

Board of Health Meeting

Agenda Package

Wednesday, February 25, 2026
10:00 a.m.
221 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston

Please note there will be a Closed Session component to this meeting.

Open Session Link:

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Meeting ID: 283 495 545 530 65
Passcode: qa7FX29r

For organizers: [Meeting options](#)

To ensure a quorum we ask that you please RSVP to kathleen.thompson@southeastph.ca or call 613-549-1232, ext. 1147.

Board of Health Agenda

Wednesday, February 25, 2026
10:00 a.m.
221 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston

1. **Call to Order**

2. **Land Acknowledgement**

Southeast Public Health is located on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples dating back countless generations. We would like to show our respect for their contributions and recognize the role and treaty making in what is now Ontario. Hundreds of years after the first treaties were signed, they are still relevant today.

3. **Roll Call**

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health approve the open agenda for February 25, 2026, as circulated.

5. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

5.1. **Minutes of the Meeting on January 28, 2026** [Schedule 5.1](#)

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health approve the open minutes of the meeting held on January 28, 2026, as circulated.

5.2. **Minutes of the Meeting on February 10, 2026** [Schedule 5.2](#)

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health approve the open minutes of the special meeting held on February 10, 2026, as circulated.

6. **Pecuniary Interest and/or Conflict of Interest, and the General Nature Thereof When the Item Arises**

7. **Closed Session**

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health convene in closed session for the purposes of a discussion as it relates to Section 239(2) of the Municipal Act, and more specifically (b) personal matters about an identifiable individual, including Board employees.

8. **Rising and Reporting of Closed Session**

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health endorse the actions approved in the Closed Session and direct staff to take appropriate action.

9. **Staff Presentations**

9.1. **Financial Projections Update – Slide Deck to Follow**

10. **Committee Reports**

10.1. **Governance Committee Update** [Schedule 10.1](#)

MOTION: THAT correspondence be sent to the Public Appointments Secretariat informing them of the departure of four provincial appointments from the SEPH Board and requesting that these vacancies be filled.

10.2. **Finance Committee Update** [Schedule 10.2](#)

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health receive the Finance Committee Update, as circulated.

11. **New Business**

11.1. **Merger Updates** [Schedule 11.1](#)

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health receive the merger update report, as circulated.

12. **Information Items**

12.1. **Northwestern Health Unit, endorsing the alcohol labelling position of Middlesex-London Health Unit, dated February 19, 2026.**

[Schedule 12.1](#)

12.2. **The Ontario Public Health Convention (TOPHC) 2026, taking place March 25, 2026.**

[Schedule 12.2](#)

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health receive the information items, as circulated.

13. **Announcements**

14. **Adjournment**

MOTION: THAT this Board of Health meeting be adjourned.

Board of Health Minutes

Open Session

Date: Wednesday, January 28, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: 221 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston, Ontario and via Microsoft Teams

In-person: Mr. Stephen Bird, Councillor Judy Greenwood-Speers, Mayor Robin Jones, Councillor Sean Kelly, Reeve Richard Kidd, Councillor Anne-Marie Koiner, Councillor Peter McKenna, Councillor Jeff McLaren, Mayor Jan O'Neill, Ms. Barbara Proctor, Warden Nathan Townend

Virtual: Councillor Michael Kotsovos, Councillor Bill Roberts

Regrets: Councillor Conny Glenn

Officer: Dr. Piotr Oglaza

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair J. O'Neill at 10:00 a.m.

2. **Land Acknowledgement**

Spoken by Chair J. O'Neill.

3. **Roll Call**

Conducted by Recorder K. Thompson.

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor P. McKenna and SECONDED by Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers THAT the Board of Health approve the agenda for January 28, 2026, as amended, with the following additions:

1. Item 5.3: Governance Committee Membership
2. Item 5.4: Finance Committee Membership
3. Item 8.3: Leased Offices Agreement Update

CARRIED

5. **Election of Officers**

The outgoing Chair, Mayor J. O'Neill, addressed the Board, expressing appreciation to Board members, the Medical Officer of Health and staff, the Ministry of Health, and the merger project team for their work and support. Mayor O'Neill advised that she would not be seeking re-election as Chair.

5.1. Board Chair

Nominations were opened for Board Chair, with Warden N. Townend and Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers agreeing to stand. Each nominee spoke to their candidacy. Following a vote, Warden N. Townend was elected Board Chair for 2026 and assumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor S. Kelly and SECONDED by Councillor P. McKenna THAT Warden N. Townend be nominated for Board Chair for 2026, and it was MOVED by Mr. S. Bird THAT Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers be nominated. Following a vote, Warden N. Townend was elected.

CARRIED

5.2. Board Vice Chair

Nominations were opened for Board Vice Chair. Councillor B. Roberts was nominated, and no further nominations were received. Councillor B. Roberts accepted the nomination.

MOTION: It was MOVED by Mayor R. Jones THAT Councillor B. Roberts be nominated for Board Vice Chair for 2026; there being no further nominations, Councillor B. Roberts was acclaimed Vice Chair for 2026.

CARRIED

5.3. Governance Committee Membership

The Board noted that the Governance Committee has a two-year term and consists of up to six Board members, including at least three municipal appointees and at least one provincial appointee, with the Board Chair serving as an ex-officio member and the Medical Officer of Health/CEO (or designate) serving as an ex-officio non-voting member.

Chair N. Townend invited confirmation from existing members and volunteers for the 2026 term. All existing members agreed to continue, with one member declining.

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor P. McKenna and SECONDED by Mayor R. Jones THAT the Governance Committee membership for 2026 be: Mr. S. Bird, Mayor R. Jones, Councillor S. Kelly, Reeve R. Kidd, Mayor J. O'Neill, Ms. B. Proctor, and Chair N. Townend.

CARRIED

5.4. Finance Committee Membership

The Finance Committee is now without two provincial appointees following the conclusion of their appointment terms. It was noted that the membership requirements mirror those of the Governance Committee.

MOTION: It was MOVED by Reeve R. Kidd and SECONDED by Ms. B. Proctor THAT the Finance Committee membership for 2026 be: Mr. S. Bird, Mayor R. Jones, Reeve R. Kidd, Councillor A. Koiner, Councillor P. McKenna, and Chair N. Townend.

CARRIED

6. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

6.1. Addendum – Minutes of the Meeting on October 22, 2025

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor P. McKenna and SECONDED by Mayor J. O'Neill THAT the Board of Health receive the Addendum to the Minutes of the meeting held on October 22, 2025, as circulated.

CARRIED

6.2. Minutes of the Meeting on December 17, 2025

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers and SECONDED by Councillor A. Koiner THAT the Board of Health approve the minutes of the meeting held on December 17, 2025, as circulated.

CARRIED

7. Pecuniary Interest and/or Conflict of Interest, and the General Nature Thereof When the Item Arises

No disclosures were declared.

8. New Business

8.1. Merger Scorecard & Implementation Plan

Dr. P. Oglaza provided an overview of the Ministry of Health's Voluntary Merger Balanced Scorecard and Southeast Public Health's (SEPH) merger implementation plan. The Board was advised that Ministry timelines do not fully align with SEPH's sequencing due to the consolidated provincial framework and the added complexity of merging three organizations; however, substantial foundational work has been completed, and robust change-management supports are in place. The Board reviewed the Merger Implementation Plan Gantt Chart, which aligns with Ministry Scorecard categories and identifies Ministry-assigned milestones. Staff confirmed that the merger plan continues to serve as SEPH's interim strategic direction while core public health programs and services remain uninterrupted, with formal strategic planning anticipated to begin in 2026.

Board members discussed using the Gantt Chart to guide organizational priorities until a new strategic plan is developed and emphasized the importance of explicitly reflecting the Rural Services Delivery Strategy.

MOTION: It was MOVED by Chair N. Townend and SECONDED by Councillor B. Roberts THAT the Merger Implementation Plan Gantt Chart be amended to include the Rural Services Delivery Strategy.

CARRIED

DEFERRED MOTION: It was MOVED by Reeve R. Kidd and SECONDED by Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers THAT the following original motion be deferred to the February 25, 2026 Board of Health meeting:

WHEREAS, significant organizational effort is required to execute the merger;

AND WHEREAS, there is a need to maintain focus and avoid mission drift for a successful merger;

AND WHEREAS, there are significant capacity limitations for SEPH to take on additional major initiatives while merger implementation is underway;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Health acknowledges the Public Health Merger Implementation Plan Gantt Chart as the de facto interim strategic plan guiding the organization for the voluntary merger timeline of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2027. The Board further acknowledges that this interim plan includes an embedded timeline for the development of the SEPH Strategic Plan, with strategic planning work to commence in 2026.

DEFERRED

MOTION: It was MOVED by Reeve R. Kidd and SECONDED by Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers THAT the amended Merger Implementation Plan Gantt Chart be reviewed by the Governance Committee prior to coming to the Board of Health.

CARRIED

8.2. Merger Updates

Dr. Oglaza provided a brief overview of the merger updates and invited questions from the Board. Board members inquired about progress on harmonization of unionized and non-unionized roles. Staff advised that while work on non-union positions is ongoing, union-related harmonization cannot proceed until the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) confirms how many bargaining units will represent employees within the newly merged Board. As a result, there are currently no substantive updates regarding union negotiations or integration of unionized staff. Staff confirmed that merger activities that do not involve unionized employees continue as planned, and that a more detailed in-camera update on union matters will be provided once the Ministry communicates its determinations. Board members acknowledged the constraints and emphasized the importance of receiving timely updates when available.

MOTION: It was MOVED by Mayor J. O'Neill and SECONDED by Councillor A. Koiner THAT the Board of Health receive the merger update report, as circulated.

8.3. Leased Offices Agreement Update

The Board requested an update on branch office operations. Dr. P. Oglaza confirmed that, as directed by the Board in December, branch offices will remain open. Staff are working with landlords to secure financially sustainable lease agreements, and current operating hours and reception access will be maintained until the Board revisits the matter in September 2026.

Dr. P. Oglaza noted that earlier proposals generated public concern, particularly the perception that closures of leased office locations would

result in service reductions. He clarified that service levels will be maintained through a combination of branch office delivery and expanded community outreach under the Rural Services Delivery Strategy.

He further advised that the exploration of potential cost-saving measures, including lease costs, arose to identify efficiencies in response to significant projected deficits and the expiry of stabilization funding in 2027. He requested clear Board guidance on balancing service continuity with cost-containment objectives. Staff will prepare further reporting once the Board confirms the scope of cost-saving initiatives.

Dr. Oglaza reiterated that the Rural Services Delivery Strategy is intended to support accessible, consistent, and comprehensive rural public health services in addition to preserving branch offices.

Board Direction: The Board directed the Chair and Vice Chair to work with staff to refine the scope of a report on branch office operations and other topics for presentation to the Board.

9. **Information Items**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor J. McLaren and SECONDED by Mr. S. Bird THAT the Board of Health receive the information items, as circulated.

CARRIED

10. **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

11. **Adjournment**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Mayor J. O'Neill and SECONDED by Councillor B. Roberts THAT this Board of Health meeting be adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

CARRIED

Board Chair
South East Health Unit

Board of Health Minutes

Open Session

Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: 221 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston, Ontario and via Microsoft Teams

In-person: Councillor Conny Glenn, Councillor Judy Greenwood-Speers, Mayor Robin Jones, Councillor Sean Kelly, Councillor Anne-Marie Koiner, Mayor Jan O'Neill, Ms. Barbara Proctor, Warden Nathan Townend

Virtual: Mr. Stephen Bird, Reeve Richard Kidd, Councillor Michael Kotsovos, Councillor Peter McKenna

Regrets: Councillor Jeff McLaren, Councillor Bill Roberts

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair N. Townend at 10:03 am.

2. **Land Acknowledgement**

Spoken by Chair N. Townend

3. **Roll Call**

Conducted by Recorder T. McKenzie

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor A.M. Koiner and SECONDED by Councillor C. Glenn THAT the Board of Health approve the agenda for the Special Meeting of February 10, 2026, as circulated.

CARRIED

5. **Pecuniary Interest and/or Conflict of Interest, and the General Nature Thereof When the Item Arises**

No disclosures were declared.

6. **Closed Session**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor J. Greenwood-Speers and SECONDED by Mayor R. Jones THAT the Board of Health convene in closed session for the purposes of a discussion as it relates to Section 239(2) of the Municipal Act, and more specifically: b) personal matters about an identifiable individual, including Board employees; and k) a position, plan, procedure criteria, or instruction to be

applied to any negotiations carried out on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the Board or the Agency.

CARRIED

7. **Rising and Reporting of Closed Session**

Chair N. Townsend reported that in closed session, the Chair was directed regarding a personal matter about an identifiable individual, including Board employees and instruction to be applied to to a negotiation on behalf of the Board.

8. **New Business**

8.1. **Strategic Planning**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor J.Greenwood-Speers and SECONDED by Ms. B.Proctor THAT the Board of Health use a third-party consultant to work with staff and the Board to develop a strategic plan, by the beginning of April, to determine the vision of Southeast Public Health and to support its advancement.

CARRIED

8.2 **Implementation Plan**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Mayor R.Jones and SECONDED by Councillor S.Kelly THAT the implementation of the rural strategy and all office closures be paused until the strategic plan is approved.

CARRIED

9. **Adjournment**

MOTION: It was MOVED by Councillor A.M. Koiner and SECONDED by Mayor J. O'Neill THAT this Board of Health meeting be adjourned at 12:44 pm.

CARRIED

Board Chair
South East Health Unit

Memo

To: Board of Health Members
From: Dr. Piotr Oglaza, Medical Officer of Health/CEO
Date: February 25, 2026
Re: **Governance Committee Update for the Board of Health**

Issue:

At the Governance Committee meeting held on February 10, 2026:

- Mayor Robin Jones was elected as Chair
- Barb Proctor was elected as Vice Chair

At the February 10, 2026 meeting members discussed the current Board complement reflecting that four provincial appointees left the Board in December and it is being recommended that a motion be passed by the Board of Health requesting that a formal letter be prepared requesting that these vacancies be filled.

Background:

As outlined in the Governance Committee's terms of reference, the Committee's responsibilities include:

- A Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee will be elected at the first Committee meeting held at the beginning of the year.
- Review of Board policies, by-laws and Committee terms of reference every two years to ensure appropriate structures and procedures are in place and make recommendations to the Board for approval.
- Recruit and recommend community members for consideration for appointment as provincial appointees to the Board.

Current Status:

At the February 10, 2026 Governance Committee meeting the Election of Officers was held to appoint a 2026 Chair and Vice Chair and work continues on the review of Board of Health policies. Given board membership decreased from 18 to 14 members, the Governance Committee is recommending that a letter be sent to the Public Appointments Secretariat requesting additional public appointments.

Rationale:

- The election of Chair and Vice Chair ensures the BOH operates effectively and maintains standards of corporate governance.

- Board policy development guarantees accountability, transparency and efficiency and helps achieve the organization's goals.
- The recruitment of public appointees brings diverse skills to public health decision making and provides an external impartial voice.

Recommendation:

THAT correspondence be sent to the Public Appointments Secretariat informing them of the departure of four provincial appointments from the SEPH Board and requesting that these vacancies be filled.

Memo

To: Board of Health Members
From: Dr. Piotr Oglaza, Medical Officer of Health/CEO
Reviewed by: Finance Committee
Date: February 25, 2026
Re: Finance Committee Update for Board of Health

At the Finance Committee meeting held on February 18, 2026:

- Councillor Anne-Marie Koiner was elected Chair.
- Councillor Peter McKenna was elected Vice Chair.

Information items received included:

- Ministry of Health funding information
- Draft 2025 Financial Results

Background:

As outlined in the Finance Committee's Terms of Reference, the Chair and Vice Chair are elected at the first Committee meeting of the year. For continuity, incumbents are encouraged to serve a minimum two-year term where possible.

The Finance Committee advises the Board of Health on financial oversight, including budgeting, financial performance, reporting, reserves, and financial risk management. The Committee reviews key financial information and provides recommendations to support responsible, compliant, and transparent stewardship of resources.

Current Status:

The draft, unaudited 2025 financial results indicate that Southeast Public Health is in a favourable financial position. Excluding merger-related activities, revenues were slightly above plan due to additional one-time funding, while expenses were below plan, largely because eligible costs (including staff time, software harmonization, and occupancy costs) were appropriately charged to the voluntary merger budget. This has resulted in a projected surplus of approximately \$3.6 million, which subject to audit, would be transferred to reserves to support future financial sustainability.

Cost-shared mandatory programs reflect similar drivers, with some administrative costs recovered from other program budgets. Most 100% funded programs (Ontario Seniors Dental Care, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Preschool Speech and Language, and Substance Use and Addictions) are operating as expected, with no significant financial issues identified.

Recommendation:

MOTION: THAT the Board of Health receive the Finance Committee Update, as circulated.

Memo

To: Board of Health Members
 From: Susan Stewart, Director, Merger Office
 Date: February 25, 2026
 Re: **Merger Updates**

Living Our Values

At the All-Staff Day, a visual artist created an original piece of artwork reflecting “Living Our Values” identified through engagement activities.

In February, artwork was displayed at Brockville and Smiths Falls offices with copies posted in all branch offices. This artwork will be displayed in Kingston and Belleville offices with copies available for branch offices by the end of March.



Change Readiness Survey

The next Change Readiness Survey for Q4 is open from February 6 to February 20, with results to be shared in March.

Staff Engagement

A one-hour webinar, *Well-being at Work*, was offered twice in February to support better attendance, with calendar invitations provided to staff.

A Town Hall for staff is scheduled for early March. This is an opportunity for staff to hear directly from SEPH leaders and be able to ask questions.

Branding and Marketing

The Website Development Project Team is excited to announce that the work of content migration to the SoutheastPH.ca website is currently underway. This phase of the project involves Communications Team members working alongside program staff and managers to review and prepare content from legacy sites to be launched publicly on the SEPH website by March 31, 2026. The update that will be pushed to the SEPH website will include this content, as well as changes to the navigation, functionality, and look of SoutheastPH.ca.

As rebranding work continues, we are happy to announce that roadside signage has been updated, and all four large offices (i.e., Belleville, Kingston, Brockville and Smiths Falls) have received their new roadside signs. This signifies larger transformation we are all building together. Stay tuned for more visual updates across our offices.

Training

TED (Training, Education and Development) Sessions provide a forum for employees to discover ideas, share best practices and showcase the expertise that exists within our agency, to foster ongoing learning, development and innovation at SEPH. Our first SEPH TED was offered in January featuring Erin Stienstra from the library. Her presentation, *Don't Do Research Alone—There's a Library for That* was recorded for those who could not attend.

Medical directives

Medical directives are written orders that authorize qualified health-care professionals to perform specific controlled acts and clinical activities for defined patient groups when predetermined conditions are met, without requiring a direct physician's order at the time of care. The Office of the Chief Nursing Officer (OCNO) is working to harmonize medical directives across the organization. To date, 19 medical directives have been harmonized to support consistent, safe, and high-quality care.

Electronic Medical Record (EMR)

We have determined which programs will use an EMR and the requisite functionality required from an EMR. We are currently working with a vendor to ensure that the EMR product will also support data integration and adjunct products for client referrals and bookings. An EMR Project Team has been formed that will determine data mapping, implementation processes and workflows.

Network Topology

Network topology is the physical or logical layout of how devices (computers, servers, printers, routers, switches, etc.) are connected and communicate within a network. We are currently working towards harmonization of SEPH's computing infrastructures and network topologies.

File Architecture

File architecture is the way files are organized, structured, stored and accessed. The system for SEPH will be based on the Ontario Municipal Records Management System (TOMRMS).

Information Technology (IT) has met with individual teams to discuss their future team SharePoint sites which will inform the larger file architecture project. While we work on the larger file architecture project, IT will be working with individual teams to provide access to SharePoint for shared storage and team collaboration. This will transition into TOMRMS at a later date.

Payroll Transition

The transition begins in February 2026 and will be completed by March 12, 2026. Communication regarding the transition plan for each legacy organization has been sent to staff.

This communication includes payroll calendars for each legacy organization to show the pay weeks that span the payroll transition period.

This memo is for the information of the Board.

Kathleen Thompson

From: allhealthunits <allhealthunits-bounces@lists.alphaweb.org> on behalf of Jessica Flynn <jflynn@nwhu.on.ca>
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2026 11:28 AM
To: Rosemary.Moodie@sen.parl.gc.ca
Cc: Kimberly Ballanace; municipality@redlake.ca; Katherine.Hay@sen.parl.gc.ca; Heather Pihulak; administration@lavallee.ca; Eric.Melillo@parl.gc.ca; Smamakwa-qp@ndp.on.ca; Rodger.Cuzner@sen.parl.gc.ca; Cindy Nielson; Victor.Boudreau@sen.parl.gc.ca; Heather Gropp; Chantal.Petitclerc@sen.parl.gc.ca; Paulette.Senior@sen.parl.gc.ca; cao@emo.ca; allhealthunits@lists.alphaweb.org; Greg.rickford@pc.ola.org; townshipofmorley@gmail.com; christine.goulet@redlake.ca; Marilou.McPhedran@sen.parl.gc.ca; lakeofthewoodstwp@tbaytel.net; Martin@sen.parl.gc.ca; Allyson Euler; clerk@ignace.ca; Marcus.Powlowski@parl.gc.ca; sue.bates@atikokan.ca; Tracy.Muggli@sen.parl.gc.ca; kevin.holland@pc.ola.org; Dawn.Arnold@sen.parl.gc.ca; glecuyer@fortfrances.ca; Margo.Greenwood@sen.parl.gc.ca; townclerk@picklelake.org; clerktreasurer@visitmachin.com; clerk@siouxlookout.ca; Sharon.Burey@sen.parl.gc.ca; alberton@jam21.net; Flordeliz.Osler@sen.parl.gc.ca
Subject: [allhealthunits] Middlesex-London Health Unit Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling Endorsement Letter
Attachments: MLHU Policy Position Re Alcohol Labelling Endorsement Letter.pdf; MLHU Policy Position Re Alcohol Labelling Endorsement Letter.pdf

Warning! This message was sent from outside SEPH and we were unable to verify the sender. This message may be unsafe!

Dear Senator Moodie,

On behalf of the Board of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit, please find the attached endorsement letter regarding Middlesex-London Health Unit Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling.

Thank you,



Jessica Flynn
Executive Assistant/Secretary to the BOH, MOH, and CEO
210 First St N.
Kenora, ON, P9N 2K4
807-468-3147, ext. 128

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February 19, 2026

The Honourable Rosemary Moodie, Senator
Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4
Sent via email: Rosemary.Moodie@sen.parl.gc.ca

Dear Senator Moodie,

Re: Endorsement of Middlesex-London Health Unit Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling

On behalf of the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) Board of Health, we are writing to formally express our strong support for the Middlesex-London Health Unit's (MLHU) *Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling* and the recommendations outlined in Report No. 0526, including support for federal action through [Bill S202, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act](#) (warning label on alcoholic beverages).

We commend the Middlesex-London Board of Health and Health Unit staff for their leadership in advancing an evidence-informed policy position to address the substantial and preventable health harms associated with alcohol consumption. Alcohol remains a leading risk factor for chronic disease, injury, and premature death in Canada and is the only legalized psychoactive substance that is not required to carry comprehensive, regulated health warning labels.

Local Alcohol-Related Health Context

The concerns outlined by MLHU are strongly reflected in our own region. Alcohol attributable harms place a significant and ongoing burden on the health and wellbeing of communities served by the Northwestern Health Unit. Surveillance data demonstrates that alcohol-related morbidity and mortality in our region occurs at rates far exceeding provincial averages and continue to strain already overstretched health, emergency, and social service systems.

In 2023, the rate of emergency department visits due to alcohol attributable causes in the NWHU area was 7,464.3 per 100,000; more than **thirteen times higher** than the Ontario rate. Alcohol attributable hospitalizations occurred at a rate of 1,065.6 per 100,000, and mortality reached 39.0 deaths per 100,000, both substantially higher than provincial levels. These impacts are not isolated and have shown increasing trends over time.

Patterns of alcohol consumption further reinforce the scale of this issue. More than one in five adults (21.6%) in our region report heavy drinking, and over half (50.9%) exceed [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#), rates that are statistically higher than those observed across Ontario. Alcohol availability is also high, with Northwestern Health Unit having the highest number of alcohol outlets per capita in the province, increasing population exposure and access.

Together, these data underscore that alcohol-related harm is a significant public health issue locally and one that disproportionately affects community safety, health equity, and health system capacity.

Rationale for Alcohol Labelling

We strongly support MLHU's position that mandatory, standardized alcohol labelling is a modest yet effective public health intervention that helps support informed consumer choice. Evidence consistently shows that clear, well designed alcohol labels:

- Increase awareness of cancer and chronic disease risks, even at low levels of consumption;
- Improve understanding of standard drink size and alcohol strength;
- Support individual decision-making at point of purchase and point of pour; and
- Complement Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health in a format that reaches consumers equitably; regardless of income, education, or geography.

Alcohol labelling aligns with Canada's approach to other legalized substances, such as tobacco and nonmedical cannabis, both of which are required to display standardized health warnings and product information. Addressing this policy gap for alcohol is an important and evidence-informed step toward reducing preventable harm.

Endorsement and Call to Action

The Northwestern Health Unit Board of Health fully endorses:

- The Middlesex-London Health Unit Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling (Appendix C, Report No. 0526); and
- [The Statement from Provincial and Territorial Chief Medical Officers of Health on Labelling of Alcohol Products.](#)

We support federal action through Bill S-202 to mandate comprehensive, regulated alcohol labels that include:

1. Prominent, rotating health warning messages;
2. Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health; and
3. Clear standard drink information per container and per serving.

A coordinated national approach to alcohol labelling will strengthen health equity, reduce preventable harms, and support Canadians in making informed choices about alcohol consumption.

Thank you for your leadership on this important public health issue. We look forward to continued collaboration across public health units to advance evidence-based policy that protects and promotes the health of our communities.

Sincerely,



Doug Lawrance
Chair, Board of Health
Northwestern Health Unit



Dr. Kit Young Hoon
Medical Officer of Health
Northwestern Health Unit



Marilyn Herbacz
Chief Executive Officer
Northwestern Health Unit

Copies too:

Board of Health for the Middlesex-London Health Unit

Board of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit

The Honourable Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Senator

The Honourable Dawn Arnold, Senator

The Honourable Victor Boudreau, Senator

The Honourable Patrick Brazeau, Senator

The Honourable Sharon Burey, Senator

The Honourable Margo Greenwood, Senator

The Honourable Katherine Hay, Senator

The Honourable Marty Klyne, Senator

The Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator

The Honourable Tracy Muggli, Senator

The Honourable Chantal Petitclerc, Senator

The Honourable Paulette Senior, Senator

Eric Melillo, Member of Parliament for Kenora-Kiiwetinoong

Marcus Powlowski, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Rainy River

The Honourable Greg Rickford, Member of Provincial Parliament for Kenora-Rainy River

The Honourable Kevin Holland, Member of Provincial Parliament for Thunder Bay-Atikokan

Sol Mamakwa, Member of Provincial Parliament for Kiiwetinoong

Northwestern Health Unit local municipalities

Ontario Boards of Health

Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)

Kathleen Thompson

From: allhealthunits <allhealthunits-bounces@lists.alphaweb.org> on behalf of alPHa communications <communications@alphaweb.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2026 10:44 AM
To: 'All Health Units'
Cc: Board
Subject: [allhealthunits] TOPHC registration has launched!

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ATTENTION ALL:
Boards of Health Section Members
Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health Section Members
Affiliates (Senior Public Health Directors & Managers)



Dear alPHa Members,

Registration is now open for TOPHC 2026, taking place March 25, 2026. This year's event is a free, half-day virtual convention designed to bring together public health leaders and professionals from across Ontario and beyond. With expert panels, dynamic discussions, and networking opportunities, TOPHC 2026 will be a unique opportunity to stay ahead of emerging trends, connect with colleagues, and explore innovative solutions in public health.

Register now and be part of the conversations shaping the future of public health. **[Visit the TOPHC website](#)** to secure your spot today!

Take Care,

Loretta

Loretta Ryan, CAE, RPP

Chief Executive Officer

Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)

PO Box 73510, RPO Wychwood

Toronto, ON M6C 4A7

Tel: 416-595-0006 x 222

loretta@alphaweb.org

www.alphaweb.org

