

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

January 25, 2019

The Honourable Victor Fedeli
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1Z1

Submitted via e-mail: submissions@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Fedeli,

Re: Budget 2019

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 to provide input for your consideration as you develop the 2019 Ontario Budget.

Specifically, we are recommending that the integrity of Ontario's public health system, as outlined in this submission, be maintained and reinforced with assurances from the Province that it will continue its funding commitment to cost-shared programs and make other strategic investments that address the government's priorities of improving services and ending hallway medicine.

Public Health is on the Front Line of Keeping People Well

alPHa's members are the medical officers of health, members of boards of health and managers of the major public health programs. These are the people on the front lines of delivering the programs and services that prevent disease and promote health in every community in Ontario. For more than 180 years, Ontarians have enjoyed a strong, locally-based public health system that puts their health and wellbeing at the front and centre.

Public Health Delivers an Excellent Return on Investment

Public Health makes a critical contribution to alleviating pressures on our hospitals and doctors' offices, by delivering programs and services that keep people from becoming ill in the first place. While it is difficult to accurately measure the impacts (one cannot count the number of outbreaks that didn't happen because of a vaccine campaign or cases of food poisoning that were prevented through regular inspection of restaurants), studies have nonetheless demonstrated that public health interventions are good value for money and an excellent return on investment.

The following are only a few examples of the return on investment in public health:

- Every \$1 spent on immunizing children with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine saves \$16 in health care costs.
- Every \$1 invested in community water fluoridation yields an estimated \$38 in avoided costs for dental treatment.
- 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 ,
- Every \$1 spent on early childhood development and health care saves up to \$9 in future spending on health, social and justice services.

Public Health is an Ounce of Prevention that is Worth a Pound of Cure

The 2017 report of the Auditor General of Ontario (AGO) contained a chapter on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's (MOHLTC) Chronic Disease Prevention program, which concluded that most chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, cancer, etc.) are preventable, or their onset can be delayed by addressing physical inactivity, smoking, unhealthy eating and excessive alcohol consumption. The Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences estimated that 22% of the Province's spending on health care was attributable to those four modifiable risk factors associated with chronic diseases, which totaled \$90 billion in health care costs, including hospital care, drugs and community care, between 2004 and 2013.

The MOHLTC's own estimates conclude that major chronic diseases and injuries accounted for 31% of direct, attributable health care costs in Ontario. Preventing chronic diseases not only helps to reduce the financial burden on the health care system but it also creates a better quality of life that in turn supports individuals' ability to contribute to vibrant communities and a strong economy. Public Health leads in reducing the modifiable risk factors behind chronic disease and injury. The effective execution of this role is limited only by its capacity.

Public Health Contributes to Strong and Healthy Communities

Boards of health in each of Ontario's public health units provide programs and services that are tailored to improve the health of the entire population starting with addressing needs at the local level. In so doing, they form the local foundation of a province-wide system that works "upstream" to address risks to health thereby reducing the demand on and costs to the health care system. These activities are outlined and mandated in the *Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability* under the Health Protection and Promotion Act and fall under the following categories:

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-being
- Food Safety
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Growth and Development
- Immunization
- Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control
- Safe Water
- Substance Use and Injury Prevention

Four “Foundational Standards” ensure that population health assessment, a focus on health equity, effective public health practice through quality assurance and transparency, and emergency management are considerations in each of these categories.

Boards of health tailor the requirements to meet local needs in collaboration with a wide array of community partners (local medical/health care communities, municipalities, school boards, etc.) or develop new programs to address the specific health needs of their communities.

Public Health is Money Well Spent

Boards of health budgets are paid for by their respective obligated municipalities in accordance with the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) with the MOHLTC providing offsetting grants of up to 75% for mandatory programs and up to 100% for priority programs.

According to the 2018-19 MOHLTC Expenditure Estimates, the operating estimate for the entire Population and Public Health Program (which includes internal Ministry expenses, funding for Public Health Ontario and the local grants) is \$1.267 billion, or about 2% of the total MOHLTC operating expenses. We believe that this demonstrates the tremendous value of Ontario’s system of local public health given its significant impact on the health of the people of Ontario.

Having applied the lessons learned from several public health crises that emerged in Ontario in the first decade of the new millennium (the Walkerton tragedy (2000), SARS (2003) and pandemic influenza (2009)), Ontario’s public health system is more clearly understood and more robust now than it was then. Investing in public health has given Ontario a mature, integrated, cost-effective, and accountable public health system.

We have demonstrated that modest investments in the public health system can generate significant returns, including better health, lower costs and a stronger economy. We believe first and foremost that the integrity of Ontario’s locally-based public health system, as outlined above, should remain intact. In addition, we believe that an explicit commitment to the ongoing provision of the 75% provincial share of public health funding along with additional strategic investments in the public health system will address your Government’s priorities of improving services, ending hallway medicine and addressing Ontario’s fiscal challenges.

Public Health’s broad efforts in the areas of health protection and promotion and disease prevention touch upon where we live, work and play, improving our quality of life and promoting healthy communities across the province. Further investments in these efforts will only strengthen their contributions to your Government’s goals of cutting hospital wait times and ending hallway health care, improving the delivery of government programs and services, and even putting money back in people’s pockets by keeping them healthy and able to contribute to the prosperity of the Province of Ontario.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to present this information as you deliberate on how Ontarians' tax dollars are to be spent over the coming year. We would be pleased to discuss our submission with you further. To schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, alPHa, at loretta@alphaweb.org or 647-325-9594.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Robert Kyle,
alPHa President

COPY:

Honourable Christine Elliott, MPP, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Stephen Crawford, MPP, Chair, Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Timothy Bryan, Committee Clerk, Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Health and Long-Term Care
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Population and Public Health, MOHLTC
Peter Donnelly, President & CEO, Public Health Ontario

About alPHa

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) is a not-for-profit organization that provides leadership to the boards of health and public health units in Ontario.

Membership in alPHa is open to all public health units in Ontario and we work closely with board of health members, medical and associate medical officers of health, and senior public health managers in each of the public health disciplines – nursing, inspections, nutrition, dentistry, health promotion, epidemiology and business administration.

The Association works with governments, including local government, and other health organizations, advocating for a strong, effective and efficient public health system in the province. Through policy analysis, discussion, collaboration, and advocacy, alPHa's members and staff act to promote public health policies that form a strong foundation for the improvement of health promotion and protection, disease prevention, and surveillance services in all of Ontario's communities.

Contact: Loretta Ryan, Executive Director
loretta@alphaweb.org or 647-325-9594

Further information on alPHa can be found at: www.alphaweb.org