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Constituent Societies

Association of Ontario
Health Centres (AOHC)

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO)

Association of Supervisors of
Public Health Inspectors of Ontario
(ASPHIO)

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors - Ontario Branch (CIPHIO)

Community Health Nurses'
Initiatives Group (RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario (HPO)

Ontario Association of Public
Health Dentistry (OAPHD)

Ontario Association of Public Health
Nursing Leaders (OAPHNL)

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
(ODPH)

Ontario Society of Physical Activity
Promoters in Public Health
(OSPAPPH)

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister for Health and Long-Term Care
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

June 5, 2019

Dear Minister Elliott,

Re: Involving the Ontario Public Health Association in Consultations on Public Health Modernization

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) to strongly applaud your government's recent decision to not proceed this year with funding reductions to public health. I also wanted to highlight the unique expertise and connections that OPHA's board, constituent societies and members have to offer and urge you to involve our organization in your upcoming consultations and any working groups on changes to public health.

While we recognize the critical role played by municipalities and our colleagues at alPHA, OPHA represents the perspectives of thousands of public health professionals working at all levels from the front line to management as well as hundreds of others who are committed to, knowledgeable about and/or partners with public health. OPHA has a unique role on the provincial scene.

We are the only provincial group that:

- bridges public health, primary care and community health through having the Alliance for Healthier Communities on our board;
- offers expertise in system efficiencies having trained over 680 professionals in continuous quality improvement through our customized white, yellow, green and black belt Lean Sigma training done in partnership with the Leading Edge Group;
- brings together nine different public health discipline associations on our board and executive – from nurses, inspectors, registered dietitians, dental staff, epidemiologists, health promoters to physical activity specialists representing both front line and management levels;
- integrates the perspectives of various sectors with members from health care, academia, students, the voluntary to the private sector;
- has been an advisor on recent public health mergers and multi-public health unit collaborative projects; and
- supports volunteer-led, provincial workgroups that bring expert members from various disciplines and sectors to advance work on a myriad of health issues.

For over 70 years, OPHA has been providing leadership on issues that advance public health and strengthen those working in public and community health through the expertise of our constituent societies, workgroups and board. We have described some of these contributions in more detail at the end of this letter.

Our members are knowledgeable about the impact of budget changes, how to approach issues of efficiency, areas that could benefit from stronger provincial coordination, and which geographic boundaries and groupings of health units could strengthen rather than detract from community health and wellbeing. Our Constituent Societies play an important role in building the capacity of their members, offering timely advice to government on system and program changes and providing provincial leadership and coordination on a variety of issues.

We are concerned about the impact of possible future changes in public health funding, structure and governance because of the uncertainty it will introduce in a key safeguard of the public's well-being. Since public health systems strengthen the health behaviours of Ontarians and prevent the onset of a wide range of illness, we fear that by destabilizing the public health system at this time, your government will have a harder time meeting its goals of improving health outcomes and ending hallway medicine. We can offer pertinent and practical suggestions that further your government's goals of reducing costs, strengthening patient-centred health care and modernizing Ontario's public health system.

Given our unique provincial role, we urge you to include OPHA in these upcoming discussions. Our board of directors is meeting on June 20th for its quarterly face to face meeting. We would value having you and/or a member of your team attend so that we could use our board meeting as a starting point. We can be reached at 416 367-1281 or by contacting me at pwalsh@opha.on.ca.

Thank you for your consideration.



Pegeen Walsh
Executive Director

C.c. Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health

More about the Ontario Public Health Association and our Contributions to Public Health:

OPHA is a member-based charity that has been advancing the public health agenda since 1949. OPHA provides leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthens the impact of those who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. OPHA does this through a variety of means including promoting public dialogue and education on healthy public policy, capacity building, and research and knowledge exchange. Our membership brings together many different disciplines and sectors working together to achieve our shared vision of optimal health for all.

Our board, constituent societies and workgroups have contributed to advancing public health in Ontario through:

- *raising awareness and increasing public engagement in health issues through social media, op-ed articles, TV and radio;*
- *responding to government requests to facilitate consultations, appear before advisory panels and provide confidential advice on proposed government policy;*
- *providing thought leadership through submissions, discussion papers and collaborating with academics on research studies;*
- *working collaboratively with your ministry to design and launch new programs, standards, guides, protocols, accountability frameworks and/or budget adjustments; and*
- *organizing professional development activities such as webinars, podcasts, workshops and conferences and serving as hub on health eating and nutrition.*