

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: ADAPTIVE WORKFORCE STRATEGIC DIRECTION: UPDATE

OBJET : ORIENTATION STRATÉGIQUE SUR LA CAPACITÉ D'ADAPTATION DE
L'EFFECTIF : MISE À JOUR

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Board of Health (BOH) with an update on the *Develop an Adaptive Workforce for the Future* Strategic Direction initiatives.

BACKGROUND

Ontario public health organizations are experiencing unprecedented levels of change, including: changing demographics, emerging diseases, evolving information technologies, ever-present and intensifying need for cost-containment while maintaining quality, managing workloads, and meeting rising expectations of clients. These

coalesce to create an imperative for an adaptive workforce and adaptable organization. Adaptable organizations are more successful at managing change, fostering innovation and developing a multi-skilled workforce. Such organizations are able to match and synchronize the demand for services with capacity, which helps leadership adjust operations quickly and smoothly to meet rapid changes and shifting priorities, and engage employees, partners, clients and the community in a meaningful way in the planning and delivery of services.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has a talented and vibrant workforce, focused on consistently meeting Ottawa's evolving needs. In addition, OPH employees strive to achieve organizational priorities and fulfill existing and new accountability and legislative requirements. To do so, they must continually develop competencies in new skills, technologies and business processes, and develop more efficient ways of delivering services. The adaptive workforce strategic direction aims to provide employees the tools to foster collaboration, innovation and continuous quality improvement. It also enables OPH to more efficiently and effectively address the community's changing needs, expand its reach and augment the impact of its public health services.

In June 2016, the BOH approved a report titled [Developing an Adaptive Workforce for the Future](#) (ACS2016-OPH-IQS-0005). This report outlined three strategic initiatives aimed at creating a more adaptive workforce over the next several years:

1. Build adaptable teams to increase the ability of staff to respond rapidly and effectively to community needs (e.g. Rapid Response team);
2. Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement through: a) effective use of technology to reach the community in a client-centred manner, support OPH's program delivery, and streamline its business processes; and b) implementation of an Employee Engagement Action Plan; and
3. Enhance OPH's capacity to reach and serve a diverse community, through partnerships with local agencies and City departments, and through increasing the representation of visible minorities, Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities in OPH's workforce.

DISCUSSION

The OPH workforce has been adapting to many changes over the past year. Several changes have been internally focused and driven, related to improved business tools and processes to ensure better service to clients. Others are significant system-focused

changes, such as adapting to the implications of the *Patients First* legislation and the modernized Ontario Standards for Public Health Programs and Services (OSPHPS).

OPH employees have been proactive in planning for these modernized Standards and their implications for services, and continue to be engaged in providing feedback to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). OPH leadership has been working with employees to re-design areas that require adjustment to fulfill the new public health mandate and improve services for clients. OPH employees' passion and commitment for what they do were apparent in the over 1700 comments, ideas and suggestions they submitted with respect to the current OPH alignment exercise. As part of this alignment, OPH's Senior Leadership Team will be considering the Ministry's recently released *Report Back from the Public Health Work Stream and the Report from the Expert Panel on Public Health*, in addition to the OSPHPS.

Progress has been made on the Adaptive Workforce Strategic Direction over the past year, as described below:

1. Build adaptable teams to increase the ability of employees to respond rapidly and effectively to community needs.
 - The Rapid Response Team (RRT) has been strengthened over the past year. More public health nurses and inspectors across OPH have been cross-trained as part of the RRT, and have supported various enhanced responses involving communicable diseases. Results of the ongoing evaluation indicate that deployed employees have been able to effectively cover client caseloads with less support required for each additional response, and are highly satisfied with their involvement and skill development. As a result, OPH plans to continue this work with teams and expand capacity to respond to enhanced responses.
 - Several other interdisciplinary team-based models of service provision have been developed to enhance effectiveness, improve efficiencies, and re-distribute activities such as planning and response for Ottawa 2017 Special Events, menu labelling enforcement, and response to the Opioid crisis. Team-based models will continue to be developed as required.
 - In 2016, OPH continued to increase the capacity of nursing employees who do not provide vaccinations as part of their routine duties to give vaccines to clients at school and community clinics in order to maintain clinical skills to quickly respond in an emergency. This will continue for 2017 and 2018.
2. Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

The Adaptive Workforce Strategic Direction is about continuous quality improvement and is aligned with the BOH report entitled [Quality Improvement Plan for 2017-2020](#) from April 3, 2017.

- OPH's web presence has become more interactive, providing clients with one point of access to OPH online.
- An updated contact centre infrastructure is now in place. This system allows OPH to be more responsive in emergency situation, and improves client access to OPH employees and services in a method convenient for them. Further functionality of the contact centre system, for example, web chat and automated calling, will be implemented over the coming year.
- Components of Staff Development and Employee Engagement Action Plans have been initiated, including:
 - Implementation of an organizational approach to encourage meaningful two-way feedback between employees, supervisors and managers;
 - Increased access to learning and development strategies for employees through technology and quality improvements, such as implementation of an Electronic Public Health Record system; and
 - Capacity building activities in the areas of emergency preparedness and response, healthy public policy and evidence-informed decision making.
- A recent pulse check found that 79% of employees say they have opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect their work, up from 61% from the 2015 Employee Engagement Survey.

3. Enhance OPH's capacity to reach and serve a diverse community.

Much progress has been made in this area, as outlined in the BOH report entitled [Health Inequities in Ottawa: Implications for Action by Ottawa Public Health](#) from November 2016. Some additional highlights include:

- OPH is the lead organization for Public Health Ontario's Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP) on *Patients First*, examining how health system planning can best occur to consider the needs of the entire population while reducing health inequities among certain groups in the population.
- Continued work on increasing the representation of visible minorities, First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and people with disabilities in its workforce; specifically, increasing the representation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to 2%, of visible minorities to 11.9% and people with disabilities to 3.34% of the total workforce.

- OPH is building awareness and understanding in order to better serve First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in Ottawa. Some highlights include activities for OPH employees on respectful workplace, Truth and Reconciliation and Aboriginal health; and diversity and inclusion in partnership with the City's Diversity and Inclusion Branch and external partners. Several employees have completed the Ontario Indigenous Cultural Safety training and report that this training has had a profound impact on the way they interact with Indigenous clients. Further, OPH is working on a Reconciliation action plan, which will be discussed with Elders prior to its adoption.

NEXT STEPS

OPH will continue to implement the Adaptive Workforce Strategic Direction. The OPH Alignment Exercise, designed to position OPH for the future, will further support the initiatives set out in this strategic direction to ensure OPH employees have more balanced workloads, have clearer accountability and decision-making processes, and continue to be agile and able to respond positively to an ever-changing environment.

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