

December 7, 2020

An Open Letter to the Community from Southwestern Public Health

Southwestern Public Health's vision is "healthy people in vibrant communities."

A vibrant community is one where people are mentally and physically healthy, the land is fertile, and businesses succeed. It is a community where people come together to support one another, learn from one another, and celebrate with one another. We imagine this vision of community is one on which we all agree.

Over the past nine months we have seen community division about the best way to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This division is not surprising. We each approach challenges from different educational, religious, political, and familial perspectives. Our ways of seeing the world are held deeply within us, and in times of stress, we hold on tighter to what we believe to be true.

We are writing this letter because we believe we need to conserve our energy for the long months ahead, rather than spend it in disagreement.

As communities and as individuals, we have choices to make. We can choose to meet our neighbours with patience and understanding. We can choose compassion for those who are struggling during this difficult time; we can choose self-compassion if we find ourselves in difficulty.

It is now time to focus on what we can agree on:

- We have a common desire to protect the community we love.
- COVID-19 affects some people more than others; we are concerned about our most vulnerable.
- Having strong, connected, supportive communities protects our health and well-being.
- We each have actions we can personally take that will reduce the spread of this virus in our communities.

At the end of this pandemic – and there will be an end – we will again gather in comfort and in ease, at hockey arenas, and school barbecues, at worship, and at weddings, knowing we did our best to protect and care for the communities that we love.

