

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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

DATE: 2021 May 20

**COVID-19 RECOVERY RECOMMENDATIONS:
ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL WELLNESS, AND SUSTAINING POSITIVE CHANGES**

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1) *Receive Report No. 25-21 re: “COVID-19 Recovery Recommendations: Organizational and Individual Wellness, and Sustaining Positive Changes” for information.*

Key Points

- COVID-19 recovery planning included looking at individual and organizational wellness, and opportunities to enhance and sustain positive changes.
- A staff survey conducted five months into the pandemic (61% response rate) provided significant input which was used to identify 54 recommendations for implementation.
- Some have already been implemented, some included in the provisional strategic plan, and others will be implemented as the organization moves beyond the pandemic.

Background

The MLHU Board of Health (BOH) received a report in June 2020 ([Report No. 08-20GC](#)) which outlined the five objectives of COVID-19 recovery planning initiated in May 2020, and information about the Return to Operations dashboard that was developed. In November 2020, the BOH received recovery recommendations related to Emerging and Priority Public Health Issues and approved five priority areas of focus for ongoing recovery ([Report No. 049-20](#)).

Work on the Recovery Planning Objectives #3 and #4 has continued progressively over the last ten months.

Planning Process and Survey Results

Two working groups were formed, with efforts made to have representation from leadership, staff, Unions, and divisions across the organization. Program evaluators were involved in both workgroups. The workgroups were relatively small and had some variability over time due to staff redeployments.

Both workgroups felt it was critical to gather information and input from across the organization to generate meaningful and relevant recommendations for each of the objectives being examined. It was determined an organization-wide survey would be used to gather this information. To ensure employees would feel comfortable to share their perspectives, an external consultant was asked to administer the survey and analyze the data, providing MLHU with aggregated responses.

In July 2020, five months into MLHU’s pandemic response, a survey was distributed to all employees, with 196 participants (61% response rate).

Consolidated and summarized results of the survey questions relevant to Recovery Planning Objectives 3 and 4 were provided by the external consultant. Workgroup members reviewed these and generated a list of recommendations, ensuring no judgement or prioritization of recommendations during this stage. Subsequently, workgroup members organized, discussed, more fully considered, consolidated, and refined the recommendations. At several intervals over many months, they were further reviewed and refined by workgroup members and the MLHU Leadership Team.

It was noted that, in addition to sharing specific recommendations for organizational and individual wellness, and what tools, technologies, work processes, human resource policies, communication strategies, and other organizational changes should be considered for ongoing implementation, some respondents shared overall reflections of their experiences since the pandemic response:

- Several respondents described a strong sense of pride that they felt in working at MLHU, noting how the organization has come together and rallied as an organization throughout the pandemic.
- Some respondents described a strong sense of staff cohesion and collaboration that has been fostered between staff and management.
- Some respondents commented they felt supported in their work at MLHU.
- Some staff also expressed their appreciation in having the opportunity to develop additional skill sets through their new roles in the pandemic response.
- Several respondents felt that MLHU has had a good response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Individual and Organizational Wellness Recommendations

Recovery Planning Objective #3 was “To support employees to achieve optimal physical, mental, emotional, and social health and to facilitate organizational wellness during and after MLHU’s pandemic response.” This also included an intention to identify desired culture shifts and/or recent culture shifts that employees recommended the organization maintain.

Twenty recommendations have been identified, within the areas of health and safety, recognition, mental health and wellness, connectedness and cohesion, and other ([Appendix A](#)).

Enhancing and Sustaining Positive Changes Recommendations

Recovery Planning Objective #4 was “To identify changes to organizational and program structures and processes implemented during the pandemic response that could be advantageous from an organizational and/or client perspective and develop recommendations for sustained or enhanced implementation post-pandemic.”

Thirty-four recommendations have been identified in the areas of tools and resources, work processes, communications, human resources, and other organizational changes ([Appendix B](#)).

Five additional recommendations within Objective #4 were exclusively related to the COVID-19 program and these were shared with COVID-19 program leaders for timely implementation.

Next Steps

The Senior Leadership Team has reviewed and approved recommendations for submission to the Board of Health, and implementation of a significant number has already been initiated, with some incorporated in the provisional strategic plan. Implementation plans will be developed and/or confirmed, and mechanisms to support sustained and full implementation will be put in place. Some recommendations will take significant time to fully establish. The insights and input of employees across the organization were critical in identifying these recommendations, and employees will continue to be engaged to ensure the recommendations are brought to life.

This report was submitted by the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Mackie'.

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Medical Officer of Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Williams'.

Emily Williams, BScN, RN, MBA
Chief Executive Officer (Interim)