

Ministry of Health

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April 7, 2025

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 Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, operating as Public Health Ontario, for your continued advice and expertise to the Ministry of Health (the 'Ministry') and your support of our government's work to build a more connected and convenient healthcare system across the province.

I am pleased to share our government's 2025-26 priorities for Public Health Ontario.

Agencies play an important role in the government and are expected to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario and adhere to government policies and directives.

Per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, agencies are required to align goals, objectives and strategic direction with our government's priorities and direction. As Chair, you must ensure that Public Health Ontario's business plan demonstrates the agency's plans in fulfilling the expectations and government priorities below and that progress and achievements are reported through your annual report. Compliance with these requirements is reported to Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet annually.

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This letter sets out my expectations for 2025-26 that Public Health Ontario is innovative, sustainable, and accountable through the following direction:

Innovative

1. Simplify client/customer interactions.
2. Expand and optimize digital service offerings.
3. Improve client/customer satisfaction.
4. Share data with Supply Ontario, when requested, regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

Sustainable

5. Strengthen public service delivery by optimizing organizational capacity and directing existing resources to priority areas.
6. Use public resources efficiently, and
 - a) Operate within agency's financial allocations.
 - b) Prudently and responsibly manage workforce size. Where an agency requires a material increase in workforce size, the agency must provide the Minister with an HR plan for approval that provides the rationale based on government priorities and/or agency mandate.

Accountable

7. Develop and report on outcome-focused performance measures to effectively monitor and measure performance.
8. Protect individual, business or organization data by actively managing data and cybersecurity and reporting Artificial Intelligence uses.
9. Report all high risks including effective mitigation plans.
10. Align hybrid work policies with the OPS and identify and assess office optimization opportunities to reduce office realty footprint and find cost reductions.
 - a) Collaborate with MOI to identify office space opportunities.
 - b) Align with the MBC Realty Directive and the OPS Modern Office Space (OMOS) Standards.
11. Develop and encourage diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
12. Increase non-government, non-fare, non-fee revenue.

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These are the government-wide objectives for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority and the accompanying performance measures that can be utilised if measurements are not currently in place.

I am also sharing priorities specific to Public Health Ontario that align with both the Ministry's strategic direction and your agency's mandate.

These priorities highlight how Public Health Ontario will continue to provide essential support to the Ministry, and our government, by advancing its goals and overarching strategic objectives. We are confident that Public Health Ontario will implement these priorities, alongside its mandated operational work related to the public health laboratory program, in alignment with the allocated base funding.

The Government's 2025-26 Budget may affect these priorities. Where additional funding is being provided, an Amending Agreement to the Ministry and Public Health Ontario's Transfer Payment Agreement will be developed and set out any additional expectations.

Keystone Priorities

1. Provide timely, high-quality, scientific and technical advice, research and supporting the development and updating of knowledge products in areas of health protection and health promotion science. This includes:
 - a) Enhancing processes for planning and creating knowledge products in collaboration with end users, including the Ministry and public health units (PHUs), to ensure they meet users' needs.
 - b) Enhancing provincially coordinated approaches to centralize access to a prioritized set of tools, templates, guidelines, best practices, frameworks, and other resources to reduce workloads and standardize the implementation of public health strategies and approaches.
 - c) Developing an annual process to set priorities to guide research and knowledge development activities in consultation with the Ministry and other partners.
 - d) Enhancing processes for sharing research, knowledge development and knowledge mobilization products to ensure the effective use by end users.

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2. Support the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Ministry, PHUs, and other partners in addressing social and structural determinants of health, advancing health equity, and integrating anti-racist practices. This includes articulating and implementing best practices for sociodemographic data collection and use within public health strategies.
3. Support the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Ministry, PHUs, and other partners in delivering enhanced public health strategies and services to the diverse populations of First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNIM) peoples in Ontario. This includes collaboration with PHUs and FNIM communities and other partners as required to support Indigenous population and public health priorities.
4. Continuing strong partnerships with the Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health and the Ministry. This includes:
 - a) Participating in joint planning and coordination processes with the Ministry's program areas to strengthen collaboration, communication, and effectiveness of key initiatives.
 - b) Participating in strategic planning, coordination and communication processes with the Ministry of Health.
5. Convene experts on topics within the mandate of the agency to develop technical public health advice, with a focus on actionable and achievable program guidance, and best practice supports for PHUs and the broader health system partners. This includes:
 - a) Enhancing a strategy to effectively convene expertise and advice on ongoing and emerging issues.
 - b) Enhancing the flexible and dynamic infrastructure required to support the operations of ongoing and ad hoc technical advisory groups.
6. Collaborating with the Ministry and Supply Ontario on opportunities to strengthen supply chain management and procurement activities across the agency to ensure goods and services are being procured in an open and transparent manner and the agency is receiving value for money.

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Health Protection: Infectious Disease

7. Support the control and management of Tuberculosis (TB) in Ontario by contributing to the implementation of publicly fund Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) testing for latent TB infection (LTBI) in eligible populations by working with the Ministry and other system partners to identify an implementation pathway for publicly funded IGRA testing and patient eligibility criteria.
8. Enhance the effectiveness of health protection initiatives by providing recommendations about required and appropriate surveillance of current and emerging Diseases of Public Health Significance (DOPHS). This includes:
 - a) Determining the need for continued surveillance of DOPHS and/or the addition of new DOPHS for provincial monitoring, with a focus on prioritizing enteric infections and antimicrobial-resistant organisms (AROs).
9. Continue to provide sector-wide leadership and expertise in case, contact and outbreak management, data collection, analysis, reporting, surveillance, and health equity analysis of DOPHS and emerging issues to enhance public health response, inform interventions, and address health disparities.

Health Protection: Infection Protection and Control

10. Strengthen prevention initiatives related to antimicrobial resistance organisms (AROs) in the health system. This includes:
 - a) Convening experts to review strengths and gaps in ARO stewardship across public health and the health system in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.
 - b) Planning a provincial AMO and antimicrobial stewardship strategy that complements the Pan-Canadian Action Plan on ARO in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.
11. Strengthen the capability of partners to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by providing timely, high-quality scientific and technical advice about Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC), evidence informed IPAC guidance, and tailored knowledge products that address knowledge gaps and support the implementation of IPAC best practices. This includes:

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- a) Establishing a prioritization plan and associated processes to guide the development, review and updating of IPAC related guidance and capacity building tools to aligned with the release of new documents and emerging evidence.
- b) Modernizing Core Competencies for Health Care Workers on-line learning modules with an emphasis on those areas that continue to require attention.

Health Protection: Vaccine Preventable Diseases

12. Optimization of immunization strategies in Ontario by providing high quality and timely scientific advice, technical expertise and actions, and data collection and analysis. This includes:

- a) Undertaking provincial and federal – provincial – territorial (FPT) monitoring and reporting of Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFIs), vaccine coverage and other technical assessments and participation on provincial and national groups and committees.
- b) Providing technical inputs to support monitoring and policy changes for the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) immunization programs and other priority programs.
- c) Providing oversight and leadership of the Ontario Immunization Advisory Committee (OIAC) to guide evidence-based decision-making, enhance program effectiveness, and improve immunization outcomes in Ontario.

13. Advance the development and implementation of the Ontario immunization registry and broader ecosystem. This includes:

- a) Working in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, and PHUs to design, plan, and implement approved initiatives for digital and data management, including leading and coordinating Immunization Repository Consolidation (IRC), change management and training for non-PHU user organizations, and to improve system integration and connectivity in alignment with the Digital First for Health 2.0 strategy.

Laboratory System

14. Continue to develop Ontario's public health laboratory program to optimize quality, impact and innovation for the health system. This includes:

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- a) Developing and implementing strategies to strengthen laboratory operations in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and health system partners.
 - b) Supporting the Ministry of Health in developing and implementing an engagement strategy to identify options to further streamline the public health laboratory program.
 - c) Developing models for decentralization of high-volume testing to other laboratory entities to improve efficiency and system capacity in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and health system partners.
 - d) Continuing testing for viral diseases to support clinical and public health action.
 - e) Working with the Ministry to Health to enhance prenatal screening in Ontario.
 - f) Revising and streamlining the courier program for public health laboratory specimens in Ontario to enhance operational efficiency, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Supply Ontario.
15. Contribute to the modernization of the laboratory sector in Ontario through supporting a provincially integrated system for laboratory services with a focus on: specimen collection and integrated transportation access; appropriate and coordinated laboratory tests; an innovation pipeline; and digital integration, by finalizing the implementation of the Ontario Laboratory Medicine Plan (OLMP) with the Ministry, Ontario Health and other laboratory partners. This includes:
- a) Providing leadership in areas of public health laboratory sciences and genomics.
 - b) Continue to co-lead, with Ontario Health, the Microbiology Table of the OLMP.
 - c) Contributing to other expert panels and structures of the OLMP as appropriate, including Point of Care Testing Table.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

16. Ensure effective plans to rapidly ramp-up response capacity and operations in the event of an emerging public health issues and/or a health emergency. This includes:

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- a) Convening of experts to provide specialized scientific and technical advice related to the emergency public health issue and/or health emergency, such as the Ontario Public Health Emergencies Science Advisory Committee (OPHESAC) or public health ethics expertise.
 - b) Contributing to Ministry of Health's planning and responses tables as requested to provide input and public health expertise on potential infectious disease and/or environmental health issues.
 - c) Supporting response actions through surveillance and reporting, laboratory leadership and other technical expertise.
 - d) Providing scientific and technical inputs to support the development and/or revisions of planning and response documents.
17. Contribute to health system readiness by working with the Ministry of Health to advance emergency management priorities. This includes:
- a) Working toward seasonal respiratory pathogens readiness; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear readiness, and ongoing response and recovery (e.g., debriefs, exercises) activities to health system emergencies and disruptions.
 - b) Developing and supporting a public health surveillance strategy, in coordination with federal, provincial and regional partners, for the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026.
 - c) Contributing to the Ministry's new Pandemic Preparedness Plan and support the enhancement of international and national response plans.
 - d) Developing and implementing knowledge building activities, educational tools and other resources to support the implementation of the Emergency Management Standard and Protocol.

Environmental Health

18. Inform and contribute to the development of Ontario's Toxicovigilance strategy in collaboration with the Ministry, the Ontario Poison Centre and the Hospital for Sick Children.

Ms. Helen Angus

19. Improve public health responses and resilience to an increasing array of environmental threats and issues. This includes:

- a) Defining and developing key metrics related to climate change and extreme weather conditions, such heat-related mortality.
- b) Enhancing the Heat Warning and Information System (HWIS).

20. Promote the appropriate application of minimum ventilation guidelines as outlined by the Ontario Building Code and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). This includes:

- a) Ongoing monitoring of best practices and other evidence.
- b) Supporting PHUs to addresses health complaints about indoor air quality.

Health Promotion, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

21. Enhance the capacity of the PHUs to implement the Ontario Public Health Standards related to health promotion. This includes:

- a) Working in partnership with the Ministry and PHUs, finalize a performance measurement framework and indicators.

22. To address prevention from a public and population health perspective, advance the implementation of the OCMOH Upstream Chronic Disease Prevention Framework, in collaboration with PHUs, the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health. This includes:

- a) Continued focus on upstream prevention of diabetes that aligns with and supports existing Indigenous diabetes and chronic disease prevention initiatives.

23. Enhance the capacity of PHUs to develop comprehensive health promotion planning and prioritization through ongoing provincial health promotion surveillance and data analysis.

24. Inform healthy public policy addressing substance-related harms in the population through the provision of scientific and technical supports and advice. This includes:

Ms. Helen Angus

- a) Ongoing review and analysis of issues related to addiction and substance use.
- b) Ongoing monitoring population health trends related to tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and opioids to inform policy, practice, and develop action-oriented recommendations.

Digital and Data

25. Progress the vision of the Public Health Digital Platform and improve data integration and efficiency by undertaking planning and implementation activities in collaboration with the Ministry, Ontario Health, and PHUs. This includes:

- a) Supporting the Ministry's development of the data governance, stewardship structures and processes, and the data models and schemas necessary to establish the Decision Intelligence Platform.
- b) Supporting the Ministry's development and implementation of new policies, technology and legislation to mitigate barriers to health system connectivity, improve system performance and reduce health and maximize adoption across health system partners.

26. Continue to provide a public health sector leadership role in data collection, analysis, reporting, surveillance, and health equity analysis of pertinent public health issues and populations as requested by the Ministry and in alignment with the priorities within the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Communications

27. Continue to coordinate all public health sector communications with the Ministry of Health, including liaising on activities pertaining to PHO communications products, plans, positioning statements and key messages.

28. Ensure best efforts to align all products arising from communications plans with the Ministry of Health and Ontario government messaging.

29. Continue to support timely information sharing between the Agency and the Ministry to enable the Minister of Health to fulfill responsibilities to the Legislative Assembly, including keeping the Agency informed of relevant government initiatives and policy directions.

30. Ensure the Chair advises the Minister of Health of planned events and emerging issues that may be of concern.

Ms. Helen Angus

At our next meeting, I would be pleased to discuss these priorities, and I look forward to hearing how they will be reflected in the agency's upcoming business plan and in ongoing agency operations.

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

Should you have any questions, please contact the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sylvia Jones', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

Attachment

- Government Priorities for Agency Sector Chart

c: Dr. Michael Sherar, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario
Deborah Richardson, 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
Brent Feeney, Director, Accountability and Liaison Branch