

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
20 September 2021 / 20 septembre 2021**

**Submitted on September 9, 2021
Soumis le 9 septembre 2021**

**Submitted by
Soumis par:**
Dr / Dre Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health / Médecin chef en santé publique

**Contact Person
Personne ressource:**
**Cameron Keyes, Director, Knowledge Exchange, Planning and Quality /
Directeur, Échange de connaissances, planification et qualité
613-580-2424, x.23537 Cameron.Keyes@Ottawa.ca**

Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2021-OPH-KPQ-0005

SUBJECT: OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY PLANNING

**OBJET: PLANIFICATION DE LA REPRISE POSTPANDÉMIQUE DE SANTÉ
PUBLIQUE OTTAWA**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit approve Ottawa Public Health's post-pandemic Recovery Plan, as outlined in this report.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la Ville d'Ottawa approuve le Plan de reprise postpandémique de Santé publique Ottawa selon les modalités exposées dans ce rapport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) recovery planning to date, specifically highlighting OPH's work to support community recovery, continue its COVID response, support employee wellness, and integrate lessons learned from the pandemic to build a more sustainable public health system that meets the changing needs of our community.

OPH's recovery planning has one overarching goal: to build a stronger, sustainable local public health system that collaborates across health and social sectors. It is built on the cornerstones of advancing population health through a health equity lens, collaboration and engagement, being innovative, and sustaining health and social systems. The plan includes three key components:

- **Respond/Restore** - Restore prioritized services and programs with a focus on supporting the community recovery and ongoing COVID response
- **Recharge** - Support employee wellness
- **Reimagine** - Identify opportunities to advance and strengthen OPH's programs, services and processes to support the community post-pandemic

OPH's COVID-19 response is expected to continue this fall and into the winter. The ongoing COVID **response** will focus on community operations (i.e. micro-targeted approaches and outreach in priority and racialized neighbourhoods), hosting COVID-19 immunization clinics, conducting case and contact management, supporting institutions in implementing and maintaining infection prevention and control practises to prevent and manage COVID-19 outbreaks, collaborating with schools to improve and maintain COVID-19 prevention and protection measures, disseminating timely and accurate COVID-19 communications, and facilitating partner and stakeholder engagement.

As a result of the recent projections by the Ontario Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables, published on September 1, 2021, which predicted that Ontario's fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic may be substantial, affecting all age groups and potentially exceeding intensive care unit capacity (ICU), OPH is also preparing for a projected increase in those diagnosed with COVID-19. OPH's surge planning includes retaining casual pools of employees, training temporary employees, and ensuring that programs are able to scale up and scale down – depending on the situation. Despite surge planning, the capacity to respond to a surge will be limited by available human resources and the response levels may need to be adapted.

This fall, OPH will continue to **restore** some prioritized programs with an aim of reducing its services and program waitlists, supporting students' return to school, and supporting community recovery. These programs include school-age immunizations, sexual health and harm reduction, healthy growth and development, mental health and substance use, dental health, and surveillance and medical consultations. OPH's work in environmental health and infectious disease will also continue.

To ensure employees feel **recharged** to continue these efforts, the OPH Wellness@Work Action Plan was updated to reflect the spring 2021 employee pulse check survey results, input from employees, and research on employee supports needed post-crisis. The plan outlines actions to focus on strengthening effective and supportive relationships across the organization, fostering work-life balance, and opportunities to further support a culture of trust. Monitoring and tracking employee and management overtime, with a goal of minimizing overtime, is a key focus for the Action Plan, as OPH will strive to support employees to achieve a work-life balance so that they have time for their families and themselves everyday.

A key component of OPH's **reimagine** plan includes building on lessons learned from COVID-19 and hearing from employees and the community to ensure that OPH is well positioned to support our community needs post-pandemic. The way OPH works to achieve population health outcomes moving forward may look different post-pandemic. As such, not all programs will go back to what they were doing before COVID-19. Employees have already shared that the way in which they do their work has changed, from the use of technology tools, to enhanced processes, and stronger and more diverse partnerships. OPH's recovery plan will build on this evolution. Later this fall, OPH will bring a report forward to the Board of Health proposing a revised 2022 Strategic Plan, which will provide additional details about recovery planning and specifically the re-imagine plan.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce rapport donne un aperçu de la planification de la reprise de SPO jusqu'à maintenant, en attirant l'attention sur les travaux que consacre SPO au soutien de la reprise communautaire, à la continuité de son intervention sanitaire face à la COVID-19, à la promotion du bien-être des employés et à l'intégration des leçons apprises pendant la pandémie afin d'édifier un système de santé publique plus durable et adapté à l'évolution des besoins de notre collectivité.

La planification de la reprise de SPO a un objectif prépondérant : édifier un système de santé publique local plus vigoureux et durable, qui assure la collaboration dans

l'ensemble des secteurs de la santé et des services sociaux. Ce système mise essentiellement sur la promotion de la santé de la population du point de vue de l'équité en santé, de même que sur la collaboration et la consultation, l'innovation, et grâce à des systèmes de santé et de services sociaux ingénieux et durables. Le plan comprend trois éléments essentiels :

- **l'intervention et le rétablissement** – rétablir les services et les programmes priorités en veillant à soutenir la reprise communautaire et l'intervention sanitaire en cours;
- **le ressourcement** – soutenir le bien-être des employés;
- **le remodelage** – cerner les occasions de promouvoir et de fortifier les programmes, les services et les processus de SPO pour soutenir la collectivité après la pandémie.

Nous nous attendons à ce que SPO poursuive son intervention sanitaire cet automne et durant l'hiver. Dans son **intervention** sanitaire en cours, SPO se consacrera aux opérations communautaires (grâce à des approches microciblées et à des efforts de rapprochement dans les quartiers prioritaires et racisés), en organisant des cliniques de vaccination contre la COVID-19, en menant la gestion des cas et des contacts, en appuyant les institutions dans la mise en œuvre et le maintien des pratiques de prévention et de contrôle des infections, ainsi qu'en veillant à la prévention et à la gestion des écloisions du virus de la COVID-19, en collaborant avec les écoles pour améliorer et maintenir les mesures de prévention et de protection contre la COVID-19, en diffusant des communications ponctuelles et exactes sur la COVID-19 et en favorisant la consultation des partenaires et des intervenants. Dans la foulée des projections récentes du Groupe consultatif scientifique sur la COVID-19 de l'Ontario et de la Table consensuelle de modélisation, qui ont été publiées le 1^{er} septembre 2021 et qui prévoient que la quatrième vague de la pandémie de COVID-19 en Ontario pourrait être substantielle et toucher tous les groupes d'âge en dépassant potentiellement la capacité des unités de soins intensifs, SPO est aussi en train de se préparer à une hausse projetée des cas. La planification de SPO en prévision de cette recrudescence du virus consiste entre autres à faire appel à des répertoires d'employés occasionnels, à former des employés temporaires et à s'assurer que l'envergure des programmes pourra être adaptée, en hausse ou en baisse, en fonction de la situation. Malgré la planification de la recrudescence du virus, la capacité de réagir à une recrudescence sera limitée par les ressources humaines disponibles, et il se pourrait que l'on doive adapter les niveaux d'intervention.

Cet automne, SPO continuera de **rétablir** certains programmes priorités, afin de réduire ses listes d'attente dans le cadre de ses services et de ses programmes, en apportant son concours dans la rentrée scolaire et dans la reprise communautaire. Ces programmes portent entre autres sur la vaccination des groupes d'âge scolaire, sur la santé sexuelle et la réduction des méfaits, sur la croissance et le développement sains, sur la santé mentale et la consommation de substances, sur la santé dentaire, de même que sur la surveillance et les consultations médicales. SPO continuera aussi de se consacrer à la santé environnementale et aux maladies infectieuses.

Afin d'assurer le **ressourcement** des employés pour poursuivre ces efforts, nous avons mis à jour le Plan d'action bien-être au travail de SPO pour tenir compte des résultats du sondage éclair auprès des employés au printemps de 2021 et de la recherche sur le soutien dont les employés auront besoin après la crise. Ce plan trace les contours des mesures à adopter pour conforter l'efficacité des relations et la solidarité dans l'ensemble de l'organisme, en favorisant l'équilibre entre la vie professionnelle et la vie personnelle et les occasions de mieux soutenir une culture de confiance. La surveillance et le suivi des heures supplémentaires des employés et de la direction, afin de minorer les heures supplémentaires, constituent une priorité essentielle du Plan d'action à l'heure où SPO tâche d'aider les employés à harmoniser leur vie professionnelle et leur vie personnelle pour qu'ils puissent consacrer du temps à leur famille et prendre du temps pour eux-mêmes au quotidien.

Un aspect essentiel du plan de **remodelage** de SPO consiste à miser sur les leçons apprises pendant la crise sanitaire et à entendre les employés et la collectivité afin de s'assurer que SPO est parfaitement en mesure de répondre aux besoins communautaires après la pandémie. Les méthodes de travail adoptées par SPO afin de produire des résultats pour la santé de la population à terme pourraient paraître différentes après la pandémie. Ainsi, les programmes ne redeviendront pas tous ce qu'ils étaient avant la COVID-19. Les employés ont déjà fait savoir que le déroulement de leurs travaux a changé, qu'il s'agisse des outils technologiques auxquels ils font appel, de l'amélioration des processus, ainsi que de la fortification et la diversification des partenariats. Le plan de reprise de SPO misera sur cette évolution. Cet automne, SPO déposera, auprès du Conseil de santé, un rapport dans lequel elle proposera une version révisée du Plan stratégique de 2022, qui donnera d'autres détails sur la planification de la reprise, en particulier sur le plan de remodelage.

BACKGROUND

OPH's COVID response has required adaptation of regular services

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has been monitoring and responding to COVID-19 since early January 2020, and the response is ongoing. Throughout the pandemic, the Board of Health has received regular verbal updates from Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health as well as written reports on September 21, 2020, November 30, 2020, and two reports on lessons learned from the pandemic on February 8, 2021. The Board was notified that several OPH programs were suspended, from spring 2020 to fall 2020, as over 80% of base staffing resources were shifted to support OPH's response to the pandemic. In September 2020, the Board was notified that OPH reinstated some critical services, including infectious disease, healthy growth and development, mental health and substance use, and dental treatment. To allow OPH to continue to respond to the pandemic while preparing for the vaccination campaign and projected surges in the winter and spring, these services were not restored to full capacity given that some staff were still required in their deployed roles and not available to offer their expertise to support core services. Efforts continue to restore non-COVID-19 programs, services and policy development.

OPH's COVID response has been extensive and complex, stretching over 20 months, and the work required to reduce and prevent the spread of COVID-19 will most likely extend into 2022. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, OPH has increased its staffing complement from 644 employees (December 2019) to 3,536 employees (August 2021), while almost 80% of OPH employees have been redeployed to the COVID-19 response. OPH's COVID response has included managing 28,239 individuals who tested positive for the virus, as of August 27, 2021. The response has also involved working with childcare centres, schools, workplaces, shelters, long-term care (LTCH) and retirement homes, hospitals, and other congregate-living settings in Ottawa to prevent and contain COVID-19 outbreaks. Specifically, OPH managed a record number of outbreaks, which included 862 outbreaks from March 5, 2020 to August 2021. OPH has also collaborated with various partners and neighbourhoods to reduce barriers that some residents face in accessing health and social services. For instance, in collaboration with the Ottawa Health Team, a referral process was established to support residents with COVID-19 in need of additional supports to isolate safely. Through this process, 922 referrals were made to these wrap-around supports, which included provision of food, diapers, income replacement, etc. In addition, via on-the-ground, door-to-door engagement efforts throughout the pandemic, OPH and partners engaged with 68,869 residents to provide masks, sanitizer, information about COVID-19 prevention, safe isolation, testing and, more recently, access to pop-up vaccine clinics.

As of September 2, 2021, OPH, in collaboration with partners, has organized 335 COVID-19 vaccination mass, mobile and pop-up clinics and administered 924,908 COVID-19 vaccination doses. In addition, 2,201 LTCH and retirement home staff have received their first dose, and 9,365 staff have received their second dose as of August 30, 2021, according to LTCH and retirement homes self-reporting to OPH through a weekly survey. Along with community partners, OPH enhanced support to 22 High Priority Neighbourhoods disproportionately impacted by lower socio-economic status, COVID-19 infections, and lower vaccination rates. To address concerns and respond to questions about vaccines, OPH collaborated with community partners to provide 43 presentations covering 11 languages. OPH has also ensured accurate and timely sharing of information and resources by continuously updating its website, responding to more than 4,500 media requests, and participating in over 125 media availabilities and more than 425 media interviews related to COVID-19.

Fall 2021 Outlook

According to Ontario's Science Advisory and Modelling Consensus Tables, published on September 1, 2021, Ontario is at the beginning of the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is predicted to be substantial, affecting all age groups and potentially exceeding intensive care unit capacity. These tables indicate that the largest risk remains to people who are unvaccinated due to the increased virulence of the Delta variant. The Delta variant is more transmissible and is giving rise to resurgences in other countries despite high levels of immunization. Ottawa-specific data demonstrates that the risk of COVID-19 infection among people who are unvaccinated within the vaccine-eligible population (i.e. Ottawa residents who are not vaccinated and those who were vaccinated with a first dose less than 14 days from their COVID-19 episode date) is 15 times higher than it is for the fully vaccinated population (based on data from July 24 to August 27). Provincial data from the Science Table show that unvaccinated people have a 30-fold higher risk of hospitalization and 48-fold higher risk of being in the ICU compared to the fully vaccinated. The Science Table indicated that vaccination rates need to exceed 85% among the eligible population and contacts need to decrease to about 70% of pre-pandemic levels until these rates are attained. To this end, OPH is working towards achieving a goal of having 90% of Ottawa residents fully vaccinated, as a means to promote community immunity, and is promoting a cautious approach to the return to school and work this fall. OPH will continuously evaluate the need for additional measures and the level of ongoing response required to protect against infection, mortality, health system disruption and societal disruption due to COVID-19.

DISCUSSION

OPH'S RECOVERY PLANNING

The Recovery Plan was developed with the knowledge and evidence available at the time. It will be adapted as the situation evolves and based on emerging evidence. There remain several unknown factors that may influence the plan, for example: the length of the COVID-19 response and the level of effort required by OPH to support this work; pending approvals for vaccine eligibility in younger age groups; the impact of novel COVID-19 variants; the length of immunity provided by vaccinations; and changes that may be implemented by federal and provincial governments impacting the public health sector.

OPH's recovery planning has one overarching goal: to build a stronger, sustainable local public health system that collaborates across health and social sectors. It is built on the cornerstones of advancing population health through a health equity lens, collaboration and engagement, being innovative and sustaining health and social systems. The plan includes three key components:

- **Respond/Restore** - Restore prioritized services and programs with a focus on supporting the community recovery and ongoing COVID response
- **Recharge** - Support employee wellness
- **Reimagine** - Identify opportunities to advance and strengthen OPH's programs, services, and processes to support the community post-pandemic

The plan also seeks to integrate lessons learned from the pandemic into ongoing and future work addressing systemic issues, with the objective of strengthening the public health, health care and social support sectors across Ottawa and Ontario. As detailed in the February 2021 report titled [COVID-19 Pandemic Response – Looking Ahead and Building Back Better](#), high impact areas for action include: the economy, long-term care, chronic disease and injury prevention, and mental health and substance use, whereas strengthening health systems will rely heavily on technology, communications, readiness and sustainability, and partnerships. Most recently, employee feedback has identified new ways of working that should be carried forward including continuing productive work-from-home strategies, applying a health equity approach to address systemic inequity, diversity and inclusion issues, continuing to look for opportunities to incorporate innovative technological solutions, cross-training between teams, and maintaining interdisciplinary teams.

The current literature supports the aforementioned areas for action and the approaches to strengthening health systems in addition to offering further insights regarding a population health approach with a focus on health equity. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted pre-existing structural inequities and systemic barriers to health and social services. For racialized communities, people living in poverty and others who already faced significant barriers to better health in their lives, the pandemic experience has been even more difficult and will continue to be a serious consideration throughout recovery planning.

Respond & Restore

As the pandemic response is ongoing, OPH has transitioned COVID-19 resources into a sustained Fall 2021 / Winter 2022 COVID-19 response. The goal is to stabilize operations by minimizing staffing actions, developing a plan that maintains staffing capacity, and retaining highly trained temporary employees. As outlined in Document 3 of this report: COVID-19 Recovery Planning Infographic, OPH's respond and restore plan will focus on the health unit's continued work to respond to COVID-19, support community recovery (through restoring critical public health programs and services), while also preparing for a surge of COVID-19 cases in the fall.

Restoring Critical Public Health programs and services

In fall 2021, OPH will continue to restore some prioritized programs, though not all to full capacity. The sequence and prioritization of programs and services being restored was determined based on community needs and waitlists for OPH services, as outlined in Document 1 of this report: Health and Social Impacts.

Programs to be further restored, to support community recovery, include:

- **School Immunization Catch-up:** From August to December, OPH will seek to immunize over 30,000 students with an aim of reducing the risk of students acquiring vaccine preventable diseases. Due to school closures over the past two school years, almost three cohorts of middle school students did not receive their required school health immunizations (i.e., HPV, Hepatitis B and meningitis vaccines).
- **Sexual Health and Harm Reduction:** OPH will increase capacity to conduct sexually transmitted blood borne infection (STBBI) case management for reportable infections, as per provincial standards. OPH will also provide services that are currently not available or have reduced access in the community

(i.e., extragenital testing for men who have sex with men) as this is unique public health work, which no other local entity undertakes. The program will also re-establish limited substance use health and harm-reduction outreach services for identified highest-risk priority populations, including access to naloxone and expanding overdose prevention and response. These services are critical given confirmed opioid overdose-related deaths in Ottawa have approximately doubled, from 2019 to 2020.

- **Healthy Growth and Development (HGD):** This program will increase capacity to provide in-home visits to new families and moms postpartum, specifically providing supports in the areas of parenting, mental health, feeding, safety, and growth and development. From September 2020 until July 2021, at any given time, almost 420 families were on OPH's HGD constantly influx waitlist, which was triaged and managed daily based on need, supports and vulnerability. With the increase in staffing, HGD will seek to eliminate the current waitlist of 156 (as of August 23, 2021) and address maternal and new families' mental health issues identified, which have increased during the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, HGD switched the in-person support available 7 days a week to a telephone service (Baby Help Line, also 7 days a week). With the collaboration of our partners, all new parents were provided with this phone number; however, when services were initially reduced, only new families with high vulnerability were connected to a public health nurse. The establishment of the Baby Help Line allowed us to mitigate some of the effects of the waitlist. This service will be maintained until drop-ins resume, which promote social connections amongst new moms and families, which are critical supports needed for new families. HGD also worked with regional partners (physicians and lactation consultants) to identify and address gaps in access to care, like access to scales to weigh babies. Some of the gaps identified at the beginning of the pandemic, such as breastfeeding support, were easier to address while others remain a challenge, the main one being perinatal mental health (i.e. levels of depression and anxiety in birthing parents, which has increased from 20% to 35% during the pandemic). To address this challenge, HGD is currently implementing a universal postpartum depression screening for all pregnant and postpartum women.
- **Mental Health and Substance Use:** To support community recovery, OPH will be increasing its services in the areas of suicide prevention, overdose prevention and stigma reduction. Also, OPH will increase work related to Racialized, and

African, Caribbean and Black Mental Health, provide mental health supports for workplaces and schools, as well as influence system change at the local and regional level to improve the mental health and substance use health of our community. This work is further outlined in the report titled *Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan: Strategic Priority Relating to Mental Health and Substance Use Health* (ACS2021-OPH-HPP-0001).

- **Dental Health Services:** As of September 1, 2021, the waitlist for dental treatments was at its peak of 456 and still increasing. As staffing increases throughout the fall, the waitlist is expected to reduce by increasing the level of service for individuals and families with low-income, including more fillings and root canal treatments and increasing prevention services. This work will seek to reduce preventable oral diseases that may have increased since the pandemic. Overall, by further restoring this service, OPH is working to achieve a decrease in waitlist backlog by Q2 2022. OPH is also exploring options to increase capacity to further reduce the backlog, while also meeting additional COVID-19 requirements from the dental regulatory body and taking into consideration the restricted capacity due to the upcoming dental clinic renovations.
- **Surveillance & Medical Consultations:** OPH will increase capacity to analyze and interpret epidemiology data and provide technical guidance to support programs being restored.

OPH's work in the following areas will continue:

- **Environmental Health:** by addressing climate change and healthy built environments through integrating a health lens into Ottawa's draft Official Plan, response to high-risk food premises complaints and compliance inspections of facilities with outstanding critical infractions, inspection of small drinking water systems with a history of non-compliance, recreational water safety, rabies prevention, Lyme disease and West Nile Virus surveillance, investigations and responding to reported environmental health hazards
- **Infectious Disease:** through the management of suspected and confirmed cases of numerous reportable diseases of public health significance including tuberculosis, Lyme disease, West Nile Virus, Hepatitis A, and Salmonella. In addition, OPH is releasing health promotion communications focused on reducing chronic disease prevention issues that may have increased during the

pandemic. However, OPH's fulsome chronic disease programming will not be restored in fall 2021.

Ongoing COVID response

OPH's ongoing COVID response will include:

- **Community Operations:** To reach OPH's target of a 90% vaccination rate and to improve equity of vaccine rates across neighbourhoods and populations, OPH is expanding engagement activities, micro-targeted approaches and outreach in priority and racialized neighbourhoods to specifically focusing on addressing barriers. OPH is working towards also achieving a 90% vaccination rate among eligible individuals in neighbourhoods with lower socioeconomic status. To further support community recovery, businesses and employees, as well as organizations and community service providers (e.g. places of worship), OPH will continue to provide sector-targeted supports related to reopening, mental health and infection prevention and control (IPAC) best practices.
- **COVID-19 Immunizations:** To vaccinate as many Ottawa residents as possible, OPH has increased its focus on targeted locations for its vaccine clinics including approximately 10 neighborhood hubs, targeted clinics at post-secondary institutions (to increase vaccine uptake in young adults), and mobile clinics in various settings (including workplaces, LTCH, RH, organized groups and events etc.). OPH is planning for the expansion of eligibility for third dose, immunizing children 5-11 years old, and continuing to identify other opportunities to reach populations with low vaccine uptake in Ottawa.
- **Case and Contact Management:** To reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community, OPH will continue to follow-up with residents who test positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts, as per provincial guidance. This work includes lab processing for all positive results including variants of concern, and investigations of community and workplace COVID-19 exposures. This team operates 7 days a week to meet Ministry requirements for follow-up within 24 hours with people who test positive for COVID-19 and to ensure timely follow-up with anyone who may have been in contact with them.
- **Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and Outbreak Management:** To support institutions in their efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within their facility, OPH will continue to monitor and respond to any resident or health care worker who tests positive for COVID-19 in institutions, such as LTC facilities, childcare

facilities and congregate settings. Work in this area includes supporting the facility in the prevention and management of COVID-19 outbreaks, ensuring IPAC best practices are maintained by facility staff (by providing on-site inspections and education, as needed), and reviewing and socializing new and existing directives. The team will continue to offer pre-emptive IPAC visits to ensure preparedness and will work towards improving outbreak management in all facilities identified as having a higher risk for infection transmission.

- **School Health:** To support school staff, students and parents to improve and maintain COVID-19 prevention and protection measures, through a targeted approach based on learnings from the 2020/21 school year. The key areas of focus include vaccinations, testing, screening, masking, distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, case and contact management, and outbreak management. School nurses will simultaneously work with their schools to complete comprehensive school health assessments using a health equity lens. This will facilitate mapping of health needs, such as for mental health supports, which will assist OPH and its partners in providing enhanced, settings-based interventions to promote the health and well-being of students, staff, and families in Ottawa with regards to COVID-19 and beyond. More details can be found in the report titled *Update on Ottawa Public Health Work to Support Schools Through Covid-19 and Beyond* (ACS2021-OPH-HPS-0003)
- **Communications and Engagement:** To continue to ensure Ottawa residents, businesses, elected officials and community partners receive accurate and timely information about COVID-19. OPH will continue to use all existing channels to communicate and engage with Ottawa residents and various external/internal stakeholders, as well as provide support to community partners with information, community presentations, resources and guidance. This work includes continuing to operate the COVID-19 Information Line, monitoring and responding to inquiries from the general public, schools, childcare centres, workplaces and health care providers. Messaging to stakeholders must be continually adapted as the pandemic requirements and response changes. Cultural adaptation is also a priority, which includes work with community leaders and organizations who can help build supports for populations at higher risk of harm from COVID-19 and other challenges to health.
- **Surveillance and Medical Consultations:** Analyzing, interpreting COVID-19 information, outbreaks, clusters, vaccination and societal impacts data,

providing ongoing public and provincial reporting and providing technical guidance for case and outbreak investigations, specific settings and practices.

- Logistics / Information Technology / Finance / Staffing Support: Providing support services to the entire organization, such as digital application solutions, hardware support, logistics, staff onboarding, scheduling, and training required to respond to the pandemic.

As OPH's COVID-19 response continues this fall and into the winter, OPH will not only increase its capacity to reduce waitlists, support students' return to school, and community recovery, it will also seek to be prepared for the projected increase in cases in the fall. OPH's surge planning includes retaining casual pools of employees in critical programs (i.e., Immunization, Case and Contact Management), training a significant number of temporary employees, and ensuring that programs can scale up and scale down – depending on the situation. Despite surge planning, the capacity to respond to a surge will be limited by available human resources and the response levels may need to be adapted.

Recharge - Employee Wellness

Moving forward, to address the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 response within the community (ie. effects on mental health, youth etc.) while also continuing to respond to prevent the increase of residents with COVID-19, more than ever OPH must continue to focus on supporting employee wellness to ensure employees feel recharged to continue the response and recovery efforts, as further outlined in Document 2 of this report: Supporting Employee Wellness.

Throughout the pandemic OPH has experienced significant change. Many employees have had to change the way they work - adapting to new roles, learning new skills, working from new locations as well as balancing additional responsibilities and challenges in their home lives. In addition, as noted in the 2021 Operating and Capital Budget Q2 report (ACS2021-OPH-PCS-0005), many employees worked a significant amount of overtime to meet operational demands. These additional pressures, both at work and at home, have an impact on mental health and employee engagement.

The Wellness@Work Action Plan was updated to reflect the spring 2021 employee pulse check survey results, input from employees (specifically regarding the challenge of managing workload and the amount of overtime accumulated by many employees to meet operational demands), as well as research on employee supports needed post-crisis. Firstly, the plan outlines actions to focus on strengthening effective and

supportive relationships across the organization, to address isolation, strengthen employee-supervisor relations and create opportunities for casual social interactions amongst employees. Actions include promoting social activities, team building, employee and program recognition strategies, and supporting greater connections between employees and leadership. To further strengthen employee-supervisor development and relations, OPH will continue to support growth and development of employees at all levels through training, mentorship and technical support.

Secondly, to foster work life balance, the following actions will be implemented: limiting employee and management overtime; supporting more flexible schedules, including working from home; promoting vacations (i.e., more consecutive days off per month at a time); and promoting rest and recovery (i.e., encouraging employees to disconnect while off). Monitoring, tracking and limiting employee and management overtime is a key focus for the Action Plan, as OPH will strive to ensure employees can achieve a work-life balance and that they have time in their week and days for their families and themselves.

Lastly, this action plan outlines opportunities to further support a culture of trust where values of respect and transparency are modelled, encouraged and reinforced by everyone in the organization. This includes: maintaining timely and regular communications to update employees in advance of the broader community, with sufficient rationale for decisions made; providing advance notice of schedule changes and deployment plans; and communicating clear roles, expectations, and workload management information. Measures of employee wellness are monitored monthly and quarterly, as outlined in Strategy Plan Q2 2021 Update (ACS2021-OPH-KPQ-0004). The Wellness@work committee continuously seeks feedback from employees and amends the plan, as needed.

Re-imagine

The pandemic has forced public health to accomplish monumental tasks. Supporting a post-pandemic future will be its own challenge for public health to determine how to best work with others to rebuild the health of the community after people have faced disruptions in employment, education and health systems, and social support networks. A key component of OPH's re-imagine plan includes building on lessons learned from COVID-19, and taking the time to hear from employees, partners and the community to ensure that OPH is well positioned to support our community's public health needs post-pandemic. Employees have already shared that the way in which they do their work has changed, from the use of technology tools, to enhanced processes, and stronger and

more diverse partnerships. Consequently, the way OPH works to achieve population health outcomes moving forward may look different post-pandemic and we will likely do our work in different ways. As such, not all programs will go back to what they were doing before COVID-19. OPH's reimagine plan will build on this evolution. Later this fall, OPH will bring a report forward the Board of Health on the 2022 Strategic Plan, which will provide additional details regarding recovery planning and specifically the re-imagine plan.

Next steps

In the fall, as the COVID-19 response continues to evolve, OPH will provide updates to the Board about OPH's COVID response and Recovery Planning.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

There was no public consultation undertaken in preparing this report. OPH's recovery plan was developed using feedback from OPH employees.

As part of the reimagine component of the Recovery Plan, OPH will continue to engage with staff and consult with various partners and stakeholders.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to approving OPH's recovery plan, as outlined in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report directly aligns with Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan: Transformational Initiative 1 – Public Modernization.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Health and Social Impacts

Document 2 – Supporting Employee Wellness

Document 3 – COVID-19 Recovery Planning Infographic

DISPOSITION

Following Board approval, OPH staff will work to implement its recovery plan and provide updates to the Board of Health.