

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

December 1, 2023

Dr. Kieran Moore,  
Chief Medical Officer of Health,  
Box 12,  
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Dr. Moore,

**Re: Voluntary Mergers and Boards of Health Leadership**

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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 Associations, we are writing to provide advice on the voluntary mergers component of the Strengthening Public Health initiative that is currently underway.

We agree with your statement that, where it makes sense to do so, voluntary mergers have the potential to address longstanding challenges in the public health system and improve optimization and coordination. We also appreciate the efforts that you have made to share information and discuss the process through meetings with local public health leadership over the past month.

Recognizing the aggressive timelines that have been imposed on this process, we are also cognizant of the fact that engagement opportunities are important for all parties, so it makes sense to use existing channels between your office and the medical leadership (e.g., the Public Health Leadership Table) and meetings with local public health staff via the regional engagement structures to drive the process forward. Our members have, however, identified targeted consultation with boards of health as a gap.

Mergers of this nature are fundamentally a governance issue and must be planned and executed by those with the authority to do so, grounded in the knowledge of the needs of the communities they serve. The final decisions will be made by local boards of health, so it is imperative there is direct and specific ongoing engagement and meaningful dialogue with local boards that includes information, clarity of process, and expectations so that they are properly equipped with the information they need to make decisions on the future of local public health.

Although there are differences in the structures of Ontario's local boards of health, it is important to acknowledge they will all be affected by the outcomes of this process. There are boards that are considering it, boards that are well into discussions, and boards that will remain as they are but nonetheless be subject to ripple effects of neighbouring mergers. The implications are too numerous to outline here, but there is a wealth of expertise and experience to draw upon from each group, which will be of tremendous benefit to the others.

We are therefore strongly recommending that you consider the development of a comprehensive strategy for direct engagement and dialogue with boards of health, as a whole and individually, that recognizes their primary authority in following through on new partnerships, taps into existing expertise at the local level, and ensures that all of the complexities and consequences of such an undertaking are fully addressed. alPHA would be pleased to work with you in this regard through our Boards of Health Section.

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](mailto:loretta@alphaweb.org) or 647-325-9594.

Sincerely,



Dr. Charles Gardner,  
President

**Copy:** Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health, Deputy Premier  
Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Colleen Kiel, Director, Public Health Strategic Policy, Planning & Communications Branch

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.