

Ministry of Health

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October 1, 2021

Mr. Bill Hatanaka
Chair
Ontario Health
525 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto ON M5J 2L3

Dear Mr. Hatanaka:

As you begin planning for 2022-23, I am pleased to provide you in your capacity as Chair of Ontario Health with a letter setting out expectations and direction for Ontario Health in the year ahead pursuant to the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive. The direction outlined in this letter is consistent with our government priorities, your agency mandate, key policies and directives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of our government's plan to build a modern, connected and sustainable health care system. COVID-19 is not going away and we will continue to take cautious and reasonable actions based on the data and evidence to ensure there is a strong chain of protection for all Ontarians. The work that you and your fellow board members have already accomplished to establish Ontario Health has helped our health system and public health care sector contain the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario. Your ongoing efforts to establish the goals, objectives, and strategic direction for Ontario Health during this unprecedented time are vital in getting the province back on track to modernize the health care system and further strengthen patient care.

As part of the Ontario government, agencies are expected to act in the best interests of Ontarians by being efficient, effective, and providing value for money to taxpayers. This includes:

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1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

Provincial agencies that have been given the authority to make financial decisions must:

- Operate within their agency's financial allocations;
- Identify and pursue opportunities for innovative practices and/or improved program sustainability;
- Identify and pursue efficiencies and savings including those due to COVID-19, as applicable;
- Comply with applicable direction related to supply chain centralization and Realty Interim Measures for agency office space;
- Leverage and meet benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives; and
- Working with the ministry, where appropriate, to advance the Ontario Onwards Action Plan.

2. Governance – Transparency and Accountability

Provincial agencies are expected to continue:

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting;
- Adhering to requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, *Public Service of Ontario Act* ethical framework, accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable; and
- Identifying the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability.

3. Governance – Risk Management

- Provincial agencies must develop and implement an effective process for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of risks, including planning for and responding to health and other emergency situations, including but not limited to COVID-19; and
- Emergency planning should include developing a continuity of operations plan that identifies time critical/essential services and personnel.

4. Workforce Management

- Optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery; and
- Modernizing and redeploying resources to priority areas when or where they are needed.

5. Data Collection

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, including by leveraging available or new data solutions to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery; and

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- Supporting transparency and privacy requirements of data work and data sharing with the ministry, as appropriate.

6. Digital Delivery and Customer Service

Agencies develop and encourage digital delivery and customer service by:

- Exploring and implementing digitization or digital modernization strategies for online service delivery and continuing to meet and exceed customer service standards through transition; and
- Adopting digital approaches, such as user research, agile development and product management.

7. Diversity and Inclusion

Agencies support a diverse and inclusive workplace by:

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives;
- Promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace;
- Demonstrating leadership to an inclusive environment free of discrimination and harassment; and
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

8. COVID-19 Recovery

- Identify and pursue service delivery methods (digital or other) that have evolved since the start of COVID-19; and
- Focus on activities that support the recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

In addition to these priorities, I expect Ontario Health to build on the work it has already achieved to integrate and oversee key health services such as cancer and renal care, and organ and tissue donation and transplant. I also expect Ontario Health to continue to work with the Ministry of Health to advance further program/organization transfers into Ontario Health and continue to support integrated, coordinated, and effective health service delivery. For the 2022-23 fiscal year, I am asking Ontario Health to focus on the following key priorities:

1. Continue to support the government's supply chain centralization efforts and collaborate with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and Supply Ontario to begin developing a clinical supply chain management model for the health care sector with clear accountabilities between Ontario Health, Supply Ontario and ministries.
2. Continue to work with hospitals, Home and Community Care Support Services, and other health system partners and the Ministry of Health to lead health system recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on reducing inequities for priority populations, including Indigenous and racialized communities, under the following recovery objectives/areas:

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Care Pathways

- a. **Increase overall access to preventative care and primary care**, including screening and other elements of comprehensive primary care that have been delayed or deferred.
- b. **Increase overall access to community mental health and addictions services**, including key issues exacerbated by the pandemic including anxiety and depression, opioid and alcohol use disorders, and eating disorders, in alignment with the *Roadmap to Wellness*.
- c. **Increase overall access to scheduled surgeries, procedures, and appropriate diagnostic imaging services**, with a focus on regions, communities, and populations with the greatest reductions in services due to the pandemic.

Patient Flow

- d. **Improve overall access to care in the most appropriate setting** (including facilitating patient transitions between hospitals, long-term care homes, community-based transitional care settings, patients' own homes, and other settings), in continuing to make progress in ending hallway healthcare.
- e. **Develop a plan for a coordinated approach to providing equitable and patient-centred care for Ontarians experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19** across various providers, regions and sectors, in consideration of the emerging science and evidence on the post COVID-19 condition.

Health Human Resources

- f. **Stabilize and begin to re-build the health care workforce** by addressing fatigue, attrition, and recruitment and retention issues. In partnership with the Ministry of Health work to:
 - i. establish and maintain an equitably-distributed health workforce to support the ongoing COVID-19 response, subsequent health system recovery efforts and longer-term system transformation; and
 - ii. develop formal roles, responsibilities, tools and capabilities in relation to the above and in relation to managing emergent Health Human Resources shortages as they arise.
- g. **Develop and implement an efficient, effective, and coordinated Emergency and Risk Management Program**, working with the Ministry of Health, that protects Ontarians and ensures continued access to the health care system. Programs should:
 - i. establish a regional structure that extends Ontario Health's mandate of transparency and accountability, sustainability and quality improvement;

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- ii. formalize collaboration provisions with health system partners and key non-health stakeholders; and
 - iii. include developing a continuity of operations plan that identifies time critical/essential services and personnel, such as the planning and implementation of appropriate critical care expansion, and that establishes conditions for the deployment of resources to areas of realized risk/emergency.
- h. **Infection Prevention and Control Hubs:** Continue to oversee the implementation and ongoing operation of Infection Prevention and Control Hubs to enhance infection prevention and control practices in community-based and congregate living settings/sites and build resources to provide these services.

All response and recovery actions will focus on improving access to care and health outcomes for priority populations. This will involve engagement with health system partners, including patients, families and caregivers to support planning and implementation of recovery actions.

3. Continue to work with the Ministry of Health to plan for, establish and support the implementation of Ontario Health Teams across Ontario. This includes implementing Ministry of Health direction regarding modernized performance measurement frameworks, service accountability agreements, and funding models for health services providers. Advancing the implementation of Ontario Health Teams also includes leveraging tools and resources in quality improvement, digital and analytics, and other resources.
4. Working within defined roles and responsibilities, in alignment with Ministry of Health direction, and in collaboration with Home and Community Care Support Services:
 - a. support the implementation of Ontario Health Teams through the staged integration of home care delivery by Ontario Health Teams or providers within, or aligned with Ontario Health Teams, in a timely manner, to ensure continuity of care and opportunity for innovation;
 - b. support the change in the legislative framework for home and community care from the *Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994* to the *Connecting Care Act, 2019* by:
 - i. updating the terms and conditions of current Service Accountability Agreements that include community services to align to any new requirements under the *Connecting Care Act, 2019* and any new policy-based requirements set by the Ministry of Health; and

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- ii. working with Home and Community Care Support Services and relevant health service providers to update and disseminate best practices and quality standards regarding the provision of home and community care services under the *Connecting Care Act, 2019* (including the use of standardized assessment instruments, care planning considerations, processes for reviewing complaints, etc.);
 - c. operating and updating as required the pre-qualification process for contracted service providers of home care services; and
 - d. operating and updating the Client Health and Related Information System and other business support activities.
5. Work in partnership with the Ministry of Health to develop a chronic disease strategy addressing prevention, management and treatment, with an initial focus on diabetes. The development of the plan will include engagement of key partners, such as Public Health Ontario.
6. In accordance with the *Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019*, continue to support the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence at Ontario Health to deliver on its requirements to implement Roadmap to Wellness, the provincial mental health and addictions strategy. This includes a particular focus on supporting the continued implementation of Ontario Structured Psychotherapy, Mobile Mental Health Clinics, and the Mental Health and Addictions Data-Digital Initiative. In addition, the Centre of Excellence will prepare to implement provincial core services and needs-based planning, undertake planning and initial implementation for the Mental Health and Addictions Provincial Coordinated Access approach, support the Ministry of Health in planning for supportive housing together with other appropriate partners, and support timely access to mental health and addictions services for Ontarians.
7. Ensure the successful ongoing operations of COVID-19 testing through the current diagnostic network and ensure the capability to establish and deliver a provincial program for all insured and/or publicly-funded laboratory and point-of-care testing services. Coordinated planning for the provincial program to be conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario, with the objectives of increasing equitable access, supporting innovation, coordinating across the sector, and improving delivery of services. In addition, ensure the successful implementation of genetic testing and establishment of a comprehensive provincial program for all genetics with robust provincial oversight to deliver these services to drive better outcomes for Ontarians and improved value.

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8. Continue to leverage Ontario Health's expertise and leadership to support continuous quality improvement across the health care system. This includes promoting improvements in the quality of the patient experience, patient care and safety through the development of clinical and quality standards and guidelines, the regular collection, analysis and reporting of data, and in response to key audit findings.
9. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, continue to implement the Ministry of Health's Digital First for Health strategy to deliver a more modern, integrated and digitally-enabled health system experience for patients and providers.
10. Continue to work with the Ministry of Health and health service providers to identify opportunities for additional health system efficiencies and savings in the context of the quadruple aim to support a sustainable health care system for Ontarians.
11. Implement changes and finalize the operating model to establish two northern Ontario Health Regions.

As Ontario Health implements these priorities, my expectation is that you recognize the diversity within all of Ontario's communities. In particular, I ask that you operate in the spirit of Active Offer in all of your service delivery. This means including a French Language Services clause in all of your agreements, especially if the contemplated deliverables under the contract will be provided by the supplier directly to the public. Furthermore, work to promote health equity and anti-racism, including equitable health outcomes, in order to reduce or eliminate health disparities and inequities, recognize the impact of social determinants of health, and respect the diversity of priority, underserved, and vulnerable communities. Recognize the role of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of health services, that you support continued engagement with Indigenous partners, and that you work to advance health equity with Indigenous peoples, regardless of where they live in the province.

Please note that Ontario Health is also required to implement the priorities related to long-term care that will be forthcoming from the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Ontario Health's plan to address all these priorities must be outlined in the agency's Annual Business Plan, which will cover the period from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2025.

Through these measures, we will continue building a health care system that will improve the patient and provider experience, provide better, more connected care, and capture better value for health care dollars. It will ensure we continue to take a 21st century approach to integrated health care that puts patients at the centre of Ontario's health care system.

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I thank you and your fellow board members for your continued support, and for your valuable contributions. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kyle MacIntyre, A/Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Transformation Division, at kyle.macintyre@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Elliott".

Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

- c: Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
- Matthew Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Health
- Melanie Fraser, Associate Deputy Minister, Health Services
- Kyle MacIntyre, A/Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Transformation Division