



# Porcupine Health Unit

## 2017 Annual Report



# Remarks from the MOH

**I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT** the Porcupine Health Unit's 2017 Annual Report. It has been an exciting year for the entire health unit team. They continue to demonstrate their ongoing dedication to improving the health and well-being of everyone in each of our unique communities and surrounding areas.

We continue to work upstream to address the complex factors that affect the health of our population. In 2017 our commitment to health equity focused on advocacy for food security and dental services for low-income adults. Our *Breastfeeding In Public* campaign, which featured local moms, gained attention across the province and beyond. With the help of partner organizations, we promoted increased child and youth physical activity and bike safety, and supported aging well in seniors. This annual report provides only a brief snapshot of the breadth of PHU initiatives addressing public health concerns across the lifespan.

Like other communities across the province, we continue to work with partners, parents and schools to prevent substance use and the harms associated with it. Our harm reduction program saw major enhancements with the provision of naloxone, a medication to reverse opiate overdoses. This life-saving medication is an important addition to comprehensive programs supporting those struggling with addictions.

In 2017 the Board of Health began the journey to develop a new strategic plan. PHU team members were eager to contribute during our annual all-staff conference, and will continue to be involved in the process. We also celebrated the incredible contributions to public health of Betty Ann Horbul, who retired after 38 years. Reflecting on the tremendous accomplishments of the PHU team this past year, I am excited to realize the immense potential going forward.

Recognizing the needs of public health and ensuring we have a voice were important themes for us in 2017. The connection with local municipalities and community partners is integral to the upstream work we do in public health. We're fortunate to have strong, supportive partners working with us to create healthier communities for all.

*Lianne Catton, MD, CFPC-EM, MPH  
Medical Officer of Health*



# Remarks from the Chair

## IT IS ONCE AGAIN MY PLEASURE

to present to you the 2017 Annual Report from the Porcupine Health Unit.

Well into my second decade of working with the health unit, it has been both fascinating and challenging. I am inspired by the dedication of the staff, management and other Board of Health members. I see people at every level of the organization working together to improve the health of all Northerners from Matheson to Hornepayne and Moosonee.

This year we advocated not only for the health related issues that our population faces, but also for local public health itself. With the Expert Panel on Public Health report, many municipalities and health units raised concerns regarding the potential loss of the local connections and leadership.

The Porcupine Health Unit team has always worked diligently to maintain partnerships in each community to provide the best public health programs and services. We recognized the concerns of a lack of dental care for low income adults in our communities. This led to the Board of Health passing a resolution for dental care funding for low-income adults, which was also successfully presented to and endorsed at the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.

We look forward to continued advocacy and partnerships to ensure the local voice is represented in a strong public health system that continues to address the unique needs of our diverse and vibrant communities.

*Gilles Chartrand  
Chair, Board of Health*



## 2017 Board of Health

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# Oral Health

## HEALTHY SMILES FOR ALL

**WHAT DOES ORAL HEALTH** have to do with reducing healthcare costs? It may surprise you to find out that across Ontario, one in five people do not visit a dentist due to cost. It may also surprise you that in 2015 over 6,400 people in the North-East section of the province — our area — visited a hospital emergency department for Oral Health problems, and almost 11,000 people visited a doctor for the same reason. That's significantly higher than the provincial average, and a lot of pain and suffering that could have been avoided.

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a program funded by the province that provides dental care, but it is only made available to children less than 18 years of age and only if their family meets very strict financial requirements. For those children who qualify, it's an effective way to prevent more serious and more expensive dental problems. Unfortunately, there are no provincial dental programs for low-income adults or for seniors who can't afford to pay for dental care.

Oral health is important for everyone's overall health and well-being. Chronic infection and inflammation of the gums increases the risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, chronic respiratory disease, and cardiovascular disease. Dental pain and loss of teeth can affect mental health and can hinder the sufferer's ability to find employment. Workers making minimum wage, seniors, new Canadians, and Indigenous people are all in desperate need of oral health.

Despite the considerable efforts expended by dental professionals in both the public and private sectors in our area, the dental health of at-risk adults continues to decline. The lack of treatment is largely due to an inability to pay for dental services, and for this reason, the PHU continues to work with groups such as the Ontario Oral Health Alliance (OOHA). Recent data from OOHA shows that the public cost of dental visits to hospital

Emergency Departments in Ontario is in the tens of millions of dollars per year (in 2015, an estimated \$31,000,000). These visits to ER and primary care may provide people temporary relief through treatment with painkillers and antibiotics, but the patient's dental problems will not be resolved unless they see a dentist.

The Board of Health for the PHU, aPHa, and other health units in Ontario have each brought resolutions to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care urging them to implement an expanded public dental program for low income adults and seniors sooner than the proposed 2025 timeline. Our healthcare system has already committed to health equity; it just makes sense to expand services to include oral health for those who need it most.

We need to make oral health a priority for all Ontarians, because everyone deserves a healthy mouth and smile.

## Inspection Services: HEALTHY CHOICES

**THE HEALTHY MENU CHOICES ACT, 2015**, came into effect on January 1, 2017. It requires food service premises (chain restaurants with 20 or more locations in Ontario) to post caloric information in their place of business for standard food items. Some examples of where the number of calories can be seen are on menus, product tags or labels on display in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores, movie theatres, and coffee shops. Food service premises are also required to post a contextual statement that informs consumers of the daily recommended caloric intake for adults and youth.

In 2017, the Inspection Services Department completed 95 menu labelling compliance inspections and 53 re-inspections within our area. Challenges identified during inspections included inconsistent signage and head office resistance, as well as locally made food items that are not part of the standard food premise menu.

Going forward, 2018 will require additional re-inspections for those with outstanding items that remain out of compliance. In addition, compliance inspections for all new food service premises or complaint inspections will be conducted to ensure that the requirements of the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015, are met.

# Physical Activity

## KEEPING KIDS ACTIVE & SAFE

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS VITAL** for a child's development and lays the foundation for a healthy and active life. Being physically active later in life depends on feeling confident in an activity setting; and that confidence, as an adult, most often comes from having learned fundamental movement skills as a child. Children need a sound foundation of movement skills to build on later in life; this is known as *Physical Literacy*.

Our team has worked very closely through the last few years in assisting our licensed day cares in providing preschoolers with fundamental movement skills through play. The Porcupine Health Unit has also piloted the Canadian Assessment of Physical Literacy (CAPL) with schools in our area. CAPL is the first comprehensive protocol that can accurately and reliably assess a broad spectrum of skills and abilities that contribute to and characterize the physical literacy level of a participating child.

Physical literacy moves beyond just fitness, motor skill or motivation. CAPL is unique in that it can assess multiple aspects of physical literacy: daily behaviour; motivation and confidence; knowledge and understanding; and physical competence. The Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO), the group responsible for CAPL, have assessed over 2,000 children since 2008. The data from those assessments, and input from over 100 researchers and practitioners within related fields of study has informed the development of CAPL. In our area, the findings revealed a need to increase physical education and basic movement skill teaching at all participating schools.

With these results in hand, we started work with partners to find ways to encourage children and youth to be active in schoolyards. One promising program is PALS, the *Playground Activity Leaders in School* program. Developed after a review of existing playground leadership programs, it encourages all children to participate in activities regardless of their gender, size, or ability.

In 2017, we formed a partnership with two local schools to launch a pilot program. PALS has three objectives: to increase physical activity; to decrease conflict and reduce the incidence of playground bullying; and to provide a leadership opportunity for students. A public health nurse and health promoter trained school staff and students in PALS. School staff will then supervise the program with Porcupine Health Unit staff providing consultation support. Selected students in Grades 5 and 6 are trained to act as playground activity leaders for younger students. These students will plan and lead fun and safe activities on the playground, leading to more active students.



# Seniors' Health

## PARTNERING TO STAY HEALTHY & INDEPENDENT

**FALLS ARE NOT A NORMAL PART OF GROWING OLD.** Yet, falling is the main threat to older adults' independence. Our program nurses, health promoters and dietitians work with the public and behind the scenes to implement the *Stay on Your Feet* strategy, which increases awareness of nine factors that help reduce the risk of falls.

Community partnerships are vital to the success of programs like this. Partnering allows us to reach more people so that they get information and services as needed. Great examples are paramedics at CP@clinics who share our resources and information with their clientele, and the Golden Manor staff who provide a venue for information kiosks.

New in 2017, *Healthy Aging Expos* were held in all our office communities. The goal was to provide our seniors with the opportunity to socialize and get acquainted with organizations, agencies, and community services that help older adults stay active and independent. Holding them in the fall created an excellent opportunity to administer flu vaccines.

Several of our Healthy Aging Expos featured the Rising Stars troupe. This group of older adults performed humorous skits demonstrating how to prevent falls in the home. The performances are both informative and entertaining.

In 2017, program staff also organized facilitator training the *Stand UP!* exercise program for older adults. Twelve community partners participated, representing 6 different communities across our region. As a result, these communities can now offer this excellent program for free.



# Tobacco

## MANY APPROACHES, ONE GOAL

**TOBACCO REMAINS A LEADING HEALTH RISK** across our region. We still have one of the highest smoking rates in the province and much of our population lives in underserved areas. Prevention, using a multi-faceted approach, is key in addressing this issue and prevent the negative impact on health of our population.

Research tells us that it takes an average of 30 quit attempts to be freed from smoking. The Porcupine Health Unit Quit Clinics provide one-to-one cessation counselling services with supporting nicotine replacement therapy. Our public health nurses helped 155 clients make one or more quit attempts in 2017; 34 of them were successfully quit upon discharge. Our staff also promoted other provincial initiatives for those who preferred other options.

Youth smoking prevention remains a priority. The tobacco industry continues its marketing strategies to target youth through various channels. Making youth aware of industry tactics and empowering them to take leadership is an effective way to educate and reduce smoking initiation. Community-based youth-led prevention activities consisted

of a smoke-free movie event, attended by 100 students from Grades 7 through 10, who subsequently said they became more aware of the issues of smoking in movies. Participants passed a petition to support a larger Smoke-Free Movies campaign.

When working with Indigenous youth, we recognize the importance of distinguishing between commercial and traditional tobacco use. In 2017, five local Indigenous youth were invited and attended a North East youth summit on tobacco. Their assistance in a brainstorming session will help us set future plans to address Indigenous youth needs in regards to tobacco prevention. A cultural sensitivity workshop was also planned in partnership with Safe Haven, Misiway Milopemahtese-win Community Health Centre, Timmins Native Friendship Centre, Mushkegowuk Council, Métis Nation of Ontario, and the PHU to strengthen relationships with other local agencies.

Additional strategies with youth included the delivery of a 10-week cessation program in one of our local high schools; and collaborative work in lobbying for plain and standardized packaging in another.



# Family Health

## BREASTFEEDING IN PUBLIC CAMPAIGN

**BREASTFEEDING BENEFITS** not only mother and baby, but also the community as a whole. It is free, environmentally friendly and reduces health care costs to the family and society. Compared to other mothers in Ontario, fewer women in the Porcupine Health Unit area choose to breastfeed; and they don't breastfeed as long. We're committed to creating communities that promote and support breastfeeding and help mothers breastfeed successfully.

When a breastfeeding mother is supported by those around her, she tends to breastfeed longer. Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well. Negative or judgemental attitudes can decrease a mother's willingness to breastfeed in public and, in turn, reduce the length of time she continues to breastfeed.

In July of 2017, Growing Healthy Families successfully launched a cut-out campaign throughout our region. The goal was to increase the normalization and acceptance of breastfeeding in public and to support breastfeeding anywhere, anytime. Originally launched in Marin County, California, the campaign has since been adapted by Ontario health units, including Toronto Public Health, Algoma Public Health, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health and Niagara Region. Life-size cut-outs of women breastfeeding are displayed during community events and in various establishments to help women feel more comfortable with breastfeeding in public.

Four local mothers and their children volunteered to be the models for our campaign. After their debut at the Urban Park in Timmins, these cut-outs travelled across the district and were displayed in each every branch community, including Moosonee. They received positive attention locally from residents, community organizations and establishments. Stories about the campaign and interviews with our public health nurses were published in local, provincial, national and even international media.

The campaign raised awareness about the importance of supporting breastfeeding in public and promoted Breastfeeding Friendly Places throughout the Porcupine Health Unit area.

Visit the Porcupine Health Unit for a list of Breastfeeding Friendly Places where mothers are welcome to breastfeed their children.



# Parenting

## A NEW CHOICE FOR PRENATAL EDUCATION

**MANY PARENTS SEE PRENATAL CLASSES** as a rite of passage, and for good reason. Prenatal education allows expectant parents and their support people to gain valuable information and ask questions. It also prepares the pregnant woman and her support person for breastfeeding and early parenting.

Prenatal education is positively associated with benefits such as:

- Increased knowledge about pregnancy and childbirth.
- Promotion of healthy behaviours (e.g., exercise, nutrition, etc.).
- Increased likelihood of a vaginal birth.
- Decreased use of epidural for pain management.
- Increased initiation and duration of breastfeeding.
- Improved maternal mental health.
- Greater satisfaction with the relationships between the couple and with the infant.

Delivering prenatal classes can be challenging in our area, both because of the huge territory and our low birth rates. So, in the spring of 2017, we launched *The Gift of Motherhood*, an interactive web-based program, to address these challenges.

The program consists of 7 classes, which include videos and animated illustrations. It's available in both English and French, and highlights local resources and information. Parents can complete the course in 6 to 8 hours, whenever it's convenient. The topics covered include:

- Childbirth education and labour support
- Discomforts of pregnancy
- Understanding labour and birth
- Labour guide
- Caring for yourself postpartum
- Feeding your newborn
- Caring for your newborn

In 2017, 44 people (40% from the branch communities) registered for *The Gift of Motherhood*. Feedback received from participants has been positive.

In 2018, to supplement the online program, the health unit will be offering face-to-face workshops in both Timmins & branch communities.

Pregnant families can register for *The Gift of Motherhood* through the PHU website or by calling their local PHU office.

### PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE EXCITING ROAD AHEAD!

Register today for the Porcupine Health Unit's  
new online prenatal education course.



- available in both English & French
- complete the course on your own schedule
- take it at home or wherever it's convenient for you

Register online or call  
1-800-461-1818

Prenatal Classes: now available online!

[phu.fyi/online-prenatals](http://phu.fyi/online-prenatals)



# Harm Reduction: THE NORTHERN EXCHANGE PROGRAM

During February 2017, the Porcupine Health Unit's Harm Reduction Program expanded to include distribution of naloxone to clients. Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can be used to reverse a drug overdose due to opioids. Harm reduction services are an important component of a comprehensive approach while we continue to work upstream to prevent substance use.

Through this program, the health unit is able to distribute naloxone kits to people who use drugs, their friends and families, and community partners. Anyone who gets a kit receives training on how to recognize an opioid overdose and how to use the nasal spray naloxone in the kit to prevent tragedies in our communities.

The program further supports clients with education on the signs and symptoms of an overdose and how to prevent one.

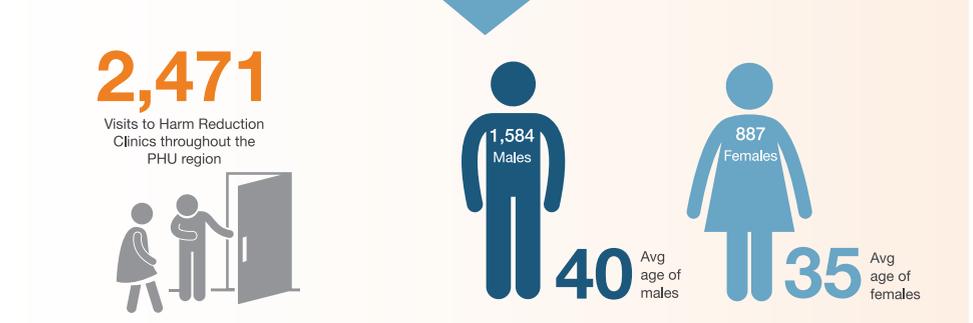
## Harm Reduction Porcupine Health Unit (PHU) 2017



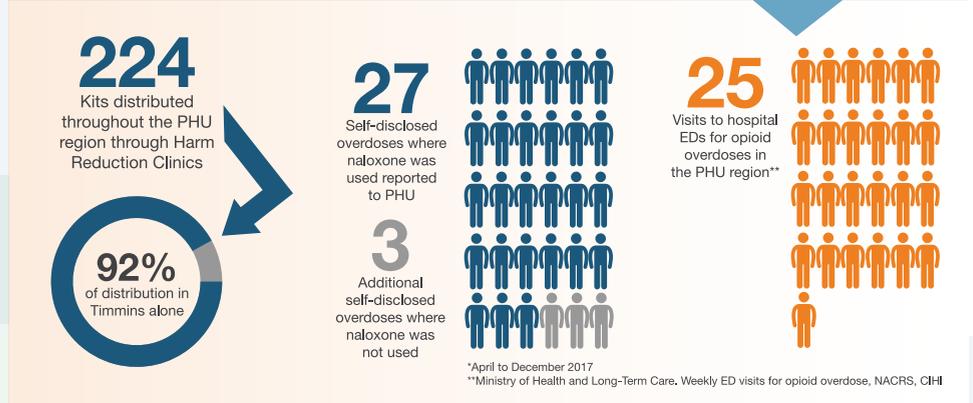
### Needle Distribution



### Harm Reduction Clinic Visits



### Naloxone & Overdose\*



# Statistics & Indicators

## Inspection

The Inspection program at the Porcupine Health Unit is committed to promoting and protecting public health and continually meeting the new challenges from our environment that can affect human health. These include environmental health programs like food safety, safe water, rabies control, sewage systems and West Nile virus surveillance. Inspectors also oversee outbreak and infection control and enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

In 2017, the Inspection program conducted:

- 1,626 food-related inspections
- 435 Child Care Centre/Personal Service Setting inspections
- 132 recreational water inspections
- 187 animal contact investigations
- 411 tobacco inspections, 2 charges and 3 warnings



## Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention

### Physical Activity Promotion:

- 11 daycares provided with physical literacy training
- 79 elementary school students participated in CAPL physical literacy testing
- 26 students trained to be PALS peer leaders

### Tobacco Cessation:

- 8 offices provide Quit Clinics
- 155 clients received assistance from our Quit Clinics
- 47 clients received assistance from the STOP (Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients) study
- 4 clients participated in school-based youth cessation programs

### Falls Prevention:

- 623 Independent living guides distributed
- 187 people attended Rising Stars acting troupe performances
- 211 online older adult services surveys completed
- 582 participants across 8 communities attended Healthy Aging Expos

### Injury Prevention:

- 204 students across 5 area schools participated in Brain Waves educational sessions
- 518 helmets inspected: 471 were found unsafe, 245 needed adjustments during PHU bike rodeos
- 132 people participated in safeTALK suicide awareness training sessions, delivered in 6 PHU communities.



## Clinical Services

### Sexual Health Clinic:

- 2,260 total visits
- 175 pregnancy tests performed
- 965 screening tests conducted for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- 429 screening tests conducted for blood-borne infections, including syphilis, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV
- 295 Pap tests performed

### Infectious Disease Program:

- 324 cases of chlamydia diagnosed
- 18 cases of gonorrhoea diagnosed
- 16 cases of iGAS diagnosed
- 32 newly diagnosed cases of hepatitis C

### Genetic Program:

- 302 client referrals
- 91 Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) referrals
- 109 clients seen in clinic

### Immunization — Travel Program:

- 791 clients seen
- 1,196 vaccines given

### General Immunization Clinics:

- 5,299 clients
- 8,250 vaccines given
- 476 TB tests performed

### Vaccine Cold Chain:

- 83 inspections conducted
- 30 cold chain failures investigated

### Influenza Vaccine:

- 16,456 doses of vaccine distributed during the 2017/18 influenza season
- 3,575 doses of vaccine given by the PHU during the 2017/18 influenza season

It's easy to book your flu shot!

Free flu clinics run through November.

Book online. Pick the time that works for YOU!

[www.porcupinehu.on.ca](http://www.porcupinehu.on.ca)



## Nutrition

### Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)

- PHU Public Health Dietitians supported the *Diabetes Expo*, offering professional training on enhancing behaviour change strategies with youth and adults
- Health Care Providers Event: Dr. Michael Vallis presented on “Sustaining Behaviour Change” to 56 Health Care Providers
- Public Event: Dr. Michael Vallis presented to members of the public on “The Management of Diabetes”. 172 members of the public attended.
- 169 children attended a Diabetes prevention event which incorporated nutrition, physical activity and mental health education

- The Healthstyles Program started in September 2017 and is a 12-month structured behaviour change program for 35 participants in Timmins and 15 participants in Kapuskasing

### Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)

- 55 pregnant women participated in the CPNP program, receiving nutritional assessment and counseling in addition to prenatal vitamins, milk vouchers and gift certificates

### Nutritious Food Basket (NFB)

- \$226.73 — the cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four in our area; 11% higher than the provincial average of \$204.00

### Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP)

- 58 schools in the Cochrane District and the James Bay Coast area participated in the program
- 10,142 students, received fruits and vegetables twice a week from April 3 to June 19 in 2017



Northern Fruit & Vegetable Program

## Preschool Speech & Language

The Preschool Speech and Language program is committed to offering innovative and quality services to the preschoolers from birth to SK entry that live in our district. Our program offers assessment, treatment and education services for children and their families.

Early identification is essential to the development of critical language skills. Our program focuses not only on children's oral language but on the development of emergent literacy skills.

- 1,399 children registered in the PSL system for the Cochrane District
- 307 new children
- 279 children were seen for an initial assessment
- 212 children received first intervention
- 579 children were seen for an assessment and treatment
- 2,089 speech and language assessment and therapy sessions provided
- Average age at the time of referral was 34 months
- Referrals were from parents (48%), Health Care Provider (20%), Education (8%), Childcare (7%), HBHC (9%), other (8%).

**We welcome you  
to breastfeed here**



**Vous êtes la bienvenue  
à allaiter ici**



## Family Health

- 722 Healthy Babies Healthy Children screens were completed
- 114 families received one or more home visits by a public health nurse or family home visitor
- 123 people attended PHU face-to-face prenatal classes and 44 registered with the online prenatal classes
- 183 car seats were inspected at our car seat clinics
- 124 establishments and 7 municipalities are designated Breastfeeding Friendly Places

## Dental Services

- 4,567 children received a dental screening by a Registered Dental Hygienist. These screenings are done in school grades JK, SK, 2, 4, 6, and 8, and in all PHU offices
- 631 students presented with visible dental decay requiring follow-up
- 883 preschoolers participated in the fluoride varnish program at 42 OEYC/Brighter Futures center, childcare, and home childcares
- 1,180 visits to our Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) HSO preventative clinics for cleaning/scaling, fluoride treatment, sealants, education and screening for visible decay
- 271 children enrolled in HSO Emergency and Essential Services Stream (EESS)
- 561 children in 12 First Nation communities received fluoride varnish and when needed interim stabilization therapy (IST) and sealant application (as of April 1, 2017, the program is being delivered by WAHA for the four communities on the James Bay Coast)
- 1,300+ people reached by Oral Health promotion education sessions, community events, media interactions, newsletters, and resource distribution

# 2017 Financial Report

| <b>PROGRAM EXPENDITURES</b>       | <b>\$</b>           | <b>%</b>      |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| General Public Health             | 8,688,710           | 61.98         |
| Healthy Babies / Healthy Children | 1,009,520           | 7.20          |
| Unorganized Territories           | 855,942             | 6.11          |
| Preschool Speech Initiative       | 780,867             | 5.57          |
| Smoke Free Ontario                | 382,953             | 2.73          |
| Healthy Smiles                    | 379,359             | 2.71          |
| Genetics                          | 348,982             | 2.49          |
| Infection Control                 | 222,300             | 1.59          |
| Diabetes                          | 198,391             | 1.42          |
| Priority Population Nurses        | 180,497             | 1.29          |
| Northern Fruit & Vegetable        | 147,171             | 1.05          |
| Vector Borne Disease              | 122,589             | 0.87          |
| Chief Nursing Officer             | 121,460             | 0.87          |
| Harm Reduction                    | 107,599             | 0.77          |
| Canada Prenatal Nutrition         | 103,346             | 0.74          |
| Stay on Your Feet                 | 91,213              | 0.65          |
| Infection Control Nurse           | 90,100              | 0.64          |
| Land Control                      | 80,225              | 0.57          |
| Children's Oral Health Initiative | 79,477              | 0.57          |
| Small Drinking Water Systems      | 24,665              | 0.18          |
| Nurse Practitioner                | 0                   | 0.00          |
|                                   | <b>\$14,015,366</b> | <b>100.00</b> |
| <b>REVENUE SOURCES</b>            | <b>\$</b>           | <b>%</b>      |
| Province of Ontario               | 11,293,206          | 80.58         |
| Member Municipalities             | 2,208,991           | 15.76         |
| Government of Canada              | 182,823             | 1.30          |
| Other                             | 330,346             | 2.36          |
|                                   | <b>\$14,015,366</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

## PORCUPINE HEALTH UNIT

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