

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.

## Racism and health

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. CPHA calls on the next federal government to invest in strategies and programs that support strong healthy people in Canada regardless of their economic and social status.

### A HIGHER STANDARD FOR CANADIAN FAMILIES

Canada remains a nation where a person's colour, religion, culture or ethnic origin are determinants of health that result in inequities in social inclusion, economic outcomes, personal health, and access to and quality of health and social services. These effects are especially evident for racialized and Indigenous peoples as well as those at the lower end of the social gradient and those who are incarcerated (populations that are also disproportionately composed of racialized and Indigenous peoples).

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

### CALL TO ACTION

CPHA is calling on the next federal government to:

- Undertake organization-wide reviews of its systems, regulations, policies, processes and practices to identify and remove racist approaches;
- Undertake the steps necessary to implement programs and systemic change in order to address the 94 *Calls to Action* from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Undertake the steps necessary to implement programs and systemic change in order to address the 58 *Calls to Justice* directed at governments described in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; and
- Provide continual accounting and monitoring to demonstrate the steps taken to respond to these recommendations.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Racism is insidious and affects all aspects of life. It is correlated to poorer health outcomes for those subject to the behaviour, with the strongest and most consistent findings (from the United States) associating the results of racist behaviours with negative mental health outcomes, negative physical health outcomes (hypertension, low birth weight, heart disease and diabetes), and negative health-related behaviours

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(cigarette smoking, alcohol use and substance use). A [2012 report published by the Wellesley Institute](#) has indicated that such relationships are more difficult to track in Canada as care registry data does not regularly record race or ethnicity statistics; however, significant associations were found between self-assessed poor or fair health and the experience of racism.

The reasons given for this effect include:

- economic and social deprivation;
- toxic substances and hazardous conditions;
- socially-inflicted trauma (mental, physical, and sexual that are either directly experienced or witnessed, and range from verbal threats to violent acts);
- targeted marketing of commodities that can be harmful to health;
- inadequate or degraded medical care; and
- degradation of ecosystems, including systematic alienation of Indigenous Peoples from their lands and traditional economies.

Adding to this complexity is the increasing diversity of Canadians. In 2016, approximately 2.2 million Canadians were from first or second generation families and this number was expected to increase.

Of particular concern is the relationship with Indigenous Peoples where the growth rate of this population is greater than that for the country as a whole. The relationship between racism, the social determinants of health and Indigenous Peoples of Canada has been described in a series of three publications and a webinar prepared by the [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#), as well as [a series of resources](#) curated by the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health along with [a blog](#) summarizing its ongoing work to become an anti-racist organization.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES

1. Will you speak out against racist views whenever and wherever you witness them?
2. What will your party do to explore, identify and eliminate racist federal laws, regulations, policies and systems of power?
3. What will your party do to reduce racism and the oppression of racialized Canadians?
4. What specific steps will your party take to ensure the implementation of anti-racist and anti-oppression regulations and policies?
5. What specific steps will your party take to ensure that the social determinants of health are considered in all social and economic policies and programs?

## RESOURCES

- [CPHA Position Statement: Racism and Public Health](#)
- [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#)

## 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.