
For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Update on Health System Transformation and the Region of Peel's Advocacy Priorities**

FROM: Cathy Granger, Acting Commissioner of Health Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update on the Region of Peel's health system priority advocacy issues within the context and status of ongoing Provincial health system transformation as well as impacts from COVID-19.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Ontario has undergone significant reforms to key parts of its health system, including the creation of Ontario Health, Ontario Health Regional Entities, and development of local Ontario Health Teams. These changes have been further impacted by ongoing efforts through the province to modernize both public health and emergency health services, changes to legislation aimed at improving home and community care services, and strategic direction on a Provincial mental health and addictions strategic plan.
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on health system reforms has been paused to address urgent and immediate pressures within the health system while other aspects adjusted to meet the urgency of need.
 - Throughout the process, the Region of Peel has remained engaged and have identified opportunities to advance key advocacy priorities as part of system reforms by engaging other levels of government and sector partners on key priorities in Peel.
 - While the Province addresses the COVID-19 pandemic, the Region will continue to build on the community response through collaboration, building alignment on key areas of need and advocating to the provincial government in order to advance the Region of Peel's own Health Services' priorities within broader health system reforms.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the provincial government set out plans for transformative changes to Ontario's health care system. As previously reported to the October 17, 2019 Health System Integration Committee (HSIC) in the report "Health System Transformation and Regional Health Advocacy Priorities", the provincial government had set course through *Bill 74: The People's Health Care Act, 2019* to re-structure Ontario's health system.

While COVID-19 has forced the Region to pivot focus to more immediate needs and challenges, staff have also continued to maintain focus to support local system planning (i.e.

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Ontario Health Teams) and advance Regional priorities (i.e. Community Safety and Well-Being Plan).

2. Update on Health System Transformation and Regional Health Priorities

The COVID-19 pandemic has reprioritized Ministry reforms. The provincial government's Economic and Fiscal Update ('Ontario Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19') released March 25, 2020, set out policy and funding measures to respond to new pandemic-related pressures on hospitals, long term care homes, public health units, paramedic services, primary care, mental health services, and a wide range of other health and human services. An overview of key health system transformation milestones is provided in the presentation attached.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted both provincial and local momentum on health system transformation, the urgency of the pandemic has underscored the importance and value of strengthening local health services to keep residents both healthy and safe.

a) Ontario Health and Ontario Health Teams

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health (Ministry) established the Ontario Health Agency to assume governance and consolidation of several health agencies and restructured the 14 local health integration networks (LHINs) into five regional offices for Ontario Health. Peel is clustered within the Central Region of Ontario Health with Donna Cripps appointed the transitional lead and Chief Executive Officer.

Following Ministry approval of three local Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) in Peel, the Region has remained engaged with community partners in the full application process.

While the current OHT landscape has shifted to focus on immediate responses to COVID-19, the Region has engaged with other OHT partners in the coordination of personal protective equipment (PPE) supply distribution, community testing and other measures to mitigate COVID-19 impacts in Peel. As the work with OHT implementation continues, the province announced \$25.25 million on July 23, 2020 to directly support OHT implementation including dedicated funds for virtual care to support vulnerable populations and individuals testing positive for COVID-19.

b) Home and Community Care

The Region of Peel has long advocated for the integration of home and community care services to reduce service wait times and ensure seamless care transitions from hospital to home, with added capacity to meet the needs of a growing aging population.

The *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020*, introduced in February 2020 and passed in July 2020 transitioned LHINs to function as *Home and Community Care Support Services* responsible for interim transitional care coordination. This will likely have implications for how local home and community care services are coordinated and funded, including those offered through the Region (i.e. Adult Day Services or ADS).

The modernized home and community care legislation is intended to remove barriers and restrictions to care in support of increased opportunities for innovation (i.e. virtual

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care) and improved access to services (i.e. integrated care and congregate settings). This provides a unique opportunity for the Region as a community service partner (i.e. ADS, community paramedicine) to support and innovate new models of care through OHT partnership that address gaps in care needs, such as those surfaced during the pandemic.

c) Long Term Care

In response to serious gaps and challenges exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Long-Term Care (LTC) launched an independent LTC COVID-19 Commission (Commission) in July 2020. Regional staff have requested the opportunity to participate in the Commission's investigation. Areas of interest include sector-wide advocacy to increase funding for additional new LTC beds and redevelopment of existing LTC facilities, number of staff to meet acceptable levels of care, as well as provision of specialized care where the Region could articulate our expertise in delivering high quality, person-centred care.

Ongoing advocacy by the Region of Peel, including most recently to the Minister of Long-Term Care at the Annual Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) 2020 conference, has called for investments in person-centred care initiatives such as the Butterfly Model, and the redevelopment of Peel Manor into a Senior's Health and Wellness Village. The report titled "Advocating to Strengthen Long Term Care and Seniors Services in Peel" to June 11, 2020 Regional Council highlighted the need for infrastructure redevelopment, enhanced guidelines for specialized support programs, funding support for the Seniors Health and Wellness Village, and funding to build workforce training and capacity (i.e. addressing staffing ratios to provide appropriate levels of care to residents). In the coming months staff will engage with relevant ministries, sector partners and leverage the work of the Commission to highlight opportunities for meaningful change.

d) Mental Health and Addictions

For many years the Region has led advocacy with community partners aimed at addressing existing underfunding of mental health and addictions service in Peel. On March 3, 2020, the Ministry released the *Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System* (Roadmap) which establishes four pillars to support the delivery of services (improving quality, expanding existing spaces, innovation, and improving access), and creation of a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence.

Since the release of the Roadmap, the Ministry, the Region of Peel and health system partners have adjusted to new challenges resulting from the pandemic. The report titled "Responding to the Mental Health and Addictions Needs in Peel" to June 11, 2020 meeting of Regional Council outlined efforts by the Region and community mental health and addictions system partners to mobilize resources, including leveraging Peel's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan, the Region's Community Response Table, and local Ontario Health Teams. Following this report, Council passed resolution on June 25, 2020 (Resolution Number 2020-507) directly requesting enhancements to funding for mobile crisis rapid response teams (MCRRT) and other sustainable improvements for supporting people experiencing a mental health crisis. With this direction, staff are working to advance opportunities to improve system capacity by raising concerns of underfunding, service disparities, and waitlists with provincial

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government leadership (most recently at the AMO 2020 Annual Conference with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions), and Peel Members of Provincial Parliament, most recently at a roundtable hosted by the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for Mississauga-Malton, Mr. Deepak Anand, while developing local innovations through community partnerships.

Staff are also developing a communications campaign through the CSWB plan focused on access to services and supports that advance safety, connectedness and well-being. These efforts will parallel ongoing focused campaigning through social media and deliberate conversations on the need for increased investments in stepped care models; Cognitive Behavioural Therapies (CBT) and services to support vulnerable populations including children and youth ages 0 – 24 and seniors. Through targeted engagement of Ministry staff, the Region has also highlighted priorities at the beginning of the pandemic including the need for enhanced mobile outreach, support for frontline workers, capacity to support self-isolation for homeless with mental health and addictions, and issues related to domestic violence.

e) Modernization of Public Health and Paramedic Services

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry established consultations directed at modernizing local public health and emergency health services. Two separate reports at the January 23, 2020 meeting of Regional Council detailed modernization consultations and separate submissions by the Region to these consultations.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry paused most modernization activities to focus on immediate public health and health system measures to protect Ontarians. Ministry leadership have indicated that renewed consultations and modernization efforts will resume when pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic eased, although timelines have not yet been confirmed.

3. Future Direction and Next Steps

As the province moves cautiously into recovery, it is expected that health system transformation will adapt to and reflect Ministry and sector learnings from COVID-19 and a potential second wave of COVID-19.

Longer-term funding remains a concern for the Region's health services. The Ministry announced funding plans to reflect pandemic-related pressures, most recently with \$27.3 million to assist with COVID-19 costs and pressures to the Safe Restart Program. The Provincial government has also acknowledged the impacts from COVID-19 by allocating one-time funding to public health units (\$47 million) for 2020-2021 and \$243 million for long term care (to date, the Regional homes have received \$1.6 million for COVID-19 prevention and containment). There is also potential additional funding that will be announced for the paramedic services sector, to cover pandemic-related costs. The Minister of Health, in an address at the Annual Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO), indicated that provincial share of land ambulance funding would increase by five per cent in 2020-2021.

Through ongoing advocacy, the Region of Peel aims to leverage Health Services' commitment to continuous quality improvement that ensure that high-quality services are delivered effectively and cost-efficiently. In the months ahead, Regional health services will continue to prioritize its response to COVID-19 with community partners. A leading example of this commitment is the work currently underway through the Community Safety and Well-

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Being (CSWB) Plan. The CSWB plan provides an example of the Region's commitment to work with organizations from across our community to develop a comprehensive approach to address priority challenges in Peel including family violence, mental health and addictions, and systemic discrimination. This and many other examples of collaborative partnerships continue to be central to the broader goal to support system transformation that meets the needs of Peel residents and bridges existing gaps in services or supports.

CONCLUSION

Ontario is undergoing significant reforms to key parts of its health system. While progress has been delayed due to COVID-19, the pandemic has created new opportunities and highlighted the urgency for a Region-wide response to improving the local health system. Through collaboration and partnerships, as highlighted through the work with OHTs, CSWB plan and other system tables, the Region continues to make an important contribution towards local health system reforms and advocate for the needs of residents within the new and evolving local health system.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Brian Laundry, Director, Strategic Policy and Performance, brian.laundry@peelregion.ca.

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