



A-Z of Healthy Communities

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF ONTARIO HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
COALITION & BC HEALTHY COMMUNITIES SOCIETY

L - Local

“Many would be surprised to learn that the greatest contribution to the health of the nation over the past 150 years was made, not by doctors or hospitals, but by local governments. Our lack of appreciation of the role of our cities in establishing the health of the nation is largely due to the fact that so little has been written about it.”

There are many localism projects in communities across Ontario, Canada and the world. For example, the Working Centre’s [Localism Project](#) in Kitchener is building momentum around relationship-based exchange and trade. By buying and selling local goods and services, they support people’s livelihood activities and help strengthen the community.

The [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#) (BALLE) has linked 8 localism strategies to the social determinants of health “to lay out a shared framework of solutions working to create healthy people and communities” and provide a guide for health sector leaders “to drive holistic shifts toward increased human and community health”.^{vii}

What does “local” mean to you? To many it means buying local. Whether it be buying from the local farmers market that sources locally grown food or supporting the small business down the road, “buying local” helps create a stronger and more sustainable environment, economy and social connections.

What is Localism? Simply put, localism is the preference for one’s own area or region, although the meaning is often extended to include “the belief that services should be controlled and provided, or goods produced and bought, within a local area for the benefit of people in that area.”ⁱ Localism is “grounded in the belief that relationships matter, most. The way we interact with where we live — who we do business with — how we connect with people, other life, the land — all of it matters... As localists, we recognize the powerful ripple effect of our everyday decisions.”ⁱⁱ

Local Food: The local food movement continues to grow in momentum. There are local produce signs in grocery stores, “farm to table” restaurants have become very popular and farmers markets are sought by discerning shoppers. Foodland Ontario explains that buying Ontario food, “*supports our communities, helps our environment, provides nutritional benefits and it tastes great.*” The Ontario Table can help you shift your purchasing habits to support locally sourced food by providing an online guide “[How to Buy Local Food](#)”. You can also find farmers’ markets near you at [OntarioFarmFresh.ca](#).

Local Governance: While many of the forces that shape our lives today are global in nature, it is at the local government level that many of the policies and programs that most directly affect our wellbeing are made. “*One of the key lessons that can be learnt from the history of public health is that many major public health advances—from clean drinking water to tobacco control—have been led at the local level. As we enter the [Anthropocene](#), and strive to embrace an [ecosocial approach](#) that can address global ecological changes, much of the leadership and action will need to occur at the local level.*”^{iv}

Local Economies: One response to chronic problems such as food deserts, unaffordable housing, empty downtown storefronts and under-serviced neighbourhoods is for people to come together to create community self-reliance through “community-led, community-controlled economies where the decision-making is by those who are feeling the effects of the decisions that are made.”^{viii}

REFERENCES

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^{iv}Hancock, T et al: One planet regions: planetary health at the local level. The Lancet | Comment | Volume 1, issue 3, pe92-e93, June 01, 2017: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(17\)30044-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(17)30044-X/fulltext)

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^{vii}Planning by Design: Healthy Communities Handbook. Ontario Professional Planners Institute, 2009. p.1: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=7171>

^{viii}Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) The Future of Health is Local: https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/files/future-of-health-is-local-2016_.pdf

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Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
Coalition des communautés en santé de l’Ontario



BC Healthy Communities
People. Place. Potential.



OHCC enables communities to create and sustain positive change through equitable community engagement, intersectoral partnerships, political commitment, healthy public policy, and asset-based community development. BC Healthy Communities supports multi-sectoral groups to build their capacity to create healthy communities.