

CITY OF HAMILTON

M O T I O N

Council Date : May 22, 2019

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR J. PARTRIDGE.....

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR

Response to the Proposed Provincial Restructuring of Local Public Health Agencies

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has made announcements about restructuring local Public Health agencies from 35 public health units to 10 new Regional Public Health Entities, governed by autonomous boards of health;

WHEREAS the Province expects to reduce provincial spending on local public health by \$200 million by 2021-22 from a current provincial budget for local public health of approximately \$750 million;

WHEREAS the Province is adjusting the cost-sharing formula with municipalities for local public health retroactive to April 1, 2019, and increasing in proportion through 2021-22;

WHEREAS municipalities such as Hamilton, Peel and others have been contributing more than their 25% share under Provincial policy for many years in order to ensure community needs are met based on the Province's Ontario Public Health Standards;

WHEREAS the announcements do not contain sufficient detail to be able to fully understand the costs and implications of the proposed restructuring;

WHEREAS the announcements were made without any consultation after cities had already approved their 2019 budgets;

WHEREAS the scale of the proposed changes to the governance, organization and funding of local public health is unprecedented in Ontario;

WHEREAS the role of municipal councils is not clear in the proposed restructuring;

WHEREAS public health units that are part of local government such as Hamilton already achieve significant administrative efficiencies and benefit from significant collaboration with social service, planning, recreation and transportation services all of which address the social determinants of health;

WHEREAS separating public health units that are part of local government may have unintended negative consequences such as reducing municipal leadership on public health issues, reducing transparency and public scrutiny, as well as reducing effectiveness in collaboration on the social determinants of health;

WHEREAS the announcements appear to have a significant impact on the delivery of local public health services;

WHEREAS Hamilton City Council confirms its support of its public health staff in all the work that they do;

WHEREAS lessons from the past show that when the public health system is weakened, serious consequences occur;

WHEREAS expert reports, such as those following Walkerton's drinking water contamination and the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), have highlighted the need for a strong and independent public health sector to protect the health and safety of the public;

WHEREAS local public health has a unique mandate that focuses on upstream approaches to prevent injuries and illness before they occur, as well as health protection measures that contribute to the safety of our food, water, and environment, and protect us from infectious diseases;

WHEREAS the evidence shows that the success of prevention is largely invisible, but the social and economic returns on these investments are immense with every dollar invested in public health programming saving on average eight dollars in avoided health and social care costs;

WHEREAS to achieve health and reduce "hallway medicine" both a strong health care and a strong public health system are needed;

WHEREAS the independence of the Board of Health and the Medical Officer of Health as the doctor for the community are essential parts of a strong and transparent public health system;

WHEREAS local perspectives add value to provincial priority-setting and decision making;

WHEREAS significant advances in public health have been led through local action, such as the development of tobacco control bylaws; and

WHEREAS the Province has indicated a willingness to consult with boards of health and municipalities on the phased implementation of the proposed changes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Mayor write to the Minister of Health & Long Term Care to request that any implementation of these funding cuts and restructuring be postponed to at least 2020 to allow for proper discussion with municipalities, existing boards of health and communities;
- (b) That the letter include, that any restructuring or modernization of local Public Health ensure adherence to the following principles:
 - (i) That its unique mandate to keep people and our communities healthy, prevent disease and reduce health inequities be maintained;

- (ii) That its focus on the core functions of public health, including population health assessment and surveillance, promotion of health and wellness, disease prevention, health protection and emergency management and response be continued;
 - (iii) That sufficient funding and human resources to fulfill its unique mandate are ensured;
 - (iv) That the focus for public health services be maintained at the community level to best serve residents and lead strategic community partnerships with municipalities, school boards, health care organizations, community agencies and residents;
 - (v) That there be local public health senior and medical leadership to provide advice on public health issues to municipal councils and participate in strategic community partnerships;
 - (vi) That local public health services be responsive and tailored to the health needs and priorities of each local community, including those of vulnerable groups or those with specific needs such as the indigenous community;
 - (vii) That representation of municipalities on any board of health be proportionate to both their population and to the size of the financial contribution of that municipality to the Regional Public Health Entity; and
 - (viii) That any transition be carried out with attention to good change management, and while ensuring ongoing service delivery;
- (c) That the Mayor work with MARCO/LUMCO and AMO to describe the benefits of Public Health remaining fully integrated with other City of Hamilton functions;
 - (d) That the Medical Officer of Health continue to report to the Board of Health in a timely manner as any new developments occur;
 - (e) That at a minimum, the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Health participate in Ministry consultations with boards of health on public health restructuring, and through the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aLPHa); and
 - (f) That this resolution be provided to the Minister of Health & Long Term Care, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, all municipalities, all Boards of Health, AMO, MARCO/LUMCO and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.