

ELECTION 2019

Public Health Matters

CPHA is encouraging voters to question their local candidates on some key public health issues. We have an opportunity to challenge all candidates to set a higher standard for Canadians. We should not be satisfied with rehearsed answers that lack depth. We need to hold the candidates themselves to a higher standard and expect more from them.

Climate change and human health crises

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. CPHA calls on the next federal government to invest in strategies and programs that support strong healthy people in Canada regardless of their economic and social status.

A HIGHER STANDARD FOR CANADIAN FAMILIES

Climate change is identified as “[the greatest health threat of the 21st century](#)” and it is recognized that “[the effects of climate change are being felt today and future projections represent an unacceptably and potentially catastrophic risk to human health.](#)” Many of the policies needed to fight climate change could also produce health benefits, reduce health care costs (i.e., utilization, transportation), and improve social cohesion and equity in our communities.

It's time for Canada to do better.

CALL TO ACTION

CPHA is calling on the next federal government to take leadership in the development and implementation of an effective, evidence-based climate action plan that will help achieve the emission reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

WHY IT MATTERS

In Canada, provincial, territorial and federal governments have [committed to making change](#), and important steps have been taken by some provincial and territorial governments, and the federal government over the last several years, but our work is far from complete. The [Auditor General of Canada](#) found that climate emissions in 2020 are projected to be 111 MT (megatonnes) above Canada's 2020 target of 620 MT.

The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) has identified the effects on health resulting from climate change as:

- Increases in atmospheric temperature are projected to increase morbidity and mortality due to heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke, heat edema, heat rash, heat stress, acute cardiovascular disease and renal disease;



- Reduced air quality from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will likely increase morbidity and mortality due to asthma, ischemic heart disease, stroke, acute lower respiratory infections, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
- Vector-borne diseases are increasing in prevalence and are likely to continue their advance as warming temperatures expand the geographic range of insects and other species; and
- Extreme weather events, including flooding, droughts, cyclones, hurricanes and wildfires are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. Changes to weather and extreme weather events threaten food security, housing and infrastructure and result in lost income for those affected by the event. Climatic instability is expected to undermine crop yields, Indigenous hunting and gathering practices, and fishery production.

Climate change is harming the physical and mental health of Canadians. Cardiorespiratory impacts from worsening air pollution due to wildfires [left many Canadians ill in recent summers](#). Emergency evacuations and population displacement from wildfires and floods have been associated with [trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder](#).

In the [Canadian Arctic](#), where temperatures have increased by up to 3°C from the 1950s, health risks are increasing from food insecurity resulting from decreased access to [traditional Indigenous foods](#).

Meanwhile, [Lyme disease](#) has spread into new regions in Canada and more intense and prolonged pollen seasons have the potential to [exacerbate hay fever and asthma](#).

QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES

1. Do you accept the scientific evidence that climate change is caused by human behaviour and is having a negative impact on the health of Canadians?
2. Does your party have an effective, evidence-based climate action plan that demonstrates a national approach to how Canada will achieve the emission reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C, based on our commitments in the Paris Accord and the Pan-Canadian Framework?
3. Will your party develop and properly fund policies and programs to support an equitable transition for farmers, workers, and their communities who will be affected by the transition to a low carbon economy?

RESOURCES

- [CPHA Discussion Document: Global Change and Public Health: Addressing the Ecological Determinants of Health](#)
- [Lancet Countdown 2018 Report: Briefing for Canadian Policymakers](#)
- [Council of Canadian Academies Report: Canada's Top Climate Change Risks](#)

ABOUT CPHA

Founded in 1910, the Canadian Public Health Association is the independent voice for public health in Canada with links to the international community. As the only Canadian non-governmental organization focused exclusively on public health, we are uniquely positioned to advise decision-makers about public health system reform and to guide initiatives to help safeguard the personal and community health of Canadians and people around the world. We are a national, independent, not-for-profit, voluntary association. Our members believe in universal and equitable access to the basic conditions which are necessary to achieve health for all.