

CONGRATULATIONS on Your Successful 2018 Municipal Election

The job you've taken on is extremely important. 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.

Today's health threats are more likely to be chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease rather than infectious diseases.



It is now understood that good health comes from a variety of factors and influences, 75% of which are not related to the health care delivery system.

These determinants of health are interconnected and contribute to the health of the population (see graphic next page).

Where we've been & where we are now

At the turn of the twentieth century, local governments targeted efforts on the provision of clean drinking water, sewers and garbage disposal—all major contributors to preventing disease. During this time, public health delivered vaccines in the community to prevent infectious diseases like smallpox, diphtheria, typhus, cholera and tuberculosis, polio, and mumps. The success of these past interventions by government and public health can be seen a century later: Today, these diseases are non-existent or minimal in Ontario.

Why focus on health & what you can do

- Two-thirds of Ontarians over 45 have one or more chronic disease(s)
- Over 50% of Ontario's adults and about 20% of youth are overweight
- Obesity has a direct effect on the rate of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease
- Nearly half of all cancer deaths are related to tobacco use, diet and lack of physical activity
- As much as half of the functional decline between the ages of 30 and 70 is due not to aging itself but to an inactive lifestyle

Local governments can play a unique role in shaping the local conditions that have an impact on the health of individuals and communities. For example, elected officials make important decisions that impact citizens' health in:

- Community planning and the built environment
- Parks and recreation facilities and their programming
- Health-related policies

What influences our health?

50%



- Income & social status
- Social support networks
- Education & literacy
- Employment/working conditions
- Personal health practices
- Early childhood development
- Culture & language
- Gender

25%



- Health care system

15%



- Biology & physical endowment

10%



- Physical environment



The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) is a non-profit organization that provides leadership to Ontario's boards of health and public health units. The Association works with governments and other organizations to advocate for a strong and effective public health system in the province, as well as public health policies, programs and services that benefit all Ontarians.

As a member of a board of health, you are automatically a member of alPHA.

For more information:



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What is population and public health?

Your public health unit and the board of health which governs it use a population health approach. Population health focuses on the interrelated conditions and factors that influence the health of populations over the life course. It does this by:

- identifying the root causes of a problem, and developing evidence-based strategies to address it
- improving aggregate health status of the whole community, while considering the special needs and vulnerabilities of sub-populations
- working through partnerships and intersectoral cooperation
- finding flexible and multi-dimensional solutions for complex problems
- encouraging public involvement and community participation

What is the role of boards of health?

Municipal elected officials can play an essential role in supporting public health unit activity by becoming a member of a local board of health. The role of a board of health is to provide public health programs and services in the areas specified in the provincially mandated *Ontario Public Health Standards*. The responsibilities of a board of health are to:

- uphold legislation governing the board of health's mandate under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and others, and meet government expectations on accountability, governance and administrative practices as outlined in the *Public Health Accountability Framework and Organizational Requirements*
- be aware of changing community trends and needs in order to develop policies to protect and promote community health
- represent the health unit in the community
- ensure the health unit's finances are adequate and responsibly spent
- hire a medical officer of health who is responsible for the management of the health unit

Watch our video What is Public Health?

<https://youtu.be/qhl595Q0ohg>