

June 21, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott
Ministry of Health
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Elliott:

On behalf of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, I commend the strong progress being made in bringing COVID-19 under control through the public health measures and the vaccination campaign directed by the provincial government of Ontario. Much work remains as we collectively work to complete the vaccination of the population and to work through the provincial Roadmap very carefully, all the while maintaining close surveillance on the trajectory of transmission. However, our strong progress enables us to begin planning for and working towards recovery, including the recovery of the public health system across the province.

One essential enabler of recovery is financial stability. At this point in time, boards of health are in active communication with Ministry of Health staff on the finances required to continue managing the pandemic in our communities. However, it would also be timely to consider for boards of health to soon receive communication from the province on the financial support from the province for our operational budgets in 2022. The Mitigation Funding received in recent years has been essential in maintaining public health programming by boards of health and easing the related financial impacts on our obligated municipalities, particularly during our response to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. For this reason, on June 15, the Board of Health approved a motion recommending that boards of health receive the Mitigation Funding from the Ministry of Health in 2022 that they received in 2021.

Boards of health have had to greatly augment their staffing through the course of the pandemic to enable our overall response, including the immunization of the population that has proved to be so essential. As we recover, boards of health will need to reduce staffing provided that the pandemic continues to come under control and remain under control; however, boards of health will also need to maintain staff levels sufficient for the resumption of our standard public health programming, and for any outstanding needs related to the ongoing control of the pandemic (such as remaining case and contact management, the potential for booster vaccinations at some point in the future, and ongoing work to ensure the safety of the school environment).

Without a continuation of Mitigation Funding in 2022 the maintenance of these activities would be greatly challenged. Boards of health would need to engage with their funding municipalities regarding the potential for substantial levy increases. Resulting staffing reductions below the levels that had been in place before the pandemic, would both impact program delivery and require sufficient advance notice to be managed. To be in place in time for the commencement of the 2022 year, boards of health would

Barrie:
15 Sperling Drive
Barrie, ON
L4M 6K9
705-721-7520
FAX: 705-721-1495

Collingwood:
280 Pretty River Pkwy.
Collingwood, ON
L9Y 4J5
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:
34 Chaffey St.
Huntsville, ON
P1H 1K1
705-789-8813
FAX: 705-789-7245

Midland:
A-925 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

also need to commence these staffing reductions in the present year while we are still responding to the pandemic.

For these reasons the Board of Health urges the provincial government to commit to the Mitigation Funding in 2022 at a level in keeping with that in 2021. The communication of this commitment soon would help to avoid the potential for boards of health to otherwise commence this kind of anticipatory action.

Thank you for considering this important matter.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Anita Dubeau
Chair, Board of Health

AD:CG:cm

cc: Ontario Boards of Health
MPPs of Simcoe Muskoka
Mayor Jeff Lehman, City of Barrie
Mayor Steve Clarke, City of Orillia
District Chair John Klinck, District of Muskoka
Warden George Cornell, County of Simcoe
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Loretta Ryan, Association of Local Public Health Agencies.