



June 29, 2022

Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH)

**Dear COMOH members:**

**RE: Endorsement of Recommendation for Standardized Sociodemographic Data**

The Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO) endorses the briefing note, Endorsement of Recommendation for Standardized Sociodemographic Data. Ontario public health units cannot assess health inequities, or determine whether population health interventions improve or worsen inequities without standardized sociodemographic data. Including the recommended standardized sociodemographic data in the new data system to monitor all diseases of public health significance is an important step towards identifying and addressing health inequities.

However, APHEO also recommends that the inclusion of these data:

- a) Be completed concurrently with the development of a Provincial Public Health Ethics Framework. Such a framework could be embedded within the Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability and would guide the ethical collection, disclosure and use of these (and other) data as they are used to inform decisions regarding public health interventions. The implementation of an ethics framework for public health is supported by a large body of research and would better ensure that health care practitioners and communities support the collection and use of sociodemographic data.
- b) Be completed as a temporary measure until the standardized sociodemographic data can be stored in a central database with data linkage available to public health users (e.g., epidemiologists, health analysts). Having the standardized sociodemographic data stored in one database, such as the Ontario health card database, and linked to other health databases and systems, is preferable to duplicating the information across databases. However, until a linked data system is possible, including standardized sociodemographic data in the new data system to monitor all diseases of public health significance will better enable Ontario public health units to address health inequities within Ontario.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards

*Erica Clark*

Erica Clark, President

Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario

The Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO) is an organization of over 300 members and affiliates, devoted to advancing and promoting the discipline and professional practice of epidemiology in Ontario public health units since 1991.