**Opinion Editorial (“Op-Ed”) Article template – Community Health and Wellbeing Week 2021**

Below, please find an opinion-editorial-article template to fill out and submit to local media, and/or to complete and share via your website or e-newsletter.

This template runs at about 600-625 words, meaning you have approximately 150-200 words to complete it with your customization sections (in yellow). Most op-eds submitted to publications tend to run at about 750-800 words (maximum).

If you have any questions or require assistance, please email Jason Rehel (jason.rehel@allianceon.org) with any questions, for help with filling out the template, or pitching to your local media outlet.

**HEADLINE/TITLE: We’re building equitable futures in community health by learning from the lessons of COVID-19**

[*Name of your community health organization*] is recognizing Community Health and Wellbeing Week (CHWW) in Ontario to highlight and celebrate our work to achieve the best possible health and wellbeing for everyone living in [name of community]. Especially during a pandemic, CHWW is a time to focus on our efforts throughout the year to break down barriers to care and provide primary care, mental health care, programming and services for our community, including members that are experiencing marginalization.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, we have been addressing the barriers to optimal health and wellbeing from systemic racism, poverty, to food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, and limited or no access to internet connectivity, and social isolation. Our staff and volunteers at [*Name of your community health organization*] have been responding to the needs of our community.

We have done that by [*insert description of some specific local COVID related supports your staff/volunteers have provided in your community*].

We continue to focus on eliminating the conditions that cause health disparities for many in our communities. We know many people live shorter-than-expected lives, face discrimination in accessing health services, or live with preventable health conditions. And we know that the pandemic has impacted communities differently. Black and racialized people, Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, isolated seniors, people experiencing homelessness and those facing mental health and addictions issues have faced disproportional impacts from COVID-19. The communities we serve are still facing barriers, so our work to ensure everyone has the opportunity for good health and wellbeing continues.

As Ontario moves towards taking steps to re-open and as we move through the pandemic, we will continue to advocate for a more equitable future for all. We’re building towards a more equitable future here in [*Name of your community/town/city/neighbourhood*] by [*Insert examples here of health equity-driven work, at the board and/or staff level, programs, larger initiatives to address health barriers, such as transportation, anti-racism, poverty, housing, food security-type of programs, but also wider advocacy, local digital equity work, etc. Should be more future-facing than the above section that listed COVID-19 supports*].

COVID-19 has showed us systems that don’t work for many people, systems that leave people behind, on issues like paid sick days, access to affordable housing, safe working conditions, or access to mental health care, oral health care or pharmaceutical drugs. There’s a lot more work to be done to build a more equitable future for everyone living in [name of your community].

We are members of the Alliance for Healthier Communities and as a member we are part of a vibrant network of over 100 community-governed primary health care organizations across the province providing accessible integrated healthcare, mental health and community supports to people who face societal barriers.

Together, let’s recognize the importance of locally driven action to change things for our communities. Together, let’s recognize and support the change that can be led by community health.

Join our movement by becoming a Community Health Equity Builder through the Alliance for Healthier Communities or by supporting our work at [name of community health organization]. [or additional call to action]