June 30, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Queen’s Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1  
Email: premier@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Wynne:

Re: Northern Ontario Evacuations of First Nations Communities

At its meeting on June 18, 2015, the Sudbury & District Board of Health carried the following resolution #32-15:

WHEREAS the evacuation and relocation of residents of a number of First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario and along the James Bay Coast, is required on a close to annual basis due to seasonal flooding and risk of forest fires; and

WHEREAS a safe, effective, and efficient temporary community relocation is challenging within the current reactive model; and

WHEREAS a proactive, planned and adequately resourced evacuation system would ensure the maintenance of quality evacuation centers in pre-selected host municipalities, as well as appropriate infrastructure to ensure the health and safety of evacuees in a culturally acceptable manner; and

WHEREAS the Thunder Bay District Board of Health passed a motion on March 18, 2015, and has submitted a letter dated April 10, 2015 to the Honourable Kathleen Wynne requesting that the provincial government address the ongoing lack of resources and infrastructure to ensure the safe, efficient and effective temporary relocation of First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario and the James Bay coast when they face environmental and weather related threats in the form of seasonal flooding and forest fires;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Sudbury and District Board of Health support the Thunder Bay District Board of Health’s resolution 50-2015 dated March 18, 2015; and

FURTHER THAT a copy of this motion be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, Ministers responsible for Health and Long-Term Care, Community Safety and Correctional Services, Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry, local area Members of Provincial Parliament and all Ontario Boards of Health.

It is the Board’s hope that you will seriously consider the need for a proactive, planned and adequately resourced evacuation system which would ensure the safe, efficient and effective temporary relocation of First Nation communities in Northwestern Ontario and the James Bay coast when these communities are threatened by seasonal flooding and risk of forest fires.

Thank you for your attention to this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Penny Sutcliffe, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

cc: Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Yasir Naqvi, Minister Community Safety and Correctional Services
Hon. David Zimmer, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Hon. Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines
Hon. Bill Mauro, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Hon. Glenn Thibeault, MPP Sudbury
Hon. France Gélinas, MPP Nickel Belt
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies