



Ottawa Board of Health MINUTES 21

Monday, January 24, 2022, 3:00 PM

By Electronic Participation

Contact for the Ottawa Board of Health:

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Board Members:

Chair: K. Egli

Vice-Chair: T. DeGiovanni

**Members: E. Banham, J. Cloutier, E. El-Chantiry, G. Gower, T. Kavanagh,
L. Leikin, S. Menard, S. Pinel, P. Tilley**

The Ottawa Board of Health met via Zoom on Monday, January 24, 2022 beginning at 3:00 PM.

The Board of Health Secretary presided over the beginning of the meeting, up to and including the confirmation of the Chair.

Councillor Keith Egli, Chair of the Board of Health, presided over the balance of the meeting.

ROLL CALL

All members participated.

REGRETS

No regrets were filed.

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (INCLUDING THOSE ORIGINALLY ARISING FROM PRIOR MEETINGS)

No declarations of interest were filed.

MOTION TO INTRODUCE REPORTS

Motion 21/1

Moved by Member Tilley

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the report titled Confirmation of the Chair and Vice-Chair for 2022 and the Medical Officer of Health Verbal Report, be received and considered.

CARRIED

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR 2022

ACS2022-OPH-BOH-0001

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit:

1. **Confirm the election of Councillor Keith Egli as Chair for 2022, to be confirmed at the first meeting of each year of its term as required by the Health Protection and Promotion Act; and**
2. **Confirm the election of Member Tammy DeGiovanni as Vice-Chair for 2022, to be confirmed at the first meeting of each year of its term as required by the Health Protection and Promotion Act.**

CARRIED

2. MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH VERBAL REPORT

ACS2022-OPH-MOH-0001

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this verbal report for information.

RECEIVED, as amended by Motions 21/2 and 21/3

Dr. Etches began by noting that the goals of the pandemic response remain the same – to decrease morbidity and mortality, to maintain essential services, with a focus on hospital capacity, and to minimize societal disruption. She indicated that the highly transmissible Omicron variant and vaccine protection are changing the context and approaches to the pandemic, with less reliance on testing, case management and contact tracing.

She talked about the various indicators that OPH is monitoring, noting that the Omicron wave peaked in early January, after a rapid rise, and that we have been seeing a somewhat slower decline since then in wastewater signal, test

positivity and new hospitalizations. Based on this data, there is reason for hope that the situation is improving, but not enough of a signal that we can stop taking precautions against COVID-19 transmission. Keeping the Omicron wave going downwards is in our hands. Therefore, Dr. Etches recommended maintaining foundational public health measures that have been shown to consistently work well - wearing masks when in close contact with people outside our own household, physical distancing, daily screening for symptoms that could be COVID-19, and staying home when we're sick.

She explained how OPH is countering the virus by continuing to work on increasing vaccination coverage among various populations and through various means. She noted that two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine drop the risk of hospitalization by 70% and a booster dose drops the risk of hospitalization by 90%. She also talked about how OPH is supporting high risk settings through testing and case and contact management as well as with outbreak prevention and management.

Going forward, Dr. Etches indicated that OPH will be monitoring school absenteeism rates and supporting school and childcare settings where there are concerns about the rate of illness in those facilities. She noted that according to updated provincial guidance, interactions in school and childcare settings are generally not considered high-risk for COVID-19 transmission when preventive measures such as masking and distancing are in place, and that OPH is developing tools to support school and childcare administrators in assessing interactions they are concerned about.

She then talked about OPH's focus on recovery, including mental health and substance use health supports, supporting businesses, community engagement and reimagining the future of public health.

In closing, Dr. Etches expressed appreciation for how the people of Ottawa have cared for one another throughout the pandemic and she thanked Board of Health Members for their support and guidance. She also thanked OPH's many healthcare sector, community and City of Ottawa partners for supporting the pandemic response and the entire OPH team for their enormous efforts.

Dr. Etches' verbal report was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is held on file with the Board of Health Secretary.

In the context of Dr. Etches' Verbal Report, the Board heard from the following

eight (8) public delegations:

- Dr. Kwadwo “Kwajo” Kyeremanteng from The Ottawa Hospital
- Dr. Alan Forster, from The Ottawa Hospital
- Dr. Gail Beck, from The Royal
- Chandra Pasma, resident
- Dr. Kashif Pirzada, Emergency physician from Toronto
- Greg Macdougall, resident
- Ryan Smith, resident
- Dr. Doug Manuel, from the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

The Board also received the following written submissions, which are held on file with the Board of Health Secretary:

- Letter from David Prichard
- Email from Greg Macdougall
- Letter from Christine Guptill
- Email from Chris Kamel

Dr. Etches then responded to questions from Board Members after which the Board considered and approved Motions 21/2 and 21/3.

During the Board’s consideration of Motion 21/2, Chair Egli ceded the Chair to Vice-Chair Giovanni. Following approval of the motion, the Chair resumed chairing for the balance of the meeting.

The discussions on this item lasted approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes. The report was then received by the Board, as amended. The attached memo includes the Medical Officer of Health’s Verbal Update.

Motion 21/2

Moved by Chair Egli

WHEREAS there is increasing evidence that immunity can wane over time

and that a third, or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine provides greater protection against severe outcomes due to COVID-19, which has led to all levels of government recommending a third, or booster dose to help restore and maintain protection against severe illness, complication or death due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS providing greater protection against severe illness and complications from COVID-19 also helps reduce the risk of hospitalization, thereby reducing the strain on hospital capacity; and

WHEREAS the Omicron variant continues to circulate and hospital capacity is under pressure such that they are not able to operate as usual or continue to catch up on procedures and surgeries as needed; and

WHEREAS in Ontario, all residents aged 18 and over have been eligible to receive a third, or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine since December 20, 2021, with older residents and certain designated groups having been eligible since November 6, 2021 or earlier; and

WHEREAS currently, 58% of Ottawa's eligible population and 47% of Ottawa's overall population have received a third, or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and every effort should be made to continue to increase third, or booster dose coverage among the eligible population; and

WHEREAS recent experiences, both in Ontario and in other jurisdictions, have shown that vaccine policies, including proof of vaccination requirements, lead to higher vaccine uptake and therefore higher vaccination coverage overall; and

WHEREAS the Province recently announced a strategy and timetable for reopening Ontario businesses and community settings, which will create more opportunities for COVID-19 to be transmitted in indoor settings where masks are not always used; and

WHEREAS the Province has also indicated that there are no plans to amend proof of vaccination requirements to include a requirement for third, or booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for certain indoor settings where masks are not always used;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit request that the Medical Officer of Health work with the

province to emphasize a cautious approach to reopening while the healthcare system is still under pressure and work with the province to identify the best approach for its proof of vaccination requirements, in particular whether to include the requirement for people 18 years of age or older (eligible population) to show proof of a third, or booster dose in addition to proof of their first and second doses, to access businesses and community settings where patrons are required to provide proof of vaccination prior to entry, and report back to the Board of Health.

CARRIED

Motion 21/3

Moved by Member Menard

WHEREAS in response to the arrival of the more transmissible Omicron variant, the Province shifted its approach with respect to COVID-19 PCR testing to focus on highest risk settings in order to manage outbreaks and maintain the critical workforce, which has led to most children and education / childcare workers no longer being eligible for PCR testing; and

WHEREAS the Board of Health recognizes that COVID-19 testing is a responsibility of Ontario Health, that Ottawa's testing centres are operated by local healthcare partners (hospitals and community health centres) and funded directly by the Ontario Ministry of Health, which sets the guidelines for testing eligibility, and that Ottawa Public Health has no operational oversight of testing criteria; and

WHEREAS the Province has committed to providing rapid antigen tests (RATs) for students and staff in public elementary and secondary schools as well as for children and staff in childcare settings, based on an initial limited supply; and

WHEREAS less robust testing, tracking and containment efforts can be expected to strain capacity elsewhere in our public systems; and

WHEREAS concurrent with this shift in testing strategy we have seen an increasing number of for-profit 'private' PCR testing services in Ottawa and elsewhere in the province; and

WHEREAS in addition to getting vaccinated when eligible and staying home

when sick, good quality, snug fitting masks also provide an important layer of protection against the potential spread of COVID-19;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Ottawa Board of Health recommend that the Medical Officer of Health and the Chair of the Board of Health write to the Premier of Ontario and to the Ontario Minister of Health to recommend that the Province:

- Expand eligibility for access to COVID-19 PCR testing, based on healthcare partner capacity and on a hierarchy of need and urgency to mitigate outbreaks and transmission in higher risk settings such as household members of ALL forward-facing healthcare workers, and daycare/childcare workers, until such time as RATs become more readily available for this sector;**
- Expand access to a regular supply of rapid antigen testing for children and workers in schools and childcare settings as these provide almost immediate results without adding pressure on the healthcare sector or local laboratories; and**
- Work towards offering free and effective masks for all people with lower income who want them by distributing through local agencies serving these populations;**

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Health reiterate its recommendation from February 2021 calling on the Province to provide the necessary funding, fiscal relief, and/or supports to employers so that all workers in Ontario have access to no less than 10 paid sick days annually in the event of a declared infectious disease emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which would support workers in being able to stay home when they are sick.

CARRIED

MOTION TO ADOPT REPORTS

Motion 21/4

Moved by Member Tilley

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the report titled Confirmation of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2022 and the Medical Officer of Health Verbal Report, be received and adopted.

CARRIED

MOTIONS REQUIRING SUSPENSION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

There were no Motions requiring suspension of the rules.

NOTICES OF MOTION (FOR CONSIDERATION AT SUBSEQUENT MEETING)

There were no Notices of Motion (for consideration at a subsequent meeting).

CONFIRMATION BY-LAW

Motion 21/5

Moved by Member Tilley

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Confirmation By-law no. 2022-1, a by-law of the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit to confirm the proceedings of the Ottawa Board of Health at its meeting of January 24, 2022, be read and passed.

CARRIED

INQUIRIES

There were no inquiries filed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Regular Meeting

Monday, February 14, 2022 - 5:00 PM

BOARD SECRETARY

BOARD CHAIR