

MIDDLESEX-LONDON BOARD OF HEALTH

REPORT NO. 13-25

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health
FROM: Dr. Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health
Emily Williams, Chief Executive Officer
DATE: 2025 February 20

MLHU 2025 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 13-25 re: “MLHU 2025 Continuity of Operations Plan” for information.

Report Highlights

- The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) and subsequent Emergency Management Guideline (EMG) requires that the MLHU prepare for emergencies, including the establishment of a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
- Planning efforts were previously initiated in 2018 but were impacted by COVID-19.
- As outlined on the 2023-25 Provisional Plan, and following completion of the MLHU 2024 Emergency Response Plan (ERP), the MLHU spent fall 2024 planning for and developing the MLHU Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
- The MLHU is now in compliance with legislative requirements, as the MLHU COOP was approved by the MOH and CEO in January 2025.
- The Plan will continue to be updated with approval from the MOH and CEO, and in consultation with key partners and internal stakeholders.

Background

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) identifies Emergency Management (EM) as a Foundational Standard, which enables public health units to manage emergency situations consistently and effectively. The Emergency Management Guidelines (EMG) (2024), updated by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in January 2024, provides direction to Boards of Health (BOHs) to effectively prepare for emergencies ensuring 24/7, timely, integrated, safe, and effective response to, and recovery from emergencies with public health impacts. More specifically, the EMG requires that BOHs conduct emergency planning, including the establishment of a continuity of operations plan (COOP).

The MLHU previously began the process of planning for continuity of operations in 2018 to identify the MLHU’s time-critical services, but was shortly impacted thereafter by the COVID-19

pandemic. Following the strategic direction in the 2023-25 Provisional Plan, and following the completion of the updated MLHU Emergency Response Plan (ERP) in 2024, the development of the MLHU Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) was initiated last fall. The MLHU COOP was approved by the MOH and CEO in January 2025.

Principles for the MLHU COOP

Throughout the development of the MLHU COOP, the following principles were established:

- The MLHU COOP is an internal document, intended to provide *strategic direction* around MLHU's preparation and response to continuity events, as well as detail the agency's time-critical interventions (TCI's), including the resources (e.g., staff, technology, etc.) used to support them.
- The MLHU COOP clearly identifies and prioritizes TCI's according to their Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) and Acceptable Service Levels (ASL), as legislatively required in the EMG.
- The MLHU COOP does not include details regarding specific responses, such as what would be required for other emergency plans, such as the Infrastructure Failure Plan.
- Ongoing engagement with leadership and staff is necessary to support the implementation of emergency preparedness and response strategies outlined in the MLHU COOP (e.g., development of checklists for leaders with TCI's).
- As a critical subordinate plan of the MLHU Emergency Response Plan (ERP), the MLHU COOP will be a living document that will be continuously updated over time.

Next Steps

The MLHU will continue to operationalize and maintain the 2025 Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), including:

- Maintaining the COOP as a fluid document and companion of the MLHU ERP, including updates as required with approval from the MOH and/or CEO,
- Consulting with leadership to understand connection to their work and alignment to the Plan,
- Integrating the COOP into the MLHU's Administrative Policy Manual,
- Socializing the updated ERP with key community partners and internal stakeholders, and
- Continuing to develop more specific emergency plans, such as the Pandemic and Infrastructure Failure Plans.

This report was written by the Strategic Advisor – Emergency Management on the Strategy, Planning and Performance (SPP) Team.



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This report refers to the following principle(s) set out in Policy G-490, Appendix A:

- The Emergency Management Foundational standard as outlined in the [Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability](#).
- The Emergency Management Civil Protection and Protection Act (EMCPA); and Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA).
- The following goal from the [Middlesex-London Health Unit's Provisional Plan](#): Program Excellence is identified as a priority area within the MLHU 2023-2025 Provisional Plan. An initiative under this priority is to collaborate with health system partners and indigenous leader and service providers, to develop robust emergency management (EM) plans that facilitate effective and timely response and surge capacity in the event of a public health emergency.

This topic has been reviewed to be in alignment with goals under the Middlesex-London Health Unit's [Anti-Black Racism Plan](#) and [Taking Action for Reconciliation](#):

- With support of MLHU's Health Equity and Reconciliation Team (HEART), there is ongoing work on documenting and supporting emergency response as required within the Indigenous communities in our region; and
- Ongoing surveillance of public health hazards and risks that may give rise to a public health emergency, with particular attention to impacts on priority of populations.