

Pakes appointed York's new Medical Officer of Health

Dr. Barry Pakes will lead York Region's continued efforts to fight COVID-19 as its newly-appointed Medical Officer of Health.

His appointment, replacing Dr. Karim Kurji, who retired this past September, was announced by the Region on Friday afternoon after the hire was formally approved by Health Minister Christine Elliott on November 18.

His appointment is effective immediately.

Dr. Pakes is not new to York Region, having served in the community as a Public Health Physician in support of the local pandemic response. He was previously Program Director of the Public Health and Preventative Medicine Residency Program at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, a school which trains physician specialists to be Medical Officers of Health.

He has also served as Associate Medical Officer of Health in the Regions of Peel, Halton, and Middlesex-London, and he also spent time in Nunavut as Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

"Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and wellbeing of our communities has been Regional Council's number one priority," said Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson in a statement. "We continue to rely on public health guidance and expertise from across all levels of governments and are confident the leadership of Dr. Pakes will deliver on the high-quality public health care our residents both deserve and expect."

Added York Region CAO Bruce Macgregor: "We look forward to continuing to work with Dr. Pakes and are proud to have him represent York Region on Public Health matters. I wish to thank Dr. Richard Gould (who served as York Region's Acting Medical Officer of Health upon Dr. Kurji's retirement) and the entire York Region Public Health team for their commitment and resiliency during these leadership changes."

According to the Region, Dr. Pakes is a graduate of McGill University and received his Doctor of Medicine from the University of Toronto, and a master's degree in public health from Harvard University.

He completed specialty training and became a fellow in Public Health and Preventive Medicine in 2007. In 2014, he completed his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Public Health Ethics from the University of Toronto.

He practices clinically in urgent care and emergency medicine and has a diploma in tropical medicine and hygiene.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter