

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Ontario Budget 2019 – Reducing Investments in Public Health

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), which represents Ontario's Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health members and front-line public health professionals throughout the province, is surprised and deeply concerned to learn of the Government's plans to restructure Ontario's public health system and reduce its funding by \$200M per year.

"Investments in keeping people healthy are a cornerstone of a sustainable health care system. We have spent considerable time since the election of the new Government communicating the importance of Ontario's locally-based public health system to ending hallway medicine," said alPHa President Dr. Robert Kyle. "The reality is that this \$200M savings is a 26% reduction in the already-lean annual provincial investment in local public health. This will greatly reduce our ability to deliver the front-line local public health services that keep people out of hospitals and doctors' offices."

In order to achieve this reduction, the Government is proposing to replace 35 public health units and 35 local boards of health with 10 larger regional entities with boards of health of unknown composition and size. As alPHa pointed out in its response to the previous Government's Expert Panel on Public Health Report (which proposed a similar reduction), the magnitude of such a change is significant and will cause major disruptions in every facet of the system. "The proposed one-year time frame for this change is extremely ambitious, and we hope that the government will acknowledge the need to carefully examine the complexities of what it is proposing and move forward with care and consideration," added Dr. Kyle.

Public Health initiatives show a return on investment. Much of the success of our locally-based public health system can be attributed to partnerships with municipal governments, schools and other community stakeholders to develop healthy public policies, build community capacity to address health issues and promote environments that are oriented towards healthy behaviours. The health protection and promotion needs of Ontarians vary significantly depending on their communities, and preserving these partnerships is essential to meeting them regardless of the number of public health units.

We look forward to receiving more details of this plan from the Ministry so that we can work with them to ensure that Ontario's public health system continues to draw strength from dedicated local voices and effective partnerships and maintains the capacity to deliver essential front-line health protection and promotion services while working to meet the Government's stated goals of broader municipal engagement, more efficient service delivery, better alignment with the health care system and more effective staff recruitment and retention.

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For more information regarding this news release, please contact

Loretta Ryan
Executive Director
(647) 325-9594
(416) 595-0006 ext. 22

About alPHa

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) is a non-profit organization that provides leadership to Ontario's boards of health and public health units. The Association works with governments and other health organizations, to advocate for a strong and effective local public health system in the province, as well as public health policies, programs and services that benefit all Ontarians. Further details on the functions and value of Ontario's public health system are available in alPHa's [2019 Public Health Resource Paper](https://bit.ly/2G8F3Ov) (<https://bit.ly/2G8F3Ov>)