

November 14, 2023

VIA: Electronic Mail (sylvia.jones@ontario.ca)

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Ministry of Health
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Jones:

Thank you for your ongoing leadership and support in the evolution of Ontario's public health system. Your commitment to a locally driven and adequately funded plan to strengthen public health through the voluntary mergers of local Boards of Health is greatly valued.

The ministry's plan presented on August 22, 2023, has been well received by the KFL&A Board of Health. The subsequent discussion of the Board resulted in the motion to explore, in accordance with parameters from the ministry, options for merging with other public health units, to achieve the ministry's stated goals to optimize capacity, stability, and sustainability of public health and deliver more equitable health outcomes for Ontarians.

The Board of Health for KFL&A Public Health remains fully engaged in the process and aligns with the ministry's vision of a strong and resilient local public health system in Ontario. However, there is a notable concern regarding the current practice, where the ministry exclusively engages with the Medical Officers of Health in discussions related to voluntary mergers, particularly at this exploratory stage. It is emphasized that the decision to engage in a merger is a critical governance function of the Board.

In light of this, it is urged that any discussions or information sharing by the ministry regarding mergers should directly involve Board of Health representatives. To effectively fulfil the Board's governance role, it is imperative that information is received firsthand, providing an opportunity for questions and feedback. The perspective of the Board is of significant importance as it serves as representatives for our communities. Ultimately, the decision to engage in a voluntary merger with other willing partners is a political one that rests squarely with the Board.

The Board of Health for KFL&A Public Health is enthusiastic about collaborating with the ministry to strengthen the public health system in Ontario. There is an anticipation that the ministry will engage directly with the local Boards of Health, fostering a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. This collaborative approach is essential for facilitating this voluntary and locally driven system transformation.

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Strengthening Public Health: Voluntary Mergers
November 14, 2023

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wess Garrod".

Wess Garrod
KFL&A Board of Health Chair

cc:

Dr. K. Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health

L. Ryan, Association of Local Public Health Agencies

Ontario Boards of Health