



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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Bill 148 should lead to better health outcomes for Northwestern Ontario residents

The Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) expects Provincial Bill 148: Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017 will lead to significantly improved health outcomes for many of its residents.

The Board of Health showed its support of the Bill by passing a resolution at its August 28 meeting commending the provincial government for taking steps to improve income levels and working conditions.

Decades of research shows people with lower incomes have poorer physical and mental health and higher rates of mortality.

According to Dr. Kit Young-Hoon, Medical Officer of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit, Bill 148, now under consideration by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, will lead to a \$15 per hour minimum wage in 2019 as well as other benefits, provides "important mechanisms that will contribute to substantial health benefits for individuals and communities in Northwestern Ontario and throughout the province."

Young-Hoon also noted "the research shows the poorer you are, the more likely you are to have health risks in your daily life, and have difficulties with accessing adequate healthy food or affordable safe housing."

For too many, working full-time does not guarantee an income above the poverty line. This may be a particular concern in Northwestern Ontario where food costs are relatively high.

It is estimated the changes to the minimum wage outlined in Bill 148 will increase the wages of more than one quarter of Ontario workers. Many of those workers are more likely to be challenged with other social factors such as low education, unstable employment, and inadequate housing.

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