



**Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Speaking Points
Toronto Board of Health
Re: Public Health Modernization**

Monday, May 6, 2019

- Good morning, Chair and Members of the Toronto Board of Health and Dr. de Villa, Medical Officer of Health, and your team members who are present.
- I am Dr. Robert Kyle, President of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, better known as alPHa, and I am pleased to be back before you today. With me is Loretta Ryan who is alPHa's Executive Director.
- alPHa represents all of Ontario's 35 boards of health and medical officers of health (MOHs)
- Since my last appearance, alPHa has continued to be very engaged and has supported its members with what the Ontario government calls "Public Health Modernization"
- In the short time that I have here, I want to bring to your attention, for example, what we believe are two important pieces of correspondence that we have prepared in support of our members
- On April 23, 2019, we released the [alPHa Position Statement](#)

- In it, alPHa stated that:
 - It remains concerned about the proposed cuts to provincial funding for Public Health, especially for Toronto
 - It is concerned about:
 - the lack of details regarding the replacement of 35 boards of health/public health units with 10 Regional Public Health Entities,
 - the ambitious timelines,
 - the magnitude of the changes, and
 - the disruption to the public health system, and, in particular, to front-line public health programs and services
- Accordingly, alPHa urged the Ontario government to:
 - Re-consider the cuts and the timelines; and
 - Extensively consult alPHa, AMO and the City of Toronto before final decisions are made with respect to the governance, management and administration of a regionalize public health system and the delivery of front-line public health programs and services
- Moreover, alPHa urged its members:
 - To meet with their local municipal officials and MPPs
 - To make use of alPHa's resources (listed in the statement)
 - To amplify and/or modulate the messages contained therein as our members saw fit

- Later, on May 3, 2019, alPHa wrote a [letter](#) on Public Health Modernization to the Deputy Premier & Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

- The letter stated that:
 - alPHa supports Public Health Modernization’s goals of:
 - broader municipal engagement,
 - more efficient service delivery,
 - better alignments with the health care system,
 - improved staff recruitment and retention, and
 - improved public health protection and promotion

 - alPHa’s chief concern remains Public Health funding cuts; namely, its members:
 - Need specific information about their 2019/20 provincial grants,
 - Need coverage of any immediate local shortfalls, and
 - Need assurance that the total investment in Public Health does not decrease over time

 - alPHa eagerly anticipates more details about the plans to “streamline” Public Health Ontario, given that this agency is an essential partner to Public Health, especially with respect to evidence-informed decision making locally

 - Finally, alPHa welcomes a conversation about the status of the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#), Protocols and Guidelines, if changes are being considered and stresses the importance of an inclusive and reciprocal stakeholder conversation

- Given the magnitude of the proposed changes in Public Health Modernization, ambitious timelines, and disruptions they will cause, the letter concluded that:
 - Attendant risks need to be mitigated
 - Front-line public health professionals need to be supported locally and provincially in order for them to continue to carry out their duties during this time of transition
- In addition to the above, alPHa and its members have been successful in bringing attention to the Public Health funding cuts and proposed restructuring; have had a fulsome media presence here and across Ontario; and have been extremely active on social media
- In closing, alPHa values and appreciates the work of all its members in giving voice to their concerns about Public Health funding cuts and restructuring
- alPHa stands ready to support its members in the days, weeks, and months ahead as regards the challenges, disruption and turbulence posed by Public Health Modernization
- I am happy to take your questions

alPHa's members are
the public health units
in Ontario.

alPHa Sections:

Boards of Health
Section

Council of Ontario
Medical Officers of
Health (COMOH)

**Affiliate
Organizations:**

Association of Ontario
Public Health Business
Administrators

Association of
Public Health
Epidemiologists
in Ontario

Association of
Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of
Ontario

Health Promotion
Ontario

Ontario Association of
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of
Public Health Nursing
Leaders

Ontario Dietitians in
Public Health

May 3, 2019

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Flr, 80 Grosvenor St,
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Elliott,

Re: Modernizing Ontario's Health Units

On behalf of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and its member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations, I am writing today to seek clarity on several aspects of the government's proposed steps towards reorganizing public health in Ontario, as announced in the 2019 Ontario Budget.

We are supportive of focusing on Ontario's residents, broader municipal engagement, more efficient service delivery, better alignments with the health care system, improved staff recruitment and retention, and improved public health promotion and prevention. We are ready and willing to assist you in meeting those goals, but in order to do so, we will need to be equipped with more information.

Our most immediate concern is related to public health funding. We appreciated receiving the memo from the Chief Medical Officer of Health on April 29th, which outlined the changes to the cost-sharing arrangement over the next three years. While this change is characterized as gradual, the municipalities' share of the cost of public health funding envelope will increase to varying degrees, effective immediately. Given that local budgets have already been set for the year, this will represent an unforeseen additional expense that will be difficult to absorb. Additionally, we have concerns about the decision to implement this change prior to finalizing the new public health governance structure that will ultimately be responsible for it. We are therefore looking forward to our upcoming calls with the Chief Medical Officer of Health for more specific and detailed descriptions of the Province's plans to ensure that any immediate local shortfalls are covered and that the total investment in local public health does not decrease over time.

We would also welcome the opportunity to draw on the wealth of expertise that currently exists within local public health to provide informed advice on the proposed replacement of Ontario's 35 public health units with 10 regional entities governed by new boards under a common governance model. We believe that our input will be vital to ensuring that all governance and operational aspects of the proposed transition are considered and that it can be achieved effectively and on time.

From a system standpoint, we eagerly anticipate more details about the plans to "streamline the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion to enable greater flexibility with respect to non-critical standards based on community priorities." Also known as Public Health Ontario, this agency is an essential partner to local public health and a most valuable resource for making the evidence-based decisions that are at the root of efficient and effective public health practice.

Finally, we would welcome a conversation about the status of the recently modernized Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), Protocols, and Guidelines within the Government's vision of a modernized public health system. For over three decades, population health in Ontario has benefitted from detailed mandatory health programs and services as itemized in Sections 5 through 9 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, which include the enabling authority for the OPHS. Taken together, these form a comprehensive blueprint for addressing the public health needs of every Ontarian in every community. If changes are being considered, it is imperative that these be communicated and subject to inclusive and reciprocal stakeholder consultation.

We support modernizing the public health system in a way that improves population health. We find that the magnitude of the changes being proposed and achieving this within less than one year exceptionally ambitious given the intricacies of public health services and their deliberate and appropriate variation among communities. The pace and breadth of these changes will cause significant disruptions in every facet of the public health system. It is essential that attendant risks are mitigated, and Ontario's front-line public health professionals continue to have the local and provincial support that they require to carry out their essential duties to keep Ontarians healthy during this time of transition.

We also acknowledge the important contributions that such modernization can make to ensuring the province's fiscal health by identifying efficiencies and, more importantly, keeping Ontarians healthy. We look forward to learning more from the discussions that the Chief Medical Officer of Health has scheduled with each of Ontario's Boards of Health.

As the organization that represents the public health system's Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations, we would like to request a meeting with you to discuss opportunities for input into the design and implementation of these changes. To schedule a meeting, please contact aPHa Executive Director, Loretta Ryan, at loretta@alphaweb.org or 647-325-9594.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Robert Kyle,
aPHa President

COPY: Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Peter Donnelly, President and CEO, Public Health Ontario
Pat Vanini, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Chris Murray, City Manager for Toronto

Impact of Reducing Investments in Public Health

alPHa Position Statement

April 24, 2019

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), which represents Ontario's Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and frontline public health professionals throughout the province, remains deeply concerned about the Government's plans to restructure Ontario's public health system. Following a briefing hosted by the Chief Medical Officer of Health last Thursday afternoon, we are further concerned about the recently announced changes to the provincial/municipal cost-sharing formula that funds local public health.

On April 11, in the 2019 Ontario Budget, the Government announced that it will replace 35 public health units and 35 local boards of health with 10 larger regional entities with boards of health of unknown composition and size, with the exception of City of Toronto, which will be one of the Regions. The Government's significant reduction in the provincial contribution to the funding formula is of concern, especially as the first phase takes effect in this current fiscal year. Complicating matters is that further details are not known at this time and the proposed one-year timeframe for the reduction from 35 to 10 public health units is extremely ambitious given the complexities of delivering public health services. The magnitude of these changes is significant and will cause major disruptions in every facet of the system. This will result in substantial reductions in frontline public health services such as vaccination programs and outbreak investigations. We are particularly concerned about the reduction in funding to Toronto Public Health that will see the provincial contribution reduced within three years to 50% because infectious diseases do not stop at municipal borders and all areas of the province needs sufficient funding to adequately protect the public. Given all of this, alPHa is calling upon the Ontario Government to re-consider the cuts and the timelines.

Key public health responsibilities are mandated by the Ontario Public Health Standards and local delivery of these contributes to ensuring that Ontarians have safe and healthy communities:

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being
- Emergency Management
- Food Safety
- Health Equity
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Growth and Development
- Immunization
- Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control
- Population Health Assessment
- Safe Water
- School Health, including Oral Health
- Substance Use and Injury Prevention

Much of the success of our locally based public health system can be attributed to partnerships with municipal governments, schools and other community stakeholders to develop healthy public policies, build community capacity to address health issues and promote environments that are oriented towards healthy behaviours. The health protection and promotion needs of Ontarians vary significantly depending on their communities, and preserving these partnerships is essential to meeting them regardless of the number of public health units.

Public health works as a system that is greater than the sum of its parts. By leveraging the skills and experience of boards of health, nutritionists, nurses, health promoters, inspectors, epidemiologists, doctors, dentists and dental hygienists, board members and administrators, and more, the health of Ontarians is supported and protected. Public health delivers promotion, protection and prevention services on behalf of, and in partnership with, the Ontario Government which has the responsibility for the health of the people of Ontario.

One of the ways to end hallway medicine is to prevent illness. Local public health agencies reduce the demand for hospital and primary care services by keeping people healthy. Building healthy communities through an efficient, proactive and locally managed public health system--one that is mandated to lead on preventative measures to protect and promote the health of Ontarians--can go a long way to reducing that demand. When combined with stable, designated funding, the public health system has the capacity to relieve pressure on doctors and hospitals. Furthermore, accountability is firmly established by provincial legislation and policy ensuring that the money spent on public health is spent effectively and with purpose.

Ontario's public health system delivers value for money, ensuring Ontarians remain healthy, and are able to contribute fully to a prosperous Ontario. Studies have shown tremendous return on investment. For example, every \$1 spent on:

- **mental health and addictions** saves \$7 in health costs and \$30 dollars in lost productivity and social costs;
- **immunizing children** with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine saves \$16 in health care costs; and
- **early childhood development and health care** saves up to \$9 in future spending on health, social and justice services.

In short, public health actions now can result in fewer emergency room and doctor's office visits today and in the future. Local public health's impact is beyond simply reducing health care dollars. Local public health ensures that healthy people can support a strong economy, providing a direct economic impact. The old adage 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' is certainly relevant to public health.

We look forward to receiving more details of this plan from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care so that we can work with the government. To this end, alPha will continue to communicate with the Minister, the Hon. Christine Elliott, and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, towards ensuring that alPha members, and its partners including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the City of Toronto, are extensively consulted before final decisions are made with respect to the governance, management and administration of a regionalized public health system and the delivery of frontline public health programs and services.

We can help ensure that Ontario's public health system continues to draw strength from dedicated local voices and effective partnerships. It will be crucial to maintain the capacity to deliver essential frontline health protection and promotion services while working to meet the Government's stated goals of broader municipal engagement, more efficient service delivery, better alignment with the health care system and more effective staff recruitment and retention.

alPHA acknowledges, appreciates and supports the voices of all its members. We encourage you to meet with your local mayors, municipal council(s), MPs and MPPs. We also encourage you to make use of alPHA's resources:

- [Speaking Notes – Toronto Board of Health Meeting April 15th](#)
- [alPHA News Release - Budget 2019 & PH Restructure](#)
- [alPHA Memo to Members - Budget 2019](#)
- [alPHA Post-Election Flyer](#)
- [alPHA Pre-Budget Submission 2019](#)
- [Resource Paper](#)
- [Local Public Health Responses](#)
- [alPHA Submission - Expert Panel on Public Health](#)
- alPHA Promotional material including the [brochure](#) and [video](#)
- Follow alPHA on Twitter: @PHAgencies

alPHA will continue to keep our members updated and advocate on their behalf so that Ontarians continue to have a local public health system that remains on the frontlines to protect and promote the health of all Ontarians.

For more information, please contact:

Loretta Ryan
Executive Director
(647) 325-9594

About alPHA

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) is a non-profit organization that provides leadership to Ontario's boards of health and public health units. The Association works with governments and other health organizations, to advocate for a strong and effective local public health system in the province, as well as public health policies, programs and services that benefit all Ontarians.