

May 27, 2019

Received May 28 2019
MOH Office

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
(sent via email to: premier@ontario.ca)

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9
(sent via email to: Christine.elliott@ola.org)

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Elliott,

On behalf of the Brant County Health Unit (BCHU) Board of Health, we are writing to express our concerns regarding the implications of the 2019 budget. Ontario's local public health system is an essential part of keeping communities safe and healthy. Public health delivers an excellent return on investment and works on the front line to protect communities from illness, and promote health and wellbeing. The services provided by public health, outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards, ensure that the population stays out of the health care system and remains healthy.

While we recognize the need for a sustainable public health system in Ontario, it is difficult to comprehend how a \$200 million provincial reduction in preventative services will contribute to lowering future overall health care costs. The Public Health budget represents approximately 2% of the Province's total health care expenditures and every dollar spent on public health services saves an average of \$14 in the acute care system. For every \$1 invested in:

- immunizing children with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine \$16 are saved in health care costs;
- early childhood development and health care saves up to \$9 in future spending on health, social and justice services;
- car and booster seat education and use saves \$40 in avoided medical costs;
- fluoridated drinking water results in \$38 saved in dental care;
- tobacco prevention programs saves up to \$20 in future health care costs; and
- mental health and addictions saves \$7 in health costs and \$30 in lost productivity and social costs.

The proposed provincial reduction in funding for public health services represents a significant strain on the ability of local public health units, like the Brant County Health Unit, to continue to deliver on its mandate. A reduction in funding that represents 26% of the budget cannot occur without cutting services. These cuts will

impact on our ability to deliver the front-line public health services that keep people out of hospitals and primary care offices and will ultimately mean greater costs to the health care system.

Before the new directions for public health units are fully implemented, the BCHU Board of Health recommends that any changes to the funding ratio be done in consultation with municipalities rather than unilaterally by the Province and deferred to the municipal 2020 funding year. The 2019 municipal levy has already been established and municipalities are already almost 50% through their budget year.

Additionally, the BCHU Board of Health recommends that the following be considered when the development of the new regional public health entities and regional governance structure occurs to maintain a strong public health presence and impact in our community:

1. No loss of service to our community – All current programs and services under the Foundational and Program Standards continue to be funded by the Regional Public Health Entity to provide services in Brant.
2. Meaningful input into program planning – The needs of Brantford and Brant County are considered in the planning of programs and services for our community.
3. Integrity of the Health Unit – The Health Unit continues to function as a unit and services continue to be provided locally.
4. Appropriate municipal role in governance – The public expects that their municipal tax dollars are overseen by municipal politicians. For the municipal investment, representatives of the obligated municipalities will continue in this oversight role.
5. Effective administrative support – All administrative services provided by the Regional Public Health Entity will be at the same level or better than currently exists in the Health Unit.

Ontario local public health units play a crucial role in ensuring the safety, health and well-being of Ontario communities and their populations. This crucial role is played out daily as Public Health Units work diligently and professionally to protect their communities from illnesses and promote health and well-being. These services outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards and Related Programs ensure that our population remains healthy and does not end up requiring costly care and treatment in hospital emergency rooms and wards. The Board of Health for the Brant County Health Unit implores your government to leave the current public health structure as it is, delivering excellent and local preventative care to our community.

Sincerely,



Greg Anderson,
Chair, Brant County Board of Health

JAT/lmj

Copied: Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
The Honourable Willem Bouma, MPP—Brantford-Brant
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Monika Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Ontario Boards of Health
City of Brantford
County of Brant
The Expositor