

Middlesex-London Board of Health External Landscape Review – November 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

All Ontario Grocery and Big-Box Stores Now Able to Sell Alcoholic Beverages

On October 31 (Halloween), it was announced that all grocery stores and big-box stores (such as Costco) were permitted to sell alcoholic beverages.

The government's expansion plan in 2024 was:

- As of July 18, 2024, up to 450 grocery stores licensed to sell beer, cider and wine are able to sell ready-to-drink beverages, including in large pack sizes.
- As of September 5, 2024, all eligible convenience stores are able to sell beer, cider, wine and ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages.
- As of October 31, 2024, all eligible grocery and big-box grocery stores are able to sell beer, cider, wine and ready-to-drink beverages, including in large pack sizes.

The government will maintain close collaboration with the LCBO, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) and The Beer Store, while also consulting with industry partners, local beverage alcohol producers and other stakeholders as it implements this new marketplace.

To learn more, visit the Ontario Government's [newsroom](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health has heard concerns regarding expanding the alcohol marketplace, most recently through [Report 50-24](#). This report outlined the concerns of expanding the alcohol marketplace and provided a primer on harms of alcohol to local municipalities. The Board and Health Unit will continue to advocate for a health focused plan to avoid further alcohol attributed harms with the expansion of alcohol in retail locations.

National, Provincial and Local Public Health Advocacy

2024 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Building Ontario for You

The Minister of Finance has released the *2024 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Building Ontario for You*. The fiscal review is a snapshot of the current financial situation and provides a preliminary look at the next budget.



Building Ontario

- Municipalities are receiving increases (\$100 million in 2025) to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (the municipal base funding they receive), and this may lessen the burden on municipalities to support local boards who request additional funding.
- The government is working with Ontario Power Generation to commence planning and licensing for three additional small modular reactors (SMRs), in addition to an already planned SMR, which has completed the first phase of site preparation at the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station.
- Continued investment in the agri-food sector to ensure farmers have resources to remain competitive while being able to supply food to the community.

Working for You

-Learn and Stay grants starting in 2026 to support 1,360 eligible undergraduate students that commit to practice family medicine with a full roster of patients once they graduate. The funding will cover all tuition and other direct educational costs like books, supplies and equipment in exchange for a term of service as a physician in any community across Ontario. This may entice more medical students to alleviate primary care burdens.

-Dr. Jane Philpott was appointed as Ontario's Chair of Primary Care Action Team to help connect everyone with a family doctor. The government committed \$546 million over three years to improve access to primary care. This investment will connect approximately 600,000 people to team-based primary care by expanding and creating new interprofessional care teams across the province.

-The government is introducing legislative amendments to reserve 100 per cent of undergraduate medical education seats for Canadian students, with a minimum of 95 per cent of seats for Ontario residents. This may be a challenge for internationally trained medical students who wish to set up practice to alleviate the primary care burdens.

-The government is investing \$128 million over the next three years to support continued increases in nursing spaces at publicly assisted colleges and universities by 2,000 registered nurses and 1,000 registered practical nurse seats. More nurses will be trained to support the primary care system.

-Beginning in 2025–26, the government will invest an additional \$150 million over two years to expand the Ontario Fertility Program (OFP). These funds may be able to support/supplement staff seeking fertility treatment.

-In 2025 there will be support for 50 hospital projects and approximately 3,000 new hospital beds to enhance access to acute care.

-As part of the government's plan to expand alcohol sales, up to 8,500 eligible convenience, grocery and big-box grocery stores in Ontario could be licensed to sell beer, cider, wine and ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages. This is a concern as many stakeholders have advocated for an alcohol strategy outlining concerns of this policy decision.

To review the full document, visit the Ontario Government's Budget [website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

As noted above, the 2024 fiscal outlook from the Province of Ontario has no mention of public health, however there are indirect impacts to public health in different areas.



Canadian Dental Care Plan milestone reached as 1 Million Canadians have received care

As of October 31, more than 1 million Canadians have received care under the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) and more than 2.7 million

Canadians have been approved to be part of the plan.

Starting November 1, the CDCP will expand to include more services. The CDCP will begin accepting requests for services that require preauthorization. This will mean that it will be possible for patients to receive services such as the initial placement of partial dentures, or crowns, as well as requests for services when a CDCP patient has a particularly high need or complex condition. Each request will be assessed thoroughly on a case-by-case basis to see if the course of treatment recommended by the oral health practitioner meets the clinical criteria for coverage under the CDCP.

The CDCP will also begin accepting paper claim submissions for services covered under the CDCP. While most providers have been able to submit claims electronically since May 2024, providers who only work with paper claims will now also be able to submit claims for their services.

More than 22,340 oral health providers nationwide, or 89% of active oral health providers, are providing care to Canadians covered under the plan.

For more information, please visit the Canada Dental Care Plan's [website](#).

Impact to MLHU Board of Health

The Board of Health acknowledges that dental care is health care, and members of the community deserve to have a healthy smile regardless of their circumstances. The Board has heard the positive impacts of both the Ontario Seniors' Dental Care and Canada Dental Care Plan programs for members of the Middlesex-London community in [Report No. 61-24](#).

Association of Local Public Health Agencies 2024 Fall Symposium

On November 8, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) hosted their annual Fall symposium. Topics included: public health recovery, public health workforce burnout and mergers.

To learn more, visit alPHA's [website](#).

**Impact to MLHU Board of Health**

The Vice-Chair of the Board of Health attended the Fall Symposium to represent the Middlesex-London Board of Health. Vice-Chair Steele also attended the Board of Health Section meeting with other local Boards of Health members.