

Community Picture Summary

A SNAPSHOT OF
HEALTH IN
TIMISKAMING
DISTRICT OF ONTARIO
NOVEMBER 2011

How to use this document

This is a summary of the full Community Picture report. Its purpose is to help communities to collaborate on shared priorities across Timiskaming, while aligning the Healthy Communities fund with what is most important to individuals and organizations in Timiskaming.

This document was created through the generous time and collaborative effort of partners and members of Timiskaming communities. After researching existing publications in November 2010, ten community consultations were held across the district, painting a picture of health in Timiskaming. Next, stakeholders gathered to identify helpful actions for the community to take, and agreed upon a set of key criteria to use in deciding which actions should be prioritized as a district. Finally, 80 individuals prioritized the actions via an online survey to come up with district-wide recommendations we can all work towards for healthier communities in Timiskaming.

Overarching Recommendations

We heard that Timiskaming wants to address the “symptoms” of health issues such as obesity, drug misuse, and injury from falls while also tackling the underlying contributing factors (or “social determinants of health”, such as poverty and unemployment). Our median income is lower than Ontario’s¹, while energy and transportation costs are high. Those on a limited income struggle to afford fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods, and those accessing the food bank generally receive pre-packaged, prepared foods. Transportation is a major barrier, tied to poverty, in accessing social and physical activities - keys for a healthy lifestyle. Shared priorities include addressing the lack of adequate housing (particularly for seniors, with Timiskaming’s aging population), and access to transportation. We must bring together different sectors to address these shared fundamental challenges through action and policy. We must include youth in the decision-making process.

Recommendations: for full recommendations, see full Report

Healthy Eating Provide education on how to live a healthy lifestyle. Hire a Local Food Coordinator to work with partners to increase access to healthy locally produced food.

Physical Activity, Sport & Recreation Develop affordable access to recreation for all. Support “unstructured play” opportunities for children to encourage the development of active lifestyle habits from an early age. Develop “active transportation” or “walkability” of communities.

Injury Prevention [To reduce risk factors leading to injury:] Develop adequate and affordable housing for all, including seniors. Increase access to affordable transportation.

Tobacco Use / Exposure, and Drug & Alcohol Misuse Create accessible spaces for children and youth to “hang out” free of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Enhance tools for mental wellness such as healthy self-esteem, positive self-regard, and decision-making. Encourage children and youth to build resiliency and identity through participating in meaningful activities and connecting with a positive adult.

Mental Health Promotion Increase awareness of mental health, enhancing tools for mental wellness. Encourage children and youth to build resiliency and identity. Ensure health care providers screen for mental health and are knowledgeable about appropriate resources, and to increase community education on mental health.

Building on strengths

Timiskaming is naturally healthy - with rich farmlands, and access to all kinds of outdoor recreation, from ice-skating and cross-country skiing, to hiking and boating. Let’s organize our efforts to take advantage of what’s here - accessing healthy local foods, exercising in our great outdoors, socializing in our communities, and leveraging existing programs. Our greatest natural resource is our people!



Targeted attention

First Nations and Métis are not accessing the services they need. There is a gap between what is offered and what is used. Funding is required for **culturally appropriate** programs and services.

A language barrier for Francophones (25% of population) 3%[♦] of Francophones speak no English, and some others are not comfortable with English health terminology, or discussing personal issues in a second language. Services and outreach in French are a must, and we should start with mental health as our top priority.

A snapshot of what we know and what we heard:

injury prevention	mental health promotion	healthy eating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortality due to injury is almost double the provincial average ♦ • Young males (15-19) are a high risk group • Seniors at elevated risk for hospitalization due to falls • Seniors' risk compounded by social isolation, lack of transportation, poor nutrition, infrequent opportunity for physical activity, lack of adequate home care, and lack of appropriate housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer Timiskaming residents than Ontario residents rate their mental health as being good² ♦ • Youth are often exposed to multiple risk factors for mental health • We need to use an integrated approach to the complex issue of mental health, as it is intertwined with all other areas • Considered by many to be the priority area for Timiskaming • "Our minds live in our bodies... they are not separate entities." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 69% of Timiskaming residents are either overweight or obese, which is statistically higher than Ontario's rate² ♦ • 31% of Timiskaming Residents eat fruit and vegetables 5 or more times per day, which is statistically less than Ontario (43%)² ♦ • The "local food environment" is not supportive of healthy eating, with fresh local ingredients being difficult to access, and restaurants generally serving less healthy options • Other issues such as transportation, poverty, and lack of awareness also contribute to poor diets
tobacco use / exposure	substance & alcohol misuse	physical activity, sport, & recreation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19% of Timiskaming residents smoke^{2*} • 9% are exposed to second-hand smoke in the home^{2*E} • Schools find it difficult to enforce smoking regulations when many parents smoke and sometimes support their children smoking • Local resources exist and an enforcement officer ensures legislation is enforced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although research is lacking, this is considered to be a major local concern • "Initiation to drug use" age is dropping • Increased observation of prescription drug use among teenagers • Kirkland Lake's methadone clinic is considered a first step in being able to address addiction locally • Further education for prevention and resources are needed within a harm-reduction approach to treatment • The links between substance misuse and isolation, poverty, and mental health must be addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of Timiskaming residents are active during their leisure time² ♦ • Cultural changes are affecting activity levels, such as more "screen time", less walking for transportation, and less emphasis on unstructured outdoor play for children • A reliance on structured physical activities, in combination with transportation barriers, recreation facilities fees, and a lack of activities offered, may be significantly impacting the way children learn to be active

* Revised November 2011 to reflect most accurate data.

^E Interpret with caution because sample size was low

¹ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population

² Canadian Community Health Survey 2009/2010, Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

About this document:

Access the full Community Picture: www.timiskaminghu.com

Be involved: contact the Timiskaming Health Unit 1-866-747-4305.

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Thank you:

Timiskaming Road Safety Coalition

Timiskaming Injury Prevention of Older Adults Committee

Canadian Mental Health Association

Timiskaming Best Start
Timiskaming Health Unit

Kirkland Lake Drug and Alcohol Awareness Coalition

Timiskaming District Secondary School

Matachewan First Nation Reserve

Beaverhouse First Nation

Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming

Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières

Timiskaming Native Women's Support Group

Aski Legal Services

Timiskaming Food Bank

Timiskaming Brighter Futures

Timiskaming Triple P Parenting Program

Green Timiskaming

Towns of Cobalt, Latchford, Kirkland Lake, and Temiskaming Shores

...and many concerned citizens!