

ELECTION 2019

# Public Health Matters

CPHA is encouraging voters to question their local candidates on some key public health issues. We have an opportunity to challenge all candidates to set a higher standard for Canadians. We should not be satisfied with rehearsed answers that lack depth. We need to hold the candidates themselves to a higher standard and expect more from them.

## Invest in protecting the health of Canadians

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. The health of our society hinges on governments' ability to design public health systems with the structure and flexibility to respond to our current and future needs; distinguish public health services from primary care delivery; and determine the relationship between core public health services and the health care system and how each should be appropriately resourced.

**It's time for Canada to do better.**

### WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

Public health is the collection of services that promote health, prevent disease, prolong life and improve quality of life that are provided by governments for all persons living in Canada. It includes responding to disease outbreaks and natural disasters.

### PUBLIC HEALTH VS. THE PUBLICLY-FUNDED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

When people think of public health, they often mean the publicly-funded health care system of hospitals, clinics and physicians that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and the rehabilitation of individual patients.

In fact, public health professionals focus on disease prevention, health promotion and crisis response so that you, your family members and your friends maintain your health at the best possible level, and don't get sick or injured in the first place. These methods are good for improving both individual and community health and they are cost-effective.

In Canada, the federal government has constitutional authority over some areas of health (e.g., quarantine at our national borders) and, with the agreement of provinces and territories, assumed certain responsibilities for health that are defined in various Acts of Parliament including the *Public Health Agency of Canada Act*.

**#PublicHealthMatters**



CANADIAN  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION

The Voice of Public Health

## PUBLIC HEALTH: A GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Public health initiatives save lives and money. For example:

- Every \$1 spent on immunizing children with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine saves \$16 in health care costs;
- Every \$1 invested in tobacco prevention programs saves up to \$20 in future health care costs;
- Every \$1 invested in car and booster seats saves \$40 in avoided medical costs; and
- Every \$1 spent on mental health and addictions saves \$7 in health costs and \$30 dollars in lost productivity and social costs.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Public health initiatives are often invisible – Canadians have confidence that the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the food they eat are safe.

However, when public health systems are under-funded and strained (e.g., the *E. coli* contamination of the water supply in Walkerton, Ontario, or the 2003 SARS outbreak), the economic, human and political costs and consequences can be enormous.

In recent years, several provinces and territories have undertaken health system reorganizations that included restructuring the public health and health promotion functions, including, in some instances, reducing their funding. Serious concerns have been expressed regarding the future of public health following these reorganizations, including the systems' capacity to meet performance expectations and service delivery requirements across our nation.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES

1. What specific plans would your party implement to strengthen public health infrastructure, disease and injury prevention programs, and health promotion activities?
2. Do you support a strengthened Public Health Agency of Canada with increased funding to help protect and promote the health of Canadians?
3. Will your party provide the Public Health Agency of Canada the necessary resources to return to building public health capacity in Canada?

## RESOURCES

- [CPHA Position Statement: Public Health in the Context of Health System Renewal in Canada](#)
- [CPHA Background Document: Public Health in the Context of Health System Renewal in Canada](#)

## ABOUT CPHA

Founded in 1910, the Canadian Public Health Association is the independent voice for public health in Canada with links to the international community. As the only Canadian non-governmental organization focused exclusively on public health, we are uniquely positioned to advise decision-makers about public health system reform and to guide initiatives to help safeguard the personal and community health of Canadians and people around the world. We are a national, independent, not-for-profit, voluntary association. Our members believe in universal and equitable access to the basic conditions which are necessary to achieve health for all.