



Annual Report

2000/2001

The Northwestern Ontario District Health Council

is comprised of health care providers, consumers and local government representatives.

All members are appointed by Order-In-Council by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The role of the DHC is to provide regional planning advice to the Minister, taking into consideration local health needs and priorities.

Our Vision

Shaping the future of the health system in Northwestern Ontario through leadership and partnership in planning.

Council 2000/2001

Chair: Rene Larson (Thunder Bay)*

Bert Badanai (Thunder Bay)**

Emile Blouin (Kenora)

Clifford Bowles (Thunder Bay)*

Paulina Chow (Thunder Bay)

Arlene Hyslop (Hudson)**

Janice Lessy (Thunder Bay)

William Martin (Fort Frances)

Tammy McEachern Hughes
(Thunder Bay)

David O'Brien (Thunder Bay)*

Joanne Ranger (Longlac)

Eric Rutherford (Beardmore)

Louise Sawchuk (Atikokan)

Andrew Skene (Dryden)*

Rainette Therrien (Kenora)

Eiji Tsubouchi (Thunder Bay)*

Frances White (Ignace)

*Executive Committee Member
**Term Expired

Message from the Chair and Executive Director

Health care is experiencing fundamental change. New technology, increased consumer expectations, an aging population, research and genomics are revolutionizing the way health care is defined, viewed and delivered. Escalating costs and shortages of health care professionals are compounding the challenges within the health care system and forcing us to think in different ways. The sustainability of the current health care system is becoming a greater concern.

The need for partnerships in health system planning has never been greater. The Northwestern Ontario District Health Council continues to strengthen its existing relationships and to develop new partnerships while planning for the health care needs of the residents of Northwestern Ontario.

Collective thinking and innovative approaches have been important as we pursue our vision: *Shaping the future of the health system in Northwestern Ontario through leadership and partnership in planning.*

This past year, the NWODHC:

- Sponsored a SMARTISK conference (an injury prevention program) with Dr. Robert Conn that linked more than 90 health related professionals in 11 communities using videoconferencing technology. This method of presentation helped reduce the barriers of transportation and costs.
- Hosted a regional presentation, A Health System in a Healthy Community: A Vision for the 21st Century with Dr. Trevor Hancock, a public health physician, internationally recognized health promotion consultant, and health futurist. During the session, Dr. Hancock shared his views on healthy public policy and healthy communities. Over 160 individuals attended the DHC sponsored event from the business, social services, health and municipal sectors.
- Secured funding for a major regional health human resources study through Human Resources Development Canada. An advisory committee of 21 agencies, including the Northwest Health Network, oversees this project. The results of the study will provide valuable information regarding retention and recruitment issues for health care providers in Northwestern Ontario.
- Partnered with other District Health Councils, health units, universities and Cancer Care Ontario through the Northern Health Information Partnership (NHIP) to produce the Northern Ontario Cancer Profile. This report reflects collaboration and commitment of Northern planning partners to provide information to improve the health status of Northern residents.

This Annual Report highlights the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council's (NWODHC) planning accomplishments for 2000-2001. We would like to extend special recognition to our Council members and the many volunteers who supported the activities of Council during the past year. We are privileged to work with such a dedicated group! We will continue our commitment to provide leadership and strengthen partnerships in planning for the health system in Northwestern Ontario.



Rene Larson
Rene Larson
Chair



Gwen DuBois-Wing
Gwen DuBois-Wing
Executive Director



Northwestern Ontario Health Human Resources Project

The availability of health human resources in Northwestern Ontario is a major concern that is receiving increasing attention from health providers, policy-makers and other stakeholders. To date, there has been considerable focus on the issue of physician shortages. However, human resource shortages are increasingly prevalent across all health sectors and categories of workers. Significant efforts are required to develop strategies to address present and future needs for broader health human resources in addition to physician resource planning.

In the past year, the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council consulted with stakeholders across the region to ascertain the need and to plan for a major Regional Health Human Resources Study. The DHC, in partnership with the Northwest Health Network, was very pleased to receive funding for the study from the Government of Canada through Human Resources Development Canada, Local Labour Market Partnership Program. The study will provide a current inventory of professional and allied health care workers in the region and will identify recruitment, retention and training factors that affect future needs.

At the provincial level, all District Health Councils are collaborating on a province-wide labour market survey. A provincial advisory committee has been struck to move this project forward. There is great benefit in working together to gather comprehensive and authoritative data and to develop evidence-based strategies and recommendations both regionally and provincially.



Hospital Operating Plan Review

A DHC Task Group reviewed the 2000/01 operating plans of the 13 hospitals in the region. In addition to hospital specific issues, three major regional themes were identified:

Health Human Resources: The shortage of health human resources (physician, professional, and allied health workers) remains the most serious, pervasive, and escalating factor compromising the delivery of health services across the region.

Funding: Though no patient services or program reductions were identified in the operating plans, the majority of hospitals submitted deficit budgets.

Technology: Northwestern Ontario hospitals collaborated to secure funding for the Regional Telehealth project from Canada Health Infrastructure Partnerships Program (CHIPPP). The implementation of Telehealth and the NORTH (Northern Ontario Remote Telecommunications Health) Network programs will likely be one of the most significant advancements for access to and delivery of health care in the region in recent years.

Physician Resources

A regional physician resource planning conference, "Restoring the Balance" was held in April 2000. The conference was co-sponsored by the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council, Northwest Health Network, Health Sciences North, and Thunder Bay Regional Hospital featuring keynote speaker Dr. Robert McKendry, author of the Fact Finder report: *Physicians for Ontario Too Many? Too Few? For 2000 and Beyond*. The conference included a number of speakers offering different perspectives on physician recruitment and

retention strategies. Conference participants included physician, health, community, and municipal leaders.

The DHC continues to participate in and provide support to communities with other physician recruitment and retention initiatives. In the past year, the DHC supported requests for Underserved Area Program designations in the region, as well as participated in local community initiatives through attendance at meetings, and the provision of data and planning support.

NWODHC Reports

Reports produced by the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council are posted on the NWODHC web site at www.nwodhc.com.

These reports are also available by contacting the DHC office at (807) 623-6131, toll-free at 1-888-227-3519, or by e-mail at planning@nwodhc.com.

- *Northwestern Ontario Injury Prevention Inventory*, May 2001
- *Cardiac Services in Northwestern Ontario: A Discussion Paper*, January 2001
- *Annual Long-Term Care Service Plan for Northwestern Ontario 2001*, January 2001
- *Restoring the Balance: Strategizing for Northwestern Ontario's Physician Resource Needs*, April 2000
- *Regional French Language Health Services Plan for Northwestern Ontario 2000/2001*, June 2000



Northwest Health Network

The Northwest Health Network is comprised of all Northwestern Ontario hospitals and other community based health agencies in the region. The hospitals have a long tradition of collaboration and partnership. This collaboration has evolved over the years from dialogue about common issues such as joint bargaining and educational forums, to shared administrative services and satellite programs.

In the past year, the Network has agreed to incorporate as a not-for-profit organization. It intends to move forward in a formalized structure to deal with future service planning. The Network submitted its implementation plan to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in March 2001. The DHC is a member of the Northwest Health Network.



Emergency Health Services

The NWODHC reestablished the regional EHS Committee with representation from a variety of EHS perspectives (hospital, ambulance, police, CCAC, etc.).

The EHS Committee supported injury prevention activities in the Northwest. A strong linkage was established with SMARTRISK, a national injury prevention organization.

This included: a NWO videoconference with Dr. Robert Conn from SMARTRISK for more than 90 participants at 11 regional sites; a review of a conceptual framework for an Ontario Teleconference series on injury prevention; a review of draft curricula for a national injury prevention training program; and participation in the SMARTRISK evaluation of the Ontario Trauma Registry. The Committee also completed the *Northwestern Ontario Injury Prevention Inventory Report* and provided injury

prevention resource materials to a variety of stakeholders.

The Committee established linkages with a variety of emergency health stakeholders including the Regional Trauma Advisory Committee, the Base Hospital Regional Utilization Committee, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), North Region, and the new North Regional Emergency Services Coordinator. The Committee completed a formal *Northwestern Ontario Emergency Department Inventory* for 15 acute care hospital sites in Northwestern Ontario. The inventory was based on visits to the majority of acute care hospital sites (12 of 15) and interviews with Emergency Department managers/administrators. In addition, the Committee monitored the transfer of responsibility of land ambulance services to the municipal sector.

SMARTRISK



SAUVE-QUI-PENSE

Nurse Practitioners

Following a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding announcement for new Nurse Practitioner positions, 16 organizations in Northwestern Ontario were granted funding for 18 positions. The DHC supported these organizations and communities in their application process through the provision of data and planning assistance. The majority of agencies in the City of Thunder Bay were successful in their recruitment efforts, however, five of eight rural communities were unable to recruit. The DHC urged the Ministry to extend the deadline for funding for the Nurse Practitioners positions in view of the great difficulty in hiring despite aggressive advertising and recruitment efforts. As many of the smaller communities continue to experience physician shortages, the DHC believes that the addition of Nurse Practitioners would improve access to health services.

Mental Health

Northwest Mental Health Implementation Task Force

In March 2000, the Province of Ontario launched the Northwest Mental Health Implementation Task Force (NWMHITF) with the mandate to proceed with Mental Health Reform and the development of a plan for the closure of Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital. The DHC has membership on the Task Force and has supported the work of this group in the form of providing information, assisting the Working Groups and providing planning advice.

In the winter of 2000, the NWMHITF collected housing-related information through surveys and focus groups and completed a housing inventory. In the spring, the DHC was requested to undertake the Northwest portion of a provincial housing study for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Consequently, data collection was expanded to include areas that were not previously incorporated. Focus group data and new survey results will be provided to both the NWMHITF and to the MOHLTC to assist in further

policy development.

The Task Force is expected to complete its work in 2002.

Mental Health Operating Plans

In May, the DHC reviewed the annual operating plans of all mental health agencies across the region and provided comments to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care regarding program and service changes and their consistency with Mental Health Reform.

Dual Diagnosis Information Needs

The NWODHC is involved in exploratory work regarding information sharing for the dual diagnosis population among the developmental and mental health agencies across the Northwest. This information will assist with the ongoing planning and service provision for the dually diagnosed by tracking individuals who receive services and identifying the level of support they receive.

Long-Term Care

The Northwestern Ontario District Health Council approved the *Annual Long-Term Care (LTC) Service Plan for Northwestern Ontario* in early 2001.

Through literature reviews, the circulation of a discussion paper, public consultations, and interviews, the Task Group elicited extensive information from consumers and providers of long-term care services. The LTC Service Plan was used to develop the recommendations intended to improve long-term care services throughout Northwestern Ontario. The Task Group continues to work on priority areas established in the Plan.

The DHC assisted in the planning of a regional conference on "Aging and Developmental Disabilities", funded by Health Canada and held in Thunder Bay on March 30, 2001. The conference has resulted in ongoing community partnerships.

Addictions

Addictions Implementation Committee

In November 2000, the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau (OSAB) provided a response to the DHC's *Addiction Treatment Integrated Service Plan for Northwestern Ontario (1999)*. OSAB recommended targeting the following areas which were highlighted in the plan:

- Improving linkages and integration with non-OSAB service providers;
- Exploring opportunities for mobile treatment services in remote communities;
- Enhancing community treatment and counselling in rural and outlying areas;
- Providing further concurrent disorders training; and,
- Exploring options for a community withdrawal management program.

To implement these changes, OSAB formed an Implementation Committee composed of service providers and DHC staff, and provided one-time funding of \$147,000 to facilitate enhancements to the system.

The Implementation Committee will continue its work in the fall of 2001.

The DHC also reviews and provides comments to OSAB regarding the annual operating plans of addiction agencies across the region.

Visit Us Online! The DHC officially launched its new web site in 2001. The site is intended to inform the public about the activities of the DHC, and to serve as a resource for those interested in health planning. The DHC web site is www.nwodhc.com.

A Tribute to the NWODHC Volunteers

Volunteers are fundamental to the DHC system. Our volunteers spend many hours involved in NWODHC activities. By virtue of the vast geography of Northwestern Ontario (60% of the province's landmass), our volunteers spend significant time traveling to attend various DHC meetings and activities. DHC volunteers are involved in health planning decisions at the community, district and regional levels. They share their knowledge, skills and expertise in the development of studies, reports and recommendations which impact planning of the health system in Northwestern Ontario.

Our volunteers make it happen! A sincere thanks to the many individuals involved in Council, committee and task group work of the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council.

DHC Committee/Task Group Membership 2000/2001

Executive Committee

Rene Larson (Chair)
Eiji Tsubouchi (Vice-Chair)
David O'Brien (Treasurer)
Cliff Bowles
Andrew Skene

Council Recruitment and Development Committee

Cliff Bowles (Chair)
Rene Larson
Tammy McEachern Hughes
Andrew Skene
Rainette Therrien
Eiji Tsubouchi

Bylaw Review Committee

Fran White (Chair)
Cliff Bowles
Rene Larson
Andrew Skene
Eiji Tsubouchi

Audit Committee

David O'Brien (Chair)
Cliff Bowles
Paulina Chow
Rene Larson
Eiji Tsubouchi

Emergency Health Services Committee

Eric Rutherford (Chair) **
Robert Beatty
Peter Bergsma
Lynne Bisset
Bill Blower
Jocelyn Bourgoin
Jeanette Cawston
John Coupland
William Graham
Bill Houston (d)
Dr. David Mutrie (r)
Tuija Puiras
Andrew Skene **
Bonnie Zabirka

French Language Health Services Task Group

Joanne Ranger (Chair) **
Mario Audet
Emile Blouin **
Diane Breton *
Denyse Culligan
Don Edwards
Luc Marchand
Marlene Pavletic
Janet Sillman
Eiji Tsubouchi **

Long Term Care Task Group

Eiji Tsubouchi (Chair) **
Paulina Chow **
Paula Donylyk
Patrick Farrell *
Judi Gryschuk
Steve Henderson
Anna May Leschuk
Denise Miault
Norm Poolton
Dela Wilkins
Tricia Williamson

2000/01 Mental Health Operating Plan Review Task Group

Cliff Bowles (Chair) **
Heather Arnold
Marilyn Arthur
Paulina Chow **
Carol Johnston
Garry Norris

2000/01 Hospital Operating Plan Review Task Group

Bert Badanai (Chair) **
Cliff Bowles **
Brock Chisholm
Paulina Chow **
Hal Fjeldsted
Paulette Lecuyer
Lori Marshall
Dr. George Morrison
David Murray
Edda Swan
Gary Weir

Notes: * Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
**NWO District Health Council Member
(d) Deceased (r) Resigned

Cardiac Services

Due to ongoing concerns about the heart-health of Northwestern Ontario residents, the NWODHC completed an environmental scan of cardiac services. The scan reviewed the entire continuum of cardiac care from health promotion and disease prevention through acute care and rehabilitation. The data from this study were distributed as a discussion paper in early 2001. Research conducted to date, as well as the feedback from the discussion paper, will be used to guide the work of a Task Group in formulating recommendations for the improvement of cardiac services in the region.

Children's Services

Upon completion of the project in March 2001, the DHC concluded its involvement with the Thunder Bay Pilot Project for Medically Fragile and Technologically Dependent Children. Both a local and provincial report were completed which contain recommendations for the improvement of services. The reports were submitted to the provincial Integrated Services for Children Division, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Currently, DHC staff are participating in a project to improve services for persons with developmental disabilities. This project is undertaken in conjunction with area service providers and the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Community and Social Services, and Education.

French Language Health Services

The NWODHC French Language Health Services Task Group updated the *Regional French Language Health Services for Northwestern Ontario 2000/2001*. The Plan, approved by the District Health Council, was forwarded to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Plan represents a significant milestone in French language health services planning, involving the cooperation of over 20 health service agencies, the DHC, and the MOHLTC. The recommendations are intended to improve health services for French-speaking Northwestern Ontario residents.

Summarized Statement of Core Operating Fund

Revenue and Expenditures

Revenue:

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Interest

Total Revenue

Expenditures:

Salaries and Benefits
Operating Expenses

Total Expenditures

Ending Surplus

2000/2001 Budget

2000/2001 Actual

\$744,489

\$744,489

23,831

\$744,489

\$768,320

\$528,367

\$516,747

216,122

207,673

\$744,489

\$724,420

\$43,900

Note: This financial summary is an excerpt from the audited financial statements prepared by Buset and Buset Chartered Accountants. A copy of the complete audited financial statements is available from the DHC.

Northwestern Ontario DHC Staff

Executive Director: Gwen DuBois-Wing

Planning Coordinator: Katie Heikinen

Health Planners: Siobhan Farrell

Sandy Isfeld

Linda Pisco

Pat Stitt (Kenora Workstation)

Bernadette Preun (resigned)

Epidemiologist: Lee-Ann Nalezty

Executive Secretary: Lisa Niccoli

Secretary: Sherry Fournier

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