



# Annual Report 2006:

An Award Winning Year



Thunder Bay District  
**Health Unit**

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## A Message from the **Medical Officer of Health**

My tenure with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit began in June of 2006. Part of the attraction in coming to Thunder Bay was the Health Unit's reputation throughout Ontario's public health system as an innovative organization, and one that is committed to excellence.

2006 proved to be a banner year for major achievements. In just one year, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and its partner organizations received recognition from the Ontario Association of Optometrists, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Province of Ontario and the World Health Organization.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit is committed to improving the health of its citizens by reducing smoking in public places. On May 31, 2006 the Smoke-Free Ontario Act came into effect, thanks to the contributions of staff, volunteers and coalition groups, who lobbied for the legislation. This signature piece of legislation will result in better health outcomes for the citizens of Ontario.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit will continue to hold up the pillars of public health: protection, prevention and health promotion. I look forward to the future with this award winning team.

Nancy E. Cameron, BSc., MD, MHSc., DOHS  
Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer



## A Message from the **Board of Health Chair**

It has been a pleasure to work with such a supportive Board in 2006. Maintaining a balanced budget while keeping up with the growing needs of our communities was a real challenge, but we persevered. For the first half of 2006, Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, Medical Officer of Health for the Sudbury and District Health Unit was the Acting Medical Officer of Health and Doug Heath was the Acting Chief Executive Officer. Their efforts were most appreciated.

Despite the difficulties in the north to attract physicians, the Board worked diligently to find a Medical Officer of Health. We are very pleased that Dr. Nancy Cameron accepted the position.

I thank my fellow board members who worked so hard in the past year. I also extend my congratulations to the staff who continue to make our communities healthy and safe places to live.

Connie Bryson  
Chair, Board of Health



### 2006 Board of Health:

Chair, Connie Bryson (Schreiber/Terrace Bay Appointee)  
Vice-Chair, Gwen Garbutt (Conmee\*, O'Connor)  
Member-at-Large, Rudy Buitenhuis (Gillies\*, Neebing)  
Member-at-Large, Joe Virdiramo (Thunder Bay)  
Member-at-Large, Maria Harding (Shuniah)  
  
Iain Angus (Thunder Bay)  
Vanessa Catalan (Thunder Bay, Appointee)  
Claudette Trottier (Greenstone)  
Gary Nelson (Dorion, Nipigon\* and Red Rock)  
David Bell (to Aug. 15) (Marathon)  
Roger Souckey (from Aug. 28) (Marathon)  
Cara Teichroeb (Manitouwadge)  
Lucy Kloosterhuis (Oliver Paigoonge)  
Neil MacOdrum (Provincial Appointee)  
Norm Gale (Provincial Appointee)  
Vacancies (Two Provincial Appointees)

\*Denotes the Township or Municipality which the board member represents. Servicing the District also requires members of smaller municipalities to share representation rights at the board.

## “Baby Friendly Community Health Service” Designation

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit has become the first Community Health Service in Ontario to receive designation as a “Baby Friendly Community Health Service.” The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, national authority for the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), granted the designation on behalf of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“We have led the way for Ontario’s Health Units to meet a gold standard of care for breastfeeding families,” explains Lorraine Repo, Manager of the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. “We are thrilled to be part of this global campaign to improve the quality of care for all new mothers.”

WHO/UNICEF launched the BFHI in 1991 to provide assessment and accreditation criteria for excellent maternity care that protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding. This recognizes that breastfeeding is important in long-term health outcomes and disease prevention for mothers and babies. This standard is applied to both developing and industrialized nations. Worldwide there are more than 16,000 Baby Friendly Hospitals.

Launched in 1998, the Baby Friendly Initiative in Canada had designations in two categories: Hospitals & Birthing Centres and Community Health Services. By the end of 2006, there were only eight other Canadian facilities that held the designation.

Thunder Bay District Health Unit staff received education and clinical mentoring to ensure high practice standards that met the UNICEF criteria. On several occasions, trained assessors interviewed clients and staff, observed daily practices and scrutinized all documentation.

After announcing the Baby Friendly designation, Thunder Bay District Health Unit staff received dozens of inquiries from health units, birthing centres and hospitals across the nation who plan to pursue this designation.

## Sexual Health

- Staff provided service to 9725 clients at sexual health clinics.
- There was a 15% increase in clients accessing services for sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment.
- Emergency contraceptive pill use increased 18%.
- 3,743 students in grades 7 – 9 received an educational presentation by a Public Health Nurse.
- “Friends with Benefits” campaign addressed the risks associated with the high frequency of casual sex among adolescents and young adults.

## Northwestern Ontario Regional Genetics Program

Genetic Counselling helps individuals and families understand genetic factors in diseases, disabilities and birth defects. People who get the facts about testing, treatment and available choices are able to make decisions that are best for them, their pregnancy, or their child’s health.

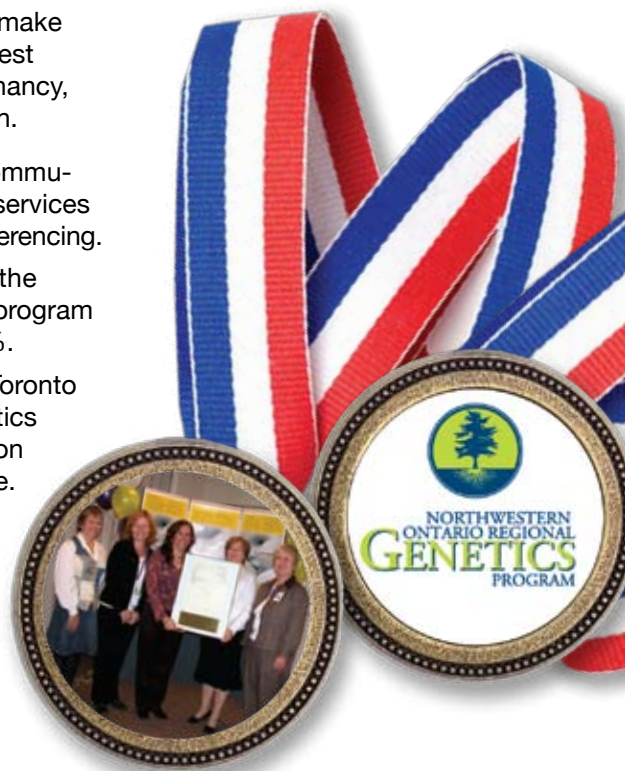
- Staff served 51 communities, increasing services through videoconferencing.
- Clinic referrals to the Cancer Genetics program increased by 30%.
- Geneticists from Toronto and Ottawa Genetics centres provided on site clinical service.

*TBDHU receives the designation of Baby Friendly Community Health Service.*

## Healthy Safe Child Conference

The Healthy Safe Child Conference brought together 200 professionals who work with parents and children, and was hosted by the Thunder Bay Children’s Aid Society, Norwest Community Health Centre, Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board and Thunder Bay District Health Unit. The following experts spoke at the conference:

- Infant Abuse and Impact of Family Violence: Dr. Marcellina Mian, Hospital for Sick Children and University of Toronto
- SIDS and Co-Sleeping: Dr. Aurore Côté, McGill University and Montreal Children’s Hospital
- Pre- and Post-Natal Drug and Alcohol Exposure, Dr. Gideon Koren, Motherisk, University of Toronto
- Effects of Cultural and Societal Trends on Child Health, Mr. Allan Mirabelli, Vanier Institute



## Healthy Babies, Healthy Children

- Hosted “Invest in Kids: High Risk Home Visiting” five-day training session for Public Health Nurses and professionals
- 1,520 Births
- 1,252 Brief Assessments
- 173 In-Depth Assessments
- 776 Post Partum Home Visits

## Lactation

The Breast is Best campaign promoted exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding for up to 2 years or more.

- 351 Personal Consultations
- 284 Individuals given Telephone Counselling

## Infant Hearing

1,300 (or 85%) of infants in the district had their hearing screened at birth. Fifteen were followed up in Stage 2 screening. Of these, ten infants had a complete audiology assessment and fortunately, none were found to have permanent hearing loss.

## Best Start

Best Start is an initiative of the Ontario Government to create seamless neighbourhood-based services for children and families. Health units across the province are being asked to offer services for children up to the age of 6 in many different locations throughout the community.

A limited amount of new funding was provided to the Preschool Speech & Language and Infant Hearing Program at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit to enable our participation in the Best Start plans expected to be finalized in 2007.

## Fair Start Receives Public Education Award

Fair Start is a screening and referral program for children from the age of 18 months to JK entry. It is a collaborative initiative that includes school boards, child care programs, Early Years Centres, Aboriginal agencies, and treatment services throughout the City and District of Thunder Bay. The Health Unit coordinates this community effort and all screening services are provided as in-kind contributions by partner organizations.

Early identification is key to providing intervention at a time in a child's life when it will make the most difference. In the District of Thunder Bay, Fair Start screened 750 children between the ages of 18 months and Junior Kindergarten (JK) entry and another 1,100 children were screened at JK entry in 2006.

Fair Start has taken a leadership role in our communities with parents, optometrists, physicians, and many other community partners in promoting the importance of “starting early”. Family physicians at the Marathon Family Practice and the Fort William Family Practice now send letters to all patients at the age of 18 months reminding them of the importance of a Fair Start screening.

18 months has long been considered a key developmental milestone. Health Unit programs are working with family physicians and nurse practitioners to ensure that all aspects of a child's development are addressed at this critical age.



*Cathy Farrell, Fair Start Coordinator and Dr. Bill Ulakovic (right), received the Ontario Association of Optometrists Public Education Award of Merit 2006 for the partnership between Fair Start and Thunder Bay Optometrists from Dr. Derek MacDonald (left), President of OAO.*

## Fluoride Varnish

In 2005, the Dental Indices Surveys in the Thunder Bay district indicated that 45% of our schools are considered “high risk” – meaning that more than 15% of children have two or more visible cavities by the time they reach Senior Kindergarten.

In 2006, the Preventive Dentistry program introduced a program of fluoride varnish for preschool children in an attempt to begin to reverse this trend. During the first year of this multi-year program, 495 preschool children received fluoride varnish either through their child care programs or at the Health Unit clinic.

Fluoride varnish protects and strengthens the outer surface of the teeth. It is best applied soon after baby teeth emerge and three times a year after that.

## More Kids, More Active, More Often

The Children’s Charter Coalition 2006 Annual Report entitled “More Kids, More Active, More Often” encouraged increasing physical activity for children in the home, at school, and in the community. Each year, the report focuses on one of the basic rights and freedoms of children. The 2006 topic was: “All Thunder Bay children deserve to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.”

The report highlighted community successes, identified areas that needed more work and asked parents, community members, and policy makers to take specific actions.

Presentations made to school boards, City Council and other decision-makers in the community were encouraging and generated positive feedback and commitment from participants.

For a copy of the report go to: [www.tbdhu.com](http://www.tbdhu.com)

## Good Food Box

The Thunder Bay Good Food Box is one of many Food Action Projects supported by the Health Unit. The goal of the Good Food Box is to make top quality, fresh produce available in a way that does not stigmatize people, fosters community development, and promotes healthy eating, while supporting local agriculture. Each month families and individuals purchase a box of seasonal fruits and vegetables at a reduced price.

The program relies on volunteers to sort produce into boxes at a main site and coordinate orders and pick ups at neighbourhood host sites. In November, the program received funding from the Trillium Foundation to hire a part-time coordinator.

In partnership with the lead agency Northwestern Women’s Centre, the Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project, local businesses and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, the program has grown almost six-fold since its beginnings in September of 2005. The Good Food Box had over 340 subscribers and 33 host sites supporting the program by the end of 2006.



## Tobacco Control Officers

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit hired and trained three Tobacco Control Officers to enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. They established protocols for inspection, vendor testing and enforcement.

## Heather Crowe Award

Simon Hoad, Northwest Tobacco Control Area Network Coordinator received a Ministry of Health Promotion Heather Crowe Award on February 10, 2006.

MPP Michael Gravelle and Minister Jim Watson presented the award to Hoad acknowledging his work towards changing public policy at municipal, regional and provincial levels.

*MPP Bill Mauro presents Simon Hoad the Ministry of Health Promotion Heather Crowe Award*

## Smoking Indoors

Smoke the Fish, Not the Kids – Take the Smoke Outside was a joint multi-media campaign with the Northwestern Health Unit to discourage lighting up in vehicles. Whimsical photos of three local comedians holding smoked fish while the kids were watching from inside the car made a distinct impression with the general public.

To view the campaign visit [www.tbdhu.com/Tobacco/Protection](http://www.tbdhu.com/Tobacco/Protection)

## Tobacco Treatment Specialist

Susan Trevisan completed the Tobacco Treatment Specialist certification from the University of Massachusetts. This training will allow the Health Unit to offer individualized tobacco cessation counselling services to those looking for support in their quit efforts.

The initial focus of this cessation counselling will be youth, young parents and those expecting their first child. Once established, the service may be broadened to a wider audience.



## Tobacco Free Sports

National Hockey League players Alex Auld (Phoenix Coyotes), Patrick Sharp (Chicago Blackhawks), Trevor Letowski and Eric Staal (both Carolina Hurricanes) assisted by lending their images to urge local youth to be tobacco-free. With cigarette smoking on the decline for youth ages 12 to 19 in Northwestern Ontario, an alarming ten percent admitted to using spit tobacco.

TBDHU aided in developing the Tobacco-Free Sports Policy and added the Marathon Minor Hockey and Marathon Judo Club to the participating sports venues in 2006.

## Smoke-Free Ontario Act

On May 31, 2006, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act came into effect. The key elements of SFOA:

- bans smoking in all public places and enclosed workplaces
- eliminates designated smoking rooms in restaurants and bars
- prohibits smoking in outdoor food and beverage establishments that are partially or completely covered by a roof
- prohibits the sale of tobacco to minors
- restricts retail promotion and bans the display of tobacco products by May 31, 2008
- permits residential care facilities to operate controlled smoking areas that ensure that others are not exposed to second-hand smoke

The City of Thunder Bay and Nipigon were already smoke-free, but other municipalities had only banned smoking in places where children under 16 were allowed, but still allowed smoking in some worksites.

The change across the region to 100% smoke-free public places and workplaces was well accepted due to the long public health education campaign. Q&A? Go to: [www.tbdhu.com/Tobacco/Protection/](http://www.tbdhu.com/Tobacco/Protection/)



## Street-Involved and Homeless Youth Share Drug Works

A study published in "Compass, A Community Resource in HIV/AIDS-Related Community Based Research" revealed that in the District of Thunder Bay, 75% of respondents reported that they shared works.

Epidemiologist, Lee Sieswerda, noted, "Most of these youth are unaware of the risk of infection. Regular users of drugs...need to use many times per day, offering many opportunities for sharing of works and the transmission of infections."

For more details of the study, go to: [www.ohtn.on.ca/compass.htm](http://www.ohtn.on.ca/compass.htm)

## On-line Video

"The Sleeping Giant: Day in the Life of a Needle Exchange Program in Thunder Bay, Ontario" is an essential video for those who wish to better understand the issues facing Harm Reduction programs.

View the video at [www.ohtn.on.ca/nep\\_giant](http://www.ohtn.on.ca/nep_giant)

## Blood, Sweat & Fears: Hepatitis C Awareness Conference

Hepatitis C is the second-most common disease reported to the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. In response, the Health Unit brought together health care professionals, social service agencies, emergency responders, community agencies, criminal justice agencies and those infected with hepatitis C to the "Blood, Sweat & Fears: Hepatitis C Awareness Conference."

With concerns about an increase of hard drug use and high risk behaviour, the conference was aimed at increasing awareness of epidemiology, prevention and treatment of hepatitis C.

## Ontario Needle Exchange Programs: Award Winning Practices

Superior Points Harm Reduction Program recently received an award from the Ontario Needle Exchange Network in recognition for its dedication, innovation and contribution to the field of Harm Reduction in Ontario.

In 2006 the Superior Points Harm Reduction Staff gave out 525,722 needles, and took in 495,725 needles.



*Don Young receives an award from the Ontario Needle Exchange Network*



## Survey Looks at Northwestern Ontario Student Drug Use

Northwestern Ontario student tobacco use has declined by more than one third, from 29% to 18% since 2001, bringing it closer in line with provincial statistics. However, alcohol, cannabis, hallucinogens and some other substances remain well above provincial rates.

A study conducted by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health showed significantly higher and more dangerous levels of alcohol consumption by Northwestern Ontario students, with especially higher rates of youth drinking and driving.

An executive summary is available at [www.tbdhu.com/Resources/Reports](http://www.tbdhu.com/Resources/Reports)

## Youth Engagement Programs

Youth-driven programs coordinated by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit support young people in making healthier choices in their lives. Youth are involved in mentorship programs that address tough issues such as substance abuse and the tobacco industry as well as advocating active, healthy lifestyles and injury prevention.

The Natural Helpers Peer Mentorship Project from both Westgate High School and Port Arthur Collegiate Institute received the MJ Quilty Award for Traffic Safety Excellence from the Canadian Automobile Association. Students chosen by their peers were the prime communicators in a campaign that focused on road safety and the dangers of impaired driving.

Here's what parents and youth are saying:

*"Natural Helpers has been a positive influence in my life and has helped me to get through some difficult times."*

*"My daughter has friends that were headed for trouble and she was able to help them to keep it together by being there for them to talk to."*

*"We communicate better and do more together. She also feels that she can talk about anything openly."*

*"Natural Helpers has helped me to stay involved in the school."*

*Natural Helpers volunteers receive the MJ Quilty Award from CAA*



## New Approach to Research with Youth

Kyle\* shared his thoughts about how alcohol had affected his life through his photo entitled "What's it Worth?". He spoke eloquently about how the death of his friend through impaired driving had not only affected him, but his family, and the entire school community. "It's like I didn't just lose one person, but I lost an entire extended family ... I really miss them all."

On the other side of the city, Jessie\* shared her thoughts about her photo. "It's called 'Abandonment', because when your parents drink all the time, the kids grow up alone. It's really lonely, and sad."

Thirty-five high school students from Dennis Franklin Cromarty School and Hillcrest High School participated in "Photovoice: Youth and Alcohol." By providing youth an opportunity to express themselves in a visual way, we were able to gain a great deal of insight about the attitudes, experiences and emotions that surround the issue of youth alcohol use," explains Patricia Hajdu, Health Promotion Planner. "The resulting exhibit demonstrated a far more complex response than we expected."

In addition to a display of their photographs, students prepared a short play, presentation and "Ask a teen expert" panel, that provided parents in attendance the opportunity to ask questions of youth about how best to support their children with the issues of alcohol use.

The 61 photos are available on loan from TBDHU to any interested organization.

\* Names changed for confidentiality.

## Infectious Disease

- The West Nile virus (WNV) surveillance program determined the presence of the virus in the bird population; however, the mix of mosquitoes species in the district did not easily support transmission of the virus to humans. There were no human cases in the district.
- There were 13 enteric outbreaks and one respiratory outbreak in acute care and long-term care facilities as compared to a total of 10 for 2005.
- Three active cases of Tuberculosis (TB) were reported and investigated and 25 inactive cases investigated. One TB case resulted in the assessment of 249 identified contacts.
- 5,082 attended the Immunization Clinic.
- 481 attended the Travel Clinic.
- The influenza vaccine arrived late this year. 15,654 doses given by the Health Unit, compared to 20,451 in 2005.
- 91% of grade 7 students received meningococcal vaccine.
- 95% of students in schools are vaccinated.

## Emergency Response

Working with the Emergency Planning and Advisory Committee, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit participated in a multi-agency exercise. The partners were able to identify gaps in the overall plan as well as update their own emergency response plans after the exercise.

## Health Hazards

- There were 401 health hazard investigations (218 in 2005).

## Rabies

- There were 400 rabies incidents investigated resulting in 21 post-exposure vaccinations.

## Food Safety

- 271 food handlers were trained and certified.
- 1,848 food premise compliance inspections were completed.
- 34 food safety charges were laid.
- 196 food safety complaints were received (170 in 2005).
- 28 food-borne outbreaks were investigated (19 in 2005).

## Water Safety

- 296 Adverse water results were reported to the Health Unit.
- 28 Boil Water Advisories/Drinking Water Advisories were issued.
- 530 beach samples taken with 12 swimming advisories were issued.
- 6 spas and 2 pools were closed.



**WARNING**  
**UNSAFE FOR BATHING**

High levels of bacteria in these waters may pose your health.



## Financial Highlights

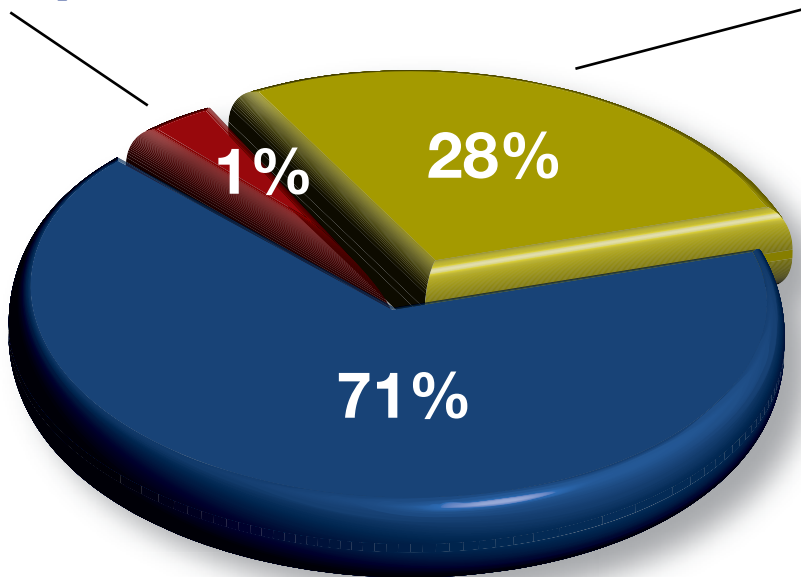
The Thunder Bay District Health Unit's programming is funded in a number of ways:

- **Cost-Shared Programs** are funded by a combination of Provincial and Municipal grants, and fees for certain programs and services, which makes up approximately 71% of the health unit's funding
- Provincial initiatives and programs are **100% funded** by the Province of Ontario, and account for approximately 28% of total revenues
- **Land Development Programs** are self-sustaining through fees set by the Board of Health, and provides 1% of the total revenues of the Health Unit

Funding for the year ending December 31, 2006 totalled \$16,804,457.00.

Visit [www.tbdhu.com](http://www.tbdhu.com) for complete audited financial statements.

**Land Development – \$158,951**



**100% Funded Programs – \$4,772,638**

- Healthy Babies Healthy Children
- Smoke-free Ontario Initiative
- Speech & Audiology
- Infectious Disease
- Genetics

**Cost-Shared Programs – \$11,872,868**

- Chronic Disease Prevention
- Immunization
- Food and Water Safety
- Injury/Substance Abuse Prevention
- Child Health including Dental
- Sexual Health
- Rabies Control
- West Nile Virus
- Tuberculosis Control

**Contact  
Information:**

999 Balmoral Street  
Thunder Bay  
(807) 625-5900  
toll-free 1-888-294-6630  
[www.tbdhu.com](http://www.tbdhu.com)

**Branch Offices:**

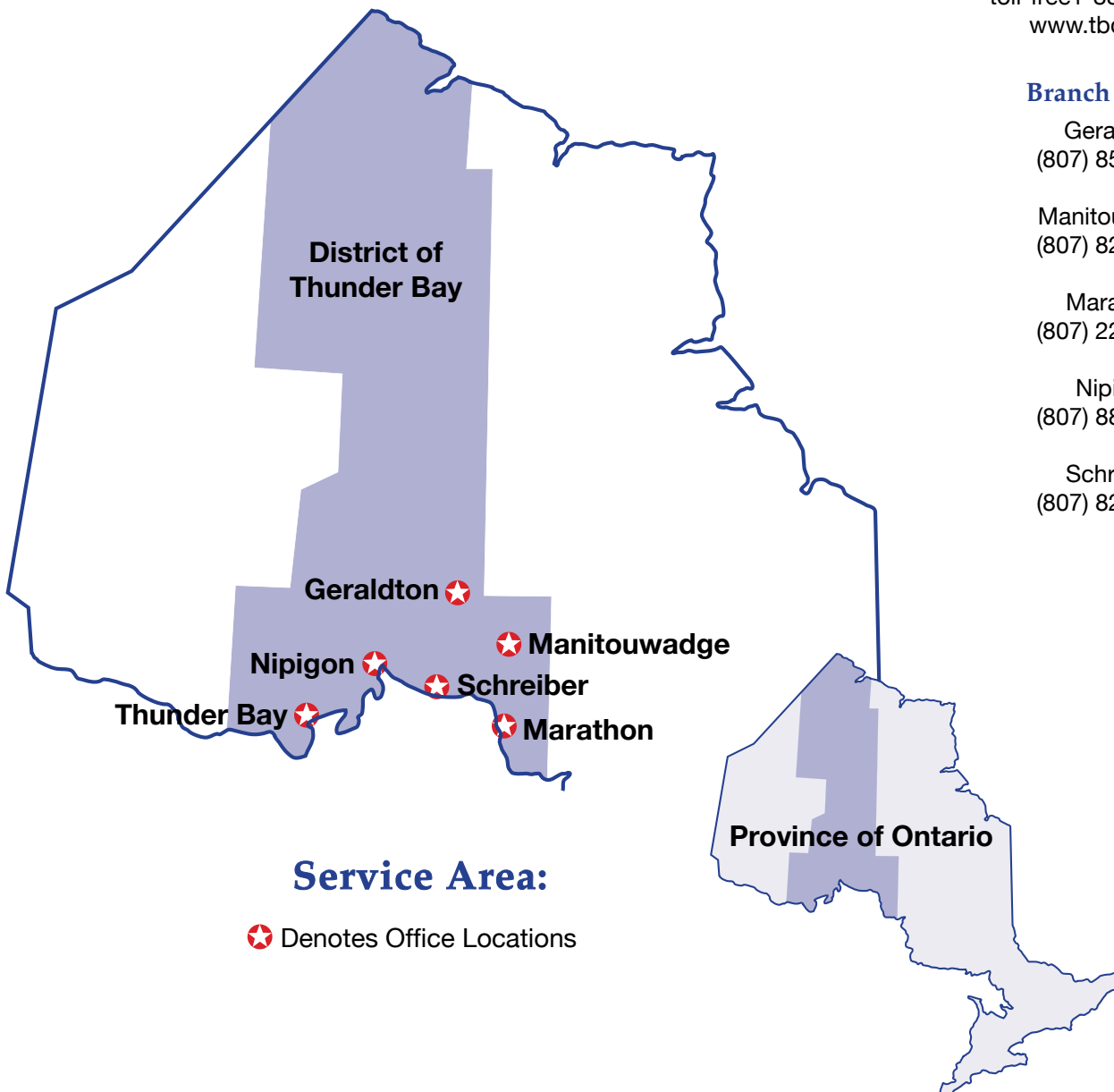
Geraldton  
(807) 854-0454

Manitouwadge  
(807) 826-4061

Marathon  
(807) 229-1820

Nipigon  
(807) 887-3031

Schreiber  
(807) 824-2413



**Service Area:**

 Denotes Office Locations