



Association of Local
PUBLIC HEALTH
Agencies

alPHa's members are
the public health units
in Ontario.

alPHa Sections:

Boards of Health
Section

Council of Ontario
Medical Officers of
Health (COMOH)

**Affiliate
Organizations:**

Association of Ontario
Public Health Business
Administrators

Association of
Public Health
Epidemiologists
in Ontario

Association of
Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of
Ontario

Health Promotion
Ontario

Ontario Association of
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of
Public Health Nursing
Leaders

Ontario Dietitians in
Public Health

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March 9, 2023

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
College Park 5th Flr, 777 Bay St
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Jones,

Re: CMOH Annual Report 2022

On behalf of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and its Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health Section and Affiliate Organizations, we are writing to congratulate the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) for the release of his 2022 Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, *Being Ready, Ensuring Public Health Preparedness for Infectious Outbreaks and Pandemics* and to reinforce the calls for investments in public health therein.

We could not agree more with the central theme of learning from the experiences of the past three years to put an end to the “boom and bust” cycle of funding and ensure sustained investment in preparedness. While the CMOH Report frames preparedness squarely in the context of future pandemics and outbreaks, we would observe that “preparedness” includes all aspects of the population-wide, upstream, prevention-focused approach to protecting and promoting health.

As you are aware, Ontario’s locally-based public health agencies are subject to a detailed mandate under the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) and the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) to support and protect the physical and mental health and well-being, resiliency and social connectedness of the population, through the core public health functions of assessment and surveillance; health promotion and policy development; health protection & disease prevention; and emergency management.

It is indeed illustrative that when the coronavirus began to sweep through Ontario in early 2020, our local public health agencies were able to pivot so quickly and completely to the last of these functions, doing exactly what they were designed and mandated to do in a public health emergency. Through case/contact management; data analysis; implementation and enforcement of public health measures; provision of advice to the public, community partners and decision makers; and leadership of outbreak control and vaccination campaigns; local public health agencies were the true “front line” of the pandemic response. As such, we are uniquely positioned to articulate lessons learned and provide specific advice on where investments in preparedness should be directed.

In this report, the CMOH identifies three interrelated domains for sustained investment, namely, “Sector and System Readiness”, “Community Readiness”, and “Societal Readiness”. Local public health has foundational roles in each, and several priorities directly related to its activities are identified, including:

- Leadership in Infection prevention and control (IPAC) strategies and response.
- Leadership in vaccination promotion and delivery strategies.
- Forging collaborative partnerships with communities that face health inequities.
- Collecting sociodemographic data to address health inequities.
- Building social trust and engage society in conversations.
- Increasing health literacy through communication of credible, trusted, and transparent information, while countering misinformation.

None of these priorities is unique to pandemic preparedness, but rather foundational to many, if not all, of the health promotion and protection endeavours undertaken by Ontario's unique network of locally based public health agencies. Investing in this system is therefore by definition investing in preparedness.

Now that the acute phase of the response is in the past, our members are pivoting back to the routine OPHS-mandated programs and services that promote and protect health in every community every day. This work is often done in collaboration with local partners as well as the broader health sector, and results in a healthier population that in turn is the foundation of a stronger economy and key to the preservation of scarce health care resources.

As the CMOH critically observes, "It is more efficient and more effective to invest in preparedness than to pay the much higher and heavier costs of being unprepared: more illness and death, mental health problems, social disruption, and economic losses". This observation is as true for each of the population health-based activities our members are responsible for as it is for pandemic preparedness alone.

We hope you will take our perspectives on the CMOH Annual Report into careful consideration, and we look forward to collaborating to create a stronger, healthier, and more prepared Ontario.

We look forward to working with you and would like to request an opportunity to meet with you and your staff. To schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, alPHa, at loretta@alphaweb.org or 647-325-9594.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Trudy Sachowski". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Trudy Sachowski,
President

Copy: Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario
Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) is a not-for-profit organization that provides leadership to Ontario's boards of health. ALPHA represents all of Ontario's 34 boards of health, medical officers and associate medical officers of health, and senior public health managers in each of the public health disciplines – nursing, inspections, nutrition, dentistry, health promotion, epidemiology, and business administration. As public health leaders, ALPHA advises and lends expertise to members on the governance, administration, and management of health units. The Association also collaborates with governments and other health organizations, advocating for a strong, effective, and efficient public health system in the province. Through policy analysis, discussion, collaboration, and advocacy, ALPHA's members and staff act to promote public health policies that form a strong foundation for the improvement of health promotion and protection, disease prevention and surveillance services in all of Ontario's communities.