



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health  
Michael Clarke, CEO (Interim)

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## **MLHU'S ANTI-BLACK RACISM COMMITMENT AND ACTION: AN UPDATE**

### ***Recommendation***

***It is recommended that the Board of Health:***

- 1) Receive Report No. 04-21 re: "MLHU's Anti-Black Racism Commitment and Action: An Update" for information;***
- 2) Direct staff to continue to prioritize efforts to identify and implement public health and organizational actions to address and eliminate racism.***

### **Key Points**

- In June 2020, the Middlesex-London Board of Health identified racism as a public health crisis.
- MLHU is working with the support of two groups of external consultants to conduct an internal diversity and inclusion assessment to address a range of issues, and to develop an anti-Black racism plan for public health action.
- MLHU is in the initial stages of collaborating with various partners to address anti-Black racism.
- Staff will bring forward the results of the consultants' work, along with staff recommendations, to the April 2021 meeting of the Board.

### **Background**

The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 saw the resurgence and expansion of international dialogue on systemic racism, police brutality, and calls to action to address racism in a comprehensive, systemic, and timely way. Organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Canadian Public Health Association have identified racism as a major public health issue, and others such as the Canadian Nurses Association have called anti-Black racism a public health emergency in Canada. On June 18, 2020, in response to a call to action from the leadership of London's Black Lives Matter and a subsequent motion passed by the City of London, the [Middlesex-London Board of Health](#) identified racism as a Public Health crisis.

Actively addressing racism is required if public health is to meet its mandate of promoting health, preventing disease and injury, and reducing health inequities. Racism is one of five areas prioritized for public health action through recent recovery planning processes, and endorsed by the Board of Health in November 2020 ([Report No. 04-20](#)).

### **Current State of Anti-Black Racism Work**

MLHU is currently working on several initiatives designed to provide a framework for action to be taken internally and externally in the months and years ahead. This planning work will provide a comprehensive work plan for the MLHU to address anti-Black racism in a way that is systematic, community and evidence informed, and collaborative with community partners and Black community members.

***Anti-Black Racism Plan:***

MLHU has been working with a group of all-Black consultants to create an anti-Black racism plan focused on identifying steps to address anti-Black racism in MLHU programs and services, and to clarify priority areas for public health action to broadly address systemic anti-Black racism. The Wright of Way Consulting Group was selected after a thorough Request for Proposal process, during which the RFP was disseminated to a list of Black consultants with health and/or public health related expertise, and to leaders and administrators of multiple local Black-led organizations and listservs for broader distribution. The work includes a literature scan of anti-Black racism in a public health context, a robust community engagement process, and interviews with key MLHU staff. By January 31<sup>st</sup>, the consultants will provide an evidence- and community-informed plan with recommendations to be actioned by MLHU.

***Diversity and Inclusion Assessment:***

After approval from the Board of Health in January 2019 ([Report No. 002-19](#)), MLHU contracted Turner Consulting Group Inc. to conduct an internal Diversity and Inclusion Assessment. After a year of delay due to public health modernization discussions and COVID demands, work was resumed in August 2020. The Health Equity team and an MLHU Advisory Committee has been supporting the Consultant in the assessment of equity, diversity and inclusion at MLHU, focusing on areas such as recruitment, retention, accommodations, and the Board of Health and MLT's roles in promoting diversity and inclusion. Once the survey, focus groups, interviews, Employment Systems Review, and employee census are completed, the consultant will identify recommendations to enhance diversity and inclusion across the organization. Recommendations will be received by March 2021 and implemented in a timely and sustained manner.

***Community Work:***

As a first step in community work, MLHU responded to a request from the London District Catholic School Board (LDSCB) to engage in discussions about potential opportunities to collaboratively take action against racism. MLHU is committed to working with the LDSCB in this area. MLHU will also address anti-Black racism through active participation on community-based collaboratives. Committees in the initial stages of formation include the community-led City-sponsored Anti-Black Racism Working Group (part of London's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy), and a proposed committee consisting of larger institutions in the area, such as school boards, London Police Service, City of London, and the MLHU. MLHU staff have also reached out to County of Middlesex staff to enquire about any anti-racism work occurring at the County or lower tier municipalities.

**Next Steps**

It is expected that some recommendations highlighted in the anti-Black racism plan and generated by the diversity and inclusion assessment will be initiated early in 2021 and implemented in the short term, while others may take months or years to fully realize; MLHU will prioritize and sustain its commitment to implementation. Oluwakemi Komolafe, Public Health Nurse, will lead implementation of the anti-Black racism plan, supporting internal programs and services to action the plan's recommendations. Navneet Sandhu, Health Promoter, will lead and/or support implementation of the diversity and inclusion assessment recommendations, with an internal committee and relevant teams across the health unit. Team members and the manager of the Health Equity team and the Chief Nursing Officer will engage in community-based anti-Black racism work as appropriate to committee terms of reference, and will provide ongoing updates to the Board of Health as committees mature and directions are clarified.

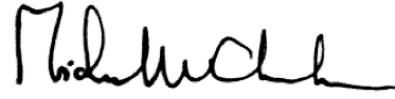
**Conclusion**

MLHU fully acknowledges the health inequities experienced by Black people in London and Middlesex due to racism. The organization recognizes its responsibility to understand, communicate, and collaboratively address these inequities. With the Board of Health's continued support, MLHU will continue to demonstrate and enhance its leadership and action to address anti-Black racism in London and Middlesex County.

This report was prepared by the Health Equity and Indigenous Reconciliation Team.



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