

# The Lunenburg County Community Health Board Presents:

## Annual Update of Our Plan, 2009/10

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In September 2007, we asked you, the residents of Lunenburg County, to speak up about health issues—to share your thoughts so we could improve Lunenburg County.

In a **Community Health Survey**, you told us your opinions. **Over 950 surveys were filled out and returned!**

After this survey, the Community Health Board developed a three year Plan for 2007-2010. We combined what you told us in the survey with the latest in health statistics and information about our County. We developed recommendations for South Shore Health, and actions for the Community Health Board to work on.

Every year, as changes come about, we review and update our Plan. Below is the update for 2009-2010.

The Community Health Board will continue to advocate for improvements to present services. We will promote new ways of making people healthy in the Community.

### Who we are...

A Community Health Board is a group of volunteers from your local area who are working together to improve health and wellness. Our role is legislated under the Health Authorities Act.

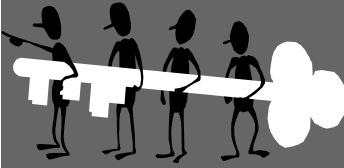
The Lunenburg County Community Health Board is one of two within **South Shore District Health Authority**. Lunenburg CHB represents the people of Lunenburg County. The Queens County CHB represents the residents of Queens.

### What we do...

Our Community Health Board:

- Listens to the people of Lunenburg County, gathering information on health and wellness concerns;
- Develops a Community Health Plan, setting priorities for change;
- Advises South Shore Health, our District Health Authority, on ways to improve health and health services;
- Takes action at the community level to put the CHB Plan into place;
- Keeps a list of services and organizations in the County called the Be Well Connected registry.
- Awards Wellness Grants to community organizations

# Community Health Plan 2007-2010



## Addictions

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### You Told Us:

- According to the survey, Addictions are one of the top health issues in the Community. For teens from 15—19 years old, Addictions are the number one health issue.
- You listed the following addictions, in order of importance: **drugs, alcohol, addictions in general, and tobacco**. These were your main areas of concern.

### Your Suggestions for Improvement:

- Better laws/policies to prevent addictions.
- Provide education programs re addictions

### The Health Research Says:

- In Nova Scotia, the **social cost of irresponsible drinking** is close to **\$418 million** a year. This cost is much more than the money the government makes from the sale of alcohol every year.
- Alcohol is still the most common of all drugs used illegally by teens. **High-risk drinking**, such as drinking to point of being drunk, was reported by **28% of teens** in 2002.
- In 2003, around **10,700 people** in Lunenburg County were affected by **problem gambling**. This number includes friends and family members.
- In Nova Scotia, in every age group, the rate of smoking has gone down in the last five years.

### We Advise South Shore Health to:

- Support youth addictions programs, especially those for teens
- Support education programs re addictions prevention in the schools at the high school level. Formerly, this curriculum content was provided through the Career and Life Management course in the Grade 10. This course has now been discontinued in Lunenburg County schools.

### As a Community Health Board, we will:

- Explore best practices and community resources in cooperation with staff of Addiction Services, and determine actions and areas of advocacy.

## Preventing Chronic Disease

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### You Told Us:

- In the survey, you told us two priorities were “**lack of exercise, and “obesity”**”. These are factors that help to cause Chronic Disease. We have placed these factors together under **Chronic Disease Prevention**.
- Under “lack of exercise”, you said there were not enough places to exercise, especially in small communities. Under “obesity”, you said there is a high rate of obesity in the County.

### Your Suggestions for Improvement:

- Increase access to exercise programs (transportation, lower cost, daycare services, etc.)
- Increase exercise programs in the schools
- Improve education to change the way people think about obesity and good nutrition

### The Health Research Says:

- In Lunenburg County, 62% of adults, and 27% of teens were overweight or obese in 2005.
- There are low rates of exercise among people in the County. This is especially true for older teens and adults.
- There are high rates of cancer on the South Shore, especially bowel cancer and prostate cancer.
- There are high rates of heart disease, diabetes, and arthritis on the South Shore.

### We Advise South Shore Health to:

- Urge the NS Department of Health to put in place a screening program for bowel cancer.
- Continue support of the Health Promoting Schools project. Expand the project to the other schools in the District. As part of Health Promoting Schools, include education programs re addictions prevention at the high school level. Formerly, this curriculum content was provided through the Career and Life Management course in the Grade 10. This course has now been discontinued in Lunenburg County high schools.
- Support Youth Health Centers, beginning with New Germany for 08/09.
- Put in place a healthy eating policy for food services at South Shore Health, like the new policy in the schools. With hospital vending machines, pursue business contracts with suppliers providing healthy choices.

### As a Community Health Board, we will:

- Advocate with Municipal Councils to improve access to recreation facilities (transportation, lower cost, etc.)
- Give priority to “Preventing Chronic Disease” when awarding the annual Wellness Grants. Programs addressing risk factors such as obesity, lack of physical exercise, etc. will be given priority for funding.

## Education

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### **You Told Us:**

You felt that education, in the broadest sense, was the key to addressing a number of issues:

- Education on healthy lifestyles
- Education to change the way people think about obesity/nutrition
- Education about sexual health
- Education for new parents about child rearing
- Education about youth crime: bullying in schools, vandalism, etc.

### **The Health Research Says:**

- In Lunenburg County, 62% of adults, and 27% of teens were overweight or obese in 2005.
- Low rates of physical activity were reported, particularly with older teens and adults.
- There has been an increase in lone-parent families in Lunenburg County in the past ten years. “Lone parent families” are those families with only one parent in the home.

### **We Advise South Shore Health to:**

- Continue funding/support for the Health Promoting Schools project.
- To promote understanding of health information, make sure that plain language is used by health care providers in South Shore Health programs.
- Support the Public Health role in helping lone-parent families. This includes support and evaluation of the Healthy Beginnings home visiting program.
- Establish permanent funding for the Baby-Friendly program. This will help new mothers, and also promote acceptance of breastfeeding in society.

### **As a Community Health Board, we will:**

- Inform Municipal Councils/R.C.M.P. about the concerns of the community over youth crime/violence. Advocate for safer streets and communities in Lunenburg County.
- Compile information on the Early Childhood Education Initiative, and the Child/Youth Health Strategy for possible CHB Actions.

## Income

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### You Told Us:

In the survey, people said that Income was a top priority. This was especially true for families trying to cover the high cost of healthy food, the cost of medicine and other basic needs.

### The Health Research Says:

Income is a key factor in maintaining health.

Although average income for families in Lunenburg County is similar to the rest of the province, several facts stand out in the research:

- **A gap exists between the salaries of men and women.** This difference in salaries is greater than in other areas of the province
- A gap exists between incomes of those living in the towns, and people in the rest of the County. People who live in the towns tend to have more money.
- The cost of a healthy diet is out of reach for low income families– those who live on social assistance, old age pension, or minimum wage find it hard to buy healthy food.
- The average cost of **healthy food for a family of four** in 2006 was **\$648/month**. This is not enough to afford a healthy diet. **After paying other household expenses, a family of four on income assistance has just \$420/month to pay for food.**

**Literacy** affects the ability to earn a good income. In Nova Scotia overall, 50% of the people living in poverty have difficulty with reading, writing or doing math.

### We Advise South Shore Health to:

- Support programs that promote health literacy
- Ensure adequate health staffing and retention of staff by offering full benefits to all SSH employees.

### As a Community Health Board, we will:

- Advocate for funding for literacy programs in the County
- Promote the “It’s OK to Ask” campaign, encouraging patients to ask questions of their primary health care providers.
- Investigate a pilot project to assist low income families to access prescription medications.

## Health Services

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### **You Told Us:**

You were concerned about:

- Wait times to receive hospital services.
- Access to family doctors
- Wait time to see a specialist.
- Access to health care in rural communities

### **Your Suggestions for Improvement:**

- Increase the number of family physicians/specialists
- Improve wait lists through better wait list management
- Better management of government dollars

### **The Health Research Says:**

The number of family doctors on the South Shore is above the provincial average. However, according to a Department of Health website, there are currently no family doctors accepting new patients in Lunenburg County.

### **We Advise South Shore Health to:**

- Let the public know about actions taken to meet national guidelines for wait times in hospital (Emergency Dept., diagnostic services, ambulatory care, surgery, etc.)
- Improve access to primary health care services for those residents without a family doctor. Support the redesign of primary care delivery through collaborative team practices.
- Support community action to address access to health services in communities such as New Germany and Chester/New Ross/Tancook Island.

### **As a Community Health Board, we will:**

- Let community groups know about the “Be Well Connected” list of services. Visit those organizations that could use the Be Well Connected information (R.C.M.P. offices, doctors’ offices, etc.)
- Advocate for new public transportation services, to help people travel to health appointments.

## Home Care, Long Term Care, Palliative Care

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### **The Health Research Says:**

As the population becomes older in Lunenburg County, there will be more need for services for the elderly. This includes Long Term Care, Home Care, and Palliative Care services.

**The following recommendations come from last year's Plan:**

### **We Advise South Shore Health to:**

- **Long Term Care:** Continue to urge the government to put additional dollars into building facilities for Long Term Care beds in the District.
- **Home Care:** Continue to urge Continuing Care to take action on those priorities identified for home care services in *Shaping the Future of Continuing Care (2005)* and to provide feedback to the Lunenburg County Community Health Board on the progress made.
- **Palliative Care:** In the long term, a hospice in the community is recommended. In the meantime, Palliative Care beds should be designated in the hospital for those patients who cannot receive palliative care in the home.

## Transportation

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### **The Health Research Says:**

Although people don't always think of transportation as a health issue, in rural areas affordable transportation is very important. In a Health Canada study in 2002, when a low-cost bus service was started in a country area, people became healthier. They had fewer mental health problems, were able to attend medical appointments, had a better diet, etc.

### **We Advise South Shore Health to:**

Continue to support development of new public transportation services in the County.

## Planning for the Pandemic

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### **The Health Research Says:**

An influenza pandemic is not just a health issue. It is likely to have a long-term effect on communities...As many as 75% of the population are likely to be infected, with 15 to 40 percent of those clinically ill.

Although no one knows when the next pandemic will occur, flu pandemics usually happen every 30 years. It has been more than 30 years since the Hong Kong Flu occurred in 1968. Many health officials feel we are overdue for another pandemic. (*Pandemic Influenza*, South Shore Health newsletter, May 2006)

### **We Advise South Shore Health to:**

Make sure that local business, municipalities, media and individuals in the community know about the planning already done, and what needs to be done at the community level.

### **As a Community Health Board, we will:**

Meet with South Shore Health and Emergency Measures Organization staff to determine status of pandemic planning, and the need for advocacy and action in the community.

## Water Quality

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In 2002, in a series of community meetings held throughout the County, water quality was identified as a health concern.

Since then, the Community Health Board has been promoting well water testing and educating the public about well water quality.

### **We Advise South Shore Health to:**

- Support the work of the Water Quality Committee by providing resources to improve access to well water testing for people in the County. We recommend to South Shore Health to promote affordable testing of well water in the area (for both chemicals and bacteria)

### **As a Community Health Board, we will:**

- Continue work on the Water Quality Committee.