February 11, 2022

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
christine.elliott@ontario.ca

Re: Enhancing Uptake of Third COVID-19 Vaccine Doses and the Proof of Vaccination Record

Dear Minister Elliott:

At its meeting on February 9, 2022, the Board of Health for Peterborough Public Health (PPH) resolved to write to you regarding opportunities to improve uptake of third doses and consideration of updating Proof of Vaccination requirement to include third doses for those eligible.

There is increasing evidence that immunity can wane over time and that a third, or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine provides greater protection against severe outcomes due to COVID-19. This has led to all levels of government recommending a third, or booster dose to help restore and maintain protection against severe illness, complication or death due to COVID-19. In Ontario, residents aged 18 and over are eligible to receive a third, or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination provides greater protection against severe illness and complications from COVID-19 and reduces the risk of hospitalization and strain on the health care system.

Evidence from IC-ES in Ontario has demonstrated increased vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic Omicron infection from no protection greater than 180 days after two doses, to 61% after a third dose. This enhanced protection against infection provides evidence that third doses would be impactful in the prevention of community transmission and protect people from transmission of COVID-19 in non-essential settings where proof of vaccination is required.

In Peterborough and across the province, administration rates of third doses of COVID vaccine have slowed substantially and as of February 3, 2022, provincial coverage sits at 54.2%. During the second last week of December, 2021, in Ontario, more than a million doses were administered however this had decreased to 335,753 doses during the fourth week of January, 2022. Last week, there was only a 2.1% increase in 3rd vaccination rates from the previous week.

Rates of vaccination amongst the most vulnerable groups, including those over the age of 50, have not yet attained rates achieved for second doses. In the PPH region they range from about 34% among those 18-29 and 82% among those 70 years and older.

Every effort should be made to continue to increase third, or booster dose coverage among the eligible population. These strategies include continued work to make vaccination more equitable and accessible by providing vaccination in convenient locations and through walk-in modalities. Additionally, as more vaccine becomes available supporting the choice of vaccination for individuals may improve uptake.
Recent experiences, both in Ontario and in other jurisdictions, have shown that vaccine policies, including proof of vaccination requirements, lead to higher vaccine uptake and therefore higher vaccination coverage overall. Requiring a 3rd dose for a valid proof of vaccination to access non-essential services is one of the most important policy levers that has been proven to work and should be pursued to continue to improve vaccine uptake and protect our communities.

We sincerely thank you for the consideration and your continued support in our vaccination rollout strategies.

Respectfully,

Original signed by

Mayor Andy Mitchell
Chair, Board of Health

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cc:  Dr. Kieran Moore, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health
     Local MPPs
     Association of Local Public Health Agencies
     Ontario Boards of Health