



**For Immediate Release: November 26, 2010**

## **HEALTH UNIT RECEIVES ACCREDITATION AWARD**

Kenora, Ont. -- The Northwestern Health Unit reports that it has been awarded unconditional accreditation from the Ontario Council on Community Health Accreditation (OCCHA).

OCCHA Executive Director Meighan Finlay says, "This award demonstrates the commitment of the Health Unit to continuous quality improvement and to providing effective and efficient public health programs and services."

Last spring, OCCHA spent three days at the Health Unit, checking its work in several areas.

The list includes leadership, management of finances and resources, working with others, programs, and services.

A team from OCCHA reviewed Health Unit documents and processes and interviewed staff and community partners.

The award means that the Health Unit has met the standards of excellence set for public health units across Ontario.

"We are very pleased to be an accredited health unit," says Board of Health Chair John Albanese. "This award recognizes our ongoing work to provide high quality public health services to the people of Northwestern Ontario."

The Northwestern Health Unit serves communities in Kenora and Rainy River Districts.

It has offices in 13 municipalities, including Kenora, Dryden, Fort Frances, and Sioux Lookout.

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For more information, contact  
**Mark Perrault**, Chief Executive Officer,  
Phone 807.468.3147 x260,  
[mperrault@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:mperrault@nwhu.on.ca)

*Enclosures (2)*

*Backgrounder: Ontario Council on Community Health Accreditation (OCCHA):*

*Picture: Accreditation Award Presentation to Northwestern Health Unit, November 26, 2010*

...2

**Enclosure: Backgrounder**

**Northwestern Health Unit Media Release: November 26, 2010**

**The Ontario Council on Community Health Accreditation (OCCHA)**

The Ontario Council on Community Health Accreditation (OCCHA) was formed in 1981. OCCHA is an independent agency governed by a Board of Directors whose members are appointed by professional associations involved in public health.

As part of the accreditation process, the organizational and administrative aspects of a public health unit are measured against established principles and standards in the areas of leadership; governance; agency management; collaboration; communication; and the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and services. The process includes a three-day on-site visit by a team of OCCHA surveyors who review the health unit's processes, policies and services, and interview agency staff and community partners.

Through the accreditation process, OCCHA provides an independent, voluntary, peer evaluation of the administrative and operational aspects of local public health agencies. The decision to apply for and maintain status as an accredited health unit is part of an agency's ongoing commitment to accountability and organizational performance evaluation. Thirteen of Ontario's 36 health units are currently accredited by OCCHA.

The current accreditation award is for three years. The accreditation process is based on a three year cycle and includes an annual review component to support ongoing quality assurance activities in accredited health units.

There is more information about OCCHA and the accreditation process on their web site at <http://www.occha.org>.

**Picture: OCCHA Accreditation Award to Northwestern Health Unit  
November 26, 2010**



**Left to Right:**

Dr. Jim Arthurs, Acting Medical Officer of Health; Mark Perrault, CEO; Alex Berry, Chair of 2010 Staff Accreditation Task Force; John Albanese, Chair, Board of Health for Northwestern Health Unit

The Accreditation Award from the Ontario Council on Community Health Accreditation (OCCHA) was formally presented to the Northwestern Health Unit at the Board of Health meeting held November 26, 2010. Alex Berry, Health Promoter, Fort Frances office and Chair of the Health Unit's 2010 Staff Accreditation Task Force, made the presentation on behalf of OCCHA's Executive Director, Meighan Finlay. Ms. Finlay was unable to attend in person and participated via teleconference.

Receiving the Award on behalf of the Health Unit were John Albanese, Chair, Board of Health for Northwestern Health Unit; Dr. Jim Arthurs, Acting Medical Officer of Health; and Mark Perrault, CEO.