

TITLE: **Climate Change and Health in Ontario: Adaptation and Mitigation**

SPONSOR: **Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health**

WHEREAS the “*Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change*”, a global, interdisciplinary research collaboration between 27 academic institutions and inter-governmental organizations, describes climate change as the biggest global health threat of the 21st century and tackling climate change is described as potentially the greatest health opportunity¹; and

WHEREAS there is clear evidence that, like the rest of Canada, Ontario’s climate has experienced warming, as well as more frequent events of extreme temperature, wind and precipitation²⁻⁴; and

WHEREAS the current environmental health harms borne by the people of Ontario are significant, and include

- Four excess deaths per day for each 5°C change in daily temperature in warm seasons⁵
- 560 cancer cases per year attributable exposure to fine particulate matter air pollution⁶
- Vector borne disease including 138 cases of West Nile virus disease and 612 cases of Lyme disease in 2018⁷
- 67 deaths, 6,600 hospitalizations, and 41,000 emergency department visits per year related to foodborne illness⁸
- 73 deaths, 2,000 hospitalizations, and 11,000 emergency department visits per year related to waterborne disease⁹
- Community evacuations as a result of flooding or forest fires, with First Nation and northern Ontario communities particularly affected¹⁰⁻¹²;
- Findings of established population of exotic mosquitoes (i.e., *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti*) posing new disease threats (i.e., Zika virus, Dengue); and

WHEREAS national and provincial projections indicate that ongoing climate change will lead to increased health harms from extreme weather, floods, drought, forest fires, heat waves, air pollution, and changing patterns of infectious disease^{3,13-17}; and

WHEREAS just as all sectors of the economy are facing increasing impacts and financial costs due to climate change⁴, the increasing health harms to the people of Ontario may be associated with increased health care utilization and health care costs; and

WHEREAS the health harms and costs of climate change will continue to have a disproportionately worse impact on certain groups and regions of Ontario, including people who are elderly, infants and young children, people with chronic diseases,

people who are socially disadvantaged, Indigenous people, and residents of northern Ontario and rural Ontario^{4,13}; and

WHEREAS climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, such as increasing active transport and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, can have powerful health benefits which include improved cardiovascular and mental health, and decreasing air pollution-related deaths, respectively¹; and

WHEREAS there is broad support among Canadian physicians and public health professionals for specific, evidence-informed actions on climate change and health, as demonstrated by the seven recommendations of the “*Lancet Countdown 2018 Report: Briefing for Canadian Policymakers*” co-developed by the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Public Health Association¹

WHEREAS the Ontario Public Health Standards articulate a general goal to improve and protect the health and well-being of the population of Ontario and reduce health inequities, and a specific goal to reduce exposure to health hazards and promote the development of healthy built and natural environments that support health and mitigate existing and emerging risks, including the impacts of a changing climate¹⁸; and

WHEREAS as part of a made-in-Ontario environment plan, the Government of Ontario has committed to undertake a provincial impact assessment to identify where and how climate change is likely to impact Ontario’s communities, critical infrastructure, economies and natural environment, as well as impact and vulnerability assessments for key sectors, such as transportation, water, agriculture and energy distribution⁴;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies write to the provincial Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to support the Ontario government’s commitment to undertake provincial level climate change impact and vulnerability assessments;

AND FURTHER that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies recommend that health and health sector impacts borne by the full diversity of Ontario communities be included in provincial climate change impact and vulnerability assessments;

AND FURTHER that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies recommend that the provincial government’s approaches to the health impacts of climate change be aligned with the recommendations of the *Lancet Countdown 2018 Report: Briefing for Canadian Policymakers*;

AND FURTHER that copies be sent to the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Carried as amended

References – Resolution A19-1

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16. Ogden N, Gachon P. Climate change and infectious diseases: What can we expect? *Canadian Communicable Disease Report*. 2019;45:76-80.
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