

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 would first like to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, operating as Public Health Ontario, to prevent, monitor, detect, and contain COVID-19 in the province. The past few years have been a testament to the valued partnership between Public Health Ontario, the Ministry of Health (the “ministry”), and the Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health.

I am pleased to share our government’s 2023-24 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. 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 2023-24. These priorities include:

1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation through partnerships, where appropriate.
- Identifying efficiencies through innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability.
- Operate within the agency’s financial allocations.
- Leveraging and meeting benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.
- Complying with applicable direction related to supply chain centralization, including contract harmonization for planned and pending procurements, accounting practices and realty interim measures for agency office space.

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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.

3. Risk Management

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of agency risks, including COVID-19 impacts and any future emergency risks.

4. Workforce 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.

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 and Collection

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

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, including pursuing delivery methods that have evolved since COVID-19.

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:

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1. COVID-19 Response and Recovery

- Continuing to provide a leadership role in COVID-19 laboratory testing, data collection, analysis, and reporting, along with surveillance of other respiratory diseases.
- Providing scientific and technical advice for COVID-19 response, including resources to support public health units.
- Supporting COVID-19 vaccine programming, including provincial monitoring for Adverse Events and vaccine coverage.
- Ensuring effective plans to rapidly ramp-up response capacity and operations in the event of a health emergency, and report annually on pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening expertise in risk communication and behavioural science.

2. Ontario's Public Health Laboratory System

- Continuing to work towards 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 at ministry and Ontario Health tables, and to the laboratory network to ensure that the public health knowledge and practice perspective is included in decision making.
- Working in partnership with the ministry and Ontario Health to build on opportunities for collaboration and coordination across the laboratory sector with a focus on efficiency, appropriateness, 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.

4. Health Protection and Surveillance

- Working in partnership with the ministry and other sectors, to develop and provide infection prevention and control scientific and technical advice, and specifically, evidence-informed infection prevention and control guidance and supporting knowledge products.

5. Health Promotion, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

- Working in partnership with Ontario Health and the ministry to advance the development of a chronic disease strategy to address prevention, management, and treatment, from a public and population health perspective, with an initial focus on diabetes and aligned with the existing Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Strategy.
 - This work will include supporting the government's response to the 2017 Ontario Auditor General audit of chronic disease prevention and will have important linkages to health equity and mental health promotion.

6. Partnerships

- Continuing strong partnerships with the Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health, and the Ministry of Health.
- Continuing to be a strong presence and providing expert public health advice and recommendations.

Ms. Helen Angus

I would be pleased to discuss these priorities during our next meeting, 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 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,

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

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