



August 6, 2024

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier/Minister of Health
Government of Ontario
sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Jones,

In follow-up to your correspondence from May 29, 2024, thank you for your expressed support of the work that the boards of health for Peterborough Public Health (PPH) and Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU) have initiated regarding a proposed voluntary merger.

Our team has been working diligently with staff from the Ministry of Health staff on laying the groundwork for the voluntary merger proposed in the PPH/HKPRDHU business case submitted April 2, 2024. We continue to see this voluntary merger, when funded adequately, as an opportunity to improve the service delivery of public health for residents of our regions.

We are writing to make you aware of concerns that have arisen regarding the Province's commitment to providing a specific budget as we've outlined in our submitted business case for years 2 and 3. This is needed for assurance that the Province is fully funding the merger. The business case and funding proposal submitted to the Ministry of Health on behalf of PPH/HKPRDHU included a 3-year budget. From the public announcements made by yourself, as well as the preamble provided by the Ministry of Health in the business case template, we understand that a 3-year budget for the full merger period will be approved. We also understand that there would be flexibility built into the budget to enable boards of health to refine costs and respond to emerging priorities throughout the 3-year merger transition time period. From Ministry of Health staff communication, we have recently come to learn that a full 3-year budget may not be approved at the outset. Instead, communication has indicated that an annual budget for fiscal year 2024/25 will be approved.

Both boards of health passed resolutions stating an intent to merge was subject to sufficient funding being provided by the Province. The communication that initial approval will be for only fiscal year 2024/25 has left both boards with uncertainty and concern as to the Province's commitment to fully fund all merger related costs for three years and whether municipalities could risk incurring increased costs in subsequent years.

We look forward to receiving confirmation from the Province regarding funding and approval to move forward. We urge you to include in this letter assurances that merger costs will be covered for the 3-year merger fund period, as previously communicated. We request that the language will include sufficient specificity as to the costs that will be covered to reassure our municipal representatives that they will not face financial burdens associated with the merger.

On receipt of the funding letter, both boards will meet to ensure that they are comfortable that sufficient funding has been committed by the Province to proceed successfully with the merger. The boards of health would also like to note that they retain the right to withdraw from the merger if they feel that the funding amount and assurance for 3-years specified in the letter are not sufficient, and that they will communicate their final decision to the Ministry in writing after careful review of the funding letter.

We would also like to impress upon the Ministry of Health, the urgency in which clearly communicated approval is needed. Our horizon for completing the necessary work to set a new entity up for success, while minimizing disruption to ongoing service delivery, is slowly diminishing the closer we approach the Province's January 1, 2025 implementation date. The implementation date may need to be revisited should approval not be received soon enough to allow successful implementation of merger activities that are required before January 1, 2025. We request to hear from you by no later than early September to allow our best success in implementing the merger.

Our boards of health are committed to working with you to achieve your objective of strengthening the public health system in Ontario through merging and increasing our capacity. We continue to believe this is an important investment for public health in our communities and truly appreciate the support that the Ministry of Health is providing to realize our shared goal of protecting and promoting the health of people and communities across our geographies.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the timely communication of approved sufficient funds to ensure the success of this proposed merger.

Sincerely,



Councillor Joy Lachica
Chair, Board of Health
Peterborough Public Health



David Marshall
Chair, Board of Health
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit

cc: Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Local Members of Provincial Parliament
Local Councils