



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

www.nwhu.on.ca

For immediate release
May 22, 2019

Health Units promote health and reduce the need for health care

The Province of Ontario's recently announced plan to restructure and change the provincial-municipal cost sharing ratio for public health has been front page news.

Benjamin Franklin was once quoted as saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

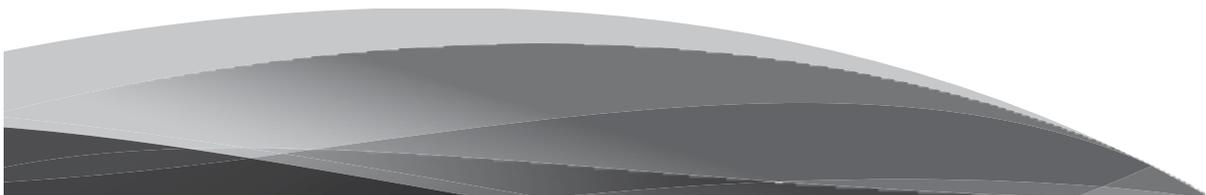
Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) provides a wide range of services that focus on keeping people healthy and preventing disease. Public health work is rooted in the local community, and helps to reduce the cost and burden on an already overwhelmed health care system. The Medical Officer of Health for NWHU Dr. Kit Young-Hoon says "research on many health unit programs such as immunization, commercial tobacco control, and early childhood development has repeatedly shown that preventing illness saves money in future expenses in health care and social services. In short, preventing illness costs considerably less than treating illness."

Public health nurses do many things including supporting new parents, families and children, providing immunizations, managing disease outbreaks, and providing people with sexual health services. Public health inspectors work to ensure safe drinking water, and they inspect restaurants, nail salons, pools and beaches to make sure that these places and services are safe for the public. Health unit staff also provide dental services for children with financial barriers, programs and services to support physical activity and healthy eating, services for young children related to speech, hearing and vision, as well as a range of programs and services in our local schools.

The provincial budget announcement proposed replacing the current 35 local public health units with 10 new regional agencies, and increasing the portion of public health funding paid by the municipalities. The provincial plan to bring about such a large change is still mostly unknown. It would be important to consider how the future model might affect local services in communities, local offices and public health unit jobs, travel time for clients, travel costs to provide service, and the ability to meet the needs of rural communities.

NWHU hopes that if the changes move forward, decision makers will put an appropriately funded system in place that ensures ongoing local services provided through local community offices and continue to employ people who live in and understand the community.

Northwestern Health Unit looks forward to the consultations with Ministry leaders which is expected to occur within the next couple of weeks. Board of Health members, the Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Executive Officer continue to meet with municipal and provincial leaders to discuss the proposed changes and the potential impact. The health unit will continue to support access to local services and decision making based on community needs and voices as the basis for effective,





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efficient and sustainable public health programs.

Northwestern Health Unit is committed to working with all of its partners to continually improve the public health system in Ontario, especially in northwestern Ontario.

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