

---

**REPORT TITLE: Peel Public Health's 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities**

**FROM:** Nancy Polsinelli, Commissioner of Health Services  
Lawrence C. Loh, MD MPH FCFP FRCPC FACPM, Medical Officer of Health

---

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Peel Public Health Interim Strategic Priorities as outlined in Section 2 and Appendix I of the report from the Commissioner of Health Services and Medical Officer of Health, listed on the February 25, 2021 Regional Council agenda, titled "Peel Public Health's 2021–2022 Interim Strategic Priorities", be endorsed.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- On October 24, 2019, Regional Council, as the Board of Health, endorsed the Peel Public Health Strategic Plan, titled 2020-2029 Strategic Priorities for the Future.
  - This plan outlined five long-term strategic priorities including 1) Practicing Effective Public Health, 2) Advancing Health Equity, 3) Enabling Active Living and Healthy Eating, 4) Promoting Mental Wellbeing, and 5) Reducing Health-Related Impacts of Climate Change.
  - Since January 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an extensive emergency response, requiring the re-deployment of the majority of Peel Public Health resources and adaptation of Peel Public Health's priorities.
  - An interim Peel Public Health Strategic Plan for 2021-2022 has been prepared to reflect the COVID-19 work currently underway and anticipated in the immediate future, as well as to redefine the scope and focus for the existing strategic priorities to reflect the COVID-19 response and recovery.
  - Responding to and recovering from COVID-19 is the primary strategic priority for Public Health for 2021-2022, and the five previous strategic priorities have been adapted to support this interim primary priority.
  - Peel Public Health will continue to monitor community needs to determine readiness to resume the 2020-2029 Strategic Priorities once demands of the COVID-19 related interim strategic priority abate.
- 

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Background**

Public Health is mandated by the Ontario Public Health Standards to have a strategic plan that sets out the vision, priorities, and strategic directions for the Board of Health. Peel Public Health's strategic plan also contributes to achieving the vision of Community for Life and the Term of Council Priorities 2018-2022. On October 24, 2019, Regional Council, as the Board of Health, endorsed the finalized Peel Public Health Strategic Plan titled, 2020-2029 Strategic Priorities for the Future, which identified the following priorities:

## Peel Public Health's 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities

- Practicing Effective Public Health;
- Enabling Active Living and Healthy Eating;
- Promoting Mental Wellbeing;
- Reducing Health-Related Impacts of Climate Change; and,
- Advancing Health Equity.

The unanticipated global COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated an extensive emergency response, requiring much of Peel Public Health's resources for the majority of 2020. An interim strategic plan has been developed by harnessing existing and previous planning work to ensure that all available resources are directed to the pandemic response. In doing so, the aim has been to provide clarity in scope and focus for Peel Public Health's 2020-2029 Strategic Priorities to reflect the COVID-19 work anticipated in the immediate future and currently underway, ensuring that:

- Local public health priorities focus on current needs;
- Resources needed for success are received; and,
- Programs adapt to the changing realities of Peel communities.

The involvement of Peel Public Health in the COVID-19 pandemic response is expected to continue for several years, encompassing case and outbreak management, vaccination and recovery. An interim strategic plan that balances the resumption of critical public health services with an appropriate COVID-19 response is needed to guide the work and effective use of resources of Peel Public Health within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. Interim Strategic Priorities

Responding to COVID-19 has been identified as a primary area of focus for the years 2021 to 2022. In addition, the five priorities in the 2020-2029 Peel Public Health Strategic Plan have been modified to reflect the COVID-19 response and recovery. In planning for eventual recovery and resumption of public health services, Peel Public Health aims to use these priorities to guide stakeholder and community engagement and the changes anticipated as the COVID-19 pandemic begins to subside.

The interim strategic priorities represent areas of work that require focus and attention in planning and resourcing in order to achieve their objectives. Critical public health programs and services will continue to be maintained, depending on community needs and organizational capacity.

**Table 1:** Interim Strategic Priorities and Vision

Interim Strategic Priority	Vision
<b>Responding to COVID-19 (new primary priority)</b>	The role of public health is to prevent severe illness and death due to all causes, including COVID-19, interrupt community transmission by supporting vaccine deployment, protect health care system capacity and workers, and minimize the societal and economic impacts of COVID-19 on the community. The COVID-19 response within Peel Public Health is sustainable and has adequate resources to support community needs, while supporting staff wellbeing.

## Peel Public Health's 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities

<b>Practicing Effective Public Health (adapted from 2020-2029 priorities)</b>	Public health has access to the best available data and other evidence, and has the skills necessary for knowledge exchange, planning and evaluation, and continuous quality improvement to effectively identify interventions to maximize the health impact in Peel's specific context. This includes timely, evidence-based decision making to respond to COVID-19.
<b>Advancing Health Equity (adapted from 2020-2029 priorities)</b>	Peel's pandemic response addresses health equity by acknowledging and analyzing how various determinants of health increase the risk of COVID-19 exposure, by identifying disparities and inequities that drive transmission and mitigating the disproportionate impacts of public health measures, and by working to address impacts in engagement with community and stakeholders. Healthy equity approaches are incorporated into COVID-19 pandemic planning, response and recovery.
<b>Enabling Active Living and Healthy Eating (adapted from 2020-2029 priorities)</b>	Peel residents live in a community that supports physically distanced community mobility throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including transportation systems that promote active living and safe commuting, and food systems that support healthy eating. Peel residents engage in behaviours and have necessary resources for healthy eating (e.g., food literacy, access to cooking facilities). Chronic disease risks are reduced because people eat well, are active throughout the day, and have moderate amounts of sedentary behaviour and screen time.
<b>Promoting Mental Wellbeing (adapted from 2020-2029 priorities)</b>	Peel residents live in socially supportive and connected communities where they experience high mental wellbeing and low mental illness. There is an increase in Peel residents' exposure to protective factors for mental wellbeing (e.g., physical activity) and a reduction in their exposure to risk factors for mental illness (e.g., problematic substance use). The negative impacts of COVID-19 on mental wellbeing are mitigated.
<b>Reducing Health-Related Impacts of Climate Change (adapted from 2020-2029 priorities)</b>	Peel residents and communities are more resilient to the adverse health outcomes and public exposure to health hazards related to climate change, with a focus on public health emergency management and mitigating the effects of rising temperatures, vector-borne diseases, food and waterborne illness, food insecurity, poor air quality, extreme weather events, and UV exposure.

As outlined in the report from the Commissioner of Health and the Medical Officer of Health, listed on the February 25, 2021 Regional Council agenda, titled "Peel Public Health and COVID-19: A Plan for an Equitable and Engaged Response", Peel Public Health's COVID-19 response incorporates a health equity lens. Further details on Peel Public Health's 2021–2022 Interim Strategic Priorities are provided in Appendix I.

## Peel Public Health's 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities

### NEXT STEPS

Upon Regional Council endorsement, Peel Public Health's 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities will be shared with local municipalities and other relevant stakeholders and posted online. The 2021-2022 interim strategic priorities reflect the COVID-19 work currently underway and anticipated in the immediate future, as well as the adaptation of the 2020-2029 strategic priorities to reflect the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Peel Public Health will continue to monitor the needs of the community to assess opportunities to advance the 2020-2029 Strategic Priorities for the Future. As the global COVID-19 pandemic continually evolves, flexibility over the next two years will be required to allow Peel Public Health to ensure an effective response, recovery and resumption of Public Health services. Updates will be brought to Council as necessary.

### APPENDICES

Appendix I – 2021-2022 Interim Strategic Priorities

---

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Dr. Lawrence C. Loh, Medical Officer of Health, extension 2856, [Lawrence.loh@peelregion.ca](mailto:Lawrence.loh@peelregion.ca)*

*Authored By: Fabio Cabarcas, Advisor*

#### ***Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:***

Department Commissioner, Division Director, Medical Officer of Health and Legal Services.