

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health
Emily Williams, Chief Executive Officer (Interim)

DATE: 2021 October 21

MLHU STAFF AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1) Receive Report No. 44-21 re: “MLHU Staff and International Travel” for information;*
- 2) Support the premise that MLHU staff should continue to be recommended to follow the guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada with respect to travel; and*
- 3) Support a non-disciplinary approach to follow up for any staff who choose to travel outside of Canada.*

Key Points

- MLHU staff are seeking direction regarding travel outside of Canada for personal reasons.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is currently advising against any non-essential travel outside of Canada; however, fully vaccinated individuals are exempt from quarantine protocol upon return.
- MLHU Senior Leadership Team is recommending a non-disciplinary approach to follow up for any staff that choose to travel outside of Canada.

Background

The pandemic continues to place a high-level of stress upon staff at MLHU, and many view travel outside of Canada, especially during the winter months, as a key resiliency strategy. Many staff are asking whether travel outside of Canada for personal reasons would be supported by the organization at this time. At the height of the second wave of the pandemic, several high-profile leaders working in the health care system were terminated for travel-related reasons, and some MLHU staff are seeking direction prior to making decisions.

Current State

As of September 9, 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) continued to advise travellers, regardless of their vaccination status, to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada; however, individuals who meet the definition of a fully-vaccinated traveler (i.e. have received a full series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine or a full series of a combination of accepted vaccines and at least 14 full days have passed since the last dose) are exempt from quarantine and the Day-8 testing requirement upon return to Canada. PHAC also provides guidance for those required to travel, including having an awareness of COVID-19 prevalence in the destination area and the availability of medical treatment should it be required.

The COVID-19 vaccine campaign has been highly successful within the Middlesex London community and with MLHU staff particularly. The rate of staff vaccination at the time of this report is 99% among full-time, permanent staff at the health unit. Vaccination has been proven to substantially reduce the risks associated with COVID-19.

The Senior Leadership Team recognizes the need to provide direction to staff on this matter and want to ensure the messaging represents a measured response. Advising staff that it is best to follow the PHAC's guidance and avoid travel for non-essential reasons while also reassuring them that no disciplinary action will be taken in the event that travel occurs, is believed to strike the appropriate balance.

Next Steps

Following Board of Health direction, the Senior Leadership Team will ensure staff receive communication pertaining to travel outside of Canada and will ensure any follow up is also aligned.

This report was prepared by the Chief Executive Officer (Interim).



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