November 4, 2021

The Hon. Christine Elliott  
Ministry of Health, Deputy Premier  
Ministry of Health  
College Park 5th Floor  
777 Bay St. Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

The Hon. Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen’s Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Minister Elliott,

The Board of Health for the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) would like to express its gratitude for the funding received over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the WECHU would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the recent approval of mitigation funding for 2022. The extension of the mitigation funding is a recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in our community.

Windsor and Essex County (WEC) has been disproportionally impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, total confirmed cases of COVID-19 were 20,350, and 462 residents of Windsor-Essex have died. While the WECHU continues to be heavily focused on the COVID-19 response in the community of WEC, preliminary work has commenced on recovery and catch-up efforts including:

- Planning of a community needs assessment and review of surveillance data to identify priorities in our community, informing priorities for program restart and program development.
- Continued focus on such initiatives as the establishment of a consumption and treatment site in the community of WEC. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an escalation in opioid related incidents.
- On-going COVID-19 response efforts including case and contact management, vaccinations and enforcement of regulations.
- Conducting an internal review of human and other resources to inform internal capacity during recovery. This includes an assessment of the internal readiness for a shift from COVID-19 pandemic-related activities to COVID-19 endemic-related activities.
Catching up on the backlog of services including but not limited to:
- School-based catch-up clinics, 5,863 doses of Men C, 8,127 HPV, 8,287 HB are outstanding. With regards to new grade 7 cohorts, 4,329 doses of Men C, 4,437 HPV, 3,909 HB are outstanding.
- More than 15,000 students have not received oral health screening.
- Approximately 4,000 students in senior kindergarten have not received vision screening.

Public health has been instrumental in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WECHU like other public health units have redeployed staff, hired additional staff and have stopped important programming to the communities’ health in response to pandemic pressures. To facilitate recovery efforts in a comprehensive and sustainable manner the WECHU Board of Health asks the Government of Ontario to provide an increase in base funding for mandatory programs specifically to support:

- Ongoing COVID-19 related expenses and sustainability
- Increases in wages, benefits and operational costs
- Recovery efforts and increased demand and need for programming including but not limited to substance use, mental health, healthy growth and development.

Additionally, the WECHU implores the Government of Ontario to provide one-time funding to support recovery and catch-up efforts over a multi-year period (2022 to 2024), recognizing that certain communities were more negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic than others.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gary McNamara
Board of Health

c: Premier Doug Ford
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aPHa)