



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health
FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / Chief Executive Officer
DATE: 2017 October 19

EXPERT PANEL ON PUBLIC HEALTH: PROPOSED RESPONSE AND PROCESS

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1) *Receive Report No. 053-17;*
- 2) *Approve [Appendix A: Response to the Report of the Minister's Expert Panel on Public Health;](#)* and
- 3) *Direct staff to work with representatives of the City of London and the County of Middlesex to submit a joint cover letter that introduces the three organizations' separate responses to the Expert Panel and highlights common concerns.*

Key Points

- As part of the Patients First healthcare transformation project initiated in 2015, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care established an Expert Panel on Public Health to develop recommendations on how to establish “strong public health within an integrated [health] system.”
- While the goals of Patients First are laudable, the recommendations of the Expert Panel would only partially achieve those goals, and would weaken the public health system.
- In addition, the recommendations reduce local integration and municipal autonomy, and are likely to increase both short-term and long-term costs.
- Alternative recommendations are already available that would achieve the goals of Patients First, maintain and strengthen the public health system, and avoid substantial cost increases.
- Deeper consultation would potentially identify better solutions to the issues currently faced by healthcare and public health in Ontario.

Background

When the [Patients First Discussion Paper](#) was first circulated in 2015, it included the establishment of an Expert Panel on Public Health to develop recommendations on how to establish “strong public health within an integrated [health] system.” The panel’s report became public in July of this year, and contains several recommendations that would significantly change the governance, boundaries and administration of public health units in Ontario. The Expert Panel report has been appended to previous MLHU reports, and is available [here](#).

The Expert Panel was asked to consider how to enhance organizational structure and governance in public health in order to improve quality control (in terms of accountability, transparency and equity); and how to integrate public health with the healthcare system.

As previously described, the most significant changes recommended by the Expert Panel are:

- Dissolving all current Boards of Health in Ontario and establishing new public health units with boundaries matching those of the fourteen Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs);
- Separating the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) and CEO roles in these new entities, with the MOH reporting to the CEO, except for specific functions; and

- Establishing new criteria for Board of Health members, including representation from Indigenous and Francophone communities, as well as from other diverse groups.

Proposed Response and Process

[Appendix A](#) details the proposed MLHU response to the Expert Panel's report. As described in the proposed submission, several issues warrant further consideration before a decision is made. There are also alternative recommendations, like those of the [Capacity Review Committee](#) and the draft Report Back from the Public Health Work Stream (not publicly available), which would better achieve the goals of Patients First without incurring many of the risks posed by the Expert Panel's recommendations.

Health Unit, City of London and County of Middlesex staff have identified several shared interests and concerns regarding the Expert Panel's recommendations. While each organization will have a slightly different perspective on these issues, submitting our concerns together under the same cover letter will help to highlight our commonalities and strengthen our input. Pending Board, City and County approval of their respective submissions, our three organizations will also seek joint meetings with the relevant decision maker(s).



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