

June 27, 2019

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Elliott:

Re: Public Health Modernization

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) to recommend the continued comprehensive mandate of public health as defined in the Ontario Public Health Standards (2018) and for gradual adjustments to the provincial-municipal cost-sharing of public health funding formula be phased in over five (5) years commencing in fiscal year 2021-22.

Since the April 11, 2019 Government of Ontario provincial budget announcements regarding public health modernization, concerns have been raised that there may be shifts in the full mandate of public health to yet to be defined essential services. It is critical that the full mandate of public health continue and that adequate funding be provided to support this through a more gradual financial downloading strategy to ensure municipalities are better prepared for the financial implications.

Extensive work went into modernizing the mandate of public health as reflected in the release of the 2018 Ontario Public Health Standards. These standards reflect a renewed mandate for public health with the goal to improve and protect the health and well-being of the population of Ontario and reduce health inequities. This comprehensive mandate is created on a foundation of quality and accountability ensuring that research, evidence, and best practices inform service delivery.

On May 28, 2019 the following resolution was carried at the aPHa Annual General meeting: Public Health Modernization: Getting it Right! This motion positions that the current mandate of public health not be altered in an effort to achieve budget reduction targets, that the Ontario government delay the implementation of any organizational and financial changes to local public health and engage in meaningful consultation and changes in the cost-shared formula be phased in over five (5) years commencing in fiscal 2021-22 (Appendix A).

The Board of Health commends the decision of Premier Ford reported on May 27, 2019 in a news conference that provincial funding cuts for public health in the provincial budget will not go forward for the 2019 year. This was welcomed news and does allow for additional time for more comprehensive financial planning by health units and municipalities.

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The work of public health is inherently cost effective, with an excellent return on investment, and is essential for the province to achieve its goal of ending hallway medicine. Funding for public health is a sound investment in support of the health and wellbeing of the people.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Anita Dubeau
Chair, Board of Health

CG:cm

Att. (1)

cc. Mayor and Council of Simcoe and Muskoka
Members of Provincial Parliament for Simcoe and Muskoka
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health

alPHa RESOLUTION A19-12

TITLE: Public Health Modernization: Getting it Right!

SPONSOR: Peterborough Public Health

WHEREAS the services provided by local boards of public health are critical to supporting and improving the health and quality of life of all residents of the Province; and

WHEREAS public health interventions are an important strategy in the prevention of hallway medicine and have been found to produce significant cost-saving with estimates that every dollar invested will save or avert at least \$14 in future costs; and

WHEREAS boards of health are accountable to both the province and their “obligated municipalities” to maximize their financial resources; and

WHEREAS meaningful municipal participation on boards of health ensures that public health agencies understand and respond to local and specific municipal needs; and

WHEREAS revenue opportunities for municipalities are constrained by both the ability to pay and provincial regulation; and

WHEREAS the current proposal for reorganizing the public health sector in Ontario was developed without meaningful consultation with either boards of health or their obligated municipalities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ontario public health mandate as currently outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards not be altered or diminished in an effort to achieve budget reduction targets and that the Province continues to financially support public health units to adequately implement the Standards;

AND FURTHER that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) calls upon the Ontario government to delay the implementation of any organizational and financial changes to local public health until April 1, 2021 with a commitment to engage in meaningful consultation over the next eighteen (18) months;

AND FURTHER that any changes in the cost-shared formula be phased in over five (5) years commencing in fiscal 2021-22;

AND FURTHER that in ongoing consultations with the province, that alPHa propose the establishment of a joint task force made up of both political representatives and professional staff from existing public health agencies, alPHa, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the City of Toronto to undertake the following activities:

- Establish a set of principles to guide the reorganization of public health in Ontario that include:
 - Assurance that the enhancement of health promotion and disease prevention is the primary priority of any changes undertaken
 - Undertaking the consolidation of health units around a community of interests which include distinguishing between rural and urban challenges, and the meaningful participation of First Nations
 - Taking into account the ability of municipalities to pay, considerations for the broad range of proposed changes in funding arrangements between the province and municipalities
 - Developing a governance structure that provides accountability to local councils required to fund local public health agencies; and
- Conduct public outreach to municipal, public health and other stakeholders to validate both the principles and the resulting plans for future re-organization; and
- Ensure that the municipal and public health perspectives on any proposed changes, including the outcomes of consultation, are incorporated.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Carried as amended