

IMPORTANT TO VOTE IN MUNICIPAL ELECTION

The 2018 municipal election is nearly upon us.

Oct. 22 is voting day for municipalities across the province unless, of course, you cast your ballot early in an advance poll. If you have voted already, or plan to on Monday, give yourself a pat on the back.

No, really.

The fact of the matter is that far too few of us even bother to vote in municipal elections. While the 2015 federal election's voter turnout hit an impressive 68.5 per cent and the recent provincial election saw 58.4 per cent of eligible voters cast a ballot, most municipal elections struggle to see voter turnout crack 40 per cent. And that's a shame.

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Granted, municipal issues may not always possess quite the same gravitas as those at the provincial or federal levels, but important decisions are still made at your local council table. Arguably, the choices made by members of council at your town or city hall have more of an impact on your daily life than the legislation that gets debated and passed at Queen's Park or Parliament Hill - even if the latter two arenas garner considerably more press coverage and punditry. That's not to say that federal and provincial issues aren't important, but upper and lower-tier municipalities are directly responsible for the administration of many services you rely on every day, including local and regional road maintenance, providing clean drinking water, garbage collection and countless others. If you have concerns about the delivery of local services, future development and/or your annual property tax bill - a perennial gripe for many homeowners - then now is the time to express it both to the incumbent politicians seeking re-election and the new candidates hoping to replace them.

It's very easy to get turned off politics these days, but given the important role municipal government plays in our communities, it behooves us all to take some time over the next few days, learn a little bit about those who desire to represent us and then vote for the candidates we think will do the best job.

After all, this is your best opportunity to voice what you want for the future of your community. A chance like this only comes once every four years.

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THREE STIGMA-BUSTERS YOU CAN DO TODAY

WE CAN ALL BE PART OF A SOLUTION TO STIGMA, WRITES MCGREGOR



MELANIE MCGREGOR
Column

STIGMA. One word that can just make your skin crawl when it comes to talking about mental health. But what can you do about it?

Well, a lot. And it's not just big things that fight stigma. It's also little things that you can do each and every day.

So, pull out your to-do list for today and add these three items:

1. Watch your language

Language takes practice, so pay attention to what you're saying and resolve to make some good changes.

For example, don't call your packed day "crazy" - call it "busy." Need to make your bed perfectly in the

empathy. If you can do something to help, do it.

You'll be opening doors to real, stigma-free conversation about mental health.

3. Post, like, click, and share

We've seen tons of things go viral - goats screaming like humans, grumpy cats and so on. So use the power of social media for good and stomp on stigma by talking about mental health.

Share a personal journey, post a touching or inspiring video or just say what's on your mind when it comes to mental health. Even just telling your network that you're open to talking can give others permission to talk as well.

We can all be part of a solution to stigma.

Melanie McGregor is the communications and advancement specialist at the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region branch, which provides mental health/addictions community support and education. Visit www.halton.cmha.ca for more information and follow @cmhahalton on Twitter for news and updates.

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