

November 9, 2022

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario

The Honourable Silvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Ministry of Health

Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health

(via email)

Re: Recommendations to Address Respiratory Illnesses

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Jones and Dr. Moore,

At its meeting of November 7, 2022, the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit received a verbal update from Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Vera Etches, about respiratory viruses circulating concurrently in our community, which contribute to the significant pressures felt by local hospitals.

The Board also heard from Dr. Lindy Samson, Chief of Staff and Chief Medical Officer at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), who talked about the record number of children needing care at CHEO – with an unprecedented volume of them requiring admission to hospital and intensive care. She noted that the number of children needing care was resulting in long waits in the hospital's emergency department, pressures on its intensive care and medical units, and that it was leading to surgeries being cancelled. She noted that most of these children are there because of viral infections, with many having difficulty breathing.

Following Dr. Etches' verbal update and Dr. Samson's oral submission, the Board approved the following recommendations:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chair of the Board of Health write to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Health and Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health to request:

- **That the Ministry of Health publicly release information on data and projections for this fall and winter's respiratory illness season and the**

impact it could have on the public's health and our health care system so that residents can better understand the risks and rationale for starting to wear masks again, to protect themselves and their loved ones and to maintain access to critical care through this exceptional respiratory season;

- **That the Ministry of Health intensify the visibility and reach of a mass health communications campaign to explain the benefits of COVID-19 and flu vaccination and masking and to strongly encourage their use; and**
- **That provincial messaging include information about other measures for limiting the impact of respiratory illnesses on our health care system, such as staying home when sick and how to access treatment, such as Paxlovid, for those at greatest risk.**

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this motion and the Chair's letter be shared with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

Pursuant to the Ottawa Board of Health's approval of the above-referenced motion, these recommendations are respectfully submitted for your consideration in hopes that the Province will move forward with their implementation. The full motion is attached, for reference purposes.

Please feel free to contact Dr. Etches directly if you have any questions or require additional information. She can be reached at Vera.Etches@Ottawa.ca or by phone at 613-580-2424, ext. 23681.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Egli".

Councillor Keith Egli, Chair
Ottawa Board of Health

cc: Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario

Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa

Motion 26/02

Moved by / Proposée par : Vice-Chair Tammy DeGiovanni

WHEREAS at its meeting of November 7, 2022, the Ottawa Board of Health received an update from Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health with respect to local COVID-19 rates that continue to be high;

AND WHEREAS the Medical Officer of Health also noted that other respiratory viruses are circulating concurrently, such as influenza and RSV, which contribute to the significant pressures felt by local hospitals;

AND WHEREAS healthcare providers at CHEO, in particular, have flagged unprecedented volumes of infants and children with respiratory symptoms from various viruses, challenging the provision of care;

AND WHEREAS Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health has also recently publicly expressed concerns that the health system will see a "triple threat" of COVID-19, a bad influenza season and the resurgence of RSV in children this fall and winter, stressed the importance of vaccination and suggested that mask mandates could be brought back in order to help control transmission of respiratory illnesses;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chair of the Board of Health write to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Health and Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health to request:

- **That the Ministry of Health publicly release information on data and projections for this fall and winter's respiratory illness season and the impact it could have on the public's health and our health care system so that residents can better understand the risks and rationale for starting to wear masks again, to protect themselves and their loved ones and to maintain access to critical care through this exceptional respiratory season;**

- That the Ministry of Health intensify the visibility and reach of a mass health communications campaign to explain the benefits of COVID-19 and flu vaccination and masking and to strongly encourage their use; and
- That provincial messaging include information about other measures for limiting the impact of respiratory illnesses on our health care system, such as staying home when sick and how to access treatment, such as Paxlovid, for those at greatest risk.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this motion and the Chair's letter be shared with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).