

March 1, 2024

VIA: Electronic Mail (president@oahpp.ca)

Dr. Michael Sherar
President and Chief Executive Officer
Public Health Ontario
661 University Ave, Suite 1701
Toronto, ON M5G 1M1

Dear Dr. Sherar:

At its meeting of February 28, 2024, the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A) Board of Health passed the following motion:

THAT the KFL&A Board of Health strongly opposes the closure of the local Public Health Ontario Laboratory in Kingston and will send correspondence to:

- 1. Dr. Michael Sherar, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario**

FURTHER THAT a copy of this letter be forwarded to:

- 1. Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health**
- 2. Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health**

We are deeply concerned about the proposed closure of the Public Health Ontario Laboratory in Kingston and its anticipated negative impact on access to diagnostic services, timely support of public health decision-making, and availability of well water testing in rural areas.

Local access to laboratory services is fundamental to promoting public health and preventing the spread of infectious diseases. The Public Health Ontario Laboratory site in our community has played a crucial role in our efforts to maintain a healthy population, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The presence of the local laboratory in Kingston fosters innovation, research and education through key partnerships with KFL&A Public Health and other local public health agencies in the region, post-secondary institutions, and other community partners like long-term care homes. The laboratory supports over 570,000 residents in the region. Individuals and organizations relying on the lab's services may face increased barriers to timely and accurate diagnoses.

The local Public Health Ontario Laboratory in Kingston has been an invaluable partner in our efforts to monitor and control infectious diseases within our community. The skilled professionals operating the lab have consistently demonstrated a commitment to excellence, providing reliable and efficient

diagnostic services. The closure of such a well-functioning facility poses a threat to the effective management of public health issues and may compromise our ability to respond promptly to emerging health concerns. It is essential to the future vision of a stronger and more resilient public health system as outlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 2022 Report on "Ensuring Public Health Preparedness for Infectious Outbreaks and Pandemics". As part of the report, Public Health Ontario Laboratory surge capacity and local expertise is critical in preparing for future pandemics.

Considering the critical role that the Public Health Ontario Laboratory plays in safeguarding public health, we respectfully urge you to reconsider the decision to close this essential facility. Collaborative efforts should be explored to address any challenges faced by the lab, ensuring its continued operation and the preservation of accessible diagnostic services for our community.

We appreciate the complex nature of the decisions you must make, and we believe that, together, we can find alternative solutions that maintain the integrity of our local public health system. The collective health and well-being of our community depend on the continued operation of the microbiology lab, and we trust that your leadership will prioritize these concerns in the decision-making process.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue that prioritizes the health of our community.

Sincerely,



Wess Garrod
KFL&A Board of Health Chair

cc: Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health Ontario Boards of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)