



## REPORT FOR ACTION

## Ministry of Health's Consultation on Changes to Public Health in Ontario

**Date:** December 18, 2019

**To:** Board of Health

**From:** Medical Officer of Health

**Wards:** All

### SUMMARY

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In November 2019, the Ministry of Health launched a public consultation process to inform their efforts in modernizing public health. This consultation includes a request for input on specific key issues in public health that are outlined in the Public Health Modernization discussion paper. This report responds to a request from the Board of Health to provide an update on these consultations by the Ministry of Health, and to provide information for consideration with respect to the recently released Public Health Modernization discussion paper.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health receive this report for information.

### FINANCIAL IMPACT

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There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

### DECISION HISTORY

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On December 9, 2019 the Board of Health requested the Medical Officer of Health to provide an update on consultations by the Ministry of Health with respect to changes in public health in Ontario, and to provide information for consideration with respect to the Public Health Modernization discussion paper.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.HL12.6>

On November 7, 2017 City Council adopted a report from the Medical Officer of Health that provided an overview of the report from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's Expert Panel on public health in an integrated health system. The report from the Medical Officer of Health included proposed alternatives to support enhanced capacity, collaboration and connectedness with the health system, without compromising public health's core mandate to improve population health.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.HL22.2>

On February 3, 2016 City Council adopted a report from the Medical Officer of Health on the December 2015 Patients First discussion paper. This report provided an assessment of the Patients First initiative, including a review of the impact of integrating public health into the broader health system.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.HL9.3>

## COMMENTS

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The Minister of Health is seeking input regarding updating and improving public health in Ontario. This report:

- provides an overview of our understanding of the consultation process that is now underway;
- describes the recently released discussion paper, Public Health Modernization;
- identifies Toronto Public Health's planned approach to providing input to this consultation process; and,
- highlights information for consideration that builds on previous reports and positions already adopted by the Board of Health related to the public health system.

### Provincial Consultation Process

In October 2019, the provincial government announced the appointment of Jim Pine as advisor for the consultation process with municipal governments and the public health sector on an approach for public health modernization. In addition, Mr. Pine is the advisor for the Province's consultations on strengthening and modernizing emergency health services. Mr. Pine has worked extensively in municipal affairs, most recently as the Chief Administrative Officer (A) in the County of Hastings.

An overview of the consultation process is provided on the provincial government's website at [http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/phehs\\_consultations/](http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/phehs_consultations/). This website includes resources such as a webinar that introduces the consultation process, and a discussion paper entitled, Public Health Modernization. Included in the discussion paper is a link to a survey, where members of the public can provide input on the questions that are included in the paper. The consultation resources note that there is a plan to provide in-person consultations with public health and municipal stakeholders.

## **Discussion Paper: Public Health Modernization**

The recently released discussion paper, Public Health Modernization, identifies four key challenges for the public health sector in its current state and, accordingly describes the intended outcomes of the modernization process<sup>1</sup>. The key challenges the paper identifies for the public health sector include insufficient capacity; misalignment of health, social and other services; duplication of effort; and, inconsistent priority setting. The paper includes questions for discussion for each of these four challenges. The paper also includes sections and questions related to addressing the public health needs of Indigenous and First Nation communities and Francophone populations. The last section of the paper provides an overview of key findings from previous reports on public health such as the Minister's Expert Panel on Public Health (2017)<sup>2</sup>, and includes questions for discussion related to public health structure and organization.

Overall, the discussion paper identified the following intended outcomes of the modernization process<sup>1</sup>:

- Better consistency and equity of service delivery across the province;
- Improved clarity and alignment of roles and responsibilities between the province, Public Health Ontario and local public health;
- Better and deeper relationships with primary care and the broader health care system to support the goal of ending hallway health care through improved health promotion and disease prevention; and
- Improved public health delivery and the sustainability of the system.

Input on the questions included in the discussion paper is requested through a survey with a submission deadline of February 10, 2020. The survey can be accessed at [http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/phehs\\_consultations/docs/dp\\_public\\_health\\_modernization.pdf](http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/phehs_consultations/docs/dp_public_health_modernization.pdf)

Input is also being solicited through in-person consultations. Toronto Public Health understands the Toronto in-person consultation with the Ministry of Health will take place in February 2020, pending confirmation.

### **Toronto Public Health's Approach to Provide Input to the Consultation**

Toronto Public Health (TPH) will be submitting a response based on an assessment of the discussion paper and input from staff. The submission will also build on our previous Board of Health positions and reports related to public health governance and structure. To this end, TPH is seeking input from staff and management using several approaches in order to provide comprehensive feedback to the Province's public health modernization efforts. A survey was created and shared with staff to provide input to TPH's response that will be submitted to the Ministry of Health. All staff were encouraged to attend one of two half-day meetings that took place in December 2019 and focused on gathering feedback on the Public Health Modernization discussion paper. Using a combination of small groups and interactive sessions, staff reviewed and discussed the questions outlined in the discussion paper at this event.

In addition, staff are encouraged to develop submissions with their teams, and/or in partnership with organizations and professional associations such as the Ontario Public

Health Association. Staff and all members of the public also have the option to submit individual responses to the survey.

## **Issues for Consideration with Respect to the Public Health Modernization Paper**

Toronto Public Health has previously reported on the potential impacts of various organizational and governance structures for public health, such as in the 2017 report to the Board of Health, "Minister's Expert Panel Report on Public Health in an Integrated Health System" (Attachment 1). The following issues for consideration build on the positions adopted by the Board of Health in respect of these previous reports.

Themes that support a good quality public health system that have been identified in the past and continue to be relevant include the need to:

- Identify and research emerging issues either centrally or through having one or more health units take a lead role;
- Create central coordination of efforts for stronger implementation such as in tobacco policy or during an outbreak;
- Define a formal working relationship between Ontario Health Teams, public health entities, and municipalities, that recognizes the local context;
- Scale up locally developed interventions for application at a broader population level;
- Develop common public health standards based on the most recent scientific evidence and monitor their impact;
- Implement provincial standards through strong knowledge of the characteristics of the local community and professional adaptation to ensure outcomes are achieved; and
- Use of local community networks to maximize the health impact of an intervention.

Principles that support these themes and were included in the Minister's Expert Panel on Public Health report<sup>2</sup> include:

- Maintaining and leveraging a strong independent public health voice and core public health functions;
- Enhancing public health's relationships with the municipal sector and community partners to support integrated planning and services delivery;
- Structural changes based on a clear understanding of the public health sector's role in an integrated health system; and
- Organization of public health resources and services that reflect local needs and priorities.

## **Conclusion**

Toronto Public Health recognizes the importance of opportunities for change that can bring about enhanced public health capacity and ultimately, support our mission of improving the health status of the population and reducing health inequities. We will continue to monitor and engage actively in the Province's public health modernization process.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Dr. Eileen de Villa  
Medical Officer of Health

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - Board of Health Report Entitled "Minister's Expert Panel Report on Public Health in an Integrated Health System" (considered by the Board of Health on October 30, 2017 and by City Council on November 7, 8, and 9, 2017)

## **REFERENCES**

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health. (2019). Discussion Paper: Public Health Modernization. Retrieved from:  
[http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/phehs\\_consultations/docs/dp\\_public\\_health\\_modernization.pdf](http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/phehs_consultations/docs/dp_public_health_modernization.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Minister's Expert Panel on Public Health. (2017). Public Health within an Integrated Health System. Toronto ON. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/public\\_health\\_panel\\_17/expert\\_panel\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/public_health_panel_17/expert_panel_report.pdf)