June 25, 2019

The Honourable Todd Smith
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Sent via e-mail: todd.smith@pc.ola.org

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Sent via e-mail: minister.edu@ontario.ca

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Sent via e-mail: christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Dear Ministers,

Re: Support for Children Count Task Force Recommendations

On behalf of the Board of Health for Peterborough Public Health (PPH), I am writing in support of the recommendations of the Children Count Task Force. These recommendations support the health and wellbeing of Ontario’s children and youth by streamlining and improving the systems that monitor and assess their health.

Peterborough Public Health is required as outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards, 2018 (OPHS) to: “collect and analyze relevant data to monitor trends over time, emerging trends, priorities, and health inequities related to the health of school-aged children and youth and report and disseminate the data and information in accordance with the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2018”.

Unfortunately, measuring the status of child health is not a straight-forward task. Although the assessment and surveillance requirements outlined in the OPHS specify which aspects must be measured and reported, a comprehensive system for monitoring the status of child health in the province has yet to be developed, and there are gaps in indicator development and data collection. The existing data only partially measure the health of children in the province, and in some cases even less information is available at the local public health agency level. The collection of relevant provincial and regional data on the full spectrum of child health indicators, with such data being made freely accessible to public health agencies, should be a future goal for Ontario.

As such, we strongly support the Children Count Task Force’s overarching recommendation to create a secretariat responsible for overseeing the implementation of the systems, tools, and resources required to improve the surveillance of child and youth health and well-being in Ontario. Additionally, to further support this secretariat, we support the following five recommendations made by the task force:
• **Recommendation 1:** Create an interactive web-based registry of database profiles resulting from child and youth health and well-being data collection in Ontario schools.

• **Recommendation 2:** Mandate the use of a standardized School Climate Survey template in Ontario schools and a coordinated survey implementation process across Ontario.

• **Recommendation 3:** Develop and formalize knowledge exchange practice through the use of centrally coordinated data sharing agreements.

• **Recommendation 4:** Develop and implement a centralized research ethics review process to support research activities in Ontario school boards.

• **Recommendation 5:** Work with the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) of Ontario to develop a guideline for the interpretation of privacy legislation related to student health and wellbeing data collection in schools.\(^6\)

A strength of the Children Count Task Force and its recommendations is the broad range of perspectives, knowledge and expertise shared by leaders in federal and provincial government agencies and ministries, academics, local public health agencies, boards of education, and non-government organizations. We believe that implementing the recommendations will provide the information that all stakeholders need to properly assess the health status of our children and youth and the return on investment of related programs and services. Furthermore, implementation will result in a more efficient and improved data collection system.

We respectfully request that the Honourable Ministers seriously consider implementing these recommendations and welcome any opportunities to consult or engage in future actions that would support this work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

Councillor Kathryn Wilson  
Chair, Board of Health

cc:  
Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
Local MPPs  
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Children Count Task Force (c/o Nicole Dupuis, Windsor Essex County Health Unit)  
Ontario Boards of Health

References:


6. Ibid