

This Op-Ed can be used by you to publish in local media, to help educate your constituents around the issue of men's health in Canada and to call them to action.

Change Men's Health: this week and all year round

Now that summer is here, many people start thinking of getting into better shape – and the more motivated among us may actually do so by making some small adjustments towards a healthier lifestyle. Recently, the Canadian Men's Health Foundation (CMHF) was in Ottawa to launch a national awareness campaign geared at getting men to take a more proactive approach to their health and wellness. Needless to say, it gave pause to my colleagues and I who are facing of summer of barbeques, farmers' markets and local fairs.

Every day, Canadian men disappear from our daily lives, not because they die, but because they are too ill or too frail to participate. This means they miss out on the moments of fatherhood, family life, and community involvement that make up the best times of life.

So, why the focus on men? Well, on average men live 10 years in poor health, most of it avoidable. Men are 79% more likely to die of heart disease, and 57% more likely to die from diabetes. 67% of Canadian men are obese. In addition, males account for 82% of alcohol related deaths and for 80% of suicides.

These statistics are needlessly high, and they are costing our communities greatly. Not only is there a financial impact on the health care system, but when men are unable to fully participate as members of our communities we all lose out.

What can be done? Health care experts say that about 70% of the problem is caused by men's attitude towards their own health, not genetics. This means that a majority of the problem is avoidable, and could be prevented with lifestyle changes.

June 9th – 15th is the first ever Canadian Men's Health Week. The Canadian Men's Health Foundation is letting men know that getting healthy doesn't have to be that hard, and it doesn't have to require drastic measures.

The website DontChangeMuch.ca provides easy lifestyle tips that you can incorporate into your daily lives, which will have major impacts on your health. Ordering a salad instead of fries, two beers instead of five, and turning the temperature down in your bedroom to get a better night's sleep are some of these small changes.

Men's health isn't just about men – women and families also play an important role in encouraging men to take better care of themselves. Talk to your husbands, brothers, fathers and sons about their health, and encourage them to take small steps to improve it. Help them make time, and let them know that their health is a priority for your entire family.

It's a fact: men can live longer lives and in better health, with major benefits to themselves, the health care system, friends, family and society.

Take some small simple steps now, for yourself and those who count on you. We can all help solve this problem, and I encourage constituents to get involved and take a stand for men's health.

