Northwestern Health Unit
www.nwhu.on.ca

210 First Street North
Kenora, ON P9N 2K4

August 27, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health / Deputy Premier
Ministry of Health
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

VIA EMAIL: Christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister Elliott,

On behalf of the Board of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU), we wish to express our appreciation for the guidance and leadership shown by the Government of Ontario through the COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Vaccine Rollout. As we progress further along the Roadmap to reopening and begin our own recovery discussions, the topic of modernization and a shift in the cost-sharing model are front and centre.

At the forefront of recovery for public health units and the municipalities we serve, and who contribute to public health funding, is financial stability. NWHU serves 19 municipalities in the province's Northwest; each of which generates much of its revenue through tourism and other economic development initiatives which have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Mitigation funding received in recent years has been critical to the maintenance of public health programming by boards of health and in easing related financial impacts on our oblicated municipalities, especially during the pandemic response, which has required NWHU to augment its staffing and redeploy existing staff to the response.

As the pandemic continues to come under control, NWHU will shift into recovery mode, which will include several months' and even years' work to catch up on programming such as school immunizations, and will require us to maintain staffing levels sufficient for the resumption of our standard public health programming, and outstanding efforts related to pandemic control such as remaining case and contact management, child and youth vaccinations and the potential for booster vaccinations at some point in the future.

Mitigation funding will be crucial to ensure the success of public health programming; without it, public health activities including ensuring the safety of the school environment will be significantly challenged. Our obligated municipalities are not in a position to shift to substantially increased levies to support this work, and public health is not in a position to reduce its staffing to below pre-pandemic numbers and

still keep our communities safe through our programming which is a substantial risk if mitigation funding and/or an increase to our base budget in 2022 is not received.

The Board of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit endeavours to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities while balancing the needs of the population in our broad catchment area. We respectfully request that the Province of Ontario reconsider its approach to the funding of public health. Public health has been instrumental in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and will continue to play a large and important role in the recovery process, especially given the long list of inequities that the pandemic has uncovered in our population's access to health supports.

Sincerely,

Doug Lawrance	Marilyn Herbacz	Dr. Kit Young Hoon
Board of Health Chair	Chief Executive Officer	Medical Officer of Health

CC: Premier Doug Ford
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Greg Rickford, MPP Kenora-Rainy River
Sol Mamakwa, MPP Kiiwetinoong
Judith Monteith-Farrell, MPP Thunder Bay - Atikokan
Ontario Boards of Health
Member Municipalities (19)
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)