



Ontario Public Health Association
l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
Established/Établi 1949

The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

44 Victoria St., Suite 502
Toronto, ON M5C 1Y2

Tel: (416) 367-3313
Fax: (416) 367-2844
E-mail: admin@opha.on.ca
www.opha.on.ca

President
Ellen Wodchis
E-mail: President@opha.on.ca

Executive Director
Pegeen Walsh
E-mail: PWalsh@opha.on.ca

Constituent Societies

Association of Ontario
Health Centres

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Association of Supervisors of
Public Health Inspectors of Ontario

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors (Ontario Branch)

Community Health Nurses'
Initiatives Group (RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario

Ontario Association of Public
Health Dentistry

Ontario Society of Nutrition
Professionals in Public Health

The Ontario Association of Public Health
Nursing Leaders

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

January 19, 2017

Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

RE: Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020

Dear Premier Wynne,

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) would like to congratulate the Province of Ontario on the release of its Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020 and its commitment to engaging citizens and stakeholder groups across Ontario. Your government's practice of soliciting feedback on the plans and proposed legislation relating to the Climate Change Action Plan through regular postings on Ontario's Environmental Registry has been impressive. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on such key documents as: the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act (Cap and Trade); Discussion Paper on the Next Regional Transportation Plan; Coordinated Land Use Plans; Discussion Paper on Electric Vehicle Incentive Initiatives; the Long Term Energy Plan, the Discussion Paper on Cycling Initiatives and changes to the Ontario Building Code.

We were encouraged from our meeting with Minister Murray in January 2015 by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's commitment to taking action against climate change and their understanding of the critical connection climate change has to the health of Ontarians. The release of the Climate Change Action Plan and supporting legislation, are important steps in ensuring climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies are implemented across multiple sectors.

Created in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a not-for-profit organization committed to providing leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthening the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. Our mission is achieved by providing professional development, timely information and analysis on public health issues, access to multi-

disciplinary networks, advocacy on healthy public policy and expertise and consultation.

With a mandate under the Ontario Public Health Standards to increase awareness of climate change health impacts and manage health hazards, the public health sector plays an important role in supporting climate resiliency as well as identifying and mitigating community vulnerabilities. Public Health Units across Ontario are at various stages of developing plans to address climate change, with some having developed comprehensive plans, including a health equity lens on vulnerable populations. OPHA and Public Health Units across Ontario are keenly aware that climate change health impacts are likely to disproportionately impact our most vulnerable populations. Under the Ontario Public Health Standards, Public Health Units are also mandated to consider health inequities when assessing needs of local populations. To that end, OPHA is pleased to see that the Climate Change Action Plan includes actions to assist low-income households and vulnerable communities to reduce their carbon footprint.

In addition, some health units, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, are moving forward in the completion of Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessments. These assessments are supported by evidence and data from the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. The vulnerability assessments will be essential in identifying and prioritizing adaptation strategies that support communities and in particular those individuals most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

We are encouraged that the Climate Change Action Plan identifies multiple areas to support mitigation which are of critical importance to public health. For example, within the action area of transportation, the support for increased commuter cycling networks, and the enhanced implementation of the Ontario Cycling Strategy and Action Plan, is to be commended. Increased access to active transportation infrastructure is vital to increasing physical activity, reducing traffic-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, decreasing related chronic diseases, and reducing traffic congestion on our roads and transportation networks.

The identification of the need to strengthen climate change policies within the municipal land-use planning process is key to supporting the creation of compact, complete communities. Ensuring municipalities have the tools and resources to implement strategies such as complete streets, climate-resilient infrastructure, energy efficient buildings, increased canopy cover, and high-density highly walkable communities will not only support climate change mitigation and adaptation, it will also have many related health benefits. We are also pleased to see that these climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and actions have already been integrated throughout the four plans included in the Coordinated Land Review completed in 2015/16, and will be integrated within other provincial legislation to provide a comprehensive approach across the ministries that address the impacts of climate change in Ontario.

Finally, we applaud the inclusion of climate change considerations within the Environmental Assessment process within Ontario, including both climate change mitigation and adaptation as important concepts to consider during this process. While mitigation will be key in decreasing potential future impacts of climate change, including adaptation as a consideration during the

environmental assessment process will reduce any climate change impacts which are already occurring within the province.

Moving forward, education and awareness raising among the public, key community stakeholders, and provincial ministries will be vital to ensuring successful implementation. Public Health Units can act as a key resource to supporting the increased awareness of the public on the need to address climate change, highlighting the positive health impacts which will result from mitigating and adapting to climate change.

OPHA is supportive of the actions outlined within the Climate Change Action Plan. The co-health benefits of these actions include better air quality, reduced urban heat islands, increased community resiliency, mitigation of climate-sensitive infectious and vector-borne diseases, increased physical activity, general wellbeing and lower health care costs. We look forward to discussing how we can work with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, to support the successful implementation of this action plan over the next five years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Wodchis". The script is cursive and fluid.

Ellen Wodchis

President

c. Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-term Care
c. Honourable Glen R. Murray, Minister of Environment and Climate Change