



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Emily Williams, Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2024 January 18

2024 FEDERAL BUDGET CONSULTATION - SUBMISSION

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1) *Receive Report No. 09-24 re: “2024 Federal Budget Consultation - Submission” for information; and*
- 2) *Approve the attached response as [Appendix A](#).*

Key Points

- [The online portal](#) for the 2024 Federal Budget has been opened and is providing individuals and organizations the opportunity to provide submissions regarding budgetary priorities.
- [Appendix A](#) is the draft response from the MLHU to be provided to the Federal Ministry of Finance by the February 9, 2024 deadline.

Background

The online portal for the 2024 Federal Budget has been opened and is providing individuals and organizations the opportunity to provide submissions regarding budgetary priorities. Submissions can be received via a survey or a written submission by February 9, 2024, to the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance.

The Federal Government, and more specifically, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), has the overall responsibility for immigration and refugee matters. It is responsible for selecting immigrants, issuing visitors' visas, and granting citizenship. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of recent immigrants or newcomers to Middlesex-London increased by nearly 70%, from 11,595 in 2016 to 19,685 in 2021 (increase of 8,090). This has increased demand for public health services, specifically those provided by the Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD), Infectious Disease Control (IDC), and Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) teams.

A high proportion of individuals newly arrived in Canada may be susceptible to vaccine preventable diseases because of a lack of effective immunization programs in their country of origin. Immunization of persons new to Canada is often challenging because: immunization records may not exist; records may be difficult to interpret because of language barriers; and immunization schedules and vaccines may differ from those used in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023). The VPD team is accountable for providing vaccines to individuals who do not have access to primary care, as is often the case with newcomers.

As part of the immigration process, newcomers are required to complete an Immigration Medical Examination (IME). If there are any abnormalities associated with the IME chest x-ray, public health staff on the IDC team will review the examination and conduct a medical history interview and symptom assessment. The increase in newcomers to London has had an impact on the volumes of suspected and

active tuberculosis (TB) cases, requiring follow up by the MLHU, with the number of active TB cases more than tripling since 2016, up from 8 per year to 23 by 2021. Each TB case requires very intensive investigation, requiring approximately 50 hours of staff time. The number of new referrals to the MLHU has increased by 28% over the same five years, from 76 in 2016 to 273 in 2022.

The HBHC program is designed to help children in Ontario have a healthy start in life. To identify families that may benefit from the program, a screening tool is used which takes into account certain risk factors for less-than-optimal development. The HBHC screening tool includes a question on whether infants and families need newcomer support. Infants and families need newcomer support if the mother is new to Canada, less than 5 years living in Canada, who lacks social supports, or is experiencing social isolation. The percent of infants screened with families in need of newcomer support has been significantly higher for Middlesex-London compared to Ontario. For example, in 2022 Middlesex-London saw demand of 10.1%, compared with 3.7% in the rest of the province. Since 2015, the need for newcomer supports have increased by 3%, corresponding to approximately 100 more families requiring this service between 2015 and 2023.

Proposed Budgetary Items to Highlights

In the draft response to the 2024 Federal Budget Consultation, the following critical priorities are suggested to be highlighted:

- The need for additional nursing and program assistant resources for the VPD team;
- The need for additional nursing resources for the IDC team; and
- The need for additional nursing resources for the HBHC home visiting team.

Next Steps

[Appendix A](#) contains a draft response to be provided to the Federal Ministry of Finance by the February 9, 2024 deadline.

This report was prepared by the Chief Executive Officer and Medical Officer of Health.



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