

Health Unit: Voters should consider poverty, income, food security on June 7

There is a prescription to improve public health, but to fill it, local voters are being urged to have all the facts before casting a ballot in the upcoming Ontario election.

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit wants people to ask their provincial election candidates where they and their political parties stand on key issues affecting health.

This not only includes doctor shortages and hospital emergency room wait times, but other factors like poverty, income, food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, access to dental care, and prescription drug coverage that can also affect everyone's well-being.

With this information in hand, voters can then select the candidate they feel will best work to decrease barriers and improve access to better health for everyone.

To assist voters, the Health Unit has created and posted resources – including a list of questions to put to provincial election candidates – on its [Rethink Poverty](#) website. People can also call the health unit at [1-866-888-4577](tel:1-866-888-4577), ext. 2300, or ext. 3238, for additional information.

“We’ve created resources that local residents can use to make an informed decision when voting on June 7 in the Ontario election,” says Rosie Kadwell, a registered dietitian with the health unit.

“It’s important to make issues like poverty an election issue. Politicians at all levels of government have an opportunity

and responsibility to support health for everyone, so let's send representatives to Queen's Park who will do just that."

In the lead-up to the Ontario election, local community coalitions – which include representatives from the Health Unit – are connecting with all provincial candidates running in the Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock riding.

Local candidates will be asked questions about where they stand on important social and economic issues that can affect people's well-being. Responses from local candidates will then be shared publicly through social media and with local media outlets by the end of May.

Local voters are also being encouraged to send a *Let's Make Poverty an Election Issue* letter to their provincial candidates urging them to take steps to fight poverty if elected.

In the City of Kawartha Lakes, print copies of the letter are available at all libraries. Versions are also posted [here](#) and at [Haliburton Food Net's website](#).

"Our health isn't just affected by health care," says Aisha Malik, a registered dietitian with the health unit.

"Our health is connected to poverty issues that affect our physical and mental health, as well as our dignity and quality of life."

Income is a good example. "Research shows that people with lower incomes tend to be less healthy," Malik notes. "By addressing factors like lack of income, we can remove a barrier and help more people reach their full health potential."

The Health Unit's list of questions to candidates sheds light on income issues, including what they would do to boost employment, whether they support a living wage, and where they

stand on a basic income guarantee.

Other questions tackle housing and health care issues like access to dental care and prescription drug coverage for low-income earners.