

May 23, 2019

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Deputy Premier
5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

**Open Letter to the Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Regarding Proposed Cuts to Public Health Units in Ontario**

A healthy Ontario is one of the best ways we can ensure we have a high quality of life, vibrant communities, and a strong economy. That's why the funding the Province provides to public health units is so important. We need a network of public health services properly funded to protect the health of all Ontarians.

Much of the work that public health does is preventative. Public health services prevent disease outbreaks, keep our water clean, vaccinate our children, and provide school breakfast programs to children in need. The 2019 Ontario budget puts this vital work at risk.

Public health in Ontario is now facing millions of dollars in cuts this year; billions of dollars in the coming years. Public health officials and elected leaders across Ontario have rightfully spoken out against these cuts and the danger they pose to critical and often lifesaving public health programs. Municipalities from across the province have been clear that they cannot make up the difference created by these cuts.

This cutting of public health services cannot go forward. It puts the prosperity of our communities and of our entire Province at risk. Funding must be restored.

It also makes no economic sense. Public health helps Ontarians stay healthy, so they don't need to go to the doctor, or a hospital, saving time and money. If the government wants to end hallway medicine, as you have pledged, one of the best ways to do that is to actually invest more, not less, in public health.

We need only look back to the SARS epidemic to realize the devastating impact of failing to invest in public health.

Traditionally, Ministers of Health have avoided commenting on the policies of their successors. Health has been seen as a non-partisan issue – something we all support. This attack on public health has prompted us to break our silence.

We implore you, Minister Elliott, to stop these drastic cuts and find a way to move forward that doesn't risk our public health services.

By working in partnership with health units and public health officials, we are confident that you can find savings in a manner that doesn't put the health of Ontarians at risk.

Sincerely,

Dennis R. Timbrell

Former Ontario Minister of Health, 1977-1982

David Caplan

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 2008-2009

Elinor Caplan

Former Ontario Minister of Health, 1987-1990

Evelyn Gigantes

Former Ontario Minister of Health, 1990-1991

Ruth Grier

Former Ontario Minister of Health, 1993-1995

Dr. Eric Hoskins

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 2014-2018

Dr. Helena Jaczek

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 2018

The Honourable Sen. Frances Lankin

Former Ontario Minister of Health, 1991-1993

Deb Matthews

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 2009-2014

George Smitherman

Former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 2003-2008