

**OPHA – Environmental Health Work Group
Terms of Reference**

Background:

Environmental health is the branch of public health which is concerned with all aspects of the natural and built environment that may affect human health.

Environmental health is defined by the World Health Organization as: “Those aspects of human health and disease that are determined by factors in the environment.” It also refers to the theory and practice of assessing and managing factors in the environment that can potentially affect health. It can include both the direct pathological effects of chemicals, radiation and biological agents and also the effects, often indirect, on health and wellbeing of the broad physical and social environment.

Public health units are engaged in addressing the complex issues and public health impacts related to environmental health such as air, land and water quality, climate change, environmental toxic exposures, consumer product safety and food safety. Public health units have a direct mandate, from the Ontario Public Health Standards (2008) to address these issues through a number of public health programs (environmental health, child health, reproductive health, chronic disease prevention, and emergency response).

Ontario Public Health Program Standards (2008 or as current) outline specific goal statements for these programs that have environmental health implications:

Chronic Disease Prevention	To reduce the burden of preventable chronic diseases of public health importance (cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory diseases and Type II diabetes).
Reproductive Health:	To enable individuals and families to achieve optimal preconception health, experience a healthy pregnancy, have the healthiest newborn(s) possible and be prepared for parenthood.
Child Health	To enable all children to attain and sustain optimal health and developmental potential.
Food Safety	To prevent or reduce the burden of food-borne illness.
Safe Water	To prevent or reduce the burden of water-borne illness related to drinking water. To prevent or reduce the burden of water-borne illness and injury related to recreational water use.
Health Hazard Prevention and Management	To prevent or reduce the burden of illness from health hazards in the physical environment.
Emergency Preparedness	To enable and ensure a consistent and effective response to public health emergencies and emergencies with public health impact

In order to improve the health of Ontarians, there is a need for public health to work with municipalities, provincial ministries, professional organizations and other national and community partners to protect and promote health.

Purpose:

To work collaboratively to improve the health of the public as it is impacted by environmental health factors through knowledge sharing, participation in environmental health promotion projects, research, partnerships and advocacy to promote healthy public policy.

Primary Activities:

The Environmental Health Work Group will focus on the following environmental health areas:

- Air Quality
- Climate Change Mitigation
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Children's Environmental Health
- Drinking Water and Recreational Water
- Emerging environmental health issues as they arise

Task groups maybe developed to work on environmental health issues.

Membership

Membership is open to staff of local public health units in Ontario and members of organizations and individuals who collaborate with public health units on issues that affect health outcomes associated with the built environment.

The workgroup will collaborate with others actively researching and working on environmental health issues. Decisions will be arrived at through consensus of members.

Members must also be OPHA members in good standing.

Chair

The chair will have a two year term which can only be renewed once. The chair is responsible for calling the meetings, preparing agendas, reporting to the OPHA board, acting as an intermediary between the workgroup and the OPHA executive director, liaising with other workgroups on issues which overlap mandates, maintaining a list of workgroup members, preparing an annual workplan, and preparing a budget as needed.

Recorder

The recorder is responsible for taking and distributing the minutes. This task will be rotated at each meeting by alphabetical order.

Accountability and Reporting

The Workgroup is accountable to the Executive Director and the Board of Directors of OPHA. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed at the first meeting each year and/or as necessary.

Meetings

Meetings are held quarterly at a minimum. To demonstrate our commitment to building healthy communities, meetings will be by teleconference or webinar with agendas being sent out two

weeks in advance. Face to face meetings will be no more than once per year, with the workgroup identifying ways to offset greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle distance travelled.

Revised: September 2014