



Municipal Engagement with Ontario Health Teams

AMO's Submission to the Ministry of Health

December 8, 2021

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Preamble

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is a non-partisan, non-profit association representing municipal governments across the province. Municipal governments work through AMO to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges. As the frontline order of government closest to people, municipal governments are deeply invested in Ontario's health system and understand the health needs of local communities.

Municipal involvement in health systems includes direct, legislated funding and service delivery, as well as indirect and sometimes voluntary efforts to address local gaps in health services. It also includes the myriad municipal services that contribute to health outcomes. In fact, an analysis of municipal Financial Information Returns from 2018 found that 90% of municipal operating expenditures contributed in some way to the social determinants of health. In that same year, municipal governments also contributed \$2.23 billion in combined operating and capital costs for health services. AMO has consistently advocated for municipal governments to have a meaningful and appropriate pay for say in health that reflects this contribution, including in our 2019 discussion paper [Partners for a Healthy Ontario](#).

Municipal Engagement with Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)

Despite this, municipal governments are not currently recognized as significant contributors to population health in Ontario and have not been included as much as they should be in health and healthcare planning at all orders of government. The integration of municipal governments and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) into Ontario Health Teams' (OHTs) decision-making across the province has been inconsistent and inappropriate for an order of government.

Municipal governments and DSSABs play important roles in the health care system by co-funding, delivering services, and employing professionals of vital services such as public health, paramedic services, and long-term care homes. Despite these contributions to both direct health services and social determinants of health, many of the OHTs have not listed municipalities or DSSABs as a partner or a member. Relationships and incorporation into governance decision-making is inconsistent across the province. This problematic and not appropriate. AMO and municipal members have been working collaboratively with the Ontario Health agency to improve and increase municipal engagement. This is promising work. However, there is more that could be done by the Ministry of Health to advance this further with clear policy direction and funding.

AMO has long called upon the province to mandate a municipal voice into health care service planning and decision-making. Improving and standardizing the relationship between OHTs, municipal governments, and DSSABs would help ensure that municipal government knowledge is integrated into local system planning and management of the health care system.

AMO recommends the following to the Ministry of Health.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Health must mandate a municipal voice into health care service planning, governance, and decision-making by the Ontario Health Teams by including a representative from each regional, county, single-tier municipality, or District Social Service Administration Board in the catchment area. The representative should be an elected official or municipal staff at the discretion of the municipal council or DSSAB board.
2. The Ministry of Health must require that Ontario Health Teams have a collaborative governance structure and decision-making process so that all organizations have a say and are supported, regardless of their size and contribution.
3. The Ministry of Health must establish and provide guidance on clear governance and accountability standards for Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) and conduct periodic compliance checks to ensure integrity and public confidence.
4. The Ministry of Health must ensure that municipal staff representatives, with responsibility for municipal health and human services in their catchment area, are formally engaged on service planning and coordination.
5. The Ministry of Health must mandate formal linkages between local Public Health Units and Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) to ensure that there is information exchange and to inform respective planning that will result in services that improve population health outcomes that are consistent with the *Health Promotion and Protection Act* and the Ontario Public Health Standards.
6. The Ministry of Health must develop and implement a digital data strategy to share information between health service providers and municipal health and human services deliverers.
7. The Ministry of Health must ensure dedicated, predictable funding envelopes within Ontario Health Teams or continued funding directly from the Ministry for municipal health services such as Long-Term Care, Emergency Health Services, and Community Paramedicine.
8. The Ministry of Health must provide administrative resource funding to municipal governments and District Social Service Administration Boards to facilitate meaningful participation in Ontario Health Team service planning.

Conclusion & Next Steps

AMO looks forwards to continued collaboration with Ontario Health and to renewed conversations with the Ministry of Health about AMO's recommendations and the next steps to implement them in a timely manner.