



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

To/Destinataire	Mayor and Members of Council	File/N° de fichier:
From/Expéditeur	Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health Anthony Di Monte, General Manager, Emergency and Protective Services	
Subject/Objet	Update on COVID-19 Vaccination Neighbourhood Approach	Date: May 28, 2021

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)'s COVID-19 Priority Neighbourhood Vaccination Approach.

Neighbourhood approach

Throughout the COVID-19 response, the primary goal has been to protect the people most at risk for hospitalization and death as a result of COVID-19.

Assessment of socio demographic data earlier in the pandemic highlighted the disproportionate impacts some communities faced and continue to experience throughout the pandemic. To address these differences, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and the Ottawa Health Team launched a COVID-19 Community Response focussing on specific neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods were selected based on socio demographic factors as highlighted by the [Ottawa Neighbourhood Study \(ONS\) data](#) coupled with rates of COVID-19 in the community.

OPH is committed to using an evidence-based approach to maximize the impact of all work, including the vaccine rollout. In the context of COVID-19, applying the most effective approach means looking at local data to understand who has been most at risk or been most severely impacted by COVID-19 and who has received a vaccine. This information is used to tailor interventions and programming for these communities.

As you are aware, the province identified "hot spots" across Ontario for vaccine prioritization based on the first three digits of a postal code. Some of these local "hot spots" incorporate some of the high-priority neighbourhoods previously identified by OPH, however the Medical Officer of Health has the authority to further focus on neighbourhoods based on local considerations. Therefore, the EOC will continue to focus its efforts on priority neighbourhoods previously identified for the vaccine rollout.

Priority Neighbourhood Plan

The Priority Neighbourhood Taskforce is leading the overall strategy to increase access, minimize barriers and offer an increasing level of support for those with more disadvantage.

Some of the barriers that exist within the priority neighbourhoods, which are among the lowest income communities in Ottawa, include:

- Inability to book time off or lack of childcare required to get a vaccine
- Language barriers
- Access to technology and technical challenges booking through the provincial system
- Transportation
- Need for additional supports, such as the help of a social worker
- The limited appointments available in the provincial system.
- A desire to wait for availability to open to all age groups to limit vaccination to “one trip” with all family members

Supports provided to date

To date, the vaccine distribution used a variety of mechanisms to address these barriers. These included:

- Increasing access to Community Clinics
 - o Supports to complete the online booking process
 - o Transportation supports through partners
- Opportunities to access vaccine outside of Community Clinics
 - o Pop-up clinics that did not require online bookings
 - o Ottawa Health Team led mobile vaccination clinics within 15 Ottawa Community Housing buildings
 - o Vaccination to homebound residents
 - o Partnerships with local health organizations for focused clinics, such as the Bruyère clinic for AIDS Committee of Ottawa clients and with Local Agencies Serving Immigrants clients
 - o Request to the Provincial government to prioritize pharmacy clinics in priority neighbourhoods
- Increase awareness of opportunities
 - o Door-to-door outreach
 - o Outreach to community partners
 - o Information sessions and town halls in 9 languages

Current neighbourhood strategy priorities

The Priority Neighbourhood Taskforce is reviewing the impact of the recent opening of appointments to all residents over 12 years old on the priority neighbourhoods.

In the meantime, the neighbourhood strategy will continue to focus on three key areas:

1. Tailored options to address barriers experienced by residents that continue to be the hardest to reach
2. Booking and transportation support into existing vaccine clinic options
3. Continuing to build confidence in vaccine

1. Tailored options to address barriers

The Priority Neighbourhood Taskforce is working with partners to identify options to meet the needs of people with the greatest barriers to accessing the vaccine.

In some areas, this may include pop-ups that include the school age population and their families, where projected coverage rates remain low. These pop-ups will apply learnings from the previous pop-up clinics, which focused on a very specific population and where communications were conducted through direct outreach.

However, as these will be very focussed on specific neighbourhoods, residents are encouraged to not wait for a pop-up clinic to come to their community. The implementation of these clinics will depend on data from local neighbourhoods and will consider the other supports and immunization channels available to residents within a particular geographical region. Resources will be allocated to the specific areas that require the most support, and not all priority neighbourhoods may receive a pop-up clinic.

Beginning May 31 pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinics will resume focussed on specific neighbourhoods and will only be eligible for residents that live in the specific neighbourhoods. More information will be provided to ward councillors as it becomes available and updates will be provided [online](#).

2. Booking and transportation support existing appointment options

Services will be integrated into locations where City services and local supports are already accessed, such as the Ottawa Public Library branches and Ottawa Food Bank locations. Staff will support these partners to provide information and support booking vaccine appointments into existing options like community clinics and pharmacies.

During these engagement activities, staff will also increase awareness of transportation supports that are available through calling 211 or by distribution of OC Transpo single-ride vouchers.

3. Building vaccine confidence

The significant work undertaken by OPH on vaccine confidence will continue.

To date, approximately 40 multilingual vaccine [townhalls](#) and Vaccine 101 presentations to service providers have been held in 9 languages, in order to share information and build vaccine confidence. These sessions were complemented by sessions led by physicians, faith leaders and other subject matter experts from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities and language capacities to provide broad reach throughout the city.

In addition, the team has developed a series of videos with faith and local leaders receiving their vaccine and speaking to why they made that decision in a variety of languages. These [videos](#) and other key messages have been shared via WhatsApp channels in multiple languages. Also, community partners with the support of OPH have been out in community having conversations about vaccine via door-to-door outreach, responding to questions and providing information so people may make an informed choice to access vaccine.

Furthermore, in an effort to build vaccine confidence OPH has launched a “Community Immunity” communications campaign. Information on why to get vaccinated, how to speak with

others about vaccines, answers to frequently asked questions and a COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Employers are some of the resources available on OPH's [Community Immunity webpage](#).

Next Steps

The Priority Neighbourhood Taskforce will continue to review the vaccine coverage rate to select the next communities for to receive more tailored options. This is in addition to the outreach, booking supports and other activities that will take place in priority neighbourhoods, congregate settings. Furthermore, dedicated vaccination efforts for homebound and Indigenous populations will continue.

In addition, the EOC is continuing preparations to ramp up operations in June, which includes the immunization of youth aged 12 to 17, the opening of the St. Laurent Complex as the 5th community clinic, and support for second dose appointments to those that are eligible.

The vaccine roll-out continues across Ottawa with appointments available at [community clinics](#) and through participating [pharmacies](#). Residents who do not yet have an appointment for their vaccine can be reassured that anyone who wants a vaccine will be able to get one and will not be missed in the vaccine roll-out.

Respectfully,

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Vera Etches
Medical Officer of Health

cc: Senior Leadership Team
Emergency Operations Centre