

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

July 22, 2019

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
10th Flr, 80 Grosvenor St,
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Andrea Khanjin
Minister of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Ministers Elliott & Khanjin,

Re: 2019 alPHa Resolutions – Climate Change

On behalf of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and its member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations, I am writing to introduce a pair of resolutions related to climate change that were passed at our recent Annual General Meeting.

Our members strongly agree that climate change is the greatest global health threat of the 21st century and as such is the defining public health issue of our time. There are no longer any credible arguments against the impacts of human activity on climate change or its observable health effects due to more frequent extreme weather events, changing patterns of infectious diseases, and threats to the quality of our air, food and water.

Resolution A19-2, *Affirming the Impact of Climate Change on Health* was passed to reinforce and formalize our existing views, while A19-1, *Climate Change and Health in Ontario: Adaptation and Mitigation* provides more specific guidance on the way forward for multi-disciplinary collaboration on robust climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to minimize the effect of climate change on the health of Ontarians. Each is attached, along with a briefing note that was provided as background by the sponsor of A19-2.

We hope that you will take these resolutions into careful consideration for the development of an effective and evidence-based climate change policy for Ontario and we look forward to lending our expertise. 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 or 647-325-9594.

Yours sincerely,



Carmen McGregor,
alPHa President

COPY: Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. Jane McKenna, Minister of Labour
Pat Vanini, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Pegeen Walsh, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association

TITLE: Affirming the Impact of Climate Change on Health

SPONSOR: Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Public Health

WHEREAS climate change is defined as a shift in long-term worldwide climate phenomena associated with changes in the composition of the global atmosphere¹; and

WHEREAS the World Health Organization states climate change to be the greatest global health threat of the 21st century²; and

WHEREAS the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concludes that human influence on climate change is clear and is extremely likely that human influence is the dominant cause³; and

WHEREAS climate change impacts the health of all people through temperature-related morbidity and mortality, extreme weather events, poor air quality, food and water contamination, altered exposure to ultraviolet rays, increasing risk of vector-borne infectious diseases, food security and indirectly impacts people by affecting labour capacity and population migration and displacement⁴⁻⁶; and

WHEREAS climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, low income and homeless people, those who are chronically ill, Indigenous peoples, and rural and remote residents^{7,8}; and

WHEREAS the City of Kingston, the City of Hamilton, and the City of Ottawa declared a climate emergency for the purposes of naming, framing, and deepening commitment to protecting the economy, the ecosystem, and the community from climate change; and

WHEREAS tackling climate change requires political commitment by international, federal, provincial, and municipal stakeholders in acknowledging climate change as a public health issue

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) affirm the anthropogenic cause of climate change and its adverse impact on health in all people;

AND FURTHER will call upon strategic and provincial partners including the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Ministry of Labour, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Ontario Public Health Association, etc. to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in local communities.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: *Carried*

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

1. Howard C, Rose C, Rivers N. *Lancet Countdown 2018 Report: Briefing for Canadian Policymakers*: The Lancet, Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Public Health Association;2018.
2. Bush E, Lemmen DS, eds. *Canada's Changing Climate Report*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada; 2019.
3. Gough W, Anderson V, Herod K. *Ontario Climate Change and Health Modelling Study— Report*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Public Health Policy and Programs Branch;2016.
4. Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks. *Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan*: Government of Ontario;2019.
5. Chen H, Wang J, Li Q, et al. Assessment of the effect of cold and hot temperatures on mortality in Ontario, Canada: a population-based study. *CMAJ open*. 2016;4:E48.
6. Cancer Care Ontario, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). *Environmental Burden of Cancer in Ontario*. Toronto2016.
7. Public Health Ontario. *Monthly Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report January to December 2018*: Public Health Ontario; April 8, 2019 2019.
8. Drudge C, Greco S, Kim J, Copes R. Estimated Annual Deaths, Hospitalizations, and Emergency Department and Physician Office Visits from Foodborne Illness in Ontario. *Foodborne pathogens and disease*. 2019;16:173-9.
9. Drudge C, Fernandes R, Greco S, Kim J, Copes R. Estimating the Health Impact of Waterborne Disease in Ontario: A Key Role for Pathogens Inhaled from Plumbing Systems. *The Ontario Public Health Convention (TOPHC)*. Toronto2019.
10. CBC News. Worrisome flood forecast has Kashechewan preparing for annual evacuation. *CBC News*. April 9, 2019, 2019.
11. The Canadian Press. Wildfire threat prompts evacuations in northern Ontario. *CBC News*. July 21, 2018, 2018.
12. CBC News. Smoke from forest fire near Kenora, Ont., prompts evacuation of Wabaseemoong F.N. *CBC News*. July 20, 2018, 2018.
13. Berry P, Clarke K, Fleury M, Parker S. Human Health. In: Warren F, Lemmen D, eds. *Canada in a Changing Climate: Sector Perspectives on Impacts and Adaptation*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada; 2014:191-232.
14. Bouchard C, Dibernardo A, Koffi J, Wood H, Leighton P, Lindsay L. Increased risk of tick-borne diseases with climate and environmental changes. *Canadian Communicable Disease Report*. 2019;45:81-9.
15. Ludwig A, Zheng H, Vrbova L, Drebot M, Iranpour M, Lindsay L. Increased risk of endemic mosquito-borne diseases in Canada due to climate change. *Canadian Communicable Disease Report*. 2019;45:90-7.
16. Ogden N, Gachon P. Climate change and infectious diseases: What can we expect? *Canadian Communicable Disease Report*. 2019;45:76-80.
17. Smith B, Fazil A. How will climate change impact microbial foodborne disease in Canada? *Canadian Communicable Disease Report*. 2019;45:108-13.
18. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. *Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability*. Government of Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2018.

BRIEFING NOTE: aPHa RESOLUTION A19-2

Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

Issue:

- Canada is warming at twice the global average¹ and there is increasing evidence to support the human influence on climate change
- Climate change has an adverse impact on health in all people but disproportionately affects vulnerable populations
- A resolution was passed by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aPHa), June 10th, 2019 affirming the anthropogenic cause of climate change and its adverse impact on health in all people and calling on strategic and provincial partners to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in local communities

Background:

- Climate change is defined as a shift in long-term worldwide climate phenomena associated with changes in the composition of the global atmosphere.²
- In Canada, the release of the document titled Canada's Changing Climate Report in April 2019 supports the profound impact of climate change from increasing extreme weather events to decreasing freshwater supply.¹
- The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concludes that human influence on climate change is clear and that human influence is the dominant cause.³
- The World Health Organization states that climate change is the greatest global health threat of the 21st century.⁴
- Climate change impacts human health through temperature-related morbidity and mortality, extreme weather events, poor air quality, food and water contamination, altered exposure to ultraviolet rays, increasing risk of vector-borne infectious diseases, food security, and indirectly impacts people by affecting labour capacity and population migration and displacement.⁵⁻⁷
- Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, low income and homeless people, those who are chronically ill, Indigenous peoples, and rural and remote residents.^{8,9}
- In Ontario, climate change has been linked to prolonged heat waves and more extreme weather events such as flooding secondary to heavy rain events, as well as an increased risk for vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease because of milder winters resulting in expanding insect habitats.
- The City of Kingston, the City of Hamilton, and the City of Ottawa have all independently declared climate emergencies, and more recently on June 17, 2019 the House of Commons passed a motion to declare a national climate emergency in Canada and support the country's commitment to meeting the emissions targets outlined in the Paris Agreement.

Recommendations:

- **Develop and implement climate effective, evidence-based based climate action plans at the local and provincial level based on Canada's commitment in the Paris Accord and the Pan-Canadian Framework.**
- **Develop and implement policies and programs to support an equitable transition for farmers, workers, and their communities affected by the transition to a low carbon economy.**

- **Collaborate on robust climate change mitigation strategies to minimize the effect of climate change on the health of Ontarians.**

References:

1. Bush, E. and Flato, G. (2018): Canada's Changing Climate Report, (ed.) E. Bush and D.S. Lemmen; Government of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario
2. United Nations. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. New York; 1992.
3. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Geneva; 2014.
4. World Health Organization. WHO calls for urgent action to protect health from climate change – Sign the call. <https://www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/>. Published 2015. Accessed April 11, 2019.
5. Government of Canada. Climate change and health: Health effects. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/climate-change-health.html>. Published 2018. Accessed April 11, 2019.
6. Costello A, Abbas M, Allen A, et al. Managing the health effects of climate change: Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission. *Lancet (London, England)*. 2009;373(9676):1693-1733.
7. Watts N, Amann M, Ayeb-Karlsson S, et al. The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: from 25 years of inaction to a global transformation for public health. *Lancet (London, England)*. 2018;391(10120):581-630.
8. United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *Climate Change: An Overview*. New York; 2007.
9. Government of Canada. Climate change and health: Populations at risk. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/climate-change-health/populations-risk.html>. Published 2018. Accessed April 11, 2019.