

## Appendix C – 2023-2024 Respiratory Planning Preparedness Exercises

The Middlesex-London Health Unit participated in a regional respiratory preparedness exercise on August 16, 2023 and lead a local respiratory preparedness exercise on September 25, 2023. The purpose of these exercises were to:

- Validate roles and responsibilities related to respiratory season readiness planning
- Identify readiness planning gaps to mitigate risks ahead of respiratory season
- Validate response structures, including clarity of coordination, communication, and issues management mechanisms (i.e. awareness of organizational connections and linkages) related to respiratory season readiness planning and / or response

### Regional Exercise

The Ontario Health West Regional Exercise was held virtually and was attended by 23 local partners representing acute care, home care, and long-term care and 6 representatives from the Middlesex-London Health Unit. The format of the activity was a tabletop response exercise, where participants discussed scenarios for the respiratory season.

The exercises planned to test against two scenarios (a long season and a peak of activity season, like 2022), with additional developments occurring throughout those seasons. In addition to anticipated seasonal activity, a surge due to a new COVID-19 variant of concern with differing infectivity and severity remains a possibility.

### Local Exercise

The Infectious Disease Control Team and Vaccine Preventable Disease Team also conducted a local respiratory preparedness exercise specific to long-term care and retirement homes. Historically, the burden of illness associated with respiratory season is experienced disproportionately in these settings and focused preparedness with this population is a high priority. This exercise was held in-person at the Citi Plaza offices of MLHU, and 37 participants represented long-term care and retirement homes. Individuals in attendance included Directors of Care, IPAC Nurses and other team members associated with resident care. There was also participating from Ontario Health West, the Middlesex-London Ontario Health Team, home care, and primary care.

The local exercise provided a reflection on the COVID-19 pandemic, review of previous respiratory seasons, expectations for the 2023-24 season, key public health guidance and tabletop exercises. The scenarios covered during the tabletop exercise included:

- Infection Prevention and Control
- Vaccination Planning
- Disease Surveillance and Monitoring
- Outbreak Investigation
- Outbreak Declaration and Management
- Management of Multi-Pathogen Outbreaks
- Declaring an Outbreak Over

An evaluation of the respiratory preparedness was distributed to participants after the session, and initial reactions were positive. The MLHU will plan to conduct this exercise on an annual basis with the hopes of getting participation from 100% of long-term care and retirement homes in Middlesex-London.