



Jim Watson
Mayor Maire

CITY OF OTTAWA
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa ON K1P 1J1
Tel: 613-580-2496 Fax: 613-580-2509
Jim.Watson@ottawa.ca
www.ottawa.ca

VILLE D'OTTAWA
110, avenue Laurier Ouest
Ottawa ON K1P 1J1
Tél : 613-580-2496 Téléc : 613-580-2509
Jim.Watson@ottawa.ca
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April 29, 2019

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
777 Bay Street, College Park 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Elliott,

With the release of the 2019 Ontario Budget on April 11, 2019, Ontario's municipalities and local boards of health were surprised and disappointed to learn of the Government of Ontario's plans to restructure Ontario's locally-based public health units and boards of health.

As Mayor of the City of Ottawa and Chair of the Ottawa Board of Health, we are writing to express Ottawa City Council's and the Ottawa Board of Health's unequivocal support for the work of Ottawa Public Health, to request that the Province maintain the health protection, health promotion, and prevention mandate of Ottawa Public Health as well as the 75/25 funding formula for health programs in Ontario, and that you initiate meaningful consultations with municipalities and local public health agencies on any reforms to Ontario's public health sector.

As you know, the five (5) primary functions of Ontario's public health sector are population health assessment, disease and injury prevention, health protection, promotion of health and wellness, and emergency preparedness and response. In addition, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) works within the community, supporting people from pre-birth through to end of life with programming and service offerings that are most often delivered in partnerships.

In an era where there is a greater focus on providing better, more timely and patient-centered care, the public health system more than carries its weight, making significant contributions to reducing the demands placed on hospitals and primary care providers. Public health actions result in fewer emergency room visits, hospitalization and treatment. Money invested into public health is money well spent; prevention is the fiscally responsible investment for our communities. There is strong evidence to support the excellent return on investment that public health offers.

- For every \$1 spent on early childhood development, the health care system saves up to \$9 in future spending on health, social and justice services.
- Every \$1 spent on immunizing children with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine saves \$16 in health care costs.



- Every \$1 spent on mental health and addictions saves \$7 in health costs and \$30 dollars in lost productivity and social costs.
- Every \$1 invested in tobacco prevention programs saves up to \$20 in future health care costs.

While larger health units may have greater capacity in some areas, it is important to keep, as a guiding principle, the fact that the population's health needs vary across the province. Therefore, flexibility for local adaptations to service provision is key.

Maintaining a way for municipalities to influence delivery of public health services is important, not only because elected officials represent the needs of their populations but also because many of the drivers of health are outside of the healthcare sector. With a regional lens on public health programming, efforts need to be made to keep specific needs of Indigenous communities and Francophones as priorities.

If the Province moves forward with restructuring Ontario's locally-based public health units and boards of health, the goal must be timely and quality public health services that prevent disease and injury for all, now and into the future, and that are responsive to local needs and priorities. It must also be done in a thoughtful way and in consultation with municipalities and local public health agencies.

We are aware that other municipalities and local health units have also communicated similar messages to you since the release of the 2019 Ontario Budget. We hope you will give serious consideration to these submissions and the arguments being put forward with respect to the value of our public health sector, the importance of local partnerships and the need to engage in meaningful consultations before moving forward with any restructuring of these vital programs and services.

We look forward to hearing from you and would welcome any opportunity to discuss these matters with you directly.

Sincerely,

Jim Watson
Mayor
City of Ottawa

Councillor Keith Egli
Chair of the Board of Health
City of Ottawa



Ottawa Board of Health Motion 4/3 approved by the Ottawa Board of Health on April 15, 2019 and Ottawa City Council on April 24, 2019

Motion 4/3

WHEREAS the Provincial government's 2019 Budget, released on April 11, 2019 announced some significant changes to how public health services in Ontario are structured, governed and funded;

AND WHEREAS there are many unknowns about how and when the Province proposes to implement these changes;

AND WHEREAS the Province is proposing to reduce the number of health units in Ontario from 35 locally-based health units to 10 regionally based health units;

AND WHEREAS local public health is known for its responsiveness to local needs, basing many of its programs and services on local evidence, data, and priorities;

AND WHEREAS the proposed restructuring is likely to result in a loss of local control and local responsiveness of public health programs and services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit request that Ottawa City Council:

- **Request that the Mayor of Ottawa write to the Province of Ontario to communicate Council's unequivocal support for the work of Ottawa Public Health;**
- **Request the Province maintain the health protection, health promotion, and prevention mandate of Ottawa Public Health;**
- **Request the Province maintain the current 75 percent provincial, 25 percent municipal funding formula for Ottawa Public Health and public health programs in Ontario; and**
- **Request the Province initiate consultations with municipalities and public health agencies on the public health system in Ontario.**