

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

FROM: Dr. Isra Levy,  
Ottawa Public Health

*Contact:*  
*Dr. Isra Levy*  
*Medical Officer of Health*  
*Ottawa Public Health*  
*613-580-2424 ext. 23681*  
*Isra.Levy@ottawa.ca*

EXPÉDITEUR : D<sup>r</sup> Isra Levy,  
Santé publique Ottawa

*Personne ressource :*  
*D<sup>r</sup> Isra Levy*  
*Médecin chef en santé publique*  
*Santé publique Ottawa*  
*613-580-2424, poste 23681*  
*Isra.Levy@ottawa.ca*

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SUBJECT: **MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH VERBAL REPORT**

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

*Check upon delivery*

Bonsoir, good evening,

As it is the first meeting of the year, it is not too late to wish you all a happy new year. And I especially want to acknowledge tonight as New Year for our Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese friends and staff, and to wish them New Year happiness. Also, I want to echo Chair Qadri's remarks about Sherry Nigro. You will have the opportunity to hear from Sherry again, as so often in the past, later tonight. I know you 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. Her leadership and wisdom will be missed by all at OPH.

As always, things have been busy on a variety of fronts since our last meeting. January saw an influx of several hundred refugees into Ottawa. Our work with municipal and community colleagues is outlined in the report in your package. As of today, we have run ten outreach immunization clinics, and provided vaccines to over 500 refugees. We have also provided close to 400 dental screenings, and continue to assist with Infection Prevention and Control measures at the temporary lodging sites which are now operating in hotels in the community. Like many of our partner agencies, OPH is adapting plans virtually daily to address emerging needs.

Another new and previously unforeseen pressure is the widely publicised Zika virus situation in the Caribbean, Central and South America. Zika virus infection is caused by the bite of an infected mosquito, and seems to cause a relatively mild and time limited infection in most adults who contract it. However, due to the still unproven but growing concerns about the virus' potentially devastating effects on an unborn child, public health agencies around the world have been recommending that pregnant women and those considering becoming pregnant discuss their travel plans with their health care provider and consider deferring travel. Needless to say we have had many enquiries about this issue.

There have been other significant developments in the last few months. Firstly, there appears to be growing interest at both the provincial and federal level in alcohol as a public health issue. In December, the provincial government announced consultations on the development of a provincial Alcohol Policy Framework, given the necessity to explore ways to mitigate potential health impacts of increased access to, and use of, alcohol. Also, just last week Canada's national Chief Public Health Officer, Dr Greg Taylor, made alcohol the subject of his annual *Report to Parliament on the State of Public Health in Canada*. Dr Taylor warns of the potential health risks from even low levels of drinking. We know that locally, in Ottawa, alcohol continues to cause a great burden of illness and death, and this month we have started a community conversation about alcohol on our social media channels. From February 1 to 29, the public can share their views online at [HaveYourSayOttawa.ca](http://HaveYourSayOttawa.ca) [[DonnezVotreAvisOttawa.ca](http://DonnezVotreAvisOttawa.ca)] to access a short bilingual survey. And of course we take comments through all of our other usual channels....phone, email and social media. We will build results of these conversations and an analysis of Dr Taylor's report into our own work towards reducing the harms associated with excessive alcohol use.

December was a typically busy month for the province too. Aside from the alcohol strategy announcement, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care also released a discussion paper regarding reform to the health care system in Ontario. Although we had anticipated that release, and the potential that local public health agencies might be included in the ministry plans, the timeline for consultations on that paper is very short. The Ministry is asking for inputs by the end of this month. Accordingly that item is also on tonight's agenda.

Finally, here at OPH we continually strive for quality improvement. During the next several months we will be gearing up for our Accreditation Survey visit, which will take place in June this year. Also, we will be assessing the results of our 2015 Quality Improvement plan, and collating the performance measurements for the provincial accountability targets. As in previous years, we are tracking towards meeting at least 80% of our targets, and continue to stay flexible and adaptable in our work so that we can meet emerging needs and continue to perform well against these targets. You will receive our year-end Public Health Funding and Accountability Agreement report in April, along with the Annual report, so we will have an opportunity to review that at that time.

That concludes my verbal report. I am, of course, happy to answer any questions.

Merci