

# Operation Health Protection

An Action Plan to Prevent Threats to our  
Health and to Promote a Healthy Ontario

June 22, 2004



# Executive Summary

OPERATION HEALTH PROTECTION is a bold 3-year Action Plan to revitalize our public health system by preventing threats to our health and promoting a healthy Ontario. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is taking decisive steps to rebuild a system weakened by a decade of decline.

The Plan sets out specific actions over the next three years and the results that Ontarians can expect from these actions. Acting on the directions in the reports on the SARS crisis by the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health chaired by Dr. David Naylor, the Expert Panel on SARS and Infectious Disease Control chaired by Dr. David Walker, and the Interim Report of Mr. Justice Archie Campbell, OPERATION HEALTH PROTECTION calls on the Ministry, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, municipalities, health providers and Public Health Units to work together to rebuild Ontario's public health system.

The Plan focuses on:

- Creation of a Health Protection and Promotion Agency
- Public Health Renewal
- Health Emergency Management
- Infection Control and Communicable Disease Capacity
- Health Human Resources
- Infrastructure for Health System Preparedness

We are investing a total of \$273 million to support this plan in 2004/05, growing to \$469 million by 2007/08. This includes an immediate investment of \$41.7 million in new funding in 2004/05 to support this plan.

## Creating the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency

Within two years, OPERATION HEALTH PROTECTION will be anchored by an independent health protection and promotion agency similar to those operating in British Columbia, Québec and at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. This new Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency will support the CMOH and provide expert scientific leadership.

Its responsibilities will include:

- **Specialized public health laboratory services** that will ensure that all health practitioners receive timely and relevant information to support health surveillance;
- **Infection control and communicable disease information and centralized support** for professionals in "the field";
- **Emergency preparedness assistance and support** in the form of scientific and technical advice, and a modern and timely alert system;
- **Risk communications** that will enhance the rapid exchange of information between healthcare practitioners, institutions and the Ministry about potential health crises;
- **Research and knowledge transfer** through linkages with research, academic and healthcare institutions; and
- **Reporting** through the CMOH on the health status of Ontarians, and emergent health threats and risks.

## Renewing the Public Health System

OPERATION HEALTH PROTECTION lays out two key elements to public health renewal in Ontario:

- **Strengthening the role of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and**
- **Strengthening the Public Health System.**

Over the coming year, the government will initiate legislative changes to give the CMOH the necessary independence to protect the health of Ontarians with:

- A duty to report publicly on public health issues, including an annual report to the Legislature on the health of Ontarians;
- Adequate protection to speak independently on matters of public health importance;
- Independent legal authority to take the actions that may be needed to prevent, reduce or eliminate health risks anywhere in Ontario.

The success of OPERATION HEALTH PROTECTION will depend on strong local capabilities. To that end, the Ministry will:

- *Strengthen the resource base for public health* by increasing the provincial share of funding for local Public Health Units from 50% to 75%.
- *Review and update the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines for local Boards of Health*, last updated in 1997.
- *Review the organization and capacity of local Public Health Units and the Public Health Education, Research and Development (PHRED) Program;*
- *Produce an annual Ontario Public Health Performance Report.*

## Health Emergency Management

The Emergency Management Unit (EMU), established in December 2003, is already up and running.

Its responsibilities include:

- Developing a health emergency action plan;
- Standardizing expectations of healthcare providers and institutions regarding emergency management;
- Improving systems of patient transfer in the event of an emergency;
- Co-ordinating distribution of supplies and equipment during an emergency;
- Increasing the availability of skills and expertise required during an emergency.

The EMU spearheaded the development of the recently released *Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan*, which will be used by healthcare providers and Ministries to prepare for a major outbreak.

In 2003, the Ministry also implemented Canada's first Emergency Medical Assistance Team (EMAT). EMAT is a 20-bed, mobile acute care field unit that can be on-site wherever there is road access anywhere across Ontario within 24 hours, to help local communities handle emergencies and unexpected events.

## Infection Control and Communicable Disease Capacity

The Ministry is creating a permanent central expert body – the Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee (PIDAC) – to continue the development of standards and guidelines for health professionals and organizations faced with infectious disease outbreaks. Membership of the committee will bring together broad expertise from across the healthcare sector. The Committee will also advise on research priorities, emergency preparedness and immunization programs. PIDAC will help create regional networks for infection control and communicable disease that will coordinate infection control activities at the local level.

## Health Human Resources Excellence

The Ministry is implementing a health human resources strategy that will attract, retain and develop the best in public health professionals. We will immediately hire a senior medical director and additional medical microbiologists at our Central Public Health Laboratory. We will bolster our infection control and communicable disease capacity by increasing full-time positions for infection control practitioners in health facilities over the next three years. We will provide 100 per cent funding for 180 full-time communicable disease positions in local Public Health Units. We will begin immediately to expand infection control training for front line staff. The Ministry will work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and professional organizations to improve health human resource planning for public health and actively promote careers in public health.

Our strategy includes reducing casualization and promoting full-time employment across the healthcare system. Our government has made a commitment to create 8000 new nursing positions to increase the proportion of full-time nurses. Since February, we have funded 2400 full-time nursing positions in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

## Enhanced Health System Preparedness

To ensure the efficient exchange of information and communications and collaborative decision-making across the healthcare system, the Ministry is building a technologically-advanced infrastructure with three major components:

- **Surveillance:** The recent establishment of the Surveillance and Outbreak Management Section in the Public Health Division is already enhancing the Ministry's ability to quickly collect and analyze data critical to identifying and managing outbreaks.
- **Communications:** A public health 'alert' system will ensure the right information gets to the right people at the right time.
- **Information Technology:** The Public Health Information and Information Technology strategy will improve the information sharing and management at the Ministry and Public Health Units. The integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS) will enable local Public Health Units to rapidly send information about communicable diseases to the Ministry, and to better trace the path of infectious diseases and manage quarantines.

# Key Activities by Year

Operation Health Protection is a 3-year Action Plan to prevent threats to our health and to promote a Healthy Ontario. The Plan focuses on the following themes:

Creating the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency Implementation Task Force established</li> <li>Operational review of Laboratories</li> <li>Medical Director and additional medical microbiologists hired at the Central Public Health Laboratory</li> <li>Video link installed between Public Health Division of MOHLTC and Central Public Health Laboratory</li> <li>Implementation Task Force submits recommendations to MOHLTC</li> <li>Legislation introduced to create the new Agency</li> <li>Capital approved for the new Agency and its Laboratory</li> <li>Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency begins its operations including new Laboratory</li> </ul>
Public Health Renewal	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Increasing the independence of the Chief Medical Officer of Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislation introduced to increase the independence of the CMOH</li> <li>First annual CMOH Report on the health of Ontarians</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Public Health System Enhancement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provincial share of funding for local Public Health Units increased to 55 per cent from 50 per cent</li> <li>Review and update of <i>Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines</i> for local Public Health Units</li> <li>Capacity review of Public Health Units</li> <li>Public Health Research, Education and Development (PHRED) Program review</li> <li>100 per cent funding for 180 full-time communicable disease positions in local Public Health Units</li> <li>CMOH issues first annual Ontario Public Health Performance Report</li> <li>Provincial share of funding for local Public Health Units increased to 65 per cent</li> <li>Provincial share of funding for local Public Health Units increased to 75 per cent</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Health Emergency Management	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency Management Unit (EMU) spearheads Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan (completed)</li> <li>Emergency Medical Assistance Team fully deployment-ready (completed)</li> </ul>
Infection Control and Communicable Disease Capacity	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee (PIDAC) created</li> <li>Regional infection control and communicable disease networks begin to be phased in</li> <li>Regional networks established throughout Ontario</li> <li>Additional infection control experts hired in healthcare facilities across Ontario</li> </ul>
Health Human Resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health human resources strategy developed</li> <li>Infection control training and courses expanded</li> <li>Health human resources strategy implemented</li> </ul>
Enhanced Structure and Support for Health System Preparedness	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Surveillance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveillance and Outbreak Management Section of Public Health Division (MOHLTC) fully operational</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Health Alert Network strengthened</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Information Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated Public Health Information System for infectious disease reporting, contact tracing and quarantine management developed and implementation underway</li> <li>Implement systems for alerts and information management</li> <li>Integrated Public Health Information System implementation completed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

[illegible]

