

Ministry of Health

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August 22, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Public Health Agency (LPHA) Board Chairs, Medical Officers of Health, Associate Medical Officers of Health, and Chief Executive Officers, Business Administrators

FROM: Dr. Kieran M. Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario and Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health, Ministry of Health

RE: Provincial Strategy to Strengthen Public Health In Ontario

Dear Colleagues,

Earlier today, at the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference, the government announced that the province is moving forward with a strategy to strengthen Ontario's public health sector.

I am excited to follow-up with some further details on the key initiatives of this strategy, which are aimed at optimizing capacity, stability and sustainability in the public health sector.

Since the SARS pandemic in 2003, there have been a series of reports that have consistently called for strengthening public health to address critical challenges

such as a lack of capacity and critical mass, structural governance challenges, misalignment of the public health sector with other health and social services, as well as challenges with the public health workforce, including recruitment, retention and leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the critical importance of a robust public health sector while once again highlighting these challenges.

Through the strategy announced today, the public health sector has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in addressing these challenges. This strategy is grounded in a locally-driven approach, equipped with the provincial supports and resources needed to facilitate change while ensuring that we retain and strengthen front-line jobs and local public health programs and services.

Key initiatives of this strategy include:

1. Clarifying roles and responsibilities through the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS)

- Working in close collaboration with the public health sector, the government will initiate a review of the OPHS in order to refine, clarify and strengthen local public health roles and responsibilities, including relationships and alignment across and beyond the broader health care system.
- As part of this review, the government will seek to support Local Public Health Agencies (LPHAs) by exploring opportunities to shift some roles and responsibilities to a regional or provincial level.

2. Supporting voluntary mergers among local public health agencies

- Mergers among LPHAs have been demonstrated to be an effective solution to long-standing capacity challenges as they have significant potential to increase program delivery resources, including through the pooling of resources, greater ability to recruit and retain staff for specialized roles, and greater ability to manage surge capacity.

- Beginning this fall, the government will work collaboratively with the public health and municipal sectors, and other stakeholders to develop criteria, parameters and accountability mechanisms to support a coordinated approach to voluntary mergers, informed by lessons learned from previous mergers.
- LPHAs will then have the opportunity to submit proposals to the government based on established guidelines and criteria through current reporting mechanisms (e.g., 2024 Annual Service Plan and Budget Submission).
- Where there is agreement between LPHAs to merge, the government will provide time-limited supports and resources to facilitate the merger process and support business continuity to ensure program and service delivery stability while change is underway. Any savings realized through mergers can be reinvested by the successor LPHAs to further support capacity and program and service delivery.

3. Providing stable, sustainable funding to LPHAs

- Recognizing the urgent need for stability, the government will restore \$47M in provincial base funding to LPHAs, effective January 1, 2024. This will restore funding for those impacted LPHAs and municipalities to the level previously provided under the 2020 cost-share formula.
- The province will also provide all LPHAs with growth base funding of 1% annually over the next 3 years to further support stabilization while collaborative processes are underway to review roles and responsibilities and facilitate mergers.

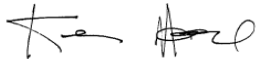
These initiatives will lay the groundwork for a longer-term approach to sustainable funding, including a review of the ministry's funding methodology for public health, based on a renewed and strengthened sector.

The Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health is committed to collaborating with you to implement these initiatives and will be scheduling

meetings in the coming days to facilitate further discussion. If you have any immediate questions, please reach out to Colleen Kiel, Director, Public Health Strategic Policy, Planning and Communications Branch, at Colleen.Kiel@Ontario.ca, and Brent Feeney, Director, Accountability and Liaison Branch, at Brent.Feeney@ontario.ca.

As always, thank you for your continued support as we work to strengthen the public health sector in Ontario.

Yours truly,



Dr. Kieran Michael Moore, MD, CCFP(EM), FCFP, MPH, DTM&H, FRCPC, FCAHS
Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health, Ministry of Health

c:

- Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
- Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
- Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Ministry of Health
- Colleen Kiel, Director, Ministry of Health
- Brent Feeney, Director, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Daniel Warshafshy, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
- Dr. David McKeown, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Michelle Murti, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Wajid Ahmed, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Fiona Kouyoumdjian, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health