



Joe Cressy 周凱捷

City Councillor | Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York

March 19, 2021

Toronto Board of Health

Re: Reaffirming support for our Medical Officer of Health and a public health-informed approach

Colleagues,

Through each stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been guided by clear advice from our public health experts. For over a year now, our Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Eileen de Villa, and her team at Toronto Public Health, have worked tirelessly to protect the health of all Torontonians.

I know that the weight of this responsibility has not been easy to bear. Dr. de Villa and her team have had to make very difficult recommendations to this Board, to City Council, and to our inter-governmental partners – recommendations that have at times been unpopular, and resulted in personal accusations and cruel attacks.

But it's these very recommendations that have helped protect countless people, and saved lives.

Toronto has not been immune to COVID-19. To date, 2,743 people have lost their lives – a devastating total. Many more have been hospitalized, and have had their lives deeply disrupted by this virus. But through swift action and public health direction, we have managed to prevent our city from becoming New York – or Italy or Brazil. This is a credit to Dr. de Villa's commitment to treating our city, and everyone in it, as though it were her own patient, and to the round-the-clock work of our public health team.

Through Dr. de Villa's leadership, and through the support of this Board, we have developed a response that is grounded in equity. Toronto Public Health was one of the first public health units to collect disaggregated data on COVID-19 and race and income, in order to see how this virus was impacting different communities. With Toronto Public Health's support, our city developed the first municipal COVID-19 Equity Action Plan in the country, to increase resources and supports to communities hit hardest by the pandemic. Toronto Public Health's COVID-19 Dashboard has provided Torontonians with transparent, accessible data, including information on variants of concern and workplace outbreaks. And Dr. de Villa's leadership and dedication has been evident in every single one of the City's COVID-19 Briefings, where she has spoken clearly and with great empathy to Torontonians about what we need to do to protect ourselves and others.

People in our city are tired, and they want the pandemic to be over. But the reality is that COVID, and the highly-transmissible variants of concern, still pose a great threat. We can't let our guard down now – we have to continue to stay vigilant, and follow the advice of our public health experts.

With this in mind, I am recommending that the Board of Health make clear our support for our Medical Officer of Health, and our continued insistence on a pandemic response that is informed by public health advice and expertise.

Recommendations:

1. The Board of Health reaffirm support for Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health, City of Toronto, and the entire team at Toronto Public Health, and recognize their tireless work in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Board of Health continue to support a public health-informed approach to Toronto's response to the COVID-19 pandemic that is grounded in data, evidence, and the best advice of our public health experts.

Sincerely,

Joe Cressy
Chair, Toronto Board of Health