

Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit
Assessment Report – Executive Summary
June 2015

On February 25, 2015, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care appointed Mr. Graham Scott as an Assessor under the authority of section 82(1) of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA) to conduct an assessment of the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit.

Mr. Scott carried out an assessment of the Board of Health for the purposes of assessing governance, including the quality of the management or administration of the affairs of the Board of Health, and ascertaining whether the Board of Health was complying in all other respects with the HPPA and the regulations.

The Assessment was completed within 45 days of the date of appointment. Mr. Scott presented his report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The report and recommendations have been accepted.

The Assessor notes shortfalls with respect to the governance and oversight provided by the APHB. The public health of local residents in the District of Algoma remains the priority for the Ministry and actions will be taken to ensure that the Board of Health is performing its duties and responsibilities under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

Overview of Findings:

In his assessment, Mr. Scott found that the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit failed to meet its obligations under the HPPA, which has had a negative impact on the operations of both the Board of Health and District of Algoma Health Unit. In summary:

Board of Health

- The Board of Health has failed to ensure the adequate management and administration of its affairs and has not met certain requirements of the HPPA, Public Health Funding and Accountability Agreement (Accountability Agreement), nor the governance expectations under the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS).
- The predominant view at the Board of Health is that status quo is satisfactory and that leadership and management issues would improve with a new Medical Officer of Health. This passive approach failed to take into account that the Board of Health had a role to play.

District of Algoma Health Unit

- The public health unit is organizationally weak as staff are unhappy and suffering from poor morale. Failure to address this immediately will lead to increased problems and a weakening of service to its clients.
- Stability and ongoing permanent leadership is urgently required.

Executive Team

- All vacancies should involve thorough and appropriate human resources processes with an emphasis on increased opportunities for internal candidates to advance. The choice of leadership is crucial and a thorough assessment process will be required.

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Staff

- While staff continue to serve their clients to the best of its ability, there has been a breakdown in communication and sudden changes in management composition and structure, resulting in declining morale. Staff must feel that they are part of the District of Algoma Health Unit team and are governed effectively and with well understood policies and practices.

Recommendations:

Mr. Scott's report included four (4) recommendations for the Ministry's consideration as follows:

1. All members of the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit, whether appointed by the municipalities or the province, except those new members appointed for the first time following the municipal elections in 2014, should step down voluntarily or be removed by the municipalities and the province. It is essential to provide a needed fresh start for the organization.
2. The Board of Health should be a skills-based Board.
3. Municipalities should look carefully at the advantage of appointing members other than Municipal Council Members on the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit, given the demanding work burden of elected councillors.
4. Two (2) options are proposed for addressing the realignment of governance:
 - i. Merge the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit with the Board of Health for the Sudbury and District Health Unit; or,
 - ii. Reorganize the current Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit structure.

Ministry Actions:

The Ministry takes the Assessor's report and recommendations very seriously. The Ministry has an interest in ensuring accountability for the expenditure of public funds and ensuring the proper quality of the management or administration of the affairs of all Boards of Health in Ontario.

The Ministry is committed to undertake a review of the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit's current governance structure immediately and is undertaking a number of steps in this regard.

The option to merge the District of Algoma Health Unit with the Sudbury and District Health Unit will be considered more broadly in the context of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's mandate to conduct a review focussing on improving patient outcomes and value for money of all public health units.

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The Minister of Health and Long Term Care has called for the immediate and voluntary resignation of municipal and provincial members who sat on the Board of Health prior to the 2014 municipal election.

The Ministry will also seek the cooperation and commitment of municipalities within the District of Algoma to ensure Board of Health members who are appointed have the necessary and appropriate skills to exercise and ensure appropriate governance and accountability. A governance consultant will also be hired to work with the municipalities within the District of Algoma to assist with the appointment process.

The Ministry will work expeditiously with the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit in the recruitment and appointment of a full-time Medical Officer of Health. Once appointed, the Ministry will support the Medical Officer of Health in fulfilling his or her duties under the HPPA.

The Ministry will continue to work with the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) to enhance Board of Health member orientation practices and processes to ensure a focus on effective board governance practices for non-profit organizations.

The Ministry will require the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit to attest that they are in compliance with the requirements as set out in the Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards. The standards include specific requirements around orientation and training of Board of Health members, Board of Health self-evaluation, leadership and trusteeship. Further, the ministry will provide additional tools to support the Board of Health's ability to assess and determine risk, and meet accountability requirements established by the Ministry.

The Ministry will continue to conduct regular follow-up audits of the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit to ensure compliance with requirements related to financial, operational, and value for money aspects of transfer payment funding.