

LET'S MAKE HEALTH **MATTER**



GET INFORMED

Find out about local issues, the role of the municipal government in decision making, and where candidates stand on issues that are important to you.



BE HEARD

You can have a say! Discuss your ideas, needs, and perspectives. Ask candidates what they will do to address topics that are important to you and your community at upcoming debates, town halls, via email, or over the phone.



VOTE

Vote on October 24, or at advance polls. Have questions about voting? Check your local municipal election website for information.

Municipal governments make decisions that directly affect your health and well-being, as well as the health of your family and community by developing healthy public policies and delivering local programs and services.

Municipal elections will be held Monday, October 24



hpePublicHealth.ca | 613-966-5500 | 1-800-267-2803

A Letter from the Medical Officer of Health

September 21, 2022

Dear Residents of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties (HPEC):

Municipal elections will be held on October 24, 2022. Municipal elected officials make decisions about programs, services and policies that affect your health, as well as the health of your family and community.

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health provides evidence-based information to help residents make decisions about factors that contribute to their health and well-being. Key issues to consider include:

- income and cost of living,
- housing and homelessness,
- mental health and substance use, and
- inclusive communities.

This Election Primer highlights these local issues and identifies actions to improve the health of all residents in HPEC. During the municipal election campaign, you can make your concerns known and have a say by asking candidates questions about these important public health issues and by casting your vote.

In preparation for the upcoming election, please take the time to learn how municipal decisions can impact your health. You can find more information about important health topics on our website hpePublicHealth.ca. If you have any questions regarding the enclosed Primer, please contact our offices at communications@hpeph.ca.

Sincerely,



Ethan Toumishey, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and CEO
Hastings Prince Edward Public Health

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health advocates to promote and protect health and reduce health inequities for all residents. Providing information to the public to assist with informed decision-making related to health and well-being is a key role of public health.

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health is situated and provides services on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people.



ISSUES

Income and Cost of Living

- Income, access to employment, and the rising cost of living affect whether people can afford resources that support good health, like housing, food, and childcare.
- In HPEC, a substantial number of households live with low income. For example, approximately 1 in 8 children and youth in HPEC (age 0-17) were living in low income households in 2020.
- Municipalities can plan and invest in programs and services that allow residents to participate in their communities, such as transit and recreation programs. In turn, these services contribute to healthy childhood development, social development, and active living for residents of all ages. Municipalities can also partner with many sectors to develop coordinated strategies to reduce poverty.

Housing and Homelessness

- Housing that is good quality, appropriate, and affordable supports the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Many forms of housing are essential to meet a range of residents' needs, including emergency shelters, supportive housing, rental housing, subsidized rental housing, and home ownership.
- Neighbourhoods also contribute to health by providing opportunities for social connection, recreational facilities, services, and parks.
- In 2016, 25% of households in HPEC spent at least 30% of their income on housing, which is considered unaffordable.
- Municipalities can partner with other levels of government, non-profit agencies, people with lived experience, and the private sector to address housing insecurity and homelessness. They can create zoning policies that determine how local land is used and approve housing development proposals.



ACTIONS



- Develop municipal programs that give individuals living with low income low cost/no cost access to municipal services and facilities.
- Support and provide leadership in the uptake of a sustainable community-wide poverty reduction strategy.
- Collaborate with community partners to support a coordinated and innovative response to local homelessness and housing affordability.
- Adopt inclusionary zoning policies to require the creation of affordable housing units in residential developments.



ISSUES

Mental Health and Substance Use

- Mental health and substance use are complex topics that affect everyone. Communities where residents live can influence individual attitudes, decisions, and behaviours related to mental health and substance use.
- Impacts of poor mental health and problematic substance use can be seen in communities in different ways, such as emergency department visits for opioid overdoses or mental health concerns, impaired driving incidents, youth vaping, and demand for treatment.
- Municipalities can implement policies that reduce local substance-related harms. They can also advocate to other levels of government for resources that address community needs.
- Municipalities can convene service providers and people with lived experience to identify service gaps and improve system navigation.

Inclusive Communities

- Many people feel isolated, lonely, and disconnected from their communities. Some struggle to access services and opportunities due to stigma, prejudice, or discrimination.
- In an inclusive community, all residents can participate economically, socially, and culturally without facing barriers due to negative beliefs about race, gender, sexuality, economic situation, and mental health or substance use problems. Residents are empowered to collaborate with municipal and community partners to create positive change in their communities.
- Municipalities can promote equity¹, diversity, and inclusion by developing internal policies, participating in training, and collaborating with community groups committed to these issues. They can also work to ensure there is equitable access to municipal services and that public spaces are designed to be safe and inclusive.



ACTIONS



- Support the development and evaluation of evidence-based best practices to address substance-related harms, such as supervised consumption sites and opioid agonist treatment clinics.
- Provide first responders with proactive measures for interactions with residents experiencing poor mental health and/or problematic substance use, such as training and guidance.
- Adopt zoning and licensing policies to manage availability of alcohol, tobacco, and vapour products and by-laws to create additional smoke-free spaces.
- Use innovative and inclusive engagement techniques when making policy decisions or developing community plans.
- Consider potential equity impacts of land use decisions and developments for community consideration.
- Participate in education or training opportunities that help elected officials identify and reduce stigma.

¹Health equity does not refer to everyone having equal resources to be healthy. It means that existing resources are more readily available for the populations who need them most.