

LET'S MAKE HEALTH MATTER



A healthy population is
crucial to a productive,
vibrant and economically
strong Ontario.

The provincial government plays an important role in shaping policies that impact on all aspects of our lives, including our health.

Healthy people, active communities, a clean environment and health equity for everyone are key considerations in provincial policy making. Working with partners and decision makers to achieve these outcomes is a key role of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.

During the 2018 provincial election campaign let's make health matter by encouraging government actions on important public health issues to reduce preventable illness and death and improve overall health in Simcoe and Muskoka.



**simcoe
muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

THE ISSUES

FOOD INSECURITY

About 1 in 8 Simcoe Muskoka households experience some level of food insecurity. When faced with a limited income, food becomes a flexible expense often resulting in a less healthy diet and increased risk of poorer physical and mental health and social isolation.

ORAL HEALTH

Oral health is one important facet of maintaining lifelong overall health and well-being. Barriers to good oral health include not having access to dental care due to cost or lack of dental insurance, and living in a community without community water fluoridation.

THE ACTIONS



- Increase social assistance rates to cover actual living costs, including food, and ensure these rates are indexed to inflation.
- Monitor household food insecurity through annual participation in the Canadian Community Health Survey and by reinstating support for public health units to conduct the Nutritious Food Basket survey annually.



- Amend legislation and support a provincial mandate for community water fluoridation within all municipal water supplies.
- Expand provincially funded access to oral health care for institutionalized and low income seniors and adults, including the working poor.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

A built environment designed to meet the daily needs of all people supports human health and quality of life. Healthy community design includes providing a range of housing and convenient access to jobs, local services, and public service facilities. It also encourages the use of active and public transportation and provides public spaces, parkland and access to healthy food.



- **Strengthen provincial policies to direct development of compact, complete communities that support active and public transit use, social cohesion, and the preservation of agricultural lands and natural spaces.**
- **Provide municipalities with funding for cycling infrastructure that supports safer cycling within and between communities.**



CLIMATE CHANGE

The changing climate is expected to result in increases in respiratory, heat-related and foodborne illnesses, weather-related injuries, vector-borne disease and UV-related skin cancers. While everyone feels the effects of climate change, factors such as age, gender, health status and access to resources makes some people more vulnerable to climate change effects.



- **Provide resources for municipalities to complete vulnerability assessments and climate-related adaptation strategies.**
- **Protect and enhance green space throughout the province as a strategy for both climate change mitigation and adaptation.**



OPIOIDS

The misuse of prescription and illicit opioids can have devastating health and social effects on individuals, families and communities. Since 2004, opioid poisoning emergency visit rates in Simcoe Muskoka have been significantly higher than the provincial rates.



- **Develop a funded, comprehensive, action plan for the Ontario Opioid Strategy, including prevention, harm reduction, treatment and surveillance with targets, deliverables, timelines and an evaluation component.**
- **Provide support and resources for harm reduction strategies, such as supervised consumption sites and enhanced naloxone roll out and access to nasal naloxone.**



CANNABIS

Cannabis use carries health risks, especially for people who use it frequently and/or begin to use it at an early age. Risks include problems with adolescent brain development, drug-impaired driving, respiratory problems and drug dependence.



- **Adopt and fund a comprehensive public health approach to cannabis legalization, regulation, restriction of access, education and harm reduction in Ontario.**
- **Align regulatory restrictions on cannabis with those on tobacco as provided in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.**

TOBACCO

Despite a reduction of tobacco use in Ontario, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death and illness. More must be done to reduce the health, social and other financial costs associated with tobacco use.



- **Shift the focus from tobacco control to a future that is free from commercial tobacco.**
- **Align the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy with a tobacco endgame approach with a target of less than 5% tobacco use in Ontario by 2035, using strategies from the Smoke-Free Ontario Modernization: Report of the Executive Steering Committee.**

ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol can cause injuries and a broad range of chronic diseases and social harms. Increased access and availability of alcohol leads to greater consumption, resulting in more harm to society, including increased crime and related policing costs.



- **Develop a comprehensive provincial alcohol control strategy to ensure that policies and programs related to alcohol are in the best health and economic interest of all Ontarians.**
- **Review the current system of access and availability to alcohol in Ontario to protect health, with the intention of not expanding it.**



THE ISSUES

INCOME

Income is the biggest determinant of a person's health and quality of life. Those living on low income have higher rates of chronic and infectious diseases, mental illness, and are more likely to die early than those who are better off financially.

HOUSING

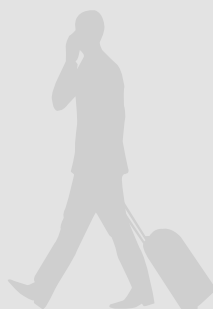
Shelter is a basic need for optimal health. Being homeless or living in unaffordable, inadequate or unsafe housing can lead to increased illness, poor mental health and premature death.



THE ACTIONS

- Adopt income security strategies that address the needs of those of low income, such as increasing social assistance rates and supporting the minimum wage increase scheduled for January 2019.
- Support the completion and evaluation of the Ontario Basic Income Pilot and consider its timely implementation across the province.

- Increase provincial funding for the building of social, affordable and transitional housing.
- Promote, provide and protect a range of affordable housing options by having a plan that outlines how all levels of government and community partners will work together.



What the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit does for you

At the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit we are champions of health for all. Guided by provincial standards and funded by the province and municipalities, we work with people, agencies, municipalities, school boards, health care partners and communities to promote well-being, prevent disease and injury, and protect health.

We are part of a broader public health system that makes vital contributions to the health of our people and communities. Investing in public health programs and services results in a clear return on investment, which saves the health care system millions of dollars a year. For example, every \$1 invested in tobacco prevention programs saves up to \$20 in future health care costs. Every \$1 invested in adding fluoride to drinking water saves \$38 in dental care. Every \$1 spent on measles, mumps and rubella immunization of children saves \$16 in health care costs. Increasing provincial funding for public health units in Ontario not only results in healthier people and places, but also makes economic sense.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit works everyday to keep you and your family healthy. We do this through offering a wide range of programs and services, including:

Health protection – safe food inspection, safe water monitoring, rabies education and investigation, health hazard prevention and management, address environmental issues, emergency management and response, enforce Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Healthy living – injury prevention, substance use prevention, active living, healthy eating, healthy schools, sun safety, tobacco-free living.

Parenting, children and family health – pre-natal classes and counselling, breastfeeding, Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, Triple P positive parenting program, child development and screening, dental screening for children, and preventive services and treatment for eligible children and adults on publicly funded dental programs.

Infectious disease control and immunization – school immunization programs, vaccine and clinics, infectious disease surveillance and monitoring, infection prevention and control, sexual health counseling and clinics.

Health equity – work with partners to address social factors such as income, housing and education that can have strong impacts on our health.

Population health assessment – collect, analyze and report on data and other information for planning purposes.

For more information, visit our website at www.smdhu.org/election2018 or contact Health Connection at 1-877-721-7520.

