



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health; Emily Williams, CEO (Interim)

DATE: 2021 May 20

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## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ASSESSMENT: MLHU EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS REVIEW**

### ***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that the Board of Health:*

- 1) Receive Report No. 24-21 re: “Diversity and Inclusion Assessment: MLHU Employment Systems Review“ for information; and*
- 2) Endorse the recommendations within the Employment Systems Review for implementation at the Middlesex-London Health Unit.*

### **Key Points**

- The Diversity and Inclusion Assessment has two deliverables - an Employment Systems Review (ESR) and a Workforce Census – to provide recommendations to ensure all employees have a safe and inclusive workplace experience and that employees reflect diversity in the community.
- The ESR provides an analysis of MLHU’s current policies and procedures, identifies experiences of MLHU employees, and provides recommendations to address any issues identified in the areas of hiring and recruitment, physical work environments, and workplace culture.
- Organizational commitment to implementation of the recommendations will strengthen MLHU’s workforce and enhance its public health outcomes.

### **Background**

Originally slated for completion in 2019, the Diversity and Inclusion Assessment was delayed due to the proposed public health restructuring and the COVID-19 pandemic. A scan of other health units across Ontario has indicated that MLHU is the first such organization to publicly report on such an initiative.

Several months after the Middlesex-London Health Unit’s COVID-19 response was underway, the Senior Leadership Team decided to move forward with the Diversity and Inclusion Assessment given its critical importance. As the Board of Health declared anti-Black racism a public health crisis, it was important to demonstrate organizational leadership in understanding and addressing diversity and inclusion within the workplace. The Assessment was initiated to identify recommendations for steps MLHU could take to ensure that all employees have the same opportunities for a safe and inclusive workplace experience and that the workforce composition would better reflect the diversity of the community served. In August 2020, MLHU contracted [Turner Consulting Group Inc.](#) to conduct the Assessment.

### **Employment Systems Review (ESR)**

As the first of two deliverables of the Diversity and Inclusion Assessment, the ESR is a key part of MLHU’s ongoing commitment to health equity. The goals of the ESR were to:

- Inform the revision, enhancement, and/or development of current and future policies and practices in order to foster an equity-oriented and inclusive workplace culture
- Identify and respond to the experiences and expectations of diverse groups within the workplace with respect to inclusion, access, equity, engagement, and eliminating discriminatory practices

- Inform efforts to further develop an equity-oriented and inclusive workplace culture that prevents and responds to the existence of discrimination and oppression and engages, encourages, and supports all employees to realize their full potential in the workplace, and
- Identify potential recommendations to address the identified issues.

An internal Advisory Committee was developed to support this work, with representation from Human Resources, both unions, Communications, and some program areas.

The consultant used the methodology for conducting an Employment Systems Review developed by the federal government as a guide for employers that must comply with the requirements of the *Employment Equity Act*. The ESR included a review of employment policies, written procedures and related documents, a review of recruitment files, focus groups, a staff online survey, and telephone interviews. The ESR primarily focused on issues affecting the groups facing persistent and systemic discrimination in employment (women, racialized people, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+).

## Results

A comprehensive report was provided by the consultant, outlining purpose, methodology, organizational context, findings, recommendations, and next steps ([Appendix A](#)). The consultant identified strengths on which MLHU can build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization, including: 1) focus on health equity and the social determinants of health; 2) staff commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion; 3) commitment of the Board and leadership to equity, diversity, and inclusion; and 4) human resources and equity infrastructure.

Eighty-eight recommendations were identified within three key priority areas:

- Diversify the workforce at all levels
- Strengthen Human Resources policies and practices
- Create a more inclusive and respectful organizational culture

## Next Steps & Conclusion

While making changes to workplace practices and culture can be challenging, it is critical that MLHU remain committed to systematic, coordinated, comprehensive, and sustained implementation of the Employment Systems Review recommendations. Recommendations will be prioritized, and an implementation plan will be developed; some steps will be initiated in 2021 and implemented in the short term, while others may take months or years to fully realize. The development of the implementation plan will be led by the Health Equity and Indigenous Reconciliation Team, in very close collaboration with the Human Resources Team, the internal Advisory Committee, and relevant teams across the health unit. The Senior Leadership Team will ensure appropriate resourcing and prioritization of the implementation of approved recommendations.

The second deliverable of the Diversity and Inclusion Assessment, the workforce census, is just being finished and we expect a finalized report by the end of May from the consultant.

Ongoing commitment from the Board of Health, MLHU's Leadership Team, and all MLHU employees to implementation of the recommendations will create an equity-oriented and inclusive workplace which will support all at MLHU to be their best self and will, ultimately, enhance public health outcomes.

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



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