

Questions about the Public Health Plan

Board of Health Responds to Public Health Announcements from the Government of Ontario

Three members of the Peterborough Board of Health who attended this summer's Association of Municipalities in Ontario (AMO) conference in Ottawa expressed concerns regarding proposed changes to Ontario's public health system, noting that several issues remain unclear.

Peterborough's Board of Health member, Matthew Graham was quoted as saying "... we still do not have a clear understanding of what the true fiscal impact on our budget next year will be, nor do we have any certainty of what representation our community might have in the new structure of our public health agency."

Despite the welcomed announcement of transitional funding support, there is still a lack of clarity as to what the promised 10% funding increase cap will mean for local funders for the 2020 budget. Early estimates forecast a shortfall in provincial funds that may be close to \$1 million dollars for Peterborough Public Health. Existing legislation makes the City, County and First Nations partners responsible to fill this gap. Even more daunting is the concern that transitional funding has only been promised for the next year, creating the real possibility of an even bigger shortfall in 2021. Other questions raised by members of the Board of Health include:

- How will this fall's promise of public consultations proceed with the Ontario government? Will there be ample opportunity for communities to participate and be heard?
- Will new (amalgamated) boards of health include representation of local elected councils and a governance model that reflects community interests and diversity including the unique public health needs of rural and First Nations residents?
- When will the new public health regions be announced?
- Will the province continue with only 10 regions despite the concerns expressed by many groups and research-based evidence suggesting regions serving populations of 300,000 to 500,000 are optimal?
- Will the new funding formula be sufficient to ensure residents will continue to receive the same level of public health programs and services?
- Will Peterborough Public Health's financial assets, which have been paid for by local taxpayers and donors, be transferred to other jurisdictions?

Mr. Graham went on to say, "while we recognize the final structure of public health agencies will be considered during the consultations, we believe a number of important principals need to guide the discussion and that includes:

- Putting the enhancement of health promotion and disease prevention as the primary priority of any changes undertaken,
- Taking into account the ability of municipalities to pay and considers the broad range of changes in funding arrangements between the province and municipalities, and,
- Developing a governance structure that provides the accountability to municipal councils required to fund local public health agencies."

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peterboroughpublichealth.ca/care-hope-vote/

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