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**For Information**

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**REPORT TITLE: Overview of Health System Transformation, Current Health Policy Priorities and the Regional Role in Ontario Health Teams**

**FROM: Nancy Polsinelli, Commissioner of Health Services**

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**OBJECTIVE**

To provide an overview of current provincial directions related to health system transformation and outline ongoing policy and advocacy priorities from a regional health system perspective.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- At a local level, challenges remain evident across the health system related to underfunding, demand for service that is outpacing supply, and a need for improved service integration across the continuum of care.
  - In 2019, the Government of Ontario initiated its provincial health system transformation agenda that included establishing 54 Minister-approved Ontario Health Teams (OHTs). Three of these OHTs are located in Peel, including the Central West, Mississauga and Hills of Headwaters Collaborative OHTs.
  - The Region of Peel's leadership and collaboration through local partnership tables as a part of the COVID-19 response and vaccine planning has provided a key opportunity for the Region to work with health system and community partners and local OHTs.
  - Several health-related policy and advocacy priorities related to paramedic services, sustained supports for specialized seniors services, and mental health and addictions remain relevant to the current policy context and our community.
  - As OHTs continue to evolve into a central anchor for local health service planning and delivery, the Region is committed to leveraging existing partnerships and working with all three local OHTs to advance health system planning, integration, and advocacy.
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**DISCUSSION**

**1. Background**

The renewed mandate of the Health System Integration Committee (Committee) approved by Regional Council on December 8, 2022, in the report from the Commissioner of Health titled "Overview of the Health System Integration Committee and Terms of Reference Update", provided advice and direction to advance health system collaboration and integration between the Region of Peel's own services and the rest of the local health system. The report also identified windows of opportunity to influence system transformation and partnering on coordinated advocacy opportunities. For additional context, Appendix I provides a schematic of health services provided by the Region of Peel (Region) and their role within the broader health system. The Committee provides a platform

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to discuss impending changes to the health system, including potential impacts to system capacity and other issues facing the local health system in Peel.

### **a) Provincial Context**

The current provincial government has a strong focus on affordability, streamlining government regulation for improved efficiency in government programs and eliminating the provincial deficit following increased government spending during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. These priorities continue to be echoed in the speech from the throne, economic and fiscal updates, budget announcements and legislation brought forward by the provincial government around modernizing the health system to improve system integration, sustainability and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Grouped with the focus on health system transformation is new provincial legislation with a potentially significant impact to municipal governance and operations to support the provincial commitment to facilitate the construction of 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. Provincial efforts to achieve efficiencies are expected to have a negative impact on funding for Regional health and social services.

### **b) Health System Priorities and Provincial Budget**

The Ministry of Health has identified its key priorities for action, introduced in its *Plan to Stay Open*:

- preserving hospital capacity;
- providing the right care in the right place by supporting transitions to long-term care;
- expanding 911 models of care and preventing hospitalization;
- further reducing surgical waitlists; easing pressure on emergency departments;
- and further expanding Ontario's health workforce.

The *Plan to Stay Open* and associated legislation has demonstrated the government's intention to work with health system partners to identify urgent, actionable solutions to ease immediate pressures. However, challenges will continue to persist with system navigation, capacity pressures and the need for more effective integration across the continuum of care.

The Ontario fiscal plan has outlined key investments in several priority areas that align with existing Regional priorities including permanent wage enhancements to Personal Support Workers (PSWs), expanding home and community care services, supporting mental health and addictions services and continued focus on the implementation and support for Ontario Health Teams (OHTs).

### **c) Status of Health System Transformation**

In 2019, OHTs were introduced as part of the *People's Health Care Act*, legislation that supported patient and family-centred care. The role of OHTs is to actively facilitate an integrated healthcare service model to support coordination and system navigation for patients and families and increase accountability.

Ongoing transformation has been grounded in the four objectives of the Quadruple Aim Framework for the design and delivery of an effective health care system:

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- improving patient experience;
- improving population health outcomes;
- achieving better value;
- and improving front-line provider experience.

The goal of OHTs is a seamless system in which patients receive care from multiple providers functioning as one team with a joint accountability. Since 2019, 54 OHTs have been approved and are at different stages of maturity.

The Ontario Health (OH) organization oversees health care planning and delivery across the province, which includes executing the government's strategy focusing on expanding access to high-quality, integrated care through accelerated implementation of the OHTs, strengthening supports to the system and system oversight accountabilities. OH is structured in five geographical regions and Peel is located within the Central Region.

The movement to integrated care by way of OHTs represents some of the most significant, fast-moving and evolving health-system reform that Ontario has experienced in more than a decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has both expedited the need for enhanced integration and exacerbated the challenges the system was facing. The health-care system will need to fundamentally change to deal not only with the ongoing demand, but also address the backlog in clinical care that resulted from responding to the first COVID-19 wave. The pandemic required that care be delivered in a more integrated way and these experiences can be used to improve the health-care system — particularly to address such issues as capacity, wait times, and coordinated care.

### 2. Current Status and Activities of OHTs in Peel Region

Currently, the Region plays an integral role in all three local OHTs with representation on their Collaboration Councils (Steering Committees), working groups and planning tables. As the Province moves to implement the *People's Health Care Act*, the Region and OHTs within the catchment area are committed to supporting and working closely with government to provide more seamless, integrated and high-quality care for the residents we serve. Central West, Mississauga, and Hills of Headwater Collaborative OHTs have advanced several milestones and notable developments are included in Appendix II.

Improved coordination of care has been central to the introduction of OHTs. It is envisioned that, at maturity, all health, community, and social services for an attributed population will be under the oversight of a local OHT.

#### a) The Region of Peel's Role in Local OHTs

As a co-funder of health services, service provider, and backbone support to the community, the Region is well positioned to provide meaningful input into healthcare planning and local health system operations as an integrated health and social system partner. The Region plays important roles in the health care system by co-funding and delivering services such as public health, paramedicine, adult day services and long-term care. Further, as a municipal government, the Region has authority through the *Municipal Act, 2001* to provide services supporting the health, safety and well-being of

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persons in the community. For additional context, Appendix II provides a schematic of health services provided by the Region and their role within the broader health system.

The Strategic Policy and Performance Division has been actively coordinating regional representation and participation on OHT planning tables and there is a coordinated engagement with OHT partners. Since August 2021, the Region has been convening bi-weekly meetings with partners representing the Central West OHT, Hills of Headwaters Collaborative OHT, Mississauga OHT, OH Central Region, and the Region. This collective has been working together to plan and implement COVID-19, Cold, and Flu Care Clinics (CCFCC) across Peel so patients can readily access these services. The group is also planning how to work together on other priorities throughout 2023 and beyond.

As OHTs become a central anchor to health service planning and delivery at a local level, the Region will be at the table as a system leader – representing regional health services and highlighting the needs and interests of the Peel community.

### **3. Emerging Policy Priorities and Opportunities for Action**

COVID-19 has amplified existing vulnerabilities and inequities and prompted collaboration across sectors to meet the needs of different population groups. As a system leader and key partner in local OHTs, the Region is committed to leveraging new relationships that have formed throughout the pandemic as well as existing partnerships and relationships to advance the shared objective of achieving greater health system integration. In time, partnerships across health, community and social services will further integrate within the OHT structure with a goal of more holistic and seamless support for clients.

Several issues that were relevant in the past Term of Council continue to be key advocacy priorities for the Health Services department in the current policy context. These include:

- Addressing system pressures for Paramedic Services through off load delays, alternate care pathways and the expansion of community paramedicine
- Expanded long-term care supports for seniors including enhanced dementia care and other specialized services(e.g. the Butterfly Care Model)
- Sustainable funding and community supports for seniors across the care continuum (including provision of services and integrated care at the Seniors Health and Wellness Village at Peel Manor)
- Enhancing community-based funding for mental health and addictions
- Wrap around care for the homeless population

Leadership from the local OHTs are also being invited to provide regular updates to the committee focusing on integration and partnership with the Region.

## **CONCLUSION**

The role of OHTs will be central to achieving greater health system integration at a local level and at maturity health services currently governed by the Region are anticipated to be formally integrated within OHTs. Given the Region's commitment to advocate for greater integration, funding and other health priorities on behalf of Peel residents, OHTs provide an important partnership opportunity for the Region to support ongoing health system planning, collaboration

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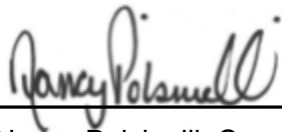
and advocacy. Further, actively participating with local OHTs provides an opportunity to help shape future system integration and ensure Peel residents are optimally served.

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix I – Municipal Health Services and the Health System (February 2023)

Appendix II - Region of Peel Timelines in Development of OHTs (February 2023)

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