



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**MEDIA RELEASE****APRIL 20, 2019**

Ford's \$1 billion public health cut puts Torontonians' safety at risk; will swamp metro hospitals

TORONTO, ON – Premier Doug Ford's massive cut to public health funding that will impact outbreak and infection control drinking water testing, vaccination rates and fuel hallway medicine, can only be described as "callously dangerous" public policy, says the union that represents more than 1000 Toronto public health staff and thousands of Toronto hospital workers.

Provincial cuts to public health - that in Toronto alone amount to an estimated \$1 Billion - became known on the same day the Ford PCs announced a cut in real hospital bed capacity of 10 per cent over the same 10 - year period.

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 79 president David Mitchell and Michael Hurley president of CUPE's Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU/CUPE) today warned Ford's drastic cut to public health, "puts Torontonians safety at risk and will ultimately fuel hallway medicine."

"There is not a single person in Toronto who doesn't benefit from the protections and safety derived from the services that Toronto Public Health staff provide residents each day. Public health services cut across economic class. They benefit all of us. Preventable communicable diseases will spread and death rates will rise if the province follows through with these cuts," says Mitchell.

Across the city, long-term care homes rely on Toronto Public Health (TPH) to detect, report and manage superbug and disease outbreaks. Torontonians' drinking water quality is tested by TPH every six hours. TPH also conducts over 20,000 tests at water treatment plants annually. Diners are protected through the city's DineSafe public health program that checks restaurants for proper food handling and enforces standards, shutting down unsafe and unclean restaurants and other food-related businesses when they fail. TPH inspections at child care centres protect children, while new moms benefit from a host of support programs.

The Ford PCs intend to decrease the province's public health units, from 35 down to 10 while at the same time cutting the provincial share of funding for public health services.

"The cuts to public health will swamp an already maxed out hospital system in Toronto and across Ontario. The cuts are completely at odds with the scientific evidence on health care spending, which supports preventing and containing disease in the community, rather than dealing with it later in its more acute, expensive, phases. Can we contain diseases like tuberculosis, for example, if we don't invest heavily in public health? These cuts must be reconsidered and withdrawn," says Hurley.

CUPE 79 represents 22,000 City of Toronto front line staff including at TPH and more than 1000 nurses and other hospital staff at Bridgepoint Health. OCHU/CUPE represents 40,000 hospital and long-term care staff province-wide.