

# PHU-THU Merger: Community Update

**June 3, 2024**

*Together, the Porcupine Health Unit and the Timiskaming Health Unit strive for an efficient and effective integration of our public health units to strengthen public health in Northeastern Ontario. We are committed to transparent communication, fostering a positive and inclusive culture, and optimizing our resources to deliver resilient and responsive public health programs and services for the best possible health outcomes in the diverse communities we serve.*

*Porcupine Health Unit-Timiskaming Health Unit (PHU-THU) merger updates are expected to be shared quarterly with municipalities, First Nations communities, and community partners.*

Questions or comments can be sent to [Rachelle Côté](#) or [Lori McCord](#).

## Where are we now?



- Submitted the application to merge to the Ministry of Health.
- Both Boards of Health have passed motions formally intending to merge;
  - Reconfirming prior Board of Health direction to work towards a merger (March 2020; August and Fall 2023);
  - Pending government approval and confirmation of government funding.
- Both Boards of Health continue to discuss municipal representation on the future board.
- Implementing change management plans for staff, including training and team-building opportunities.
- Continuing to work on corporate integration (Human Resources and Information Technology).

## Communities and Public Health

- Local community needs and how we can best address them remain a strong focus throughout the merger.
- The merger will strengthen public health in each community by:
  - Reducing duplication and freeing up staff capacity and resources for effective public health programs and services;
  - Increasing surge capacity for urgent local public health concerns and emergencies;
  - Increasing staff expertise and enhancing retention;
  - Aligning boundaries with community and system partners, streamlining communication and work.
- Funding support from the Ministry of Health will ensure no financial impact of the merger on municipalities during the transition, and that the current staff and level of service will be maintained and enhanced.
- Merging now provides the opportunity to preserve our unique rural voice and plan our own future.

## Next steps

- Continuing to meet with the Ministry of Health on a regular basis to review the application and plan next steps.
- Engagement with community leadership and partners will focus on ensuring that public health programs and services are strengthened along the way.

## Messaging for your community members

- Current local public health contacts, programs and services remain the same.
- Merging will increase capacity, allowing for continued access to public health programs and services, even during simultaneous public health emergency responses.
- There will be more long-term, sustainable solutions that will have lasting positive impacts on the health of communities.
- While discussions of a merger between the Porcupine Health Unit and Timiskaming Health Unit have been occurring over 20 years, the COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to realize the potential of a

merger. A merger is imperative to respond and adapt effectively to the everchanging needs of our communities.

***Strengthening public health in Northeastern Ontario***