

to: Engage NL

from: Building Healthy Communities Collaborative (BHCC)

www.buildinghealthynl.ca**Rationale for BHCC participation in the Legislative Review process:**

The Building Healthy Communities Collaborative (BHCC) believes in using partnerships, available resources and expertise to create and support healthy individuals, towns and cities. The activities of the BHCC and its project partners, have raised awareness of the value of creating a “Healthy Built Environment”. BHCC members offer their future support to the Municipal Legislation review process, in creating healthy built environments.

Rationale for Healthy Built Environment Action:

Dr Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada released her [***Annual Report on the State of Public Health in Canada, 26 October 2017***](#). She acknowledged that: “Where we live matters, and we all have a part to play in creating communities that promote healthy living.” She noted “the tremendous potential that our built environment has for helping Canadians live healthier lives. A healthy built community environment: provides easier access and opportunities for health-supporting behaviours; supports positive mental health through enhanced connectivity; promotes physical health through urban design planning; and involves all levels of health-informed decision-makers and infrastructure planners in community development.

Premier Dwight Ball released [***The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland***](#) document which acknowledges the added health and economic value of communities designed to develop, assist and enhance individual well-being. The NL government has committed to: building health impact consideration in all government policy decisions with the intent to create healthy environments and improve health status; supporting municipalities in implementing policies and practices that support health outcomes in Municipal Plans; funding schools in creating healthier learning environments; protecting the natural environment by reducing greenhouse gasses; increasing food security through agriculture and aqua-culture; providing affordable, safe and accessible housing; and, to developing supportive community partnerships.

Municipalities are in a significant position to advance the healthy communities agenda through their control over the design and access features which make healthy options the automatic, or default option in the built community environment. The [***Municipalities Act***](#) and the three [***Cities Acts***](#) are critical to providing broad-spectrum support for guiding municipalities in building healthy environments and thereby addressing the social, physical and economic health of the province.

Healthy Built Environment (HBE) Components:

The premise of a HBE is that a properly designed and built environment enables its residents to access the resources which promote and support overall health. The HBE refers to the interconnectivity of all constructed components of the community, and their link with the natural environment. Health is accepted to be inclusive of the physical, social and economic condition of individuals and their environment as described in the World Health Organization’s [\(WHO\) definition of health](http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/). <http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/>
<http://www.bccdc.ca/our-services/service-areas/population-public-health/healthy-built-environment>

Data supporting the health influence of environmental design is irrefutable. The current NL focus on the HBE, places us in a position on the leading edge of provinces, where we can put legislative and regulatory measures in place to ensure significant future health benefits.

British Columbia - Provincial Health Services Authority: Healthy Built Environment Linkages

The BHCC partnered with the British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority to understand and use their construct of the five elements of the HBE: Neighbourhood Design; Housing; Transportation Systems; Natural Environments; and, Food Systems. The program is being modified to suit the NL context.

http://www.phsa.ca/Documents/linkagestoolkitrevisedoct16_2014_full.pdf

Enabling and Mandatory Legislation:

In Newfoundland and Labrador, revising the four municipal legislation acts can go beyond basic needs to introducing legislation, regulations and by-laws to enhance community well-being. They can follow the NL Government's lead with the Health in All policy directive, requiring all new policies to be viewed with attention to their potential health impact.

Given that 89% of the population is living in 271 wide-spread, incorporated municipalities, most with fewer than 500 residents; and, that most of the *health care budget, the Government's most significant expense*, is used to treat preventable *chronic diseases*; then, policies and legislation present a broad, equitable, approach to health status interventions.

Requiring municipalities to include HBE data and consideration when developing long-term Municipal plans, is a one-step approach to incorporating design requirements to create healthier communities.

Health interventions through legislation, can provide reasonable access to: safe, healthy housing; nutritious, local food; reasonable and active transportation; community social connectivity; healthy school and workplace environments; destination walkability; and, appealing recreational venues. This can be achieved in part by the introduction of: mixed land use zoning; high-standard, multiuse buildings codes; "complete neighbourhood" designs; natural element inclusions (trees, brooks, etc.); regulatory provision for community-wide public events; and, a focus on increased population density with reduced urban or rural sprawl.

Expectations for Healthy Outcomes:

When municipalities are given the authority, incentive and resources to develop healthy communities, then adequate and informed planning can create an aesthetically pleasing, inviting, physically active, socially interactive, connected, accessible, and serviced environment hosting a healthy population.

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