



# Ottawa Public Health Annual Report 2011

## Improving Ottawa's health: Health promotion, protection and disease prevention

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### Message from the Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health, Councillor Diane Holmes



I am pleased to present the Ottawa Public Health (OPH) 2011 Annual Report, which highlights the accomplishments of our local public health unit and demonstrates how it improves Ottawa's health through health promotion, protection and disease prevention. Many of the featured stories in this report include personal accounts from clients about how the programs have improved their quality of life, as well as testimonials from OPH staff about the significance of these services.

As Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health, I have been able to witness first-hand the positive impact of OPH services in the community – the launch of the new dental health program for low-income families at one of our local schools and the opening of a new sexual health centre in South Nepean.

I am proud of how OPH and the Board of Health have worked together to improve the health and well-being of our community.

## The Ottawa Board of Health

The Ottawa Board of Health – which has a legislated duty to ensure the provision of public health programs and services to the residents of Ottawa, and to govern these programs and services in the public interest – held its inaugural meeting in April 2011. The Board is comprised of 11 members, representing a mix of members of Ottawa City Council and the public. All members are appointed by Council.

- Diane Holmes (Chair)
- Dr. Atul Kapur (Vice-Chair)
- David Chernushenko
- Mathieu Fleury
- Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
- Jan Harder
- Katherine Hobbs
- Timothy Hutchinson
- Marguarite Keeley
- Maria McRae
- Gisèle Richer

### OPH online and social Media 2011:

- Launched online prenatal classes for moms-to-be
- Received over 11,000 hits to online screening tool for sexually transmitted infections
- Developed the “Enjoy the Skin You’re In” social media campaign to reduce indoor tanning of 16-18 year olds. There were over 2,800 views of the YouTube videos
- Released daily health tweets and identified as one of the 10 most popular Twitter accounts in Canada, with over 6,800 Twitter followers. Follow OPH on Twitter (@ottawahealth).

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## Message from the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Isra Levy

Our vision at Ottawa Public Health is to make Ottawa a community where people are healthy, safe and actively engaged in their well-being. Whether it is providing new parents with information on healthy child development or assisting a client in the removal of bed bugs, the stories in our 2011 Annual Report show how OPH is turning that vision into reality and improving Ottawa’s health.

In 2011, OPH provided services for almost 20,000 clients at the sexual health clinics and centres. This represents a 20% increase in demand for service over the previous year. Our capacity to improve and protect Ottawa’s health was very apparent as OPH dealt with a number of emerging community health needs in 2011. OPH staff were called upon to initiate a community-wide notification due to an infection control lapse at a local endoscopy clinic as well as to provide support to residents for a number of other health emergencies. These services were provided in addition to our ongoing and regular programming. I am honoured to be working with such professional staff, who have risen to the challenges of this past year. I am proud of our accomplishments and of the extraordinary service we have provided to the community.

Our work would not be successful without the support from Ottawa residents and the assistance of many community partners including: schools boards, community health and resource centres and parks and recreation facilities. My gratitude also extends to members of our new Board of Health, who have provided their wisdom and guidance in helping improve public health in Ottawa.

### **OPH partnerships at a glance:**

- Expanded mental health screening services and access to mental health counselling services for families, children and youth through new partnerships with Centre Psychosocial, Crossroads Children's Centre and Youth Services Bureau
- Researched, collated and prepared five health status reports for partners in the community
- Partnered with The Ottawa Hospital's Healthy Lifestyle and Diabetes Program and the Bruyère Academic Family Health Team Diabetes Program to deliver the Workplace Health Diabetes Project, reaching over 1,180 employees in 26 different workplaces.

## **Improving Ottawa's Health: Health Promotion, Protection & Prevention**

### **Helping new immigrants**

Many families who are new to Ontario are not aware that children must be immunized against certain diseases before attending school. "Having children vaccinated against diseases such as measles, not only spares them from getting sick but can also help to prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases throughout schools and the community," says OPH public health nurse Geneviève Richer-Brulé. One of the responsibilities of OPH is to ensure that all school aged children have received their required publicly-funded vaccines.

Joseph and his family, newly arrived to Canada from a refugee camp in Uganda, were recipients of this important public health service. One of the first things Joseph did when he arrived in Ottawa was to register his children for school. However, his children had not been immunized in the refugee camp and he was unable to complete their school registration. Joseph's children were referred to the OPH immunization assessment clinic where a nurse determined that the children needed vaccinations for measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio. The OPH nurse worked with a community health centre and had the children vaccinated right away. Joseph was overjoyed and thanked OPH for helping his children meet the immunization requirements to attend school and to protect them from these diseases.

For further information: [Immunization clinics in Ottawa](#)

### **In 2011, OPH helped prevent diseases through publicly-funded vaccination and support programs:**

- Administered almost 10,000 doses of human papilloma virus vaccine to grade 8 girls
- Established a Physician Outreach Team to support immunizations in approximately 400 primary care clinics
- Provided the flu shot to 800 street-involved individuals
- Tested 240 homeless persons for tuberculosis

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## Something to smile about



In October 2010, Ms Valerie Edwards saw an announcement for OPH's Healthy Smiles Program at the Wabano Aboriginal Centre. Healthy Smiles Ontario is a new program, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, that provides low-income families with access to dental care treatment.

In 2011, OPH helped 1,062 individuals through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program. "Before Healthy Smiles Ontario, finding the money to pay for dental treatment was difficult and sometimes not possible. I wanted to ensure that my kids got the dental care they needed, but it was difficult. Through this program, I was able to take the kids to the public health dental clinic and they were seen by the dentist and hygienist," says Valerie. Her two children were the first in Ottawa to be enrolled in the program.

For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit [ottawa.ca/health](http://ottawa.ca/health) or call Ottawa Public Health Information at 613-580-6744 (TTY: 613-580-9656). The application form can be downloaded at [downloaded the Healthy Smiles Ontario Program application form](#). Complete, sign and take your application form with the required documentation to any City of Ottawa Client Service Centre. Further details are available at City of Ottawa - [Access to dental care](#)

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## Keeping the bed bugs at bay

Ann Stanton-Loucks has more than 13 years of experience as an OPH public health inspector. She recently began working in the Health Hazard Complaints Program, which deals with concerns regarding mould, as well as pest problems, including bed bugs. What Ann finds most gratifying is that she has a positive impact on someone's life right away. "Frequently we get calls from clients who are at their wit's end. They are frustrated, disheartened and upset. If we can help them with their situation, the impact is immediate."

OPH staff responded to more than 1,200 health hazards complaints in 2011, such as bed bugs and indoor mould. More than 1,000 Ottawa residents were given help because of a bed bug problem. She also describes how the program helps to make someone's living situation better. "A client who has bed bugs feels isolated. We are able to provide accurate information about bed bug treatment and remove some of the stigma surrounding a bed bug infestation. Ultimately, we work with all the parties involved so that the client can have a pest-free environment and get a good night's sleep. With vulnerable clients, we are able to coordinate with public health nurses to provide them with access to any social services that they may need," says Ann.

Tom, a retired construction worker, is among the more than 1,000 Ottawa residents that OPH helped in 2011 because of a bed bug problem. Before getting help from OPH, Tom described his experience with bed bugs as causing complete havoc. OPH staff investigated Tom's apartment and explained how to deal with the bed bug infestation. A public health inspector also contacted the landlord to advocate, on Tom's behalf, the need for licensed pest control to help eradicate the insects. OPH staff also put Tom in contact with Bed Bug Busters, a non-profit organization that helps clients prepare their homes for licensed pest control.

For more information: [Bed Bugs](#)

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## Making health connections during a crisis: Infection control lapse



In July 2011, OPH was advised that some infection prevention and control cleaning protocols had not always been followed during the performance of endoscopic procedures at an out-of-hospital clinic in the Ottawa area. This lapse had potentially exposed about 7,000 patients, who had undergone endoscopic procedures – colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy and endoscopy – to the risk of infection with hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

OPH was successful in directly notifying over 90% of potentially affected patients, and providing comprehensive communication and patient support to those who sought it. In order to maximize public notification, OPH made use of public service announcements, social media platforms, phone calls, and where necessary, in-person delivery of letters to individuals' homes. OPH also forged partnerships with local laboratories to ensure blood testing was available to individuals without a family physician. In addition to responding to the infection control lapse, OPH managed 175 outbreaks of infectious diseases in 2011, which

affected 2,955 adults and children.

The notification effort was underpinned by a plan to ensure that concerned people could obtain information from multiple sources, including a dedicated OPH phone line. During the first week following the release of the information, OPH's dedicated phone line was open for over 80 hours; it stayed active until midnight for the first three days to respond to the volume of calls. In the first two months of operation, the phone line received approximately 4,900 calls. Staff also responded to emails from concerned residents and affected patients.

Since October 2011, OPH has been conducting surveillance, follow-up of test results, case management, and evaluation. Patients with positive results continue to be interviewed in detail to determine risk factors for exposure. OPH has also undertaken an epidemiological "look back" investigation to determine if there was evidence of patient-to-patient transmission of disease as a result of the lapse.

To date, OPH has not established a link between the clinic where the lapse occurred and any positive cases of hepatitis B or C or HIV identified in patients of the clinic. The response is ongoing.

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## Giving babies and families a healthy start

The Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program provides home visits to expectant parents and those with children up to the age of 6 years and direct access to important parenting support and health information. "There are so many questions and concerns that parents have about healthy child development. And at times, these can be very complex and demanding situations. Home visits ensure clients receive support and information, in a way that is very personal and tailored to each family," says OPH public health nurse Josée Peterson. More than 13,000 home visits were made in 2011 as part of the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program.

In 2011, OPH received almost 20,000 telephone calls to the Ottawa Public Health Information Line, 25% of which were calls from families of young children. Post-partum depression – a depression that affects women after childbirth – is a health issue that is broached during all home visits with new parents. It is important for families to be aware of the signs and symptoms of post-partum depression and mood disorders, tips on how to deal with the emotional impact of having a newborn as well as the help that is available to them. Clients have expressed to OPH that just by having a nurse there to talk with about a

stressful situation can help to relieve some of the pressure families experience upon the arrival of a new baby and to address challenges as their child grows.

Through home visits, staff can help parents learn about topics such as pregnancy and childbirth, parenting, child development, mental health, family violence and resources in the community. For more information on arranging for a family home visit, call the Ottawa Public Health Information Line at 613-580-6744.

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## NutriSTEP®

OPH's volunteer Community Food Advisors reached more than 3,200 individuals. Collectively, volunteers contributed over 12,800 hours to OPH programs and activities during 2011. Marie-Hélène Traversy is a public health nurse with the Early Child Health Team. She has always had a passion for nutrition and healthy eating. This passion led her to champion the Nutrition Screening Tool for Every Preschooler® (NutriSTEP®). "I am very proud to be promoting the use of NutriSTEP® in Ottawa because this tool is an effective way to make parents aware of the importance of establishing a healthy lifestyle for their children from an early age. NutriSTEP® gives us the ability to promote key messages to prevent obesity, offer support resources as well as direct parents to community services. Parents are very receptive of this tool and their feedback indicates that they very much appreciate the information and resources that are given to them," says Marie-Hélène.

This program helps to assess eating habits and identify nutrition problems in children aged three to five years. It involves the use of a valid and reliable questionnaire that parents can complete about their preschooler. The questionnaire includes topics such as children's food and nutrient intake, physical growth, developmental and physical capabilities, physical activity, and food security. For more information: [NutriSTEP® website](#)

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## Stay Smart, Wear a Helmet

About 11,000 people were provided with helmet fitting and head injury prevention information in 2011.



Children and youth have the highest rate of head injuries related to ice skating. This concerning fact prompted OPH to partner with several other City of Ottawa departments to curb head injuries among Ottawa children. Starting January 1, 2012, it is mandatory for novice skaters as well children 10 years old and younger to wear a helmet during public skating sessions at City of Ottawa facilities.

"We are fortunate to have so many opportunities for families and kids to learn and enjoy our nation's pastime of ice-skating," said Mayor Jim Watson. "While especially important for kids, it doesn't matter if you're a seasoned pro or just learning to skate, it's important to be safe and wear an appropriate helmet.

The City of Ottawa is also fortunate to have forged a partnership with CCM/Reebok in order to provide a way for residents to purchase helmets at discounted prices. Coupons are available to all residents at all indoor City of Ottawa arenas and at all Play it Again Sports stores in Ottawa. These coupons allow residents to save up to \$10

off the price of their CSA certified CCM 04 helmet, allowing residents access to safe and affordable helmets.

For more information:

[Helmet safety](#)

[Choosing and using the right helmet](#)

[Public skating](#)

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## The Friendly Corner: Changing the lives of seniors

The Friendly Corner is a health promotion and physical activity centre at the St. Laurent Shopping Centre that strives to make staying healthy easier and fun for seniors. Teresita and Jacques Ethier have been attending the program since its inception and helped organize a mall walking club through this program.

OPH helped Ottawa area seniors dispose of their old medications. More than 1,100 old medications were collected during medication clean-out events in 2011. Jacques says, "The Friendly Corner has certainly had a great impact on me. I joined in 1993; one year after my cardiac bypass surgery at the Heart Institute, and it became the second phase in my life after 40 years in the teaching profession. Not only has my physical well-being improved, but also my mental health."

Teresita says, "I have good reasons to wake up early every morning and I look forward to going to a place that adds zest to my everyday life. I believe that I have become a better friend, and a kinder wife, mother, grandmother, all because of the participation, interactions and satisfaction of belonging to our larger family at The Friendly Corner. The friendships forged satisfy our craving for connectivity with others, while taking good care of our health."

For the last 18 years, OPH and the St. Laurent Shopping Centre have been offering this service.

Reducing social isolation and risk of falling due to inactivity are some of the many health benefits The Friendly Corner offers to seniors. Each year, there are more than 8,000 visits to The Friendly Corner for physical activity programs, education, peer support and special events.

For more information:

[The Friendly Corner](#)

[Physical activity for seniors](#)

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## Power of Dads



Strong fathers are gentle and patient. Dave Elder is a strong father and competitive power-lifter who brings the same level of passion he has for his sport to the work that he does in the community. As an OPH public health nurse and father of two wonderful girls, Dave helps fathers see the inner strength and power they have to positively influence the lives of their children. 'Power of Dads' is a family-friendly community celebration that recognizes the role of the father, and uses a strongman demonstration as an attraction. This one-day event features motivational speeches, parent education stations and activities for children. "We create a clear parallel between the physical power that is displayed at the strongman demonstration and the inner strength that dads have to be patient, gentle and caring with their children," says Dave.

"Power of Dads" and more than 120 public health community events were arranged by OPH staff in 2011. At the event, children were asked to tell OPH about their dad. 'A best friend,' 'funny,' 'loving,' and 'awesome' are only a few of the answers received from children aged four to six years. A father attending the event also shared his thoughts on how inspiring and moving it was to participate in the strongman demonstration amongst children

cheering him on. “Maybe I’m just getting soft, but it’s the little moments like that, that make all the hard work worthwhile. So thanks again guys for giving me the chance for such an experience. We may lift big and sometimes look big, but somewhere inside us all is that little boy, we need to remember him sometimes”.

On June 15th, 2011, the 6th Annual Power of Dads event attracted over 500 dads with their families and was organized in collaboration with Mothercraft Ottawa’s Touch a Truck Event. In addition, a smaller version of “Power of Dads” was hosted on Father’s Day in collaboration with the Young/Single Parent Support Network of Ottawa.

For more information: [Becoming a Dad](#)

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## Improving access to courses on safe food handling



OPH’s Food Safety Program not only protects the public through food premises inspections, but also through robust food handler training. “While food safety involves many different stakeholders from the international, national and provincial levels, the fact is the buck stops at the local public health unit. Local food establishments look to Ottawa Public Health not only for regulatory guidance but for information on how to prepare and handle food safely on a day to day basis. Our food safety certification program is the single most important means by which we can transfer sound food handling principles directly to those who sell, prepare and serve food to the residents of Ottawa and their guests,” says Michelle Goulet, public health inspector with the Food Handler Certification Team.

In 2011, more than 1,500 individuals were certified in safe food preparation. This represents a 10% increase over the previous year and a 28% increase since 2009. “The continuous increase in enrolment in the voluntary program speaks to the quality of its content and to the skills of the public health inspectors who administer it,” says Michelle. In 2011, OPH conducted over 12,400 food safety inspections at approximately 5,210 establishments. The steady increase in numbers of certified food handlers is also a reflection of the program’s ability to adapt.

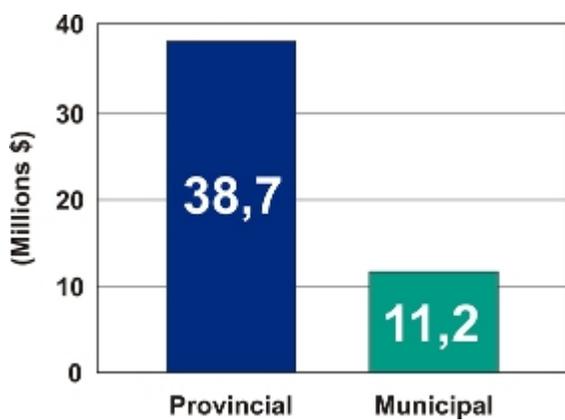
Streamlining the group registration process for large organizations and corporations has garnered considerable positive feedback. One course attendee remarked, “I really appreciated this format for registration. It saved a lot of time and confusion rather than having to register each participant individually as we did in the past.” In addition, weekend courses for those unable to attend during the week were offered in 2011. Courses continue to be taught in English, French and Cantonese in order to meet the multi-lingual needs of the community. For those who prefer web learning, online e-courses through a partner company In Good Hands are also offered. In 2011, outreach into the community was strengthened by providing more presentations at health fairs.

For more information:

[Certified Food Handler Training  
In Good Hands](#)

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## OPH Sources of Funding



\$ in thousands	Sources of funding
20,772	Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
13,510	Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport
4,487	Ministry of Child and Youth Services
11,221	Municipal
85	Federal
147	Fees & Services
50,222	Total

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