

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / CEO

DATE: 2019 December 12

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## **PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION UPDATE – CONSULTATION AND RESPONSE**

### ***Recommendation***

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

- 1) Receive Report No. 076-19 re: “Public Health Modernization Update – Consultation and Response” for information;***
- 2) Direct staff to conduct consultations with internal and external stakeholders to develop a comprehensive and unified Middlesex-London Health Unit response;***
- 3) Direct staff to arrange for a focused off-site retreat in January 2020 for Board of Health consultation; and***
- 4) Direct staff to arrange for a special board meeting in early February 2020 for approval of the MLHU response in anticipation of the submission deadline on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020.***

### **Key Points**

- In April 2019, the Ontario government proposed changes to the structure and funding of public health in the province, including amalgamations of local public health units and significant budget reductions. The government has subsequently reevaluated these changes and committed to extensive consultations across the province on how best to transform and strengthen the role of public health.
- In late November 2019, the Ministry of Health released a discussion paper which will frame the conversation about public health modernization. The Ministry has invited input and feedback through written and in-person consultation.
- The Middlesex-London Health Unit will be engaging with staff, the Board of Health, and other stakeholders to formulate an organizational response to the discussion paper. Written responses are due for submission by February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### **Background**

On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the provincial budget proposed to significantly restructure Ontario’s public health system, including the dissolution of its 35 health units and the creation of 10 new regional public health entities. New boards of health were to be established and substantial adjustments to provincial-municipal cost-sharing were proposed, as well as a reduction of the overall budget envelope for local public health. Consultations were expected to be held by the Ministry of Health in the summer and fall of 2019.

Subsequently, the provincial government has indicated that the proposed amalgamations and budgetary changes required further consideration and confirmed the need for robust and broad consultation. It has been specifically noted that there are no pre-determined outcomes from this consultation process, and that all reasonable options will be considered. The consultations will be led by Jim Pine, Special Advisor, Alison Blair, Executive Lead for Public Health Modernization, and Dr. David Williams, the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The consultations were launched on November 18, 2019 via a webinar and the release of a discussion paper. A summary of the webinar and the discussion paper can be found in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#), respectively. The Ministry has invited input and feedback through written and in-person consultation with public health and municipal stakeholders. Written responses are due for submission by February 10, 2020. The Ministry recommendations will be developed in Spring 2020.

### **Development of a Response to the Discussion Paper**

The Middlesex-London Health Unit (“MLHU”) will respond to the Ministry of Health’s call for input and advice on specific key issues for the public health sector.

Previous efforts and reflections on the structure and function of local public health will inform MLHU’s response during this consultative process. In July 2019, the Board of Health approved a response paper titled Keeping Middlesex-London Safe and Healthy to be forwarded to the Minister of Health, other boards of health and relevant stakeholders ([Report No. 053-19](#)). Additionally, previous reports of relevance to this process include Review of Public Health Services in Middlesex County ([Report No. 055-18](#)) and What Makes a High Performing Health Unit? A Research Report to Inform Strategic Planning ([Report 01-15GC Appendix C](#)).

To develop a comprehensive and unified MLHU response, consultations with staff, management, and the Board of Health will be conducted in January 2020. Specifically, it is recommended that the Board consultation occur during a focused off-site retreat. Indigenous communities, the City of London, and Middlesex County will be approached to determine their desire to contribute to the MLHU response. Approval of the response by the Board would be sought at a special board meeting in early February 2020 in anticipation of the submission deadline. A proposed schedule of consultation can be found in [Appendix C](#).

### **Next Steps**

The proposed schedule of consultation will guide the necessary action of staff and the Board of Health to ensure the submission of a robust and fulsome response. Feedback from the Board of Health will ensure that the consultation plan engages MLHU staff and all relevant stakeholders in a meaningful way.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Organization Division and the Associate Medical Officer of Health.



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