

Let's Make

# HEALTH

A Priority

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

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

Active communities, a clean environment, and ensuring health for all people regardless of background or income level are key considerations in provincial policy making.

During the 2014 provincial election campaign let's make health a priority and encourage government actions to reduce preventable illness and death and improve overall health in Simcoe and Muskoka.

# ISSUES AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS FOR HEALTH

## FOOD ACCESS

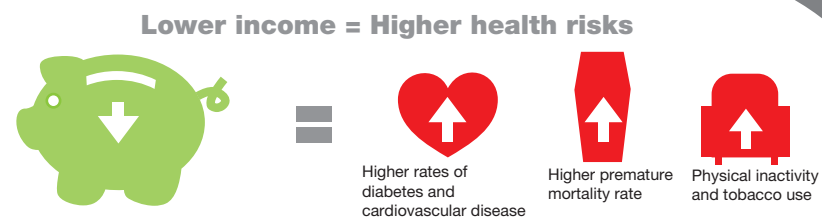
- Partner with municipalities to fund community-based food access programs like farmers' markets and fresh food box programs.
- Provide infrastructure grants for schools and community centres to build kitchens and create on-site gardens.



Access to safe, nutritious, affordable and personally acceptable food in every neighbourhood contributes to better health, and can lower the risk for many chronic diseases and the need for health care.

## POVERTY

- Implement policies that promote the creation of quality jobs that pay fair wages for all Ontarians.
- Invest in municipal poverty reduction initiatives that address local priority needs and issues.



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

## ALCOHOL

- Develop a provincial alcohol strategy that is in the best interests of all Ontarians regarding their health.
- Maintain the current system of wine and liquor sales and distribution in Ontario.



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, and in turn results in more harm to society.

## WATER FLUORIDATION

- Amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to require community water fluoridation for all municipal water systems.
- Provide provincial funding and technical support to municipalities for community water fluoridation.



Fluoride in drinking water helps to protect teeth against decay. Community water fluoridation is the most equitable and cost-effective way to deliver fluoride and improve oral health for everyone, regardless of age, education or income level.

About 1 in 10 Simcoe Muskoka households experience moderate or severe food insecurity. When faced with a limited income, food becomes a flexible expense often resulting in a less healthy diet and increased risk of chronic disease.



## FOOD SECURITY

- Increase social assistance rates and the minimum wage to reflect the true cost of purchasing nutritious food.
- Achieve the goals of the Healthy Kids Panel report through implementing recommendations that address the food system and reduce poverty.

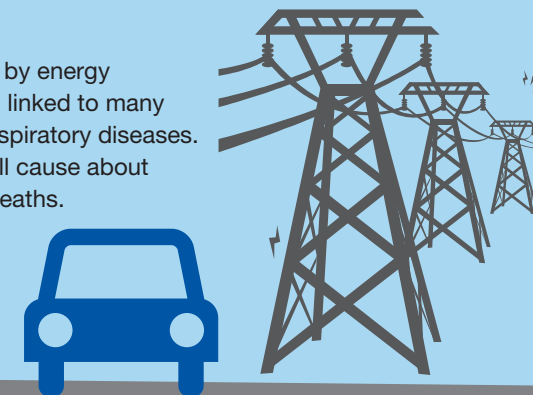
Shelter is a basic need for optimal health. Being homeless or living in unaffordable, inadequate and unsafe housing can lead to increased illness, poor mental health and premature death.



## HOUSING

- Provide funding for supportive housing, particularly for vulnerable and chronically homeless individuals and families.
- Invest in revitalization projects in lower income neighbourhoods to increase resident safety, connectedness and well-being.

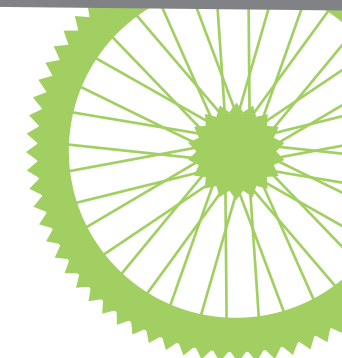
Air pollution, caused primarily by energy production and vehicle use, is linked to many chronic cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. It is estimated, air pollution will cause about 400 chronic disease-related deaths.



## AIR POLLUTION

- Support the implementation of the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) province-wide as a tool for people to assess their individual risk to outdoor air quality.
- Provide incentives to people and businesses to facilitate energy conservation and reduce vehicle use and emissions.

Active transportation is a great way to increase daily physical activity. Having access to cycling, walking and public transit infrastructure makes active forms of transportation not only the easy choice but the preferred choice and helps to improve overall health.



## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- Collaborate across ministries to achieve the goals of Ontario's Cycling Strategy.
- Design provincial roadways to increase options for cycling and integrate them with regional cycling networks.

# PUBLIC HEALTH IN SIMCOE MUSKOKA

As champions of health for all, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit works with individuals, families, agencies and communities in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka to promote and protect health and to prevent disease and injury. We offer a wide range of programs and services, including:



## Health protection

Safe food inspection, safe water monitoring, rabies education and investigation, health hazard investigation, environmental issues.



## Healthy living

Injury prevention, alcohol and other substance misuse prevention, active living, healthy eating and weights, healthy schools, sun safety, tobacco-free living, Smoke-free Ontario Act enforcement.



## Parenting, child and family health

Prenatal classes and counseling, Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), child development and screening, dental screening and preventive services for school children and children of low-income families.



## Infectious disease control and immunization

School immunization programs, vaccine and clinics, communicable disease monitoring, sexual health counseling and clinics.



## Social determinants of health

Strategies to address the factors (income, housing, education, etc.) that create poor health outcomes for people, particularly vulnerable populations.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION...

To learn more about any of the issues in this resource, please visit our website at [www.smdhu.org](http://www.smdhu.org), or contact Health Connection.

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