

*Somerset West Community
Health Centre*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

November 2019

FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH AND HARM REDUCTION

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH PROMOTION, AND ADVOCACY

BUDGET SPEAKS!

The 2020 draft City budget was tabled on November 6th and included the following highlights:

- \$15M for affordable housing development
- \$500K for social service agencies
- The establishment of a new Anti-Racism Secretariat
- CCOC housing won the Request for Proposals bid to build affordable housing on the Forward Ave shelter site

Our team is coordinating deputations at the Community and Protective Services Committee on November 15th for the review of the Rental Accommodation Study report and November 21st for the budget review.

ENGAGING SCHOOLS IN OUR ANTI-RACISM, ANTI-OPPRESSION WORK

As a follow up to our community conversation with racialized youth, our Advocacy Committee hosted representatives from the catholic and public school boards to talk about racism within the school system. Representatives from Parents for Diversity, and the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership, also attended to speak about their advocacy and systems level work, and share insights on how we can support work in this area.

COMMUNITY PLANNING IN MECHANICSVILLE

Staff, residents, and neighbourhood partners in Mechanicsville have come together to create a planning committee. The group hopes to identify education opportunities, especially around safety and mental health.

VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT WITH CHRISTMAS EXCHANGE REGISTRATIONS

Thanks to the support of volunteers, we were able to facilitate three Christmas Exchange hamper and voucher registration sessions. Here are some highlights:

89 Applications Submitted

206 Individuals Registered for Support

6 volunteers contributed a total of 39.5 hours to ensure that we were able to offer support in English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

WORKING ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We are actively involved in working with the City around affordable housing. Over the last several years, we have been asking for the City to make some changes, for example:

- Allow social service organizations to make third party complaints to bylaw on behalf of tenants
- Create an index of bylaw complaints and responses to complaints that can be accessed by the public
- Increase the number of by law officers to do proactive inspections

All of these asks were included as recommendations in the City's Rental Accommodations Study, which impacts long-term and short-term rental accommodations. We are also working with a group of organizations calling for stronger commitments to affordable housing in the new Official Plan.

CONTINUING TO PUSH FOR A LEBRETON FLATS COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT

As a member of the LeBreton Flats Community Benefits Agreement Coalition, we made a presentation to the National Capital Commission (NCC)'s senior leadership encouraging them to enter into a legally binding agreement to make sure community benefits are integrated into their redevelopment plans. They agreed that community benefits are critical to this redevelopment, but are unsure what the most effective framework to would be. The Atkinson Foundation's PowerLab will be holding a workshop for the Coalition in November to determine our action plan and next steps.



NEWS ON ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) has shared that it is highly unlikely that any subsidized/rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units will be included in the Rochester Heights Phase I redevelopment. RGI units are subsidized to ensure that tenants who meet the criteria for social housing do not pay more than 30% of their income on rent. We are hearing that due to the nature of the financing for the redevelopment, the lowest cost units in the Rochester Heights redevelopment will be using the Below Market Rent (BMR) model, which is around 80% of market rent. We have expressed concern with this model as high rents in Ottawa mean that 80% of market rent is still unattainable to anyone on low income. This means that while units may be affordable to people with moderate income, it's unlikely that people with low income, or on social assistance, will be able to benefit from the community redevelopment.



CHILDREN AND YOUTH

BUILDING OUR CAPACITY

We have joined the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative - Growing Up Great's "Building Agency Capacity to Improve Family Engagement Practice in Ottawa" pilot project. This process will help us understand how successfully we are implementing parent engagement strategies, and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

HARM REDUCTION

SEXUAL HEALTH SHOULDN'T BE SPOOKY!

In October, we held a sexual health workshop for ACB youth to provide resources, encourage conversation, and improve folk's knowledge of sexual health. We have also started attending the University of Ottawa's Open Mic Night, doing condom outreach, and attending Jaku Konbit's Black Support Youth Group.

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

The Harm Reduction department has been working with our City Counselors to support clients sleeping rough in our catchment area. This issue has garnered some media attention and we are seeing support from the community. The City is working to expedite housing for the individuals who are living in a local tent city and we are also working with churches and other partners to explore the possibility of an after-hours warming centre. Read about it here!

OUR CONSUMPTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES REMAIN BUSY

Our Supervised consumption and treatment site continues to be very busy, seeing about 200 unique clients every month. The service is working to support clients as the drug supply continues

to be contaminated by fentanyl, which causes frequent withdrawal and overdoses. We are also seeing benzodiazepine analog Etizolamin in the drug supply, which causes over-sedation, distress, disorientation and amnesia, among other symptoms. There have been 5 deaths in Ontario in 2019 linked to etizolam poisoning.

Our team is working hard to ensure clients stay safe when they are incapacitated in this way, and our teams are collaborating to support clients as they experience the destabilizing effects of a toxic drug supply.

On Nov. 6, Joel Harden, MPP for Ottawa Centre, spoke at Queen's Park about the toxic drug supply and the urgent need to address the opioid crisis. Somerset West CHC was named in his speech as one of the organizations at the frontlines in this crisis. Watch it here!

FUNDING APPLICATION FOR SAFER SUPPLY

We are waiting to hear about the outcome of a Safe Supply prescribing application submitted to the Substance Use and Addictions Program of Health Canada by Ottawa Public Health. We are a partner in this application, and if approved, this project could start as soon as January 2020. Safe Supply is widely acknowledged to be one of the most urgently needed interventions into the health and safety of people who use drugs in the midst of the overdose crisis.

TALKING ABOUT COMMUNITY SAFETY

In response to a request from the local BIAs, we organized a community safety meeting for November 13th. The meeting was open to the public and provided a forum to discuss safety concerns and solutions. We were thrilled with the level of community engagement, with approximately 80 residents, businesses and partners in attendance. Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Public Health and Crime Prevention Ottawa were all in attendance and made presentations to help set the context for the discussion.

While there were certainly safety concerns tabled, we also heard a lot of support from the community for the work we're doing. The majority of our neighbors expressed appreciation for our efforts to respond to the overdose crisis and an understanding that our services are part of the solution to safety concerns. This understanding was reflected in the solutions they brought forward, which included 24/7 supervised consumptions service and support for safe drug supply. The possibility of increased neighborhood policing was also tabled. The event was covered by CBC Ottawa - read about it here!

CELEBRATING THE CHANGE OF SEASON

On Nov. 8th, we held a fall feast for our community. Indigenous elders joined us for a community potluck that included delicious food, music, and thoughtful discussion.



PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

WINTER CLOTHING GIVE-AWAY

Our outreach team has provided rooming house clients access to new winter coats, hats and gloves. The give-away is set to continue with a winter boots giveaway later in the month!

SHIFTING OUR WALK-IN CLINIC AT 55 ECCLES

Effective November 1st, the walk-in clinic at Eccles has moved to the second floor to join the health services clinic. This move opens space for the Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) clinic which is shared by our OAT team of Primary Health Care and Harm Reduction staff.

OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE (ONHC)

SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE

Our Multicultural Health Navigator (MHN) program was selected to present at this year's Pathways to Prosperity National Conference held in Toronto, which had 450 attendees. One of our team members made a presentation highlighting the essential work navigators perform to enhance the well-being of newcomers to Canada. This work includes supporting and coordinating connections to primary health care, creating and facilitating health promotion programs, and acting as intermediaries between newcomer clients and community organizations.

LOOKING AT PERSONAL SUPPORT WORK AS AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR NEWCOMERS

We recently conducted a small study to better understand the working conditions and experiences of immigrants who work as Personal Support Workers (PSWs) in Ottawa. Through a short literature review, and interviews with 7 PSWs born outside of Canada, we learned that while this profession is a good entry point into employment for immigrants to Canada, there is currently a shortage of people staying in the profession. This is caused by a number of factors, including:

- Low pay and inequities in pay
- Precarious nature of employment (part-time, casual, evening work, split shifts)
- Physically demanding work that is hard on people's health

Other factors mentioned include safety issues, racism, and not being treated respectfully or having skills acknowledged by clients, family members and/or other health professionals. Findings from this study were shared with our partners, including the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership. We hope to work with our partners to identify ways we could advocate for better experiences for all PSWs

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