

Middlesex-London Board of Health External Landscape Review – January 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



Ontario Approves Transition of Nine Drug Injection Sites into Treatment Hubs

On January 2, the Province of Ontario announced that nine (9) former consumption and treatment sites would be turned into HART hubs by March 31, 2025. These hubs will be eligible, on average, to receive up to four times more funding to support treatment and recovery under the model than they receive from the province as a consumption site. To assist with transitioning, the sites will also receive one-time funding for start-up costs.

These hubs are located in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Kitchener, Guelph and Thunder Bay.

To read the full news release, please visit the Ontario Government's [newsroom](#).

Toronto Board of Health stands up against Ontario's closure of supervised consumption sites

On December 19, 2024, Toronto Board of Health called a special meeting to direct the Board's Medical Officer of Health to support a legal challenge against the Ontario government's decision to shut down five supervised consumption sites in Toronto.



The Board Report titled "[HL20.1 - Supporting the Legal Challenge of the Community Care and Recovery Act](#)". The legal challenge being brought forward by The Neighbourhood Group and two safe consumption site users argues that the *Community Care and Recovery Act* violates the rights and freedoms of people who use drugs, including the right to protection from cruel and unusual punishment and the right to life, liberty and security of the person. It also argues that the provincial government has overstepped into federal jurisdiction by enacting the *Community Care and Recovery Act*.

In addition to directing the Medical Officer of Health to provide evidence in support of the legal application, the Board of Health voted to advise parties before the deadline of January 10, 2025. The next board meeting is scheduled for January 20, which would have caused the Board to miss the deadline.

To read the full article, please visit the Toronto Star's [website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The consumption and treatment site in London (Carepoint) at 446 York Street is not impacted by these changes at this time. The Middlesex-London Health Unit and the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (operators of Carepoint) continue to support members of the community who use services at Carepoint.

National, Provincial and Local Public Health Advocacy

Joint Statement from the Co-Chairs of the Special Advisory Committee on Toxic Drug Poisonings – Latest National Data on Substance-Related Harms

On December 23, 2024, the co-chairs of the federal, provincial, and territorial Special Advisory Committee on Toxic Drug Poisonings Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's Chief



Public Health Officer and Dr. Sudit Ranade, Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health issued the release of the [latest surveillance data on opioid and stimulant-related harms in Canada from January 2016 to June 2024](#).

From January to June 2024, there were 3,787 opioid-related deaths, representing an average of 21 deaths every day. During this same period, there were 2,846 hospitalizations (16 per day) for opioid-related poisoning, 18,792 emergency medical services (EMS) responses (104 per day) to suspected opioid-related poisoning, and 13,287 (73 per day) emergency department visits for opioid-related poisoning. While these figures are lower compared to the same period in 2023, the data is considered preliminary and subject to change as updated information comes in from the provinces and territories, such as completed death investigations.

To read the media release, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada's [newsroom](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

Surveillance data on opioid harms in Middlesex-London reflect similar patterns to those seen at the national level. The MLHU and the Community Drug and Alcohol Committee of Middlesex-London will also continue to monitor data and trends regarding opioids.



Report from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario: Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis

On January 9, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) a comprehensive report titled "Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis" that reveals the unprecedented and growing toll of homelessness on individuals, families, communities, and governments.

The study's findings indicate that Ontario is at a tipping point in its homelessness crisis. More than 80,000 Ontarians were known to be homeless in 2024, a number that has grown by more than 25 per cent since 2022. Without significant intervention, homelessness in Ontario could double in the next decade, and reach nearly 300,000 people in an economic downturn. The crisis stems from decades of underinvestment in deeply affordable housing, income support and mental health and addictions treatment, combined with escalating economic pressures on communities.

The report proposes a fundamentally new approach that focuses on long-term housing solutions over temporary emergency measures and enforcement. AMO urges provincial and federal governments to take significant, long-term action on affordable housing, mental health and addictions services, and income supports to fix homelessness and improve communities' economic foundations and quality of life.

To review the full report, please visit AMO's [website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health acknowledges that homelessness within Middlesex-London has risen, and was exacerbated by challenges within the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health Unit continues to work with partners on the matter.