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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
Report: #2025-INFO-83
Date: October 31, 2025

Subject:

2025 Annual Report of the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on the release of the annual report from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada (CPHO) regarding the state of public health in Canada entitled: [Working Together to Thrive: Well-Being and Public Health](#).

2. Background

2.1 The CPHO is responsible for providing an annual report to the Minister of Health for tabling in Parliament as required under Section 12(1) of the [Public Health Agency of Canada Act](#).

2.2 The annual report provides an update on the state of public health in Canada and encourages discussion on priority public health issues.

2.3 The 2025 CPHO annual report was released on October 7, 2025.

2.4 This year, the CPHO focuses on the topic of well-being and provides a vision and solutions to mitigate complex issues that impact well-being, such as climate change, the toxic drug supply, economic pressures, and infectious diseases.

2.5 Well-being has also been prioritized in the global public health sphere, with the World Health Organization's 2021 [Geneva Charter for Well-being](#), which emphasized the importance of building "well-being societies" focused on health equity and a healthy planet for current and future generations.

2.6 New data, resources and features to help measure the state of public health in Canada are available on the [Health of People in Canada dashboard](#).

3. CPHO Annual Report Highlights

3.1 The first section of the report describes the emergence and importance of well-being as a goal and approach among communities and governments in Canada and around the world.

- a. The goal of well-being is multidimensional, incorporating health, social, economic, and environmental dimensions and indicators.
 - b. Two well-being frameworks are introduced in the report:
 - [Canada's Quality of Life Framework](#) assesses well-being using 91 indicators across five domains (i.e., prosperity, good governance, health, society, and the environment), and three central indicators (i.e., life satisfaction, sense of meaning and purpose, and future outlook).
 - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) [Better Life Index](#) uses 24 indicators to measure 11 well-being topics for member countries.
 - c. Key features of well-being approaches include:
 - A positive vision of health, encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, and social dimensions.
 - Balancing health, social, economic, and environmental priorities, for both current and future generations.
 - Intersectoral action across dimensions, with a focus on co-benefits.
 - d. The report also highlights First Nations, Inuit, and Métis knowledge systems and concepts of well-being. The report acknowledges the variety of well-being concepts across distinct Indigenous cultures, while also pulling out two common traits that are shared across distinct groups:
 - Using a holistic and strengths-based lens to well-being.
 - Understanding well-being as collective and relational (i.e., inclusive of family, community, society, the land, and nature, and encompassing the life course and an intergenerational perspective).
- 3.2 The second section of the report explores opportunities and benefits associated with applying a well-being approach in public health, which:
- a. Enables a positive and strengths-based way to promote health and well-being. Well-being approaches can recognize and build on existing strengths like community capacity and resources.

- b. Shifts public health discourse towards structural inequities, which are a root cause of health disparities. This shift allows public health to move beyond historical applications of health equity that were focused on monitoring trends and preventing and treating disease risk over time.
 - c. Recognizes the connections between the health of the current generation, future generations, and the planet. This enables a more holistic and longer-term approach to health promotion.
 - d. Creates potential for well-being to be a catalyst for intersectoral action to concurrently advance health, social, economic, and environmental priorities.
- 3.3 The third section of the report discusses the role of public health in well-being initiatives. Relevant areas of action include:
- a. Sharing knowledge on the structural determinants of health (e.g., political, economic, and ecological determinants).
 - The structural determinants of health are the mechanisms (e.g., values, beliefs, norms, laws, policies, and institutional practices) that drive the inequitable distribution of power and resources and therefore influence daily living conditions. In the Canadian context, colonization and systemic racism are examples of determinants of well-being.
 - Public health's knowledge of structural determinants of health can be used to support well-being initiatives to understand and act on societal conditions that create and perpetuate well-being inequities.
 - b. Leveraging public health data and evidence.
 - This requires both collecting disaggregated data to measure and monitor inequalities (e.g., by socioeconomic status or demographics) and applying equity and intersectionality lenses, when possible, to account for the diverse lived experiences and differential outcomes of populations affected by multiple and intersecting systems of power and oppression.
 - c. Championing intersectoral action.
 - Public health has long recognized the role of other fields in influencing health, and the importance of intersectoral action to foster health and health equity by improving the determinants of health. Working collaboratively with communities and other sectors to understand and improve health through policies, community-based interventions, public participation, and advocacy is public health's key role.
 - d. Supporting Indigenous rights.

- One important framework for rights-based action is the United Nations' [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). This document establishes a universal framework of the minimum standards necessary for the survival, dignity, well-being, and rights of Indigenous Peoples globally. It affirms the right to self-determination and self-government; the recognition of Treaties; access to and protection of lands, territories, and resources; protection and promotion of culture and language; economic and social rights; and participation in decision-making and strengthening Indigenous institutions.
- Public health institutions in the Canadian context can support the implementation of Indigenous rights by partnering with Indigenous Peoples directly as experts, collaborators, and service providers, and by accessing tools like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [calls to action](#), and their [ReconciliACTION plans](#), among others.

- 3.4 The report's final section, called "The Way Forward", highlights several opportunities for public health professionals to prioritize and advance intersectoral well-being initiatives. Public health professionals are encouraged to:
- a. Mobilize intersectoral partnerships by pooling resources, using well-being frameworks, and building capacity among public health professionals to work with actors outside of public health.
 - b. Promote positive health and well-being outcomes through a strengths-based lens that focuses on helping communities thrive.
 - c. Recognize the interconnections between the current generation, future generations and the planet's health and well-being in public health practice, policy, and research.
 - d. Leverage and expand upon public health's existing knowledge and evidence on the social and structural determinants of health and well-being.
 - e. Measure and monitor health equity, while also responsibly and ethically contributing to data sharing across sectors. This should include enabling affected communities to participate in decision-making throughout any or all stages of the data collection and use process. This recommendation also encompasses supporting Indigenous data sovereignty.
 - f. Advance intersectoral action in well-being initiatives (i.e., seek out opportunities to bring different sectors together, and offer to support existing intersectoral initiatives).
 - g. Collaborate with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. This looks like engaging meaningfully in long-term relationships, creating opportunities to invest in and support well-being data, research, policies, and programs, and implementing Indigenous rights-based approaches within public health systems and intersectoral partnerships.

4. Relationship to Strategic Plan

4.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Directions and Pathways in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Healthy People, Caring Communities

- H1. Implement preventive strategies to support community health, including food security.
- H2. Collaborate with partners to respond to complex social issues that improve community safety and well-being, including mental health and addictions.
- H4. Support the development of healthy children and youth, including access to affordable and quality child care.
- H5. Provide services for seniors and work with community partners to support aging in place.
- H7. Prepare for and respond to local health emergencies in partnership with the community.

b. Strong Relationships

- S2. Build and strengthen respectful relationships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.
- S5. Ensure accountable and transparent decision-making to serve community needs, while responsibly managing available resources.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The CPHO's annual report is an opportunity for boards of health and relevant intersectoral partners across Canada to reflect on the current state of public health and establish priorities for the year ahead.

5.2 This year's report is focused on promoting the collective well-being of people living in Canada. The CPHO's vision is for everyone in Canada to thrive and be productive. That meaning, people are healthy, have quality housing, decent work, strong connections to family and community, and a sense of hope about the future. To realize this, the CPHO is calling for attention to well-being as a unifying goal for collaborative actions across sectors.

5.3 Locally, the Durham Region Health Department will continue to work collaboratively across sectors to advance the health and well-being of Durham Region's populations.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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