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July 20, 2021

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

delivered via email
christine.elliott@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Elliott,

On behalf of the Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health (SWPH), we wish to applaud the continuing commitment shown by you and your government for the financial support of local public health units in their ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response. The collective effort of all levels and branches of government in their prioritization of the health and well-being of Ontarians has been truly exceptional and heartening.

Much progress has been made in increasing vaccine rates, decreasing cases, alleviating pressures on our healthcare system, containing transmission, and implementing public health measures against COVID-19 whereby we have now progressed to Step 3 in the Roadmap to Reopen Ontario. Indeed, the improvements we have seen in recent weeks is cause for a thoughtful and thorough consideration of our larger recovery plans as the pandemic has significantly impacted our many and diverse communities.

As other health units have experienced, the extensive resources required to support our COVID response resulted in the necessary reduction or cessation of many programs and services. As we look towards the latter part of the fiscal year and into 2022, we note that much work remains as SWPH engages in rebuilding programs and services, addressing community needs, reviving regional connections and supports, and assessing the aftereffect of public health's focused pandemic work on local populations.

In essence, the recovery of post-pandemic public health programs and services cannot rest upon the support of local funders alone. Without a continuation of mitigation funding, our board will need to reduce staffing numbers that would be needed to resume standard public health services as well as address ongoing COVID-19 work, such as vaccine outreach and immunization, possible booster vaccinations, and case and contact management in schools and workplaces.

Given the leadership role public health units will play in their continued COVID-19 response, the extensive resources required to ensure Ministry targets and requirements are met and maintained, and public health's commitment to the mandates identified in the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), we request that the Ministry commit to the following:

- Extension of mitigation funding for the 2022 fiscal year;
- Extension of the availability of one-time funding for COVID-19 extraordinary expenses;
- An increase in base funding levels to accommodate increasing operating costs since 2019; and,
- Multi-year funding dedicated to COVID recovery to restore and return programs to OPHS requirement levels.

Sufficient and sustained financial support from you and your government is a key component of public health recovery planning. At this time, we await approval of SWPH's 2021 Annual Service Plan and COVID-19 extraordinary expense one-time funding submission – plans and scope which have considerably exceeded our initial estimation given the priority mandate to vaccinate local populations posthaste. I would emphasize once more that our local plans to meet the needs of our communities hinge upon a timely indication of vital funding commitments for 2022 as well as this current year.

Our Board extends its sincere thanks for considering this critical request.

Yours truly,



Larry Martin
Chair, Board of Health

c: Cynthia St. John, CEO, Southwestern Public Health
The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Ernie Hardeman, MPP Oxford County
Jeff Yurek, MPP Elgin Middlesex London
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Loretta Ryan, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health