

May 23, 2019

**SENT ELECTRONICALLY**

The Honourable Christine Elliott  
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
College Park, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
777 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3  
[christine.elliott@ontario.ca](mailto:christine.elliott@ontario.ca)

Dear Minister Elliott:

**Re: Letter of Support for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit – Proposed Boundaries**

It is our understanding that the provincial government is willing to consider feedback on the proposed boundary changes for public health units. With this in mind, the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is fully supportive of the May 15, 2019, letter from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Board of Health recommending that the full territory of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit remain intact and join with York Region Public Health to form a new regional public health entity on April 1, 2020.

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, having merged with Parry Sound in 2005, is well aware of the complexities, disruptions in program service delivery, time and effort, cultural change issues, and especially involved costs associated with such an undertaking. It will be difficult enough merging five health units with intact boundaries, let alone splitting up Simcoe Muskoka, and especially in such a short time frame.

Creating a single health unit entity with such a massive area of over 400,000 Km<sup>2</sup> will make it extremely challenging to respond, in a timely manner, to the local public health needs of the communities we would be required to serve.

For these many reasons, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Board of Health strongly urges the government to reconsider the proposed boundary change and keep the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit intact and join as a whole with York Region Public Health.

Sincerely yours,



Nancy Jacko  
Chairperson, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Board of Health

/sb

To: Minister Elliott  
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## Enclosure

Copy to: North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Member Municipalities  
Boards of Health for, Algoma, North Bay Parry Sound, Porcupine, Renfrew, Simcoe Muskoka, Sudbury, Timiskaming, and York  
Medical Officers of Health for Algoma, North Bay Parry Sound, Porcupine, Renfrew, Simcoe Muskoka, Sudbury, Timiskaming, and York  
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
Elizabeth Walker, Director, Accountability and Liaison Branch, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Vic Fedeli, MPP, Nipissing  
John Vanthof, MPP, Timiskaming Cochrane  
Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka

May 15, 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:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) to recommend that the full territory of SMDHU remain intact and join with York Region to form a new regional public health entity on April 1, 2020. This is in response to information provided verbally to Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health for SMDHU by staff from the Ministry of Health and Long - Term Care on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 indicating that public health services in the District of Muskoka will be provided by a regional public health entity that will also serve Sudbury, North Bay, Parry Sound, Algoma, Porcupine, Timiskaming and part of Renfrew; he also was informed that Simcoe County will be served by a public health entity that will also serve York Region. From this communication it is also Dr. Gardner's understanding that the provincial government is willing to consider feedback on these boundary changes. The Board appreciates having the opportunity to recommend that all of the territory served by SMDHU be combined with that of York Region in a new regional public health entity.

The Board and staff have worked very hard since the inception of SMDHU (the result of a merger prompted by the province in 2005) in order to create a cohesive public health agency that is highly successful in fulfilling its mandate. The District of Muskoka benefits from public health services provided in partnership with Simcoe County. The division of our Muskoka and Simcoe operations would disrupt and undermine program delivery.

The geographic area of the proposed *northeastern regional public health entity* is extremely large (over 400,000 kilometers, extending to James Bay). Providing public health services over such a large and low density area will be very challenging, and it will be very difficult for the governance and management of such a regional public health entity to provide attention to local service provision. The provision of public health services in the District of Muskoka would be more challenging within this very large public health entity than they would be if Muskoka were to join Simcoe County in a regional public health entity with York Region. The provision of public health services for the remaining communities in the proposed *northeastern regional public health entity* would also be further challenged with the addition of Muskoka to their territory.

The inclusion of the District of Muskoka with Simcoe County and York Region in a single public health entity would also be consistent with the observation that in general, the community and health care service referral patterns in Muskoka are directed to facilities in Simcoe County (Barrie and Orillia), and to communities further south (including in York Region).

**Barrie:**  
15 Sperling Drive  
Barrie, ON  
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705-721-7520  
FAX: 705-721-1495

**Collingwood:**  
280 Pretty River Pkwy.  
Collingwood, ON  
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705-445-0804  
FAX: 705-445-6498

**Cookstown:**  
2-25 King Street S.  
Cookstown, ON  
L0L 1L0  
705-458-1103  
FAX: 705-458-0105

**Gravenhurst:**  
2-5 Pineridge Gate  
Gravenhurst, ON  
P1P 1Z3  
705-684-9090  
FAX: 705-684-9887

**Huntsville:**  
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705-789-8813  
FAX: 705-789-7245

**Midland:**  
B-865 Hugel Ave.  
Midland, ON  
L4R 1X8  
705-526-9324  
FAX: 705-526-1513

**Orillia:**  
120-169 Front St. S.  
Orillia, ON  
L3V 4S8  
705-325-9565  
FAX: 705-325-2091

Finally, of great concern to the Board is the reality that the division of Muskoka from Simcoe would greatly increase the complexity, cost and duration of time required for the creation of the new public health entities, compared with having Muskoka and Simcoe join together with the public health services in York Region. A merger between SMDHU and York Region would be complex on its own, however the splitting of our operations between Simcoe and Muskoka at the same time as mergers both with York, and with six other health units to the north would be overwhelming in its complexity.

Given the inherent and substantial disadvantages of dividing Simcoe and Muskoka, the Board recommends that SMDHU join in its entirety with York Region in the modernization of public health.

Thank you for considering our recommendation.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Anita Dubeau  
Chair, Board of Health

CG:cm

cc. Mayor and Council of Simcoe and Muskoka  
Members of Provincial Parliament for Simcoe and Muskoka  
Boards of Health for York Region, Sudbury, North Bay, Parry Sound, Algoma, Porcupine,  
Timiskaming, and Renfrew  
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Central Local Health Integration Network  
North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network