, or any other social or economic reasons.

Ottawa Public Health engages a diverse team of professionals, including public health nurses, dental hygienists, public health inspectors, dietitians, health promoters & communicators and epidemiologists.

Throughout 2019, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet and interact with various members of the OPH team - during site and clinic visits, as well as at various meetings and events. In each of these interactions, I was impressed with how the team works hard to respond to community needs. As such, I want to take this opportunity to thank all Ottawa Public Health employees, learners and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to protecting and promoting the health of Ottawa residents.



As Board Chair, I look forward to continuing to serve as your champion at the Council table, in the community and beyond. Together, we will continue to advance the health of Ottawa's population.

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 of the Board of Health



## Message from the Medical Officer of Health

Ottawa Public Health continued to work with community members and partners to respond to immediate community health needs and adopt strategic actions to tackle major burdens on the health of the population over the longer-term.

Looking back, I'm reminded of the preparation and work that went into the new Wellness@Work Action Plan, the framework to evaluate our Reconciliation Action plan, and the development and adoption of a new Strategic Plan. The year also brought various enhanced responses for which we were well prepared - for communicable diseases and for events such as the Westboro bus collision and spring floods. 2019 also required us to refocus some of our thoughts and energies into planning for and responding to the Province's proposal to modernize Ontario's public health sector.

All of this was balanced with the day-to-day work of maintaining our core functions in protecting and promoting the health of Ottawa residents. In all instances, I am thankful for the hard work and dedication of the entire OPH team and for the input of clients, communities and partners.



This Annual Report is anchored in Ottawa Public Health's new Strategic Plan for 2019-2022 - particularly the five (5) goals for 2019-2020 and three (3) transformational initiatives - and it speaks to the work already underway to implement our strategic priorities. It also highlights some key accomplishments from 2019.

I hope you will 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



## Our New Strategic Plan

**Protecting Our Community's Health: Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategy**, approved by the Ottawa Board of Health in June 2019, provides OPH with clear direction for the coming years to ensure our work is making a difference in the health and well-being of the people of Ottawa. It includes four strategic directions to:

- Promote mental health and reduce the health and social harms of substance use;
- Drive prevention across the health system;
- Influence the social and physical environments that support health and well-being; and
- Maximize potential in people, processes, and resources.

Under this new strategy, OPH has adopted five goals for 2019-2020:

- Drive innovative approaches to mental health and substance use;
- Healthy communities by design;
- Streamlining through digitizing;
- A healthy workplace and workforce; and,
- Continuously improve our core work to maximize impact.

The strategy also includes three transformational initiatives that have significant implications for our work:

- Community and client engagement;
- Ontario Health Teams (OHTs); and
- Public Health Modernization.

OPH's 2019 Annual Report is grounded in this Strategic Plan, highlighting achievements in implementing these goals and transformational initiatives.





## Transformational Initiatives

Transformational initiatives provide a focus in the early stages of the strategy.

### Community and client engagement

OPH is committed to embedding a coordinated approach to engagement such that the work we do and decisions we make are rooted in the voices of clients and partners. New tools and processes are being developed to enable this. For example, the Engage Ottawa online platform was used in 2019 to explore alternative ways of reaching more people across our communities.

### Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)

OHTs were introduced by the province in April 2019 as a new way of organizing and delivering care. Under this model, clients and patients will receive all care from one coordinated team of providers, making it easier to access the right services at the right time. Collaboration between OHTs and public health will help to increase the focus on health promotion and prevention of disease and injury

across the health system. OPH has been an active partner in the four OHTs emerging in Ottawa and in provincial discussions to define the role of public health units in OHTs.

### Public Health Modernization

The Ontario government has identified an opportunity to transform and strengthen the role of public health. To inform a path forward, the Ministry of Health launched a public consultation process. OPH has been engaging with partners and stakeholders over the course of the year to solicit ideas for a robust public health system; ideas that can enhance the important work of public health within and across the health system. We are grateful for the diversity of perspectives provided from across our communities, as this has helped shape our vision for strengthening public health in Ontario. OPH feels well-positioned to take a leadership role in supporting the modernization mandate and working with other public health units into 2020 and beyond.





## Goal 1 - Driving Innovative Approaches to Mental Health and Substance Use

The **Ottawa Community Action Plan (OCAP)** was developed following the February 2019 **Ottawa Summit on Opioids, Substance Use and Mental Health** that brought together 200 people to discuss the current state of mental health and substance use and identify future strategies.

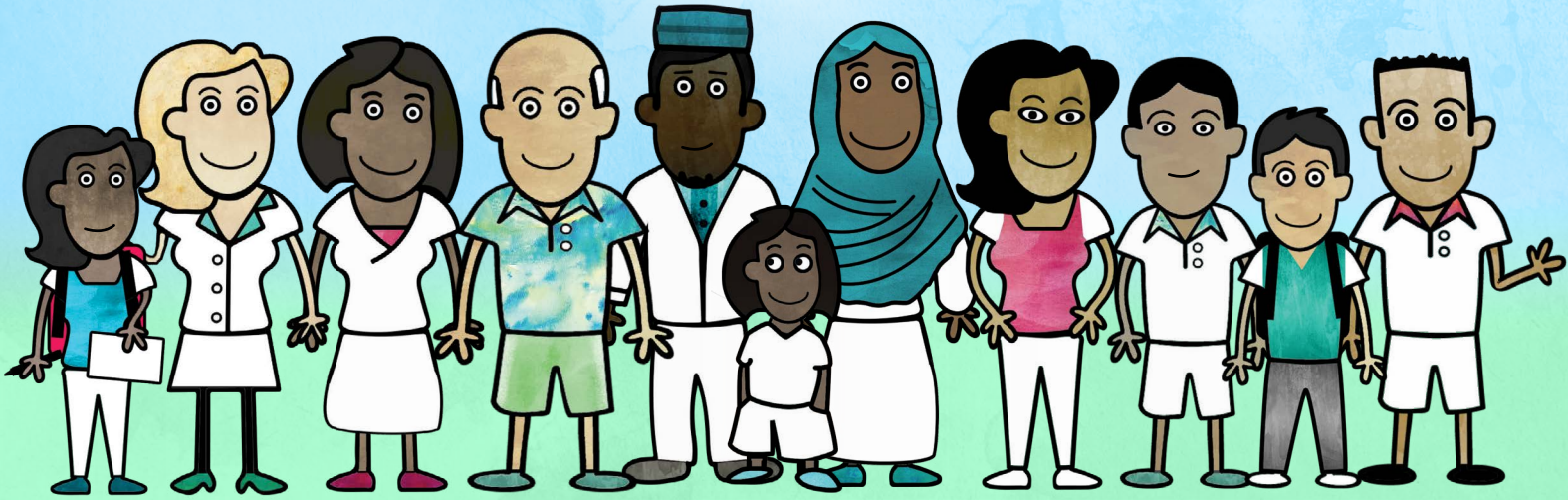
This opt-in, collaborative, network-based strategy focuses on preventing stigma and problematic substance use; reducing harms associated with opioid use through emerging harm reduction initiatives; and collaborating and integrating across the system to increase access and uptake of services. 2019 accomplishments include:

- Establishing a Steering Committee to shape programs, services and measures designed to drive innovative approaches to mental health and substance use;
- Launching **Youth Connections Ottawa**, a peer-to-peer program in collaboration with local school boards;
- Working with local post-secondary institutions to prevent and reduce harms related to substance use and violence;
- Facilitating collaboration across agencies seeking to increase access to a safer supply of opioids and advancing the work for coordinated access to mental health and addiction services;
- Working with the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addictions (CCSA), The Royal, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) and the Community Addictions Peer Support Association (CAPSA) to develop a plan for reducing stigma in key workplaces in Ottawa; and





## have THAT talk temps D'EN parler



- Working with CAPSA and CCSA to develop and provide stigma reduction training to health professionals.

To reduce risks associated with large crowds and the presence of substances at festivals, in 2019 OPH collaborated with community partners to provide violence and substance overdose prevention and intervention training and messaging to festival organizers, staff, volunteers and attendees.

Through community partnerships and leveraging local influencers, OPH produced a series of videos targeting festival goers with **Party Safe** messaging. Through this initiative, large music festivals, their staff and volunteers we were able to provide support in making festival events safer for everyone.

### have THAT talk

In spring 2019, OPH launched two new **have THAT talk videos** for Ottawa's diverse populations. These new videos titled **Are You New to Canada?** and **Mental Health = Health**, were created based on evaluation and community consultations that outlined a need for mental health resources for newcomers and ethno-cultural populations. Based on the video series, workshops were developed and delivered to community intermediaries, with a focus on those that support vulnerable residents.

## Goal 2 - Healthy Communities by Design

This strategic goal is grounded in the understanding that our physical and social environments have the potential to enable people to live healthier lives, by making the healthy choice the easier choice, and by creating the conditions for people to thrive. OPH supports the design of vibrant, safe and inclusive communities with a focus on transportation, housing, food, natural environments and greenspaces.

A whole community response is needed to shape and enhance our physical and social environments. OPH's approach involves leading strategic projects within the healthy communities framework (based on the [World Health Organization's Healthy Cities Approach](#)), collaborating with agencies that have shared priorities, and supporting stakeholders that can make a sizeable impact in affecting positive change.

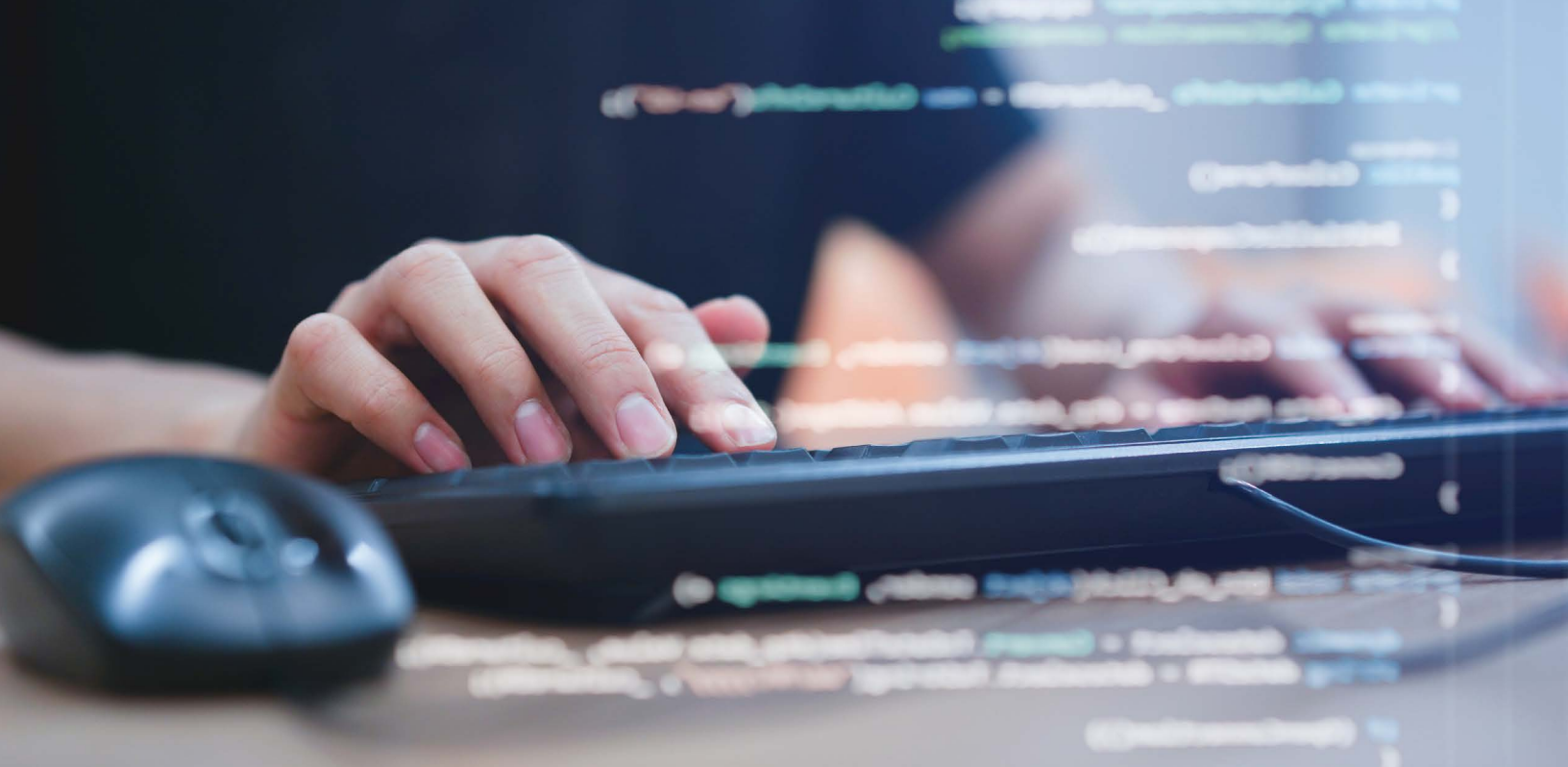
Being mindful of emerging opportunities, community needs, existing evidence, and available resources, OPH teams identified 17 projects, including but not limited to:

- Integrating a public health perspective into the City of Ottawa's new Official Plan to ensure that future growth and development will enable healthy built and natural environments, including strategic direction to support the development of healthy and walkable 15-minute neighbourhoods (as described in the [5 Big Moves](#));



- Engaging in a range of activities that support climate change mitigation and adaptation from a public health perspective, including informing the [Climate Change Master Plan](#);
- Developing an Aging Well Plan that envisions a city where all older adults and their caregivers are healthy, safe, valued and actively engaged in their well-being within a compassionate and inclusive environment;
- Implementing and supporting initiatives that enhance knowledge and skills for kids to play outdoors and for all residents to be active in nature; and
- Participating in the development of the City's updated [Strategic Road Safety Action Plan](#) by contributing a population health equity lens and supporting strategies that align with a safe system for all road users.





## Goal 3 - Streamlining Through Digitizing

OPH is embracing digital health innovations to improve the capacity and quality of public health programs and services. This goal is focused on the development and implementation of an Electronic Public Health Record (EPHR) system to be used across OPH for years to come. The use of technology solutions to optimize the functioning, effectiveness and efficiency of public health programs and services positions OPH to participate in and support Public Health Modernization and the provincial Digital First for Health strategy.

Phases 1 and 2 of the EPHR implementation project are focused on replacing existing paper processes, with future development to be focused on building new functionality and integrating with other electronic databases.

Phase 1 is nearing completion and has involved “superusers” testing and providing feedback on functionality to help ensure client/staff safety at clinics, to help prevent errors when entering information, and to schedule client appointments or make referrals to other programs.

While significant progress was made in 2019, OPH did shift implementation timelines to invest appropriate resources to ensure the health unit gets a high quality, functional and secure solution that meets the needs of staff and clients.



## Goal 4 - A Healthy Workplace and Workforce

It is essential that employees feel safe, healthy and engaged at work. In the spring of 2019, OPH surveyed employees using an evidence-based resource, called **Guarding Minds At Work**, to help assess, protect and promote the psychological health and safety of employees. Nearly two-thirds of OPH employees completed the survey, providing a baseline score to gauge how well the health unit is doing in this area.

Based on the results, OPH chose to focus on two factors - Engagement and Organizational Culture and in so doing, the OPH Wellness@Work committee, a cross-departmental group

of employees, developed an action plan for promoting a psychologically safe and healthy workplace.

A variety of activities have been and will continue to be undertaken, from supporting team building and social activities to building relationships, maintaining a strong culture of recognition, and promoting greater work-life balance. The Wellness@Work committee continues to promote a culture of accountability, not blame, encourages mental health capacity building and provides high-quality learning and development opportunities.





## Goal 5 - Continuously Improving our Core Work to Maximize Impact

Continuous improvement is fundamental to OPH's way of working and fosters a culture of high performance, innovation and service excellence. Goal 5 of our strategy focuses on improving our core work to maximize impact. This will be measured by service delivery performance, which is based on the notion that understanding performance and having a comprehensive performance management program is a key step towards supporting continuous improvement and enabling more informed decisions.

Much of the work for Goal 5 in 2019 centred on developing key service delivery performance measures and building the tools to support quarterly reporting across OPH teams. As this goal matures over time, processes to enable cross-department conversations will be strengthened. These timely discussions about performance gaps and challenges will help OPH make strategic choices that foster our vision of keeping Ottawa's people healthy, safe and well.

## Responding to Emergency Situations is part of OPH's Core Work

In 2019, OPH responded to many emergency situations, including: the OC Transpo bus collision at the Westboro station, the 2019 Ottawa River flood, outbreaks of measles and hepatitis, an Enbridge service outage, a tornado, and a residential high-rise fire and evacuation.

The spring flood represented OPH's largest response in 2019, as a broad range of public health professionals supported affected residents in Constance Bay, Cumberland, Britannia and Fitzroy Harbour. Working in concert with the City of Ottawa's Emergency Operation Centre, first responders and partners, OPH:

- led the City of Ottawa's Human Needs Taskforce to coordinate and conduct nearly 2,400 home wellness visits in the affected areas to ensure residents were supported during the flood and in the recovery phase;
- supported the operation of reception, lodging and community support centres, engaging residents to share their experience, ask questions and identify concerns;
- developed a comprehensive web resource outlining flooding prevention, safety during a flood, and flood recovery information;



- developed and disseminated videos to inform residents on a variety of flood-related topics; and
- facilitated well-water testing, including support for results analysis;

OPH's emergency management program includes annual assessment of its emergency plans and systems to meet legislative requirements. OPH also continues to encourage Ottawa residents to develop their own personal emergency preparedness plans and assemble an emergency preparedness kit to ensure their safety and that of people they care for. Residents and community partners can learn more about emergency preparedness, prevention and response by visiting the OPH website.





## Let's Clear the Air

To protect residents from the harms of e-cigarette and tobacco use, in March 2019 the Board of Health approved OPH's updated Let's Clear the Air Action Plan. The Plan's pillars consist of: working with partners to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke and vapour; increasing supports for cessation; preventing youth initiation of smoking, vaping and cannabis use; and advancing public policy to further protect residents' health.

OPH worked with youth, parents and intermediaries to increase knowledge about the harms associated with vaping, providing targeted prevention education programs and resources through in-class presentations, school-wide assemblies and interactive displays. Over the 2018/2019 school year, almost 11,000 students participated in a class presentation on vaping. OPH also gathered best practices to address vaping-related nicotine addiction among youth and harm reduction guidelines for adults who want to transition from smoking to vaping.

In accordance with the Action Plan, OPH worked with City departments to harmonize the City of Ottawa's smoking related regulations; advocated for stronger provincial legislation related to vaping products; and responded to federal consultations on proposed vaping regulations. OPH also worked with two post-secondary institutions to implement 100% smoke and vape free policies to protect students, staff and visitors from second-hand exposure to tobacco, cannabis and vaping.

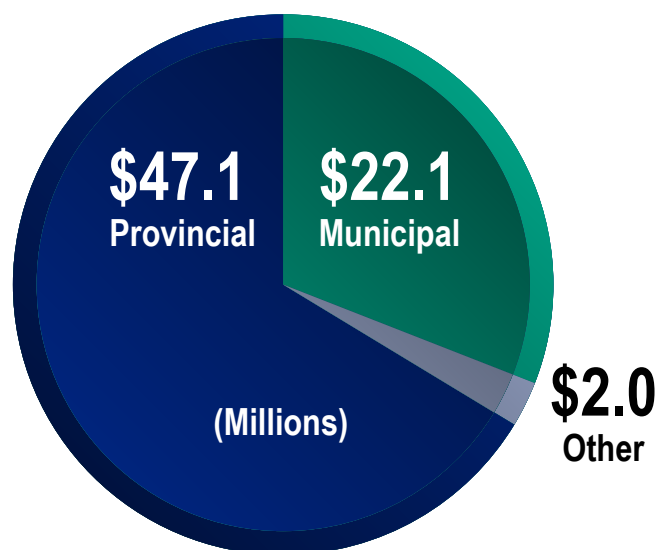
OPH worked with groups with the highest rates of smoking to adapt cessation services to meet their needs, while also working with community agencies to identify ways to increase cessation services and capacity throughout Ottawa for populations that experience barriers to access.

# 2019 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<br>(in millions) |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Provincial           | 47.1                    |
| Municipal            | 22.1                    |
| Federal              | 0.6                     |
| Own Funds            | 0.3                     |
| Fees and Services    | 1.1                     |
| <b>Total Revenue</b> | <b>71.2</b>             |

| Program Delivery                                | Amount<br>(in Millions) |
|---|-------------------------|
| Chronic Disease Prevention & Well-Being         | 7.1                     |
| Food Safety                                     | 4.5                     |
| Healthy Environments                            | 1.9                     |
| Healthy Growth & Development                    | 4.0                     |
| Immunization                                    | 2.0                     |
| Infectious & Communicable Diseases              | 13.3                    |
| Safe Water                                      | 1.2                     |
| School Health                                   | 12.5                    |
| Substance Use & Injury Prevention               | 6.6                     |
| Foundational Standards and Emergency Management | 7.7                     |
| <b>Supplementary Programs</b>                   |                         |
| Healthy Babies Healthy Children                 | 4.6                     |
| Dental Program                                  | 2.4                     |
| Miscellaneous Programs                          | 3.4                     |
| <b>Gross Expenditure</b>                        | <b>71.2</b>             |



## Core Work

- Support healthy early growth and development
- Promote health and wellness through all stages of life
- Prevent injuries and chronic disease
- Prevent and control infectious disease
- Prevent food and water-borne illness
- Protect and promote environmental health
- Prepare and respond to emergencies
- Monitor the health of the population to inform system planning
- Assess and report on the health of the population
- Advance healthy public policy