March 3, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister Elliott,

The Board of Health (BOH) for Peterborough Public Health (PPH) is committed to its legislated mandate to protect and promote the health of our communities and residents. We are very proud of our legacy of community health protection, which dates back over 130 years to 1889, when the Town of Peterborough passed a By-law to appoint its first board of health. For much of that time, we have had representation from two First Nations, Curve Lake and Hiawatha, firmly embedded within our governance structure. When the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) was proclaimed in 1990, our municipal and First Nation councils utilized Section 50 of the HPPA to formalize our relationships.

More specifically, our BOH is composed of 8 representatives of our locally elected councils: one from Curve Lake FN, one from Hiawatha FN, three from the County of Peterborough and three from the City of Peterborough. In addition, the Province appoints five members.

We are writing to you to express our urgent concern about the current lack of provincial representation on our board. Their absence has created a lack of board capacity and impairs the board from comprehensively fulfilling its governance responsibilities.

Peterborough board members, on behalf of the community and our funding partners, are charged with significant responsibilities. They engage with staff on key initiatives such as strategic planning, establishing the annual budget, tracking financial results and performance against planned targets, and ensuring we meet the regulatory mandates established by the Province.

In addition, board members serve on committees, which provide the board advice on key financial, performance and regulatory matters. Unique to Peterborough, our board has struck an Indigenous Health Advisory Circle to ensure the board is aware of and responsive to public health matters that are relevant to our Indigenous populations.

We believe boards of health work best when there is strong and effective representation from all the funders. Their perspectives help to make our public health agencies and services more responsive to local needs and provincial mandates. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, boards will play an important role in the regrouping and reprioritizing that will need to occur once herd immunity has been achieved and we can pick up where we left off in February 2020.

Over the past two years we have had several provincial appointees unsuccessfully apply for a renewal of their appointment and only one alternative appointment has been made. We are now down to only two provincial appointees, one who recently requested reappointment and whose term expires March 3rd. The other was a new member appointed for only a one-year term, due to end August 13, 2021. Should these positions not be
filled before the end of the terms and the current vacant positions filled, governance of Peterborough Public Health will be significantly compromised.

We urge you to allow the provincial appointment process to resume. We would welcome the reappointment of our two provincial members and also the addition of three provincial appointees to replenish what we have lost.

We also respectfully request that appointments be a minimum of two years (ideally three as was previously the norm), given the time and effort necessary to onboard these representatives. Longer terms will allow members to feel they have had adequate time to be oriented to their responsibilities, and will provide them with an opportunity to meaningfully engage in public health decisions for their community.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Original signed by*

Mayor Andy Mitchell  
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
Dr. David Williams, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dave Smith, MPP Peterborough-Kawartha  
David Piccini, MPP Northumberland-Peterborough South  
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Boards of Health