

Application for appointment to: Middlesex-London Health Unit Board

Organization/Sector you are representing (if applicable):

Name: Ben Benedict

Occupation: Communications Professional & Visual Artist

Describe your work experience:

My work experience is backed by my confidence and tenacity with an exceptional history of results-orientated accomplishments and a diverse background in communications, education, health care, and organizational development within the cultural, voluntary, public, and private sectors.

My life has been about serving my community. Life and work experiences that specifically support my application to the Board of Health representative role includes:

*As a Veteran, I served six years as a Canadian Special Forces Medial Assistant (trauma medicine & public health), travelling across Canada including Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic.

*As a leader in education, I was nominated Academy of Learning “Franchisee of the Year in 1998” for: my vision in creating 100 per cent growth annually and making the Sarnia one of the fastest growing computer and business skills training franchises nationally; being awarded the highest dollar amount of any service provider ever within Lambton County from Human Resources Canada in 1997; and for my communication skills and overall contribution to the franchise organization nationally. I have also taught Public Relations at Fanshawe College, illustrating the depth of my skills.

*As a speaker and workshop leader, my past clients include the Epigenetics EH Conference as an artist presenter with the Children’s Health Research Institute (2011); the London Intercommunity Health Centre (2011); Art For All Canada 3rd and 5th Annual Conference, Toronto, ON (2011 & 2013); SIFE York at the Schulich School of Business, York University (2012 & 2013 - Keynote Speaker); Professional Writers’ Association of Canada Toronto Chapter & the Editors’ Association of Canada Toronto Branch (2013); and being invited to present a national webinar on Marketing for Artist for CARFAC Ontario in 2014.

*As business leader and entrepreneur I have built a successful communications, marketing, and public relations practice, Benedict Creative Communications (est. 2005). Key local and regionally focused short fixed-term clients include Perspective Marketing (Oakville), the London Majors Baseball Club, Vanier Children Services, the London Clinical Psychiatry Residency Consortium, and the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada where I was able to increased funds raised for their annual Spring Sprint Campaign through organizational analysis, improved media relations, strategic use of narrative, and a call to action in 2011.

*I am also a recognized mid-career culture worker: As a Freelance Writer and Editor [Canadian Press (CP) and American Psychological Association (APA) styles] and Journalist (The Londoner, 2005-2008), I have over 1,000 publishing credits on business, culture, economic development, environment, mental and physical health, heritage, and community interest in regional, national, and international (Calgary, Guelph, London, Sarnia, & Toronto; Buffalo, NY & Erie, PA; Digital) publications beginning in 1993; As a fine artist and curator having exhibited professionally across Ontario including Aylmer, Bright’s Grove, Hamilton, Ingersoll, London, Port Stanley, St. Thomas, Sarnia, Sudbury, Toronto, Wallaceburg, and Woodstock. In 2005 I served as the Vice Chair, Board of Directors for the Forest City Gallery. I have also been honored to host two radio shows at CHRW Radio Western (2009-2012) including the Rainbow Radio Network and Inside the Arts for which I won an Outstanding Feedback Show Award.

Describe your educational background and, if applicable, professional credentials:

My education in the medical and public health sector began when I served as a Canadian Special Forces Medical Assistant, then continued as a *Certified Health Care Aide* putting myself through two undergraduate degrees, to eventually my work as a communications professional working with leading health organizations within London, to most recently earning a Master of Arts in Communication (2017, 4.0 GPA) with an emphasis on health care, education and advocacy including earning a Graduate In-Course Merit Scholarship in 2015. Specific and relatable courses include Quantitative & Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations, Organizational Theory

and Public Relations Leadership, Public Relations Ethics and Law, PR: Social and Organizational Context, Graduate Seminar in PR Education, and Health Communication: Theory and Practice.

Masters of Arts in Communication	Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS	2017
Artist-Educator Foundations Course	The Royal Conservatory, Toronto, ON	2012
Corporate Communications (Post-Graduate)	Fanshawe College, London, ON	2006
Public Relations (Post-Graduate)	Fanshawe College, London, ON	2004
Micro Computer Business Applications (Honours)	Academy of Learning, Sarnia, ON	1995
Bachelor of Fine Arts	University of Western Ontario (UWO), London	1993
Bachelor of Arts (English)	University of Western Ontario (UWO), London	1993
Health Care Aide Certificate	Fanshawe College, London, ON	1992

What skills, abilities and specialized knowledge do you have that will assist this body?

My expertise lies as a communications, marketing, and public relations professional with extensive knowledge of and experience in the health care sector beginning in 1982 through to present day (trauma medicine, geriatric care, and health communications). As a Master's Graduate in Communications I focused my degree efforts on health communication and education – two areas I feel can benefit the LMHU. I have exceptional public speaking skills as an educator; having acted as spokesperson for several organizations and made multiple television appearances – both attesting to my media relations skills; and as a volunteer broadcaster at CHRW Radio Western (2009-2012) I won an Outstanding Feedback Show Award.

As an individual who has oversaw the growth and development of both for-profit and non-profit organizations, I feel that these skills and insights could prove beneficial as MLHU looks to move locations in the coming year to Citi Plaza. Here I also feel that my past experience in moving a facility into a mall space (Gallery Lambton to Bayside Centre) in 1997 creating the conditions for its current growth, can benefit both the MLHU and London-Middlesex residents. Given the various health crises affecting London currently, I believe my knowledge of and relationship to London's marginalized LGBTQ2, immigrant, and indigenous communities (as cofounder of Pride London Festival 2002-2012, and 2018 Ward 13 Candidate) will also provide insights as well as provide greater diversity on the Health Unit Board. I am also exceptionally versed in digital technologies as an early adaptor and educator.

Why are you interested in serving the City of London on this body?

I have served London in many ways and I see this as the next step in my professional and personal growth as a communications and health care professional – bridging my experiences in a way that provides the greatest service and utilization of these skills for my community. As an individual with local, regional, and provincial experience this is also the level of performance I have become accustomed to given my lifetime of community focused leadership. In 2018, I ran unsuccessfully for city council in Ward 13 and in that, there were many individuals who suggested I find ways to stay committed and convicted to my community efforts. Having completed a master's degree last year, and in running for City Council this year, I see this as that natural progression of my commitment and a return to public service in a way that best utilizes my skills and abilities.

What contribution do you believe you can make to this body?

I am committed and dedicated in my service, taking time to read minutes and reports to be an effective contributor when called upon – as noted by the recognition I have received for my past contributions (see next question). I believe my familiarity with the sector, extensive background in health care, my skills as a researcher and communications professional – all add value but it is my skills in blending business and nonprofit growth that will allow for the greatest contribution and leadership during this time of change and growth for the MLHU. My outgoing personality and strong network within the sector, political astuteness in working with various levels of government and my past experiences as a lobbyist (Private Vocational Schools, Artist Rights, Culture & Heritage, LGBTQ2 Rights / Safe Schools, Veterans) and journalist with health writing experience can all be positive in promoting the services of the LMHU as well as negotiating with senior levels of government. I am also a downtown resident and available to attend committee meetings as required.

What past contributions have you made on a similar body or organization?

There are a number of related committee experiences that reflect my contributions:

*I first served on the University of Western Ontario's Student Council (1990-1993) including as a member of the John Labatt Visual Art Building Committee overseeing a \$10 million budget, and receiving a five minute standing ovation during my final meeting for my unwavering devotion to students. I then served on Lambton County's Culture & Communications Committee as a Library Board Member (1994-1999) where I also sat on the Gallery Lambton Site Selection Committee (1997).

*As a nonprofit leader and volunteer, I developed the Pillar Innovation Awards' project plan (2003) including recommending that artists design the awards annually. I then served on Pillar Nonprofit Network's Education & Training Committee (2005 – 2009) directing nonprofit training programs based on community need. As Cofounder and Board Member of Pride London Festival (2002-2012), I acted as spokesperson and oversaw the organization's development, funding, communications, and marketing to where today it is currently the third largest Pride Organization in Ontario. In this I created the Pride Community Directory and built the annual art show into a juried exhibition with international participation in 2011. I also worked with leading health organizations across London and Middlesex County (Anova, John Gordon Home, London InterCommunity Health Centre, MLHU, Rainbow Health Ontario, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection) including serving several years on the Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia Working Group (HBT). I also helped develop the criteria for the Rainbow Youth Leadership Award at the London Community Foundation, promoting its value to local school boards and GSAs, raising funds, overseeing media relations, and the awarding of the first three awards. Pride London Festival was recognized as a significant community cultural event by the City of London in 2008, and I was personally recognized for my contributions in 2012 as a Community Trail Blazer. That same year, 2012, I was recognized by the London Community Foundation as an "Influential Londoner" in a video campaign.

* I served on the Health & Safety Committee (2006-2008) while with The Londoner, Sun Media (2005 – 2008).

*For London, I have served on the City of London's Race Relations Advisory Committee (2002), and Creative City Committee (2007-2013) where as an engaged community representative I assisted in the development of London's Cultural Prosperity Plan, Public Art Policy, and was part of the representative team to the 2011 Creative City Summit in London. I was recently honored to be invited to participate in the Art on Utility Boxes in Ward 13 Neighbourhoods program originally proposed by the Piccadilly Area Neighbourhood Association (PANA). My Bell Box Mural was completed at 75 Albert Street during the summer of 2017 while writing my Master's Thesis, after being nominated by the North Talbot Neighbourhood Association to complete this commission that illustrates my appreciation for my community.

What experience do you have in exchanging your views with others and in appreciating and respecting the skills, abilities and knowledge of others?

Respecting skills and abilities is a hallmark of Scouts Canada where I volunteer as a leader in Petawawa, London, and Sarnia, becoming Troop Scouter and Assistant District Commissioner (1986-1999). I am proud to have helped raise hundreds of young leaders before moving on to new challenges. I was also raised in a home with a disabled sibling (spina bifida), around migrant workers (Jamaicans), and have fought biases and prejudices my whole life as a gay man - appreciating and respecting others is something I understand. Additional skills training in this area includes Managing and Leading on Diversity (2003), and Prevention of Violence & Harassment in the Workplace (2010), as well as Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) courses - Accessibility Training For Educators, and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), plus Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act, Health and Safety Awareness, and Respect in the Workplace as part of my administrative training as an instructor at Fanshawe College (2011-2015).

I also have extensive jurying experience where impartiality is essential including for such groups as the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), Neighbourhood Resource

Association of Westminster Park, Western Fair District, Pride London, and Home County Folk Festival.

Then there's my extensive committee experience beginning with Western's Student Council, where I received a five minute standing ovation during my final council meeting for my unwavering devotion to students. My work as a library board member in Sarnia-Lambton where after 5-years of service Leonard McNeil, County Warden 1999 wrote "I only knew you for 10 months but could clearly see by your input you are definitely a treasured asset to this Board and this will certainly be missed. At some meetings, your passionate plea for change may not have happened, but it made each of the other members stop to give thoughts towards positive change and this process is a must," (Personal Correspondence, September 13, 1999). Finally, there's my work on London's Creative City Committee where Mayor Joni Baechler wrote "Your service demonstrates your dedication to bettering the City of London and to improving the lives of its residents. You have played an important role in a group that is striving to make London a more vibrant community," (Personal Correspondence, November 6, 2014).

Accolades for my unbiased and dedicated efforts have also been received in my working life as owner of Benedict Creative Communications where then client Jeff Carter, Phycologist, Vanier Children's Services wrote "In additional <sic> to an excellent final product, I appreciate the process of working with you. I felt that we had a strong working relationship as a team. I liked your ideas about how to approach the project and how to organize the content. As the work progressed, we were able to adapt to the unexpected. I am very pleased with the look of the final manual. Vanier will certainly keep you in mind if we have similar work in the future," (Personal Correspondence, January 13, 2014). As well as during my tenure at Fanshawe College where I received this Professor Feedback: "This course was by far the most enjoyable one I have taken through Fanshawe. Ben has a true passion to teach, and is probably one of the most ethical people I have met. A CREDIT to his industry!" (Winter 2013 - W13CE).

Are you interested in such an interview? Yes