



## Public Health Bulletin - Provincial Elections

Provincial elections offer an opportunity to raise public health issues and focus attention on the public health system. Government decisions and policies influence health determinants such as income and social status, social support networks, education, employment and working conditions, physical environments, social environments and healthy child development. The Public Health Association of Nova Scotia (PHANS) has developed this election bulletin to help both members and non-members discuss and highlight these relevant issues with their local political candidates.

Most Nova Scotians know about the personal health care system and access it when they are ill or experiencing a health problem. They are less aware of another system working on their behalf - their Public Health system and that it is delivered at federal, provincial, territorial and local levels. A strong Public Health system is the foundation to enhance and protect the health of all Canadians through health promotion, disease and injury prevention, monitoring health status, and responding to outbreaks and public health emergencies.

**Here are some questions to raise with your political candidate.**

### Public Health Renewal

In 2006, the government of Nova Scotia approved *The Renewal of Public Health in Nova Scotia: Building a Public Health System to Meet the Needs of Nova Scotians*. This report identified the investments and structures necessary to strengthen the Public Health System and ensure it has the capacity to promote and protect the health of Nova Scotians. A mid-course review conducted in 2011 demonstrated that considerable progress had been achieved toward meeting the 21 recommendations however there has been a reduction in the overall budget allocated to the Public Health program in Nova Scotia i.e. 1.5% of the overall health services budget.<sup>1</sup>

**What is your party prepared to do to ensure the ongoing renewal of the Public Health System in Nova Scotia?**

### Poverty in Nova Scotia

#### Poverty and Inequality Adversely Affect Health and Health Care

"Poverty and income inequality are among the most reliable predictors of poor health and premature death. Low-income earners have poorer physical and mental health and higher rates of hospitalization and health service usage."<sup>2</sup> Poverty is the greatest barrier to good health was the message heard during a nationwide consultation conducted by the Canadian Medical Association in 2013.<sup>3</sup> Public Health practitioners are concerned about the level of poverty in Nova Scotia, and the need for effective government action to reduce the impacts of poverty on health through collaborative action at multiple levels (provincial, municipal, federal) and departments.

**What is your party prepared to do to support a government wide, collaborative approach to poverty reduction? How will your party go about developing a plan of action, including allocation of resources? How will you address the issues related to child poverty in particular?**

**The Public Health Association of Nova Scotia (PHANS)** is a voluntary not-for-profit organization, affiliated with the Canadian Public Health Association. Membership is open to individuals and groups supporting PHANS' mission, principles and objectives.

By advocating for policy change, our **mission** is to work towards a society that supports a broad vision of health for Nova Scotia. **PHANS** also works to enhance the capacity of the public health workforce in Nova Scotia by providing networking and educational opportunities.

**PHANS** believes that public health is a product of a healthy community, a healthy environment, and a healthy economy



## Healthy Child Development

### Early Child Development Services in Nova Scotia

It takes a village to raise a child. The Public Health Association of Nova Scotia celebrates the excellent progress in improved outcomes for children and youth through the Child and Youth Strategy, the work of the Department of Health and Wellness and the District Health Authorities, Community Services and the creation of the Early Childhood Development branch within the Department of Education.

However, we continue to be concerned about the lack of sustainable funding for many of the programs and initiatives, such as the Enhanced Home Visiting Program offered through Public Health and partners. Further, our families and children lack universal access to early education and childcare services, and our schools and communities are struggling with their capacity to provide optimal environments for learning and growth.

**What is your party prepared to do to support child development, and how will you fund this? How will you sustain existing initiatives that are making a difference in the lives of our children?**

## Healthy Communities

### Many factors impact the health and well being of Nova Scotians

Binge drinking continues to be a problem in Nova Scotia. “While drinking alcohol is common for almost all university students across the country (over 90%, the percentage of Nova Scotia students who drink heavily at least once per month is significantly higher than the national average (57% vs. 32%) Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness 201.2 Another 1 in 5 Nova Scotians reported binge drinking at least once per month<sup>4</sup>.

- ***What is your party's plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol in Nova Scotia?***
- ***What is your party's plan to reduce the incidence of domestic violence/violence against women?***
- ***How can the financial challenges of the province be resolved without resorting to revenue generation through gambling? alcohol?***
- ***What is your party prepared to do about the issue of contraband tobacco?***
- ***What is your party's plan to support healthy and safe communities? (prevent crime, improve road safety, improve air quality and prevent environmental damage)***

<sup>1</sup>Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (February, 2012). Renewal of Public Health-A Mid-Course Review 2011.

<sup>2</sup>World Health Organization (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health.

<sup>3</sup>Canadian Medical Association (July, 2013). Health Care in Canada: What Makes Us Sick? Town Hall Report.

<sup>4</sup> Nova Scotia Department of Health and wellness (Spring, 2012). Reducing Alcohol Harms Among University Students: A Summary of Best Practices.