

Middlesex-London Board of Health External Landscape Review – April 2024

The purpose of this briefing note is to inform MLHU Board of Health members about what is happening in the world of public health and impacts to the work of the MLHU and Board. This includes governance and legislative changes, news from other local public units, external reports on important public health matters, learning opportunities and MLHU events. **Please note that items listed on this correspondence are to inform Board members and are not necessarily an endorsement.**

Local Public Health News



Hamilton

Another step toward 'good place' in Hamilton public health reform

Hamilton's Board of Health will be moving to a semi-autonomous governing model by the end of 2024. In a [council meeting on Tuesday, April 2](#), a sub-committee was struck to implement forming a Board of Health to include community members and members with a medical background.

Haldimand-Norfolk and Hamilton are Ontario's only public health units using a single-tier governance model, where the board of health is made up of all members of municipal council, with no community or provincially appointed members.

To learn more, please see the [article from the Hamilton Spectator](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

MLHU's Board of Health is a fully autonomous Board of Health with a diverse group of individuals from different backgrounds and appointment methods. The Board supports the work of fellow Boards of Health and it will be important to understand the composition of Hamilton's newly designed Board of Health.

National, Provincial and Local Public Health Advocacy

Federal government commits to creation of national school food program

On April 1, the federal government will launch a national school food program with a target of providing meals to 400,000 children every year, beyond those served by existing school food programs. The Program will be a safety net for the kids who need this support the most. The lack of access to food disproportionately impacts children from lower-income families and from racialized and Indigenous communities. At this time, \$1 billion in funding will be allotted to the provinces and territories, along with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities as well as Self-Governing and Modern Treaty partners to support children experiencing food insecurity.



More details will be announced after the 2024 Budget is released on April 16. It is noted that the Board has also received correspondence (E) from Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Public Health Unit with their support of this program.

To learn more, please see the [article from CBC](#) and the [media release from the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health has heard the impacts of food insecurity in the community and has supported advocacy efforts for a school food program in [Report 69-23](#). In May 2023, the estimated local monthly cost to feed a family of four was \$1,124, an increase from \$1,084 in May 2022; this highlights that incomes and social assistance rates have not kept pace with the increased cost of living.



The Honourable
Peter Bethlenfalvy
MINISTER OF FINANCE

2024 Ontario Budget: Building a Better Ontario

On March 26, the Provincial Government released the 2024 Ontario Budget: Building a Better Ontario. The highlights included:

- \$1 billion in the new Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program and quadrupling the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund to a total of \$825 million to help municipalities repair and expand the critical infrastructure needed to reach their housing targets.
- Connecting approximately 600,000 people to primary health care with a total additional investment of \$546 million over three years.
- \$200 million in a Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund to invest in new and upgraded sport, recreation and community facilities.
- Investing \$46 million over three years, including for the purchase of four police helicopters to improve community safety in the Greater Toronto area.
- Extend the temporary cuts to the gasoline tax rate by 5.7 cents per litre and the fuel (diesel) tax rate by 5.3 cents per litre until December 31, 2024.
- An additional \$100 million investment in 2024–25 through the Skills Development Fund Training Stream.
- Investing an additional \$152 million over three years towards various supportive housing initiatives designed to support vulnerable people.

To view the full 2024 Ontario Budget, please visit the [Ontario Budget website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health (along with Boards of Health for other public health units) are actively advocating for increased financial support to provide crucial public health programming for the communities they serve. Without adequate funding received, work outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards will not be reached to its full potential. It is noted that the Board of Health has received the Association of Local Public Health Agencies' review on public health matters within the 2024 budget as a part of their agenda package.

MLHU News

Canadian Public Health Week at MLHU

On April 8, 2024, MLHU celebrated Canadian Public Health Week! For the third year in a row, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) is highlighting the many contributions of public health professionals and agencies in Canada, highlighting the many ways public health plays a key role in promoting and protecting the health of Canadians coast-to-coast. Canadian Public Health Week ran from April 8-12, 2024.

For more information about Canadian Public Health Week, [please visit the Canadian Public Health Week website](#).



Impact to MLHU Board of Health

Canadian Public Health Week highlights the work of public health units across Canada and celebrates the work that MLHU staff do to support the Middlesex-London community. The Board of Health recognizes, acknowledges and supports MLHU staff in their work!