

Middlesex-London Board of Health External Landscape Review – August and September 2023

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



Porcupine and Timiskaming Health Units Moving Towards a Voluntary Merger

Porcupine and Timiskaming Health Units announced on August 30 that they would begin the voluntary merger process to merge their public health units.

“While several reports over many years have recommended a merger between our health units, recent events including the COVID-19 pandemic have confirmed the benefits of a merger to increase staff capacity to deliver public health programming and to respond to surges and emergencies,” states Dr. Lianne Catton, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer for the Porcupine Health Unit.

“The merger will strengthen local public health programs and services while increasing efficiencies,” says Dr. Glenn Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health for the Timiskaming Health Unit. “Programs and services will continue as is in local health unit offices in both regions during the merger process.”

To view the full media releases, please visit either the [Porcupine Health Unit](#) or [Timiskaming Health Unit](#) website.

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

On August 22, 2023, the Ontario Ministry of Health (through Minister Sylvia Jones) announced the plan regarding the future of the public health sector. This included providing financial support to public health units interested in a voluntary merger process. Boards of Health will need to determine if a merger with another health unit is beneficial to improve capacity and better serve the needs of the community.

New Medical Officer of Health in Chatham-Kent

On September 5, it was announced that Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit's new Medical Officer of Health is **Dr. Shanker Nesathurai**. He

received his Doctor of Medicine from McMaster University in Hamilton, and his Master of Public Health from Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, MA. He served as the Medical Officer of Health for Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit from 2018-2021, and most recently as the Acting Medical Officer of Health for Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. In addition to training in public health, Dr. Nesathurai is a specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation.



To view the full media release, please visit [Chatham-Kent Public Health's website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board supports collaboration and connection with other public health units in the province and encourages MLHU's Medical Officer of Health to work with other Medical Officers of Health as necessary for advocacy and idea sharing.

National, Provincial and Local Public Health Advocacy



Ontario Investing in a Stronger Public Health Sector

At the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference on August 22, 2023, the Ontario Government (through Minister of Health, Sylvia Jones) announced updates to funding for public health units in Ontario.

Changes to funding include:

- Permanent return of mitigation funding to public health units, with subsequent adjustments to the municipal cost sharing ratio;
- An increase in base funding for public health units by 1% annually; and
- Funding to health units who participate in voluntary public health unit mergers.

To view the full media release, [please visit the Ontario \(Ministry of Health\) Newsroom online.](#)

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

Boards of Health in Ontario are experiencing financial pressures post-pandemic and will need to assess the impacts of this funding announcement on their respective health unit.

AMO 2023 Annual General Meeting & Conference

From August 21-23, more than 2,500 municipal leaders, government officials, public servants, sponsors, exhibitors, and media gathered in the City of London to take part in the 2023 AMO Conference. MLHU was represented by Chair Newton-Reid, Chief Executive Officer, Emily Williams and Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Alex Summers.



Impact to MLHU Board of Health

MLHU Delegates also met with Minister Sylvia Jones (Health) and Minister Michael Parsa (Children, Community and Social Services) on public health matters.

MLHU News

Health Unit Reports the Year's First Local Human Case of West Nile Virus

On September 1, 2023, The Middlesex-London Health Unit reported the first locally acquired human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) for the summer of 2023. According to Public Health Ontario, to date, there have been five probable and confirmed human cases of WNV in Ontario, as well as 222 WNV-positive mosquito pools.

The Vector-Borne Disease Team has administered three rounds of treatment on approximately 113,780 catch basins. The team has also completed 695 surface water treatments at approximately 195 sites on public property. The Health Unit will continue its surveillance and control efforts throughout the region and is reminding people in all areas of London and Middlesex County that West Nile Virus is still present in our community.

To see the full media release, [visit our website.](#)

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

West Nile Virus is a reportable disease of public health significance (DOPHS) which a Board of Health (public health unit) is required to report. It is vital for the Board of Health and the community to be made aware of such illnesses in order to spread awareness, education and prevention.

New Associate Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Joanne Kearon

On July 24, 2023, **Dr. Joanne Kearon** began her role as the Associate Medical Officer of Health at the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Dr. Kearon trained as a physician in Public Health and Preventive Medicine, including Family Medicine, at McMaster University. She also has a Master of Public Health from McMaster and completed her undergraduate at Queen's University.

Dr. Kearon will be part of the Senior Leadership Team and provide leadership across the organization and in the community. As the AMOH, she will provide significant support to the EHID and Public Health Foundations Divisions, while also taking on emerging initiatives and projects.

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health appointed Dr. Joanne Kearon as the Associate Medical Officer of Health, per their obligations under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. The Board welcomes Dr. Kearon to her new role to support the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

Learning Opportunities

Michael G. DeGroot
Health Leadership
Academy



Collaborative Health Governance Program – McMaster University

The Collaborative Health Governance (CHG) program at McMaster University's DeGroot Health Leadership Academy has been designed with an understanding of the new world of governance, and the unique responsibilities and challenges confronting today's health and social service sector boards.

The CHG program is designed as a highly interactive, 3.5-day, virtual learning, experience using The Directors College proven delivery model. 90-minute learning sessions are led by experienced governance experts, health care leaders, and board directors.

For more information, please visit the [Collaborative Health Governance Program website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health can be provided with learning and professional development opportunities to learn more about their roles as a local governing board.