



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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

DATE: 2022 March 17

HEALTHY LIVING STRATEGIC REVIEW

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 13-22 re: “Healthy Living Strategic Review” for information.

Key Points

- The Healthy Living Division delivers a large number of public health programs and services encompassing numerous public health standards and diverse health topic areas, limiting the ability to focus resources and efforts.
- The pause in much of the division’s program work resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity to examine and identify divisional and team program priorities going forward to achieve greater population health impact.
- This strategic review may result in recommendations for: changes to programs; changes to the way programs are structured; shifting of resources within the division or across divisions; and the addition of positions with new and additional skills to the organization.

Background

The Healthy Living Division delivers a large number of public health programs and services encompassing numerous public health standards, protocols and guidelines and diverse health topic areas with limited resources ([Appendix A](#)). Interventions range from direct client support to enforcement, health promotion, health communication, harm reduction, and influencing healthy public policy. Much of the work is accomplished through internal collaboration and community partnerships/coalitions, several where the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) plays a lead role.

While the programs and interventions that the Healthy Living Division has delivered reflect important work, the number of program areas has limited the division’s ability to focus resources and efforts to maximize health impact at the population level.

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated an unprecedented shift in public health’s focus, with the deployment of a significant number of Health Unit staff to the COVID-19 response. The Healthy Living Division was highly affected, with many programs stopping and others greatly reduced.

This pause in program work, although challenging, has created an opportunity to examine the division’s pre-COVID-19 programs and interventions, review existing and new evidence, and consider current community needs with an aim to identify divisional and team program priorities going forward to achieve greater impact.

Purpose of Strategic Review

The purposes of this project are three-fold:

- To align and prioritize Healthy Living programs within the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) and Middlesex-London Health Unit Strategic Priorities;
- To ensure the application of a comprehensive health promotion framework to program planning within the Healthy Living Division; and
- To determine if the division, and teams within the division, are structured and resourced in a way to enable the division to meet program outcomes efficiently and alter structure and resourcing where needed.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles have been identified to ground the work of the review, as well as the ongoing work of the division:

- Prioritize program work that is upstream, considering social determinants of health and health equity;
- Use comprehensive health promotion frameworks for considering where to prioritize focus and how to implement public health interventions for greatest population level impact including: Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion; Socio-Ecological Model; and Frieden's 2010 Health Impact Pyramid;
- Utilize various forms of evidence. i.e., National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT) model for evidence-informed decision making in public health;
- Build, foster and leverage intersectoral partnerships; and
- Build and enhance internal collaboration.

Key components of the review

Key steps to the strategic review process include:

- Mapping OPHS requirements and MLHU Strategic Priorities against Healthy Living Division programs to identify alignment and potential areas for program changes;
- Developing and utilizing a criteria tool incorporating guiding principles and frameworks to review existing programs and determine levels of program alignment, gaps and/or opportunities for enhancement;
- Conducting an environmental scan of select health units with strategic questions regarding structure and program resourcing, roles, and skill sets/competencies; and
- Completing targeted internal discussions regarding public health work across the organization to make recommendations for potential shifting and aligning work between divisions to enhance efficiencies and collaboration.

As a result of the strategic review, it is anticipated there will be changes to divisional and/or team structure, resource allocation, and the programs delivered within the division. An examination of core competencies will be completed with anticipation of identified opportunities for capacity building within the division, as well as the potential for diversifying the professional backgrounds of the workforce. As part of continuous quality improvement, ongoing assessment will occur and adjustments will be made as needed.

Communication

Plans for the review were presented to and endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team. Information regarding the strategic review has been shared with CUPE and ONA bargaining units. A Health Living Division

meeting was held on March 2nd where information was shared with staff and opportunity was provided for questions to be answered. Ongoing communication will occur with division and union partners.

Timelines

It is anticipated that by the end of May 2022, recommendations for changes to program areas and divisional and team structure will be completed. A report outlining recommendations regarding programs, structure, and resource allocation will be brought forward to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Board of Health for discussion and approval. Upon approval, Healthy Living leadership will collaborate with division staff to refine program interventions and workplans throughout the summer and fall.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Living Division leadership team.



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