

Ministry of Health

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Ms. Helen Angus
Chair, Board of Directors
Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion
661 University Avenue, Suite 1701
Toronto ON M5G 1M1

Dear Ms. Angus:

I want to extend my appreciation to the team at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, operating as Public Health Ontario, for all of their work over the past year. I would like to draw specific attention to all of your efforts to help the Ministry of Health (the “Ministry”), health system, and Ontarians recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to share our government’s 2024-25 priorities for Public Health Ontario.

As Chair, you play a vital role in helping Public Health Ontario achieve its mandate. It is important that your agency’s goals, objectives, and strategic direction continue to align with our government’s priorities and direction. As part of the government of Ontario, agencies are expected to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario and ensure that they provide value for money to taxpayers. Agencies are also required to adhere to government policies and directives.

Per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, this letter sets out my expectations for Public Health Ontario for 2024-25. These priorities include:

1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- Operate within the agency’s financial allocations.
- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies, and savings through innovative practices and/or improved program sustainability.
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario’s bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives.
- Complying with realty interim measures for agency office space.
- Leverage and meet benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

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2. Transparency and Accountability

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable.
- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability, and providing the Minister with annual skills matrices to ensure boards have qualified appointees.
- Reviewing and updating agency key performance indicators annually to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

3. Risk Management

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of agency risks, including cyber security, and any future emergency risks.

4. Workforce/Labour Management

- Optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including redeploying resources to priority areas, where needed.
- Supporting the implementation of the Community Jobs Initiative (CJI) by identifying opportunities to relocate new or existing agencies to lower cost communities across Ontario (as per section 5.4 of the Management Board of Cabinet Realty Directive), as applicable.
- Aligning Human Resource and Accommodations strategies with Ontario Public Sector directives and policy.
- Adhering to Treasury Board / Management Board of Cabinet labour and bargaining mandates.
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

5. Diversity and Inclusion

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist, and diverse workplace.
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

6. Data Collection, Sharing and Use

- Improving how the agency analyzes and uses data in decision-making, information sharing, and reporting to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery including an equity/social determinant of health lens.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements, and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

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7. Digital Delivery and Customer Service

- Exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery to ensure customer service standards are met.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations.

These are the government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority.

I am also sharing several priorities specific to Public Health Ontario:

1. Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response

- Ensuring effective plans to rapidly ramp-up response capacity and operations in the event of emerging health issues and/or health emergency, and report annually on its roles and responsibilities for pandemic preparedness in alignment with the provincial strategy.
- Working in partnership with the Ministry on emergency management priorities, including seasonal respiratory pathogens readiness, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear readiness, and ongoing response and recovery to health system emergencies and disruptions.
- Strengthening expertise in risk communication and behavioural science.
- Strengthening capacity for public health ethics advice to contribute to pandemic preparedness.

2. Ontario's Public Health Laboratory System

- Continuing to work with the Ministry to develop and implement strategies for modernizing Ontario's public health laboratory system.
- Continuing to represent and contribute to the voice of public health laboratory sciences through the implementation of the Ontario Laboratory Medicine Program (OLMP) and other forums, so that public health knowledge and practice perspectives are included in decision-making.
- Working in partnership with the Ministry, Ontario Health, and Local Public Health Agencies to build on opportunities for collaboration and coordination across the laboratory sector with a focus on quality, efficiency, appropriateness, innovation, and a sustainable infrastructure for broader laboratory services.

3. Public Health Strengthening

- Providing scientific and technical advice and support to the Ministry in its work to strengthen Ontario's public health system, including the review of emergency management under the Ontario Public Health Standards and key performance indicator development.

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4. Health Protection

- Working in partnership with the Ministry and other sectors to develop and provide scientific and technical advice, and supporting knowledge products. This includes the provision of infection prevention and control (IPAC) scientific and technical advice and evidence-informed guidance and supporting knowledge products that are tailored to meet the IPAC needs of specific sectors and settings.
- Supporting the vaccination programs, including provincial monitoring for Adverse Events Following Immunization and vaccine coverage.
- Aligning program plans with Ministry direction, including working with the Ministry to develop annual priorities for IPAC-related activities.
- Convene expertise to support updated Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) best practices, scientific evidence and recommendations to the provincial government, Local Public Health Agencies, and other partners for biological and non-biological agents as it relates to public health, workplace settings, and classrooms.

5. Surveillance

- Continuing to provide a sector wide leadership role in data collection, analysis, reporting, surveillance, and health equity analysis of diseases of public health significance and emerging public health issues, particularly the opioid epidemic.
- Take the provincial lead in monitoring, surveillance, and reporting on women's health in order to improve the evidence based on which to inform health policy and health system priorities through a convening role with Ontario Health, public health, health system, clinical, and academic partners.
- Increasing the agency's temporal and spatial analytic capacity and increasing data sharing with the Ministry, where applicable, to support data-driven and evidence-informed decision-making within the province.
- As requested by the Ministry, working with health system partners to identify efficiencies and support integrated surveillance and data systems to promote and protect the health of Ontarians.

6. Health Promotion, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

- Continue to review and provide expertise and evidence-informed recommendations to the Ministry to inform the development and implementation of healthy public policy, specifically ongoing analysis on issues related to tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and opioids.
- Undertake and strengthen systematic and comprehensive tracking of all alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, and opiate-related indicators with annual reporting to the Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health through a centralized reporting system to inform the development of health public policy.

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- Continuing to work in partnership with Ontario Health and the Ministry to advance the development and implementation of a chronic disease strategy to address prevention, management, and treatment, from a public and population health perspective. This work will initially focus on diabetes, in alignment with and supportive of the existing Indigenous diabetes and chronic disease programs, and be in accordance with Ministry direction and approvals.
- Working in partnership with the Ministry to develop and provide scientific and technical advice and surveillance that supports advancing a chronic disease prevention strategy. This work will include supporting the government's implementation of Ontario Auditor General audit recommendations and will have important linkages to health equity and mental health promotion.

7. Partnerships

- Continuing strong partnerships with the Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health and the Ministry.
- Developing systems and capacities to convene expert and technical public health advice on topics within the mandate of PHO, including emerging public health issues with a specific focus on developing actionable and achievable program guidance and best practice supports for Local Public Health Agencies.
- Working in partnership with the Ministry, Ontario Health and Local Public Health Agencies, to design, plan, and implement approved initiatives aimed at digital and data management to achieve a modern Public Health Digital Platform.

Thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to Public Health Ontario. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to me and the people of Ontario.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kieran Moore, directly.

Sincerely,



Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

Attachment

c: Dr. Michael Sherar, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario
Peter Kaftarian, Interim Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister
Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health