

MOH Verbal Update February 22, 2024

- OPHS review
 - As you know, the office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health is reviewing the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#), also called the OPHS
 - These are the foundational documents that outline what health units do and how they do it, ranging from restaurant inspections to school health to analysis of community health data
 - The province's Strengthening PH initiative had 3 prongs: one of them was voluntary mergers, and another one of them was a review of the OPHS
 - This will be conducted by the province, with extensive consultation with local health units
 - The province's goal is to "identify roles and responsibilities [of local public health units] that can be refined or stopped, and/or 're-leveled' to a regional or provincial level"
 - The province will be carrying out this review over the course of 2024 and the plan is to implement any changes by early 2025
 - The reason for this review is:
 - Some guidelines have been out of date or don't best serve the needs of our communities, and have been due for review and changes
 - To improve efficiency for some elements where a local 'flair' isn't as critical; for example, signage used as part of legal requirements
 - Overall, the provincial guidelines require health units to deliver more services than we have the capacity and resources to provide
 - As our costs grow on an annual basis, our revenues have not been growing at the same rate; this means we have a gradual erosion of our budget in real terms
 - To manage this reality, part of the goal of the OPHS review is to reduce the workload and requirements for health units to meet our fiscal realities
 - I want to be clear:
 - In our work on exploring mergers, one of the guiding principles is that we would focus on retaining local public health services
 - I know there's concern that a merger could lead to loss of focus on local needs
 - As I've said before, the goal of the mergers is not to cut costs, and the province has said that they would not reduce the provincial grant to health units as a result of a merger
 - However, we may see a change or shift in services provided by local public health units as a result of the changes to the Ontario Public Health Standards, which will be happening regardless of whether we go forward with a merger