



Renfrew County and District Health Unit  
*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, February 15, 2024)

### **RCDHU Considering Potential Mergers with Neighbouring Public Health Units**

In 2023, the Ontario Ministry of Health announced a new initiative to support public health units that decide to pursue mergers with other health units. Three years of funding to support mergers and stabilization of programming will be provided to public health units pursuing a merger. The goal of supporting mergers is to enhance capacity, stability, and sustainability in the public health sector.

Specific objectives include increasing the populations served by public health units to be closer to 500,000 (with consideration of geographical challenges), improving critical mass through increasing the size of health units, enhancing health units' ability to recruit and retain staff, improving organizational performance, and retaining local service delivery and frontline jobs. The province has indicated that mergers are not intended to reduce costs, and any efficiencies realized in a merger would be retained by public health units to support service delivery.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) serves a population of 107,522 across a large geographical area of approximately 15,000 square kilometers. In the context of the support for mergers offered by the province, RCDHU's Board of Health passed a motion to apply for provincial funding to explore the feasibility of amalgamation with neighbouring health units. As a result, RCDHU is exploring benefits, risks, and local impacts of potential mergers by collaborating on studies of several different merger scenarios.

"We welcome this opportunity to explore potential mergers with other public health units, in support of enhancing public health capacity and effectiveness to better protect and promote the health of Renfrew County and District residents," states Joanne King, Chair of the RCDHU Board of Health. "Ensuring that we retain local service delivery and enhance public health services will be our primary focus as we consider the results of the feasibility studies and whether a merger makes sense for RCDHU."

All involved boards of health will independently consider the results of these studies and decide whether to proceed with any merger. Proposals for mergers must be endorsed by all involved boards of health and are to be submitted to the province in early April 2024. Implementation of mergers is intended for January 2025.

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