

## Board of Health Briefing Report

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Health  
Date: May 4, 2022  
Topic: 2022 Provincial Election Campaign  
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### RECOMMENDATIONS

***It is recommended that the Timiskaming Board of Health receive the report '2022 Provincial Election Campaign' for information.***

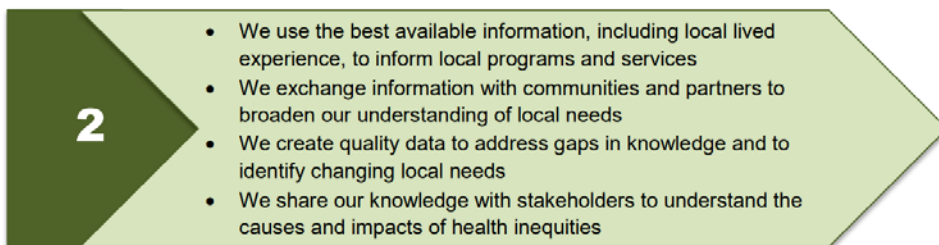
#### Overview

- The provincial election is happening on June 2, 2022.
- Policies within provincial jurisdiction impact the health and well-being of individuals and communities in the Timiskaming Health Unit District.
- Local public health agencies provide programs and services that promote well-being, prevent disease and injury, and protect population health.
- Voting influences policy decisions that impact population health and well-being.
- Voting and related activities are forms of civic engagement which is known to impact health.
- This brief aims to inform the Board of Health of the potential impact of the provincial election upon local public health as well as Timiskaming Health Unit's upcoming provincial election campaign.

Ontario Public Health Standards (2018) and Timiskaming Health Unit Strategic Plan 2019-2023

This work contributes to meeting requirements and expected outcomes in the Ontario Public Health Standards (2018). Addressing social determinants of health and health inequities aligns with the Policy Framework for Public Health Programs and Services including intersecting with numerous program standards. This work also supports the following THU 2019-2023 strategic directions:

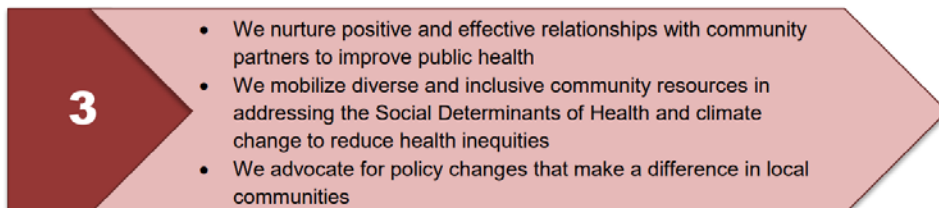
#### **We create, share and exchange knowledge**



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- We use the best available information, including local lived experience, to inform local programs and services
- We exchange information with communities and partners to broaden our understanding of local needs
- We create quality data to address gaps in knowledge and to identify changing local needs
- We share our knowledge with stakeholders to understand the causes and impacts of health inequities

#### **We collaborate with partners to make a difference in our communities**



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- We nurture positive and effective relationships with community partners to improve public health
- We mobilize diverse and inclusive community resources in addressing the Social Determinants of Health and climate change to reduce health inequities
- We advocate for policy changes that make a difference in local communities

## Background

All levels of government play an important role in shaping policies that impact all aspects of our lives, including our health and well-being. Most policies have a health impact, not just those in the health sector. Decisions made by the provincial government can impact individual and community health. Provincial policies influence the social, ecological and commercial determinants of health. The upcoming election is an opportunity to look beyond issues related to health care services and think about other public health issues that affect our lives and future generations. This includes sustained investment in public health strategies and local public health agencies that provide programs and services that promote well-being, prevent disease and injury, and protect population health. The work of local public health results in a healthier population and avoids drawing on costly and scarce health care resources.

Voting is a way of letting the government know how it should operate. Voting is a right. Furthermore, voting or registering others to vote is an example of civic participation that impacts health and well-being. However some people face significant barriers to voting; for the 2018 provincial election, only 53% of eligible voters cast a ballot, compared to an Ontario average of 57%. Low voter turnout could result in policies that are not representative of those who vote less.

In recent years, local public health agencies including Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) have implemented communications campaigns related to the municipal, provincial and federal elections. This action is part of an approach to achieve population health outcomes by increasing awareness of government strategies to promote and protect health and well-being and reduce health inequities.

For the upcoming 2022 provincial election, THU will harness the work of our peers including Public Health Sudbury and Districts; Hastings Prince Edward Public Health; Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit; and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, as well as local work to address digital equity, to inform and deliver a district-wide campaign. The campaign is in development; objectives and topics are outlined briefly below. The campaign will begin in early May and continue up to June 2. The campaign may include a media release, paid media, social media posts, a web page, sharing of an election primer with community organizations and local provincial election candidates, and submission of questions to local candidate debates.

### **Campaign Objective: Increase awareness of the importance of voting and provide information to support the voting process.**

Messages related to this campaign objective will include why voting matters, and the provision of information related to common questions on the voting process. Messaging will also include ways to learn about political party / candidate platforms, and how to support others to vote.

### **Campaign Objective: Increase awareness of public health issues related to the provincial election and their local importance.**

Topics of relevance to the provincial election and public health for potential inclusion in the campaign are listed below. These topics align with the Ontario Public Health Standards (2018). They are locally relevant and many have been significantly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in small and rural communities. Moreover, several of these topics have been supported by resolutions passed by the Board of Health for Timiskaming.

- **Mental health:** promoting children and youth mental health through public health programming including school health, healthy families, and healthy communities

- **Income security**, such as basic income, to ensure everyone has the money they need for basic needs, including food
- **Paid sick days** for all employees in addition to those for public health emergencies
- **Housing** strategy and supports (affordability, accessibility, supportive) including Indigenous-led strategy, supports for older adults
- **Indigenous health and wellbeing**: Respect First Nation self-governance by ensuring their public health needs as determined by communities are met as well as upholding and implementing responsibilities under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action
- **Anti-racism**: ensure sustainable funding and commitment to advance provincial anti-racism strategic plan and ensure anti-racism initiatives are informed and led by racialized populations
- **Opioids**: support proactive, comprehensive, and multi-stakeholder plans for opioids that include “meeting people where they’re at” education, harm reduction, and treatment
- **Infection prevention and control (IPAC)**: the Hub model is essential to ensuring protection from infectious diseases for all residents in congregate living settings this model and other IPAC measures require ongoing support to support health prevent tragic outcomes
- **Climate Change**: invest in public transit and active transportation to increase physical activity and to create healthy, green, and just communities
- **Oral health**: ensure individuals are able to access the oral health services they need, where and when they need it, without financial hardship
- **Digital equity**: acknowledge the importance of equitable access to digital devices and services for Ontarians for improving economic and social wellbeing, and overall health, and commit to addressing gaps in digital equity across Ontario
- **Public health**: adequate funding to support recovery work to address the backlog in public health services and programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Local Work and Next Steps

THU staff are adapting and launching a communications campaign to promote health-informed participation in the upcoming provincial election. THU would like to acknowledge Public Health Sudbury and Districts for their work and permission to adapt their 2022 Provincial Election Primer.

### Summary

The 2022 Ontario election presents a critical opportunity to shape the policy context for local public health and the many factors that influence health and wellbeing for people in Timiskaming. By helping to increase informed voter participation and draw attention among candidates to these issues, Timiskaming Health Unit is upholding its strategic directions and mandate.

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