

FACT SHEET: Impact of New Governance Model of Public Health Agencies

Updated January 2020



How would the amalgamation of 34 local health units into 10 affect public health governance?

Currently, Ontario's boards of health are composed of a majority of municipal representatives. The County of Peterborough and the City of Peterborough each appoint three members to the Peterborough Public Health board. Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations each appoint one member, and the province has five appointees, for a total of 13 members, representing a population of about 140,000. If the province were to move ahead with its plan to create larger regions, comprised of many more municipalities over a greater geographic area, it is most likely that Peterborough would not be so well represented on any successor board. The planned restructuring also raises concerns about accountability, as existing ties to local councils would be reduced. It is hard to imagine how one or two board members from this area would liaise with all of the local stakeholders and funders of public health. Also, a regional board would not have as well defined political identity. It is unlikely that citizens would relate to a board that is headquartered in Whitby or Oshawa as a potential influencer for local public health policy, as it would be considered to be external, remote and would have less visibility than a local board.

How many people will be represented in the 10 new regional public health entities?

The proposed regions vary in population size, from a minimum of approximately 230,000, in northern Ontario, to a maximum of 2.9 million. Peterborough has been included in a region that would start with Pickering in the west and stretch to Belleville and Prince Edward County in the east. The total population would be 1.2 million, with almost 60% of that residing within the Regional Municipality of Durham.

Peterborough Public Health has counter-proposed a smaller region based in the Kawartha Lakes and made up of approximately 300,000 – 500,000, which is supported by research¹ to be an optimal size for a local public health agency.

Is the province continuing to promote a public health system composed of 10 regional public health entities?

(Click the following hyperlinks for a [map](#) and [description](#) of the previously proposed regional entities.)

The consultations that have been launched as of November 18th have been characterized as a “re-set” with “no preconceived outcomes”. Peterborough is optimistic that the dramatic changes envisioned in the April 2019 budget will not be a harbinger of the final outcome.

¹ Mays GP et al. Institutional and Economic Determinants of Public Health System Performance. American Journal of Public Health 2006; 96(3):523-531
