

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

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
Frost Building North, 3rd floor.
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1Z1

January 15, 2026

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

Re: 2026 Ontario Budget Consultation: Public Health Programs and Services

On behalf of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), including its Boards of Health Section, the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health Section, and our Affiliate Organizations, we are pleased to provide input into the 2026 Ontario Budget consultation regarding the funding required to ensure a stable, locally based public health system.

A healthy economy is not possible without healthy people. Public health is a foundational component of Ontario's health-care system and is a critical driver of economic strength. By preventing illness, protecting communities, and promoting long-term health, public health contributes to higher productivity, reduced health-care costs, and sustained economic prosperity. For these reasons, public health must be supported in the 2026 Budget through sufficient, predictable, and sustained funding to ensure its long-term stability.

We appreciate the Government of Ontario's commitment to the Ministry of Health's *Strengthening Public Health* initiative announced in 2023. This initiative, which aims to optimize the capacity, stability, and sustainability of Ontario's public health system through reorganization, programming, and funding reforms, represents an important step forward.

Progress to date has been encouraging. Four mergers amongst nine former public health units have been successfully completed with ministry support. The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), which are the blueprint for mandatory public health programs and services in all health units, are under active revision, with early drafts suggesting these are being strengthened. A review of the public health funding model is forthcoming, and we anticipate this will be an important opportunity to consider strategies to guarantee the long-term stability and capacity of local public health throughout the province. While we remain enthusiastic about and engaged in this important initiative, we need to restate local public health is still facing substantial and mounting budget pressures that need to be addressed immediately.

The programs and services local public health delivers are requirements under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) and outlined in detail in the OPHS. The funding envelope for public health units has been insufficient to meet these requirements for some time, and modest annual funding increases have not matched costs related to inflation, population growth, collective bargaining, capital, and technology. Our capacity has therefore been steadily eroding for years which does not allow public health to deliver on its mandate.

According to the Bank of Canada, inflation has averaged nearly 4 per cent over the past five years. During this same period, public health funding increases of approximately 1 per cent annually have effectively amounted to year-over-year funding cuts, compounding other unavoidable cost pressures.

Despite these challenges, investments in public health deliver significant returns. Ministry of Health [2025–26 expenditure estimates](#) indicate that transfers to Ontario's local public health agencies totaled approximately \$916.7-million — about 1 per cent of the ministry's total operating budget. This modest share underscores the strong return on investment public health provides and demonstrates the funding increases required to stabilize the system would be relatively small in fiscal terms.

To further illustrate this value, alPHa has produced a series of [Public Health Matters infographics](#) highlighting the economic and health returns of public health investments. The latest is attached and showcases activities such as immunization, inspections and investigations, chronic disease prevention, outbreak management, and emergency response — each of which plays a vital role in protecting Ontarians and supporting economic resilience.

Our mandate is designed to keep Ontarians as healthy as possible for as long as possible, which makes public health a foundation of economic strength: a healthy population is more productive, incurs lower health-care costs, and contributes to long-term economic resilience and prosperity. In short, local public health must be seen as a cornerstone of the provincial government's commitment to protect Ontario by building a more competitive, resilient, and self-reliant economy through stronger, safer communities and investments in health.

We look forward to working with you and welcome this opportunity to make the case for a sustainable and resilient public health system. Please have your staff contact Loretta Ryan, Chief Executive Officer, alPHa, at loretta@alphaweb.org or 416-595-0006 x 222 for any follow-up.

Sincerely,



Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang
alPHa Chair

Copy: Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario

Encl.

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. alPHa advises and lends expertise to members on the governance, administration, and management of health units. The Association also collaborates with governments 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.

PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

alPHa

Association of Local
PUBLIC HEALTH
Agencies

January 2026

A STRONG ECONOMY SUPPORTED BY HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH'S ROLE

Protecting local public health is essential to supporting Ontario's economy. A healthy population is more productive, reduces health-care costs, and drives long-term prosperity. Through community-based strategies and strong partnerships, local public health improves health outcomes, increases efficiency, and strengthens local economies across Ontario. The positive impact of local public health in Ontario is illustrated in the examples below.

OUR ASK:

We are asking provincial and municipal decision makers to sustain and strengthen funding for Ontario's local public health system so that communities stay healthy, services remain stable, and the economy stays strong.

PREVENTING DISEASE: IMMUNIZATION

Immunization keeps children healthy and parents in the workforce — while reducing costly hospital care.

- 25% fewer hospitalizations among children aged 0–4 during the 2024–25 RSV season after expanded infant immunization
- 186,000+ Hepatitis B doses and 233,000+ HPV doses delivered to students in 2024
- Childhood immunization reduces ER visits, hospital stays, and long-term health costs

PROTECTING THE POPULATION: OUTBREAK PREVENTION & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Public health detects and contains outbreaks early, protecting workplaces, care settings, and essential services.

- 5,000+ respiratory outbreak responses in congregate settings (2024–25)
- 1,800+ follow-ups by public health units in response to Infection Prevention and Control complaints in 2024
- Emergency response support for First Nations communities during floods and wildfires in 2025

PROTECTING THE POPULATION: INSPECTIONS

Public health inspections prevent illness by enforcing safety standards in everyday settings.

- 42,000+ food premises inspected in 2024
- 6,800+ pools and spas inspected in 2024
- 8,600+ personal service settings inspected in 2024

PROTECTING THE POPULATION: INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations stop health threats before they spread, protecting communities and the health system.

- 14,000+ food safety investigations in 2024
- 106,000+ disease notifications managed in 2024
- 28,000+ rabies exposures investigations in 2024

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

Preventive public health programs reduce chronic disease and long-term health-care costs.

- 556,000+ students screened for dental needs in 2024
- 526,000+ children and youth supported through Healthy Smiles Ontario as of March 2025
- 109,700+ seniors enrolled in the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program as of March 2025
- 99,450+ postpartum Healthy Babies Healthy Children screens completed April 2024-March 2025



Be the unified voice and a trusted advisor on public health



Advance the work of local public health through strategic partnerships and collaborations



Support the sustainability of Ontario's local public health system



Deliver member services to local public health leaders

Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)
2026 Budget Deputation to the Minister of Finance
Hilton Garden Inn Toronto/Mississauga
100 Traders Blvd. Mississauga, ON, L4Z 2H7
Wednesday, January 14, 2026

Good morning, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I'm Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, a medical officer of health and Chair of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, representing Ontario's 29 public health agencies anchored in local communities.

In our current economy where, more than ever, we need to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and value-for-money to strengthen Ontario's economic future, local public health is a steadfast partner. We deliver essential health services to residents, including those who require complex support. We collaborate with system partners for greater impact and reduced duplication, and we are responsive to local needs while also ensuring a set of fundamental public health services are available across all Ontario communities. Public Health programs reduce demand on hospitals, emergency departments, and long-term care.

Public health funding faces challenges in keeping pace with pressures like inflation, population growth, and needed infrastructure and technology investments. A consistent, equitable and forward-looking funding approach is needed. When public health capacity erodes, costs are not eliminated - they are shifted downstream. This increases strain on other parts of the healthcare system and drives higher, overall spending.

To optimize the funding we receive, which we greatly appreciate, Public Health is not standing still. We are actively pursuing strategies to address growing demands, such as through furthering partnerships for collective impact, prioritizing services based on local needs and provincial priorities, and advancing digital modernization and innovation.

In addition to sustainable funding, we need the government's help to invest in digital infrastructure for the public health system. Such advancements will propel public health agencies towards the next level of operational efficiency and client service. Furthermore, digital modernization can streamline processes and reduce friction across the entire health system, aligning with the government's objectives of cost savings and optimizing the use of its skilled healthcare workforce by prioritizing patient care over administrative duties.

In closing, investing in Public Health is a sound economic investment. A healthy population contributes to productivity, workforce participation, and reduced dependence on costly healthcare. Investment in public health is therefore an investment in Ontario's fiscal health, and long-term economic strength.

We look forward to providing a more detailed written submission and appreciate your consideration as you prepare the 2026 Budget. Thank you.