



Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Board of Health

RECOMMENDATION/RESOLUTION REPORT – WECHU Charity Status Application

2026-09-24

BACKGROUND

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) is a statutory corporation established under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA)* (Ontario), with a legislated mandate to promote and protect the health of the population through disease prevention, health promotion, environmental health, and population health surveillance. The WECHU delivers a broad range of provincially mandated public health programs aligned with the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), including immunization, infectious disease control, chronic disease prevention, mental health promotion, environmental health inspections, dental health programming, and emergency preparedness. The organization is primarily funded through a cost-shared model, with approximately 75% of funding provided by the Province of Ontario and the remaining 25% funded by municipal partners (City of Windsor, County of Essex, and Township of Pelee Island), along with program-specific grants. Currently, WECHU operates without charitable status, which limits its ability to:

- issue tax receipts for donations;
- access certain federal and provincial grant opportunities;
- receive non-governmental funding, including private donations and gifts in kind;
- leverage community fundraising or philanthropic partnerships. Obtaining charitable status will support enhanced financial sustainability and flexibility by enabling diversified revenue streams while maintaining alignment with WECHU's exclusively charitable purposes of advancing public health and community well-being.
- leverage charitable status pricing for capital and operational expenses.

Charitable status would also strengthen transparency, accountability, and governance practices through compliance with Canada Revenue Agency requirements, further reinforcing public trust. In Ontario, most public health units are established as municipal or regional boards of health and do not typically hold independent charitable status, relying primarily on government funding. As such, pursuing charitable designation represents an innovative approach that may position WECHU as a leader in leveraging philanthropy to enhance public health programming, particularly in areas addressing health equity, social determinants of health, and community partnerships.

PROPOSED MOTION

Whereas, the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit is mandated under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* to deliver programs and services that protect and promote the health of the population; and

Whereas, WECHU's programs and services constitute exclusively charitable purposes that benefit the community, including disease prevention, health promotion, environmental health protection, and population health surveillance; and

Whereas, obtaining charitable status would enable WECHU to access additional funding opportunities, including donations, grants, and non-cash contributions, thereby enhancing its ability to deliver and expand public health programs; and

Whereas, being an officially recognized charitable organization will provide operational savings/discounts from service vendors; and

Whereas, charitable status would support financial sustainability, strengthen partnerships with community organizations and donors, and improve capacity to address emerging public health priorities and health inequities; and

Whereas, achieving charitable status would enhance governance, accountability, and transparency through compliance with federal regulatory requirements; and

Whereas, pursuing charitable status represents a strategic opportunity for innovation among Ontario public health units, where such designation is not commonly held.

Now therefore be it resolved that the Windsor-Essex County Board of Health approves the submission of an application to the Canada Revenue Agency for registration of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit as a charitable organization; and

FURTHER THAT, the Board of Health authorizes the Chief Executive Officer and/or designate to take all necessary actions to complete and submit the application, including the provision of supporting documentation and any required follow-up; and

FURTHER THAT, the Board of Health directs administration to report back on the status and implications of the application process, including any governance, financial, or operational considerations associated with charitable registration.