January 20, 2022

The Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Ontario
Hepburn Block 10th Floor 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Sent via email: christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister Elliott

RE: Support for Local Boards of Health versus Regional

At its meeting held on January 20, 2022, the Board of Health for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU) passed a motion to support correspondence from the Boards of Health for the City of Hamilton and Peterborough Public Health regarding the importance and preference for a local versus regional governance model for public health in Ontario.

We concur with our public health unit colleagues that local responsiveness, knowledge, and partnerships have been integral to our pandemic response and that this should be considered as part of a comprehensive post-pandemic review before considering any changes to, or reductions in, public health units in Ontario (regionalization). Also, that the Province and the Ministry consult the various partners that health units work with during pandemic and non-pandemic times to assess how they would be impacted by a regional versus a local public health unit approach.

Local public health units have always been important; the pandemic has highlighted the importance for us, the public, and our partners.
Our Board looks forward to working with you to ensure that a meaningful review of local public health governance and effectiveness is conducted with a focus on the needs of the residents and all the partners we work with through the programs and services that are offered by health units during pandemic and non-pandemic times.

Respectfully

BOARD OF HEALTH FOR THE HALIBURTON, KAWARTHA, PINE RIDGE DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Original signed by Mr. Elmslie

Doug Elmslie, Chair, Board of Health

DE/nb

Encls. 2

Cc (via email): The Hon. Doug Ford, Premier
The Hon. Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock
David Piccini, MPP Northumberland-Peterborough South
Dr. Kieran Moore, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Charles Gardner, Chair, Council of Medical Officers of Health
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Ontario Boards of Health
Loretta Ryan, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Jennifer Moore, CAO, Northumberland County
Mike Rutter, CAO, Haliburton County
Ron Taylor, CAO, City of Kawartha Lakes
Susan Walsh, CEO, Northumberland Hills Hospital
Carolyn Plummer, CEO, Haliburton Highlands Health Services
Eric Hanna, Interim CEO, Campbellford Memorial Hospital
Kelly Isfan, CEO, Ross Memorial Hospital
September 15, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, 80 Grosvenor Street,
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4
Christine.Elliott@pc.ola.org

RE: Support for a Local Board of Health

Dear Minister Elliott,

As the province of Ontario and Public Health Unit’s across the province continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Hamilton’s Board of Health has been reflecting on our local pandemic response. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of public health local responsiveness, particularly when dealing with local outbreaks. During the past eighteen months we have seen how local knowledge and partnerships has strengthened the pandemic response by better understanding the needs in the community and leveraging trusted relationships. The strength, timeliness, and flexibility of local collaboration can be seen through the implementation of various strategies, including increased public health measures, equitable access to COVID-19 testing, and an extremely complex and targeted vaccination strategy.

We are writing this letter to reiterate our position that a local, rather than regional governance is preferred to inform planning on how to strengthen and modernize the public health system. One of the current strengths of the governance system in Hamilton is the ties to the municipal sector which has a direct influence on opportunities for health where people live. As a governing body, the Hamilton Board of Health / Council can remain flexible and make decisions to increase, decrease or change service delivery based on local need. This has been particularly important throughout the pandemic as regular public health programs had to be flexible with the level of their operations to allow for resources to be shifted to essential services and the COVID-19 response. Maintaining the local voice supports ongoing advocacy of local need to ensure that priorities in the community are met, for example, the collection of local Social Determinants of Health Data which has allowed public health efforts to more effectively reach those who are disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
It is believed that if there is a shift to a regional board of health model, there will be a reduced local leadership voice in decision making. Due to this, it is important that public health governance remains local while ensuring accountability to municipalities, the province and the local population. Leveraging local responsiveness during the pandemic has reinforced our position that a local rather than regional governance remains the preferred model.

Sincerely,

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor

CC:
Andrea Horwath, MPP, Hamilton Centre
Paul Miller, MPP, Hamilton East – Stoney Creek
Monique Taylor, MPP, Hamilton Mountain
Sandy Shaw, MPP, Hamilton West – Ancaster – Dundas
Donna Skelly, MPP, Flamborough – Glanbrook
Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)
Ontario Boards of Health