

October 30, 2006

Hon. George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
80 Grosvenor Street
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Smitherman:

On behalf of member Boards of Health, Medical Officers of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA), I am writing in response to the August 21, 2006 budget letters received by Boards of Health from your office.

The goal of Boards of Health across Ontario remains the achievement of full compliance with the program requirements described in the *Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines*. At current funding levels sixty percent of Boards reported through an alPHA survey that they are “mostly”, “almost completely”, or “completely” compliant. We understand that the *Guidelines* are currently under review and wish to fully support the process that is underway. We are glad to see the priority status it has been given and the engagement of our members in this work. We are happy that the expertise of our members has been acknowledged in this way and we are looking forward to the results expected in March 2007.

We also understand that the completed *Guidelines* review will be taken into consideration with the fifty recommendations of the Capacity Review Committee put forward this past May in their final report, *Revitalizing Ontario's Public Health Capacity*. We would like to reiterate our support of the Capacity Review Committee's key recommendations and urge you to move them ahead as quickly as possible, especially those focusing on strengthening the public health work force and ensuring accountability. We would also like to offer our support in the development of a public health sector transition plan. We are working well with staff in the Public Health Division and appreciate being included in this important process.

In the mean time, Boards of Health will continue to strive to meet the current *Guidelines*. alPHA surveyed its members in September to further assess the impact of current funding levels for public health units. A number of health units reported that they will not be able to move ahead with new and expanded programs. In practical terms, this means that 399 approved positions will not be filled for 2006 in health units across the province.

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Boards of Health are currently working with municipalities to develop strategies to mitigate impacts on programs, services and staff. In some cases, municipalities have already agreed to contribute more than the required thirty-five percent of the budget for core public health programs and services. These local discussions are on-going and will have an impact on the health unit budgets that are currently under development for 2007.

We share many common interests as we work towards a rejuvenated and transformed public health system in Ontario. The many reports following Walkerton and SARS have made it clear that change must happen. As we progress together with the identification, definition and implementation of those changes, alPHa will continue to monitor the impacts on the public health sector and share those impacts with you.

I would be happy to discuss any of the information in this letter with you at any time. I can be contacted through alPHa's offices at 416-595-0006 should you require additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,



Liana Nolan, MD, MHSc, FRCP(C)
President

Copy: Hon. Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance
Ms. Shelley Martel, Health and Long-Term Care Critic
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer, Health Critic
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health