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Key Messages for Kerri Davies, Vice Chair, Board of Health

Presentation to Toronto Board of Health on Monday, May 6, 2019

My name is Kerri Davies and I am the vice-chair of the board of health for Peterborough Public Health. I am a provincial appointee and am serving my fifth year. Peterborough Public Health serves an urban/rural population of approximately 135,000 made up of 9 municipalities including the City of Peterborough, eight townships in the County of Peterborough and Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations. I'm pleased to be here to address the board of Toronto Public Health and the guests here today, to add our voice to the critical conversation about the preservation of public health in our province.

I would first like to state that Peterborough Public Health echoes ALPHa's support for the Minister of Health's proposed policy direction to maintain public health as closely connected to its municipal councils and funders. Ontario's communities need public health on the ground with them as accessible and responsive partners. So we are glad to see that this important relationship is being preserved.

However, we are concerned about the planned download of public health funding to municipalities. We all know what happened the last time the province downloaded – and

the enquiries into both SARS and Walkerton called for greater, not less, provincial investment in a strong and local public health system. Peterborough's board of health supports a call for a delay in changing the provincial municipal funding formula until a comprehensive and thorough consultation with impacted municipalities and boards of health can be conducted. We need to ensure there are no unintended consequences and that the final funding formula is both sustainable and optimal. Given that municipal and board of health budgets for 2019 have already been finalized, a change at this critical time will result in significant funding shortages and potential reduction in important public health service delivery.

We are also concerned about Minister of Health Elliott's comments regarding Toronto Public Health and bicycle lanes on Yonge Street. We know through experience that working with municipal partners to design healthier built and natural environments is just as much of a CORE public health service as are immunizations and outbreak control. In fact, with 85% of Ontario deaths resulting from chronic disease like cancer, diabetes and heart disease, healthy public policy work by boards of health and their staff is even more critical in keeping Ontarians healthy and preventing hallway medicine. For every dollar invested in policy actions like building infrastructure for active transportation results, we reap high

returns on investment, higher even than the median cost-benefit ratio of \$8.30 return for every dollar invested in public health programs, from a 2017 published review.

Benjamin Franklin had it right when he said...almost 300 years ago...that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Finally, in support of Toronto Public Health, I want to point out that we recognize that Toronto is our first line of defence against emerging diseases of public health significance. An outbreak may be only a plane ride, or a car or train ride, away. We need Toronto to be strong and well-resourced, in order for smaller communities like ours to be fully protected. In addition, because of Toronto’s size, its diversity and capacity, it is often the municipality that breaks new ground for public health. Bylaws protecting the health of communities often get developed and tested in Toronto, and then spread across the province. For example, Toronto Public Health was the first to push for a ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides. More recently, Toronto Public Health is leading the charge to address vaccine hesitancy and calling on Health Canada to explore ways of stopping the spread of misinformation about vaccines. And Toronto by-laws often lead to provincial legislated changes as well. Toronto Public Health is a public health leader and a resource for this province, and we must be careful not to put this at risk.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today.