

**Report to  
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health  
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa  
1 November 2021 / 1er novembre 2021**

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**Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE      File Number: ACS2021-OPH-KPQ-0007**

**SUBJECT: OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2019-2022 – 2022  
ANNUAL REFRESH**

**OBJET: PLAN STRATÉGIQUE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE OTTAWA POUR 2019-  
2022 – MISE À JOUR ANNUELLE POUR 2022**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit approve the re-alignment of Ottawa Public Health's strategic work, as described in this report and outlined in Document 1, attached.**

## **RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa approuve la réorientation du travail stratégique de Santé publique Ottawa, telle que décrite dans ce rapport et exposée dans le document 1, ci-joint.**

## **BACKGROUND**

[Protecting Our Community's Health: Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategy](#) was approved by the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa in June of 2019. It was designed with the notion of delivering and executing on the strategy through focused annual action plans. Over the past year, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has continued to make positive progress towards its implementation.

The 2021 action plan had five goals and three transformational initiatives, namely:

- Goal 1:** Drive innovative and coordinated approaches to mental health and substance use health across the lifespan
- Goal 2:** Healthy communities by design (focus on COVID-19 response and efforts)
- Goal 3:** Streamlining and increasing accessibility through digitizing
- Goal 4:** A healthy and agile workplace and workforce
- Goal 5:** Continuously improve and evolve our core work to maximize impact
- Transformational initiative 1:** Community and client engagement
- Transformational initiative 2:** Ontario Health Teams
- Transformational initiative 3:** Public-health modernization

Looking ahead to 2022, four areas of focus will greatly influence how OPH operates and the type of strategic work in which it engages:

- Planning for ongoing COVID-19 response
- Incorporating lessons learned from COVID-19 into core operations
- Supporting community recovery and responding to unintended and/or indirect impacts associated with the pandemic
- Restoring prioritized services and programs

The purpose of this report and the attached Document 1 is to seek the Board of Health's approval of the updated action plan for 2022.

## DISCUSSION

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan was designed as a road map for implementing and achieving OPH's vision. It described the organization's mission, vision, commitments and high-level goals and it articulated the steps required to attain them over a minimum of three years. At the time of the strategy's launch, there was agreement that the action plan should be revised and updated on a yearly basis to ensure ongoing relevancy, considering internal and external conditions and its alignment with organizational priorities. This is critical in the current context given the need to balance the ongoing COVID-19 response, incorporating lessons learned, supporting community recovery, and restoring prioritized core services.

The purpose of this review and refresh is threefold:

1. To assess current strategic work and determine priorities for OPH;
2. To state strategic goals and outline objectives, desired outcomes and key activities to guide work in achieving the strategic priorities for 2022; and
3. To revise strategic performance measures to allow for the review of progress toward goals and objectives.

## Approach

To plan for the next year, staff reflected on the priorities of the current strategic plan and 2021 Action Plan, determined which priorities (or discrete elements of them) require sustained, increased, or decreased efforts in the next year and what new priorities have arisen.

OPH's approach to this year's action plan review is informed by meetings with cross-sector partners and stakeholders, members of the public, insights from OPH employees, leadership, and the Board of Health, as well as a review of:

- COVID-19 lessons learned / After-action reports
- Evidence-based concept papers
- Ministry of Health and City of Ottawa directions
- Responses to the *Recovery Planning* and *City Employee Pulse Check* surveys

## SWOC Analysis

A high-level analysis was completed of OPH's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC). Summarized on pages 7 to 9 of Document 1, attached, the SWOC set the stage for OPH's action plan refresh, which aims to effectively balance strategy with operations.

OPH's main weaknesses are: a limited workforce capacity arising from the ongoing and evolving nature of pandemic demands; critical challenges relating to the backlog in programs/activity; indirect and worsening impacts of the pandemic; and financial uncertainties.

### **Key Areas of Opportunity**

A review of this data and consideration of the interplay between SWOC components revealed several important hazards and opportunities that have risen to the forefront during this pandemic.

Key opportunities to seize in the coming year include:

- **Health Inequities** have been further exposed by the pandemic - highlighted by the disproportionate rates of COVID-19 in areas with a high proportion of racialized communities and high material deprivation.<sup>1</sup> This evidence has reinforced an urgency for changing the way we do things. Considerable work was done to apply a health equity approach over the course of the pandemic response (e.g., the Community Operations service area worked alongside community partners to understand and respond to the needs of neighbourhoods and populations whose social circumstances placed them at higher risk for COVID-19) and lessons learned from this work may be extended.
- **Partnerships** have been instrumental to OPH's successes throughout the pandemic response, including but not limited to, its relationship with the City of Ottawa, collaborations with various community partners and businesses, work with local hospitals and other healthcare providers, schools, and engagement with neighbouring public health units.
- **Engagement and collaboration** have been vital since the start of the pandemic. As a part of the COVID-19 response, OPH has worked with many community and client groups, including people with lived and living experience, First Nations,

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<sup>1</sup> Ottawa Public Health. (August 2020). [COVID-19 in Ottawa –The relation to racialized communities and deprivation.](#)

Inuit and Métis partners, racialized community partners, faith leaders, and partners that work with people experiencing homelessness.

### **Proposed 2022 Action Plan**

The Action Plan creates a shared vision to guide decision-making, inform prioritization and orient the delivery of public health programs and services for the next year. While the proposed 2022 Action Plan builds on the pre-pandemic mission, vision, and commitments articulated in the 2019-2022 Strategy, it proposes important updates in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. Not only is this expected to support the health unit in leveraging lessons learned during the response, it also seeks to enhance OPH's responsiveness to new or changing needs and to increase the impact of its work in the year ahead.

OPH is putting forward the following updates:

- Merging two goals - continuous improvement and streamlining through digitizing.
- Adding two new goals - one focusing on health equity, which was previously a strategic commitment, the other on collaborating and engaging strategically, which merges and builds on two transformational initiatives from 2021 ("Community and client engagement" and "Ontario Health Teams").
- Developing or updating measures to better reflect revised strategic priorities.
- Adding a new transformational initiative that will focus on re-imagining and planning for OPH's post-pandemic future. This includes some aspects of the previous transformational initiative "Public-health modernization."

Refer to pages 12 to 19 of Document 1, attached, for more information on these goals and transformational initiative. Current and newly proposed (or adapted) measures can be found on page 20.

### ***Goal 1: Drive Innovative and Coordinated Approaches to Mental Health (MH) and Substance Use Health (SUH) Across the Lifespan***

Throughout the pandemic the demand and need for mental health and substance use health programs, resources, supports, and services increased. It will continue to be vital to consider mental health and substance use health when planning for recovery from the pandemic. These therefore continue to be a priority within OPH's strategy.

The work of this goal will be advanced primarily through:

- The Ottawa Community Action Plan: preventing stigma / problematic SU; employing emerging harm reduction initiatives to reduce harms of opioid use; centralize access to comprehensive MH/SUH and social services.
- OPH's Mental Health Strategy: to increase positive mental health, coping strategies, resilience, and help-seeking behavior, as well as reduce stigma and prevent suicide in Ottawa.
- Support to the City of Ottawa's Community Safety and Well-being Plan.

### ***Goal 2: Healthy Communities by Design***

Pandemic activities feed into OPH's objective to use public health control measures to protect the community and prevent infection; provide equitable protection for underserved and priority populations; and influence the physical environment, which enables people to live healthier lives. For 2022, this goal will continue to centre around our COVID-19 response and efforts: Case and contact management; Outbreak Management; School support; Community Operations; Immunization; Surveillance; and Communications. While this goal remains largely the same as in 2021, the underlying activities remain adaptable to needs in each stage of the pandemic.

### ***Goal 3: Advance and Monitor Population Health Through a Health Equity Lens***

Though this is a new goal for 2022, it is not new work for the health unit. Addressing health inequities is an organizational priority and an expectation – it is embedded in OPH's standards, core operations, and strategy action plan. OPH is committed to reducing health inequities through its programs, services and collaborative partnerships while promoting policies that address the social determinants of health (i.e. social and economic conditions in which people live, learn, work and play). OPH will continue to work with residents, partners and communities to develop the conditions that support health and health equity. It is important to place health equity as its own goal now, not only given the urgent needs highlighted by the pandemic, but also to leverage increased recognition of how vital this work is and commitment to act.

### ***Goal 4: A Healthy and Agile OPH Workforce and Workplace***

Workforce and workplace health have remained a top concern during the pandemic response. Just as we want our population to be healthy, safe, well, and treated with dignity - we want the same for our employees. This goal will continue to drive next steps as OPH focuses efforts on enabling a safe and inclusive work environment and on providing the necessary support, training and tools.

### ***Goal 5: Continuously Improve and Evolve our Core Work to Maximize Impact***

The pandemic work fits well within the parameters set out by OPH's goal of continuous quality improvement, driving the health unit to adjust its structure in response to organizational requirements and inspiring the organization to continuously refine its approach to optimize its impact on the community. Going forward, OPH will keep building on this work as it continues to promote an environment of ongoing learning and improvement.

Employees have already shared that the way in which they do their work has changed over the course of the pandemic response – including the innovative use of technology. It is therefore natural that the technological side of improving the way we work is embedded within this goal. Previously a unique goal, streamlining through digitizing is now encompassed within Goal 5 and includes:

- Automating inefficient and manual processes to compensate for the scarcity of time and resources.
- Providing the tools and technical training necessary for employees to work remotely.
- Leveraging technology to further the capacity, quality, availability and accessibility of health services, and to better connect with clients, colleagues and the broader health system.

### ***Goal 6: Collaborate and Engage Strategically with Ontario Health Teams, Partners, Stakeholders, Communities and Clients to Help Strengthen the Health System***

The nature of the pandemic has provoked an unprecedented level of collaboration - reinforcing existing partnerships and creating opportunities for new ones. Working with our partners, clients, and stakeholders has been instrumental to OPH's successes throughout the pandemic response. OPH has implemented new approaches to work more directly with communities at higher risk for poor health. These strengthened approaches to community engagement can and should be leveraged in addressing other public health priorities.

Key success factors for this goal involve working on shared priorities, ensuring we know what our partners, community and stakeholders need from us and what we need from them to maximize responsiveness and impact in addressing the needs in the community. We can do so much more working together. Not only is this priority

apparent under this new Goal 6 but collaboration, engagement and collective action can be seen woven across other goals for 2022.

### ***Transformational Initiative 1: Reimagine and plan for our post-pandemic future***

Prioritizing future planning will allow OPH to set the stage for its new, reimagined 2023 strategy. Transformational initiatives are foundational elements that need to be developed now in order to transform the way we work later. This new transformational initiative will seek to identify opportunities to advance and strengthen OPH's programs, services, and processes to support the community post-pandemic. This will include 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. As OPH plans for the next strategic term, it will reflect on the priorities of the current strategic plan, determine which require continued efforts and focus in the new, re-imagined strategy, and what new priorities have arisen.

### ***Commitments***

Ottawa Public Health remains committed to:

- **Reconciliation** – We work in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and communities to advance Indigenous health equity.
- **Quality** – We use the best available evidence to continuously improve and inform our work.
- **Engage** – We work with residents, partners and communities to develop the conditions that support health and health equity.
- **Impact** – We promote sustainability by directing resources for maximum benefit and value.

### ***Measures***

Performance measures and associated targets allow OPH to review its progress toward strategic goals and objectives. New measures have been proposed and existing measures have undergone modifications, as needed, to reflect updates to the Strategy Action Plan. In 2022, OPH will report quarterly on the key performance measures set out for each of the six strategic goals. Current and newly proposed goal-based measures can be found on page 20 of Document 1, attached.

### ***Next steps***



OPH will engage with employees and partners to further align existing programs and services with the updated 2022 Action Plan goals, objectives and outcomes. Other opportunities will be sought to support the Action Plan's implementation and achievement of strategic priorities. Internal communications will also be key to ensuring employees have the information needed to contribute to and feel engaged in this strategic work.

### **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

### **CONSULTATION**

This report is administrative in nature and therefore no public consultation is required.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving 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**

Accessibility was considered in the writing of this report.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

This report provides an update on OPH's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and proposed some re-alignment of the strategic work in light of the health unit's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Protecting Our Community's Health: 2022 Update and Proposed Re-Alignment

**DISPOSITION**

Following Board approval staff will work to implement the goals and transformational initiative outlined in this report and in supporting Document 1 and will provide quarterly status reports to the Board of Health.