

HEALTH FOR ALL: BRIDGING MUNICIPAL ACTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

SPRING 2019: ISSUE 2

Timiskaming Health Unit is pleased to introduce our second edition of our email newsletter for municipalities. Find previous editions [on our website](#).

Written for elected officials and municipal staff, we highlight local opportunities for municipalities to affect the wellbeing of their communities. We appreciate any feedback and at any time invite questions, comments or conversations about ways that Timiskaming Health Unit can support your work.

In this issue:

[Community Safety and Wellbeing Plans](#)

Public health is well poised to be contributing to this planning process with information, access to evidence and expertise.

[Opioid Poisonings in Timiskaming District: a snapshot](#)

Learn about the work of public health and access data to help your municipal efforts.

[Collaborative Climate Change Project](#)

A Timiskaming-specific report about Climate Change will be generated to describe anticipated impacts of climate change on our district, how we are vulnerable, and how our communities can adapt.

[Municipalities Reducing Poverty](#)

Timiskaming-specific data about poverty, information about the Cities Reducing Poverty initiative for municipalities, and reminder of FCM's *Ending Poverty Starts Locally* resource for municipalities.

[Resources](#)

Tobacco and vaping signage and protection, Resource from Association of Local Public Health Agencies on municipally elected representatives' role in promoting community wellbeing and an online training series for municipal planners about public health.

[For your Community Members](#)

Ways that municipalities can support families in outdoor play, an affordable and accessible way to be active and information on Timiskaming's local and charitable food map.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING PLANS

Newly mandated Community Safety and Wellbeing Planning's stated goal is *"to achieve the ideal state of a sustainable community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, access to services and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression."* This is very much in line with the priorities of public health, and Timiskaming Health Unit is well positioned to support municipalities in accessing both data and evidence-based approaches to meet this goal. Please contact [Rachelle Coté](#), Executive Assistant to the Medical Officer of Health, to discuss or invite THU to participate in your CSWB process.

OPIOID POISONINGS IN THE TIMISKAMING DISTRICT: A SNAPSHOT

The [opioid poisoning infographic](#) illustrates the opioid poisoning situation in the THU catchment area. This infographic equips stakeholders such as municipalities with data to assist in planning and shows the actions that public health is taking to mitigate the impact of opioids on our communities.

COLLABORATIVE CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT

Thanks to funding from Health Canada, 7 [northern Ontario public health units to work together on climate change reports](#). A project staff person will work with the health units to create common tools and information so they can each engage stakeholders at the local level. Local meetings will be held to educate partners, including municipalities, about the impacts of climate change on health, and explore possible future policies and programs that will help people adapt to the changes that are happening. Separate reports will be produced for each health unit region, including Timiskaming.

MUNICIPALITIES REDUCING POVERTY

In Timiskaming, 1 in 5 households live with low income, and there are very specific ways in which municipalities can influence poverty. The [Cities Reducing Poverty](#) network works across Canada to make the work of municipalities and local poverty reduction roundtables easier and more effective. It offers a [bi-monthly newsletter](#) that includes the latest news, resources and tools in poverty reduction.

Poverty in Timiskaming. Income is perhaps the most important social determinant of health. Level of income impacts health both directly and indirectly by shaping overall living conditions, affects psychological functioning, influences health-related behaviours, and determines the quality of other social determinants of health such as food security, housing, and other basic prerequisites of health.^[i]

The median after-tax income for Timiskaming residents is \$28,566, which is lower than Ontario's median of \$30,641.^[ii]

The low-income measure is a method to measure poverty. It accounts for income and household size to reflect that a household's needs increases as the number of people increases.^[iii] When the after-tax income of a person falls below the thresholds outlined in the table, they are considered to be living in low income. This measure does not take into account the duration of the poverty or those who have incomes barely above the cut-offs but who have similar living situations.

In Timiskaming, **5,675 people live in low income** which is 18% of residents.³

Low-income measure thresholds, 2015.

Household size	After-tax income
1 person	\$22,133
2 persons	\$31,301
3 persons	\$38,335
4 persons	\$44,266
5 persons	\$49,491
6 persons	\$54,215
7 persons	\$58,558



1,235 are children and youth (20% of those under 17 years of age)

3,095 are aged 18 to 64 years (16% of those aged 18 to 64 years)

1,340 are aged 65 years or older (20% of those aged 65 and older)

As we approach a federal election, [Ending Poverty Starts Locally](#) is a 2017 resource from Federation of Canadian Municipalities that can help Timiskaming municipalities consider ways in which local poverty reduction efforts can complement the federal strategy. *"From coast to coast to coast,*

municipal leaders are on front lines of poverty. Every day, we see how poverty prevents individuals, families and communities from seizing their full potential. Among orders of government, municipalities are Canada's eyes and ears on the ground. They are catalysts for change, convening diverse actors and tailoring initiatives to local realities. They are also driving action on cross-sectoral issues. However, while the face of poverty is profoundly local, other orders of government control investment and policy levers that are vital to an effective response. Federal, provincial and territorial actions should complement, enable and help scale up innovative local efforts to reduce poverty across the country."

RESOURCES

This [flyer for municipalities](#) produced by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPha) supports municipal elected officials in promoting community wellbeing.

"As an elected official, you are a leader in your community and an advocate on behalf of your constituents. You are part of a local government that plays an essential role in building a vibrant and sustainable community. You will make meaningful decisions that impact everyone who lives, works, learns and plays in your community. It's a big responsibility and we want you to know that your local public health unit shares your enthusiasm for ensuring everyone living in your community is as healthy as possible."

[Public Health and Planning 101](#) is an easy-to-use online course developed by Ontario Public Health Association. The online education module has both shared and tailored sections for public health and planners. It is comprised of four sub-modules:

- Introduction to Health and the Built Environment;
- Policy, Legislation and Standards;
- Roles and Responsibilities; and
- Public Health and Planning Professionals Working Together.

THU staff have completed the modules and found it beneficial in better understanding the work of municipal planners.

Presentations from public health. If your council or staff would like a meeting with or presentation from public health on any of these topics or other areas related to municipalities' ability to promote health, [please contact Rachelle Coté](#). Public health can offer evidence briefs, examples from other communities, and data about various aspect of a community's health to help municipal decision-makers promote health.

FOR YOUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Promote outdoor play as an accessible and affordable way for families to get active

The health and wellbeing of local children and youth has always been a priority for many of us in Timiskaming. As part of this work, we recognize that play, particularly in the outdoors, is an important opportunity to encourage families to get active and reap the benefits of being active. [Here are some of the evidence-based benefits](#) of unstructured play. Timiskaming's Board of Health recently endorsed the [Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#).

Municipalities have a specific role to play, and THU is available to support you:

- Establish a community-wide approach to increasing access to unstructured play that establishes a common vision and addresses community concerns.
- Enhance community planning and design standards to increase and improve all-seasons play spaces and parks within existing communities and new residential or mixed-use developments.
- Identify and address gaps in access to safe places for unstructured play by location and socio-economic status.
- Influence the use of risk-benefit assessment processes to mitigate play-associated liability concerns for municipalities.

THU is running an active outdoor play social media campaign to encourage outdoor play. Please follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) and share via your organization's social media channels. If you are interested in working together on this project, please [contact Crystal Gorman](#), Public Health Promoter, at 705-567-9355 x3238.

Timiskaming's [Local and Charitable Food Map](#) is constantly being updated and available to highlight where residents can eat and buy food grown and made in Timiskaming. This includes restaurants, caterers and stores that sell local foods. It also provides information about other resources such as community gardens, food banks, and free/low cost meals, for those who may be facing financial limitations and need some help putting food on the table. It highlights food produced in the area geographically located within the Timiskaming District, including Temagami, including fresh produce and livestock grown and raised in the district as well as products that use locally produced products as the first or main ingredient. Restaurants and businesses included on the map actively demonstrate a commitment to sourcing and selling local products when in season.

^[i] Mikkonen J, Raphael D. *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts*. Toronto, ON: York University School of Health Policy and Management; 2010.

^[ii] Statistics Canada. 2017. *Timiskaming Health Unit, [Health region, December 2017], Ontario and Ontario [Province] (table)*. Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed July 24, 2018).

^[iii] Statistics Canada 2017. *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016*. Available from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/tab/t4_2-eng.cfm. Access August 8, 2018.