

The Council of Ontario  
Medical Officers of  
Health (COMOH) is a  
Section of



alPHA's members are  
the public health units  
in Ontario.

**alPHA Sections:**

Boards of Health  
Section

Council of Ontario  
Medical Officers of  
Health (COMOH)

**Affiliate**

**Organizations:**

Association of Ontario  
Public Health Business  
Administrators

Association of  
Public Health  
Epidemiologists  
in Ontario

Association of  
Supervisors of Public  
Health Inspectors of  
Ontario

Health Promotion  
Ontario

Ontario Association of  
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of  
Public Health Nursing  
Leaders

Ontario Dietitians in  
Public Health

2 Carlton Street, Suite 1306  
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1J3  
Tel: (416) 595-0006  
Fax: (416) 595-0030  
E-mail: info@alphaweb.org

November 16, 2018

Hon. Rod Phillips  
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
Ferguson Block, 11th Floor  
77 Wellesley St. W  
Toronto, ON M7A 2T5

Dear Minister Phillips,

**Re: Environmental Commissioner of Ontario Report**

---

On behalf of the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH), a Section of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA), I am writing to convey our support for the principles put forth in the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario *Climate Action in Ontario: What's Next? 2018 Greenhouse Gas Progress Report* as a foundation for a made-in-Ontario plan to address climate change.

As public health physicians, we have taken on the responsibility for protecting health at the population level, and it is often said that our communities are our patients. It is for this reason that we see climate change as perhaps the defining public health issue of our time, as it will affect every aspect of what we do.

Changes in the patterns and prevalence of communicable diseases, increases in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as floods, fire and drought, and damage to ecosystems are already being observed. According to the October 2018 special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase without immediate action. These impacts will be felt more acutely among our most vulnerable populations.

Ontario has an important role to play in what will necessarily be a global effort. The Ontario Public Health Standards, which set out our own mandate for the delivery of public health programs and services, explicitly names the impacts of climate change as an emerging health risk that we must take measures to mitigate. As public health physicians, we believe that prevention is the best medicine and we would strongly prefer actions that address climate change itself to actions that address its impacts.

We are aware that your Government is in the midst of resetting the legislative framework for Ontario's efforts to address climate change, and in our estimation, the Environmental Commission of Ontario report provides an excellent and achievable framework for a new provincial policy. It clearly outlines the importance of such a policy, describes specific strategies for reducing emissions and provides advice about adaptations to climate disruption that will be required regardless. The report is also very clear about the negative consequences of inadequate action to Ontario's health, economy and sustainability. As the Environmental Commission of Ontario has observed, Ontario is well positioned to be a jurisdictional leader in a lower-carbon economy, with many sectors already embracing innovative ideas to do their part. She has also observed

that realizing this leadership will require a solid commitment by the provincial government to develop strong legislation, clear emissions-reduction targets and incentives to reach them.

We hope that you will take the Environmental Commission of Ontario report into consideration and we look forward to lending our expertise to the development of a robust climate change policy for Ontario. We would be pleased to discuss this with you further. To schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, alPHa, at [loretta@alphaweb.org](mailto:loretta@alphaweb.org) or 647-325-9594.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Mackie".

Dr. Chris Mackie,  
Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health

**COPY:** Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario  
Dr. Robert Kyle, President, Association of Local Public Health Agencies