

TO: Chair and Members of the Finance & Facilities Committee

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

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## **SOUTH WESTERN ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH MUTUAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT**

### ***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that the Board of Health endorse the Mutual Assistance Agreement for South Western Ontario Public Health Units attached as Appendix A to Report No. 045-14.*

### **Key Points**

- Responding to an urgent situation may require immediate assistance from one or more neighbouring health units
- Having a Mutual Assistance Agreement in place will facilitate arranging for this assistance in a timely, efficient manner

From time to time, situations arise that overwhelm the resources of one health unit leading to a call to neighbouring health units for assistance. In the case of this Health Unit, two such occurrences are the mass immunization campaign for meningococcal disease of 2001 and the mass immunization campaign for hepatitis A of 2002. Conversely, support was provided by the Health Unit to Toronto Public Health during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003 and to the Oxford Public Health Unit for a Rubella (German Measles) outbreak in 2005. MLHU staff also supported the Huron County Public Health following a tornado in 2011.

To facilitate such responses, representatives from the South Western Ontario Public Health Units have prepared the *Mutual Assistance Agreement* (attached as [Appendix A](#)). This agreement defines the parameters which would apply to future situations requiring neighbouring health unit assistance, including:

- how costs and their payments are to be addressed;
- liability indemnification on the part of the assisting health unit; and
- employment relationship of staff of the assisting health unit when providing services in a neighbouring health unit's jurisdiction.

The Perth District Health Unit drafted this agreement several years ago based on the *Mutual Assistance Agreement* in place for the Central West Public Health Units, and took the lead on revising it this year. The new agreement has been signed by six of the other eight health units in South Western Ontario.

### **Conclusion**

Responding to an urgent situation may require immediate assistance from one or more neighbouring health units. Having a *Mutual Assistance Agreement* in place will facilitate arranging for this assistance in a timely, efficient manner.

This report was prepared by Mr. Ross Graham, Manager of Strategic Projects.



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