

Media Release

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**Thunder Bay District
Health Unit**

Cuts put Public Health at risk

Significant cuts in provincial funding for public health were put forward in the Ontario budget released last week that will put public health at risk.

The government expects to reduce its investment by \$200M annually across the province within two years. This reflects a potential reduction of up to 27% in the provincial grants for cost-shared programs for health units. These cuts are in addition to significant prior funding limitations experienced as a result of a revised provincial funding formula introduced in 2015, and provincial fiscal restraints.

In the budget, the government also proposes a reduction in the number of Health units from 35 local units to 10 regional entities.

The changes are a real cause for concern, according to the Chair of the Board of Health, Mr. James McPherson. "There are many questions and the full extent of the changes, the financial details and the specific timelines for this are not yet known; however, we are anticipating the impact of this to be very significant," he said.

As one of 35 provincial public health units, TBDHU delivers a wide variety of public health programs and services according to the Ontario Public Health Standards, the mandate provided by the province for public health units. Programs span health protection areas, such as food and water safety and protection against infectious diseases, to programs that promote health and wellbeing, such as early years home visiting program, healthy schools programs and substance prevention programs. Much of this work is done through strong connections with many local partners. These include municipalities, social services and health care partners, schools, researchers, Indigenous organizations, among others. The efforts made by Public Health are foundational to overall community health.

The TBDHU area has poorer overall health status as compared to the rest of the province – for example, higher rates of smoking, alcohol consumption – which has a significant impact on the health of the population. Rising rates of infectious diseases and emerging infectious disease threats, such as tuberculosis, require ongoing monitoring and response.

"Public health provides fundamental programming and services that help keep people and communities healthy and protect against disease. There is a significant and proven return on investment with public health. It is unfortunate that the government is taking this position", says Dr. Janet DeMille, Medical Officer of Health of TBDHU.

The Board of Health and Senior leadership will be considering the implications and will be encouraging the government to engage in meaningful consultations before any implementation occurs.

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For more information:

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