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Supporting Employee Wellness

While OPH employees have been focused on supporting the community through this pandemic, there is also a need to support OPH employees' wellness. The City of Ottawa conducted an employee pulse check surveys in fall 2020 and spring 2021. Since the fall survey was conducted, there were some positive improvements identified, which included significantly more employees feeling supported by their leader and feeling their leader embodied servant leadership behaviors. In addition, employees who had regular coaching/feedback conversations reported doing better than employees who do not. These surveys also identified areas for action, for example, general well-being deteriorated in 47% of employees since the pandemic started and work demands have increased for 83% of employees. In the spring 2021 pulse check survey, OPH Managers and Program Managers reported faring worse compared to their City of Ottawa counterparts. In particular, they reported deterioration of their general well-being, managing work-life balance, being extremely or very concerned about their mental health, and feeling overwhelmed. Overtime data also demonstrates that OPH employees have accumulated a significant amount of overtime to meet operational demands. Finally, many temporary employees have expressed the challenge of an uncertain employment future with OPH.

OPH employees have expressed a need to return to pre-COVID hours, more flexible work weeks, reduced overtime, and a need for continued encouragement to take consecutive vacation days. Further, as a transition towards recovery continues, employees have asked for transparent communication to facilitate employees' own recovery before 'recovery' can begin. OPH's workplace wellness committee has developed an updated Wellness@Work Action Plan that incorporates employees' and managers' concerns identified in the survey, including efforts to address workload, overtime and communication about OPH's future workforce plans. For temporary employees working with OPH, as program demands shift (i.e., mass COVID immunization clinics reduce to focus on targeted clinics), OPH has sought to reassign, train and retain temporary employees, where possible.