

February 27, 2024

Brian Ostrander, Warden, Northumberland County

Dear Mr. Ostrander,

As Chair of the Board of Health for the Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit, I am pleased to write to you to share that after extensive discussion, Peterborough Public Health (PPH) and Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge (HKPR) District Health Unit will seek provincial approval to voluntarily merge.

Over the past several months, the PPH and HKPR Boards of Health have carefully examined how combining our staff of over 300 public health professionals would improve the programs and services we deliver to our residents and community partners throughout the entire geographies we serve.

Through this process, it was quickly identified that both the HKPR District Health Unit and PPH have an extensive history of collaboration and share similar geographic, demographic, health status and population characteristics. Both our organizations are similarly united in our commitment to reduce health inequities and address the most pressing public health challenges faced by the communities we serve.

In August 2023, the Ministry of Health [announced plans to strengthen the public health sector](#) by offering funding for a three-year period to local public health agencies that decide to voluntarily merge by January 1, 2025. In response to this announcement, the Boards of Health for HKPR District Health Unit and PPH [decided to move forward](#) with a process to explore the impacts of a voluntary merger. At our 2024 Budget Presentations to your council, you will recall that we shared information on this provincial announcement and our local explorations.

In November 2023, a PPH/HKPR Joint Board Merger Exploration Working Group was established with representatives from both health units to work with an external consulting firm Sense & Nous, who was tasked with preparing a comprehensive *Feasibility Assessment Report*. These findings were recently presented to both Boards of Health for consideration to help make an informed decision in February.

There are many steps to address before a merger is fully implemented. As local funders and stakeholders in our services, you can expect no immediate changes to existing partnerships or the public health programs and services that we deliver. Our most immediate action will be to develop a joint business case and funding proposal, to be submitted to the Ministry of Health by April 2nd. If approved, planning for the creation of a new joint health unit will be initiated in early Fall 2024, with a target implementation date of January 1, 2025. Merging our respective health units offers a critical opportunity to strengthen public health capacity, expand upon our successful record of collaboration, and work together to keep our communities healthy. Merging is



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also a means of optimizing public health resources and ensuring that we have the resources and staffing to address future public health emergencies and surges in demand.

As always, we value your dedicated partnership and look forward to ongoing collaboration as we work to build a more cohesive, local public health system that delivers progress on population health outcomes while reducing health inequities.

We will continue to provide updates on this journey as it progresses.

Sincerely,

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