



**Public Health  
Santé publique**  
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

May 28, 2019

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier:

**Re: North East Public Health Regional Boundaries – Modernization of the Ontario Public Health System**

At its meeting on May 16, 2019, the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts carried the following resolution #17-19:

*WHEREAS the Health Protection and Promotion Act amendment effective April 1, 2005, enabled the merger of the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit with the Simcoe County District Health Unit and with the North Bay & District Health Unit; and*

*WHEREAS North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) have invested greatly since that time to successfully transition to their respective new agencies; and*

*WHEREAS the new public health entity for northeastern Ontario is proposed to include the existing public health units in the region (Algoma Public Health, Public Health Sudbury & Districts, Porcupine Health Unit, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, Timiskaming Health Unit) along with Muskoka District and a part of Renfrew; and*

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*WHEREAS the northeast public health entity is the only one of ten proposed regional entities that would not respect existing health unit boundaries and would require the costly dissolution of existing health units; and*

*WHEREAS the demographics, socioeconomic status, health status, and important health care referral patterns of the Muskoka District are all distinct from those of the northeast; and*

*WHEREAS the proposed northeast public health entity is a massive area (402,489 km<sup>2</sup>) with significant administrative and geographic complexities, for which the incorporation of an additional distinct area would tax the region's ability to respond appropriately to diverse public health needs; and*

*WHEREAS the Board of Health for SMDHU having expressed similar observations, is requesting the support of northeast boards of health for their position that SMDHU remain intact as they transition to a new regional entity;*

*THEREFORE be it resolved that the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts endorse the position of the Board of Health for SMDHU that the organization of their public health services remains intact as they transition to the new regional public health entity.*

Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter. The Board of Health is working hard with regional counterparts to be able to engage constructively with the anticipated Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care consultation process over the next number of months.

Sincerely,



René Lapierre  
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Honorable C. Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Dr. D. Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
L. Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
J. McGarvey, President, Association of Municipalities Ontario  
F. Gélinas, MPP Nickel Belt  
M. Mantha, MPP Algoma-Manitoulin  
J. West, MPP Sudbury  
J. Vanthof, MPP Timiskaming, Cochrane  
Ontario Boards of Health

May 15, 2019

The Honourable Christine Elliott  
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
10th Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Elliott:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) to recommend that the full territory of SMDHU remain intact and join with York Region to form a new regional public health entity on April 1, 2020. This is in response to information provided verbally to Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health for SMDHU by staff from the Ministry of Health and Long - Term Care on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 indicating that public health services in the District of Muskoka will be provided by a regional public health entity that will also serve Sudbury, North Bay, Parry Sound, Algoma, Porcupine, Timiskaming and part of Renfrew; he also was informed that Simcoe County will be served by a public health entity that will also serve York Region. From this communication it is also Dr. Gardner's understanding that the provincial government is willing to consider feedback on these boundary changes. The Board appreciates having the opportunity to recommend that all of the territory served by SMDHU be combined with that of York Region in a new regional public health entity.

The Board and staff have worked very hard since the inception of SMDHU (the result of a merger prompted by the province in 2005) in order to create a cohesive public health agency that is highly successful in fulfilling its mandate. The District of Muskoka benefits from public health services provided in partnership with Simcoe County. The division of our Muskoka and Simcoe operations would disrupt and undermine program delivery.

The geographic area of the proposed *northeastern regional public health entity* is extremely large (over 400,000 kilometers, extending to James Bay). Providing public health services over such a large and low density area will be very challenging, and it will be very difficult for the governance and management of such a regional public health entity to provide attention to local service provision. The provision of public health services in the District of Muskoka would be more challenging within this very large public health entity than they would be if Muskoka were to join Simcoe County in a regional public health entity with York Region. The provision of public health services for the remaining communities in the proposed *northeastern regional public health entity* would also be further challenged with the addition of Muskoka to their territory.

The inclusion of the District of Muskoka with Simcoe County and York Region in a single public health entity would also be consistent with the observation that in general, the community and health care service referral patterns in Muskoka are directed to facilities in Simcoe County (Barrie and Orillia), and to communities further south (including in York Region).

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Finally, of great concern to the Board is the reality that the division of Muskoka from Simcoe would greatly increase the complexity, cost and duration of time required for the creation of the new public health entities, compared with having Muskoka and Simcoe join together with the public health services in York Region. A merger between SMDHU and York Region would be complex on its own, however the splitting of our operations between Simcoe and Muskoka at the same time as mergers both with York, and with six other health units to the north would be overwhelming in its complexity.

Given the inherent and substantial disadvantages of dividing Simcoe and Muskoka, the Board recommends that SMDHU join in its entirety with York Region in the modernization of public health.

Thank you for considering our recommendation.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Anita Dubeau  
Chair, Board of Health

CG:cm

cc. Mayor and Council of Simcoe and Muskoka  
Members of Provincial Parliament for Simcoe and Muskoka  
Boards of Health for York Region, Sudbury, North Bay, Parry Sound, Algoma, Porcupine,  
Timiskaming, and Renfrew  
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Central Local Health Integration Network  
North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network