

July 8, 2004

Agenda for Action on Air & Health

In Toronto, as in many large urban centres in industrialized nations, air quality continues to present a significant concern for public health. The study *Air Pollution Burden of Illness in Toronto* estimates that five key air pollutants contribute to about 1,700 premature deaths and 6,000 hospitalizations each year in Toronto.

These estimates have been updated from the original study done in 2000, which estimated that air pollution was linked to 1,000 premature deaths and 5,500 hospitalizations.

City's commitment

The City has made a significant commitment to improved air quality. For example:

- The City's Official Plan encourages a compact urban form, mixed land uses, and alternative modes of transportation;
- Toronto's Energy Efficiency Office works to increase the energy efficiency of public buildings, institutions, and privately-owned buildings within the City;
- The 20/20 social marketing campaign and the Smart Commute Initiative aim to reduce home energy use and vehicle use across the GTA;
- The Toronto Atmospheric Fund (TAF) has funded city and community-based research and projects designed to address climate change and/or air pollution.

Focus on provincial government

- The City lacks the necessary jurisdiction, authority, and resources to improve air quality.
- The Agenda for Action recommends actions that can be taken by the provincial government to directly or indirectly improve air quality.
- Many of the recommendations would improve air quality and human health in communities across Ontario.

Sources of Air Pollution in Toronto

- The transportation sector - on-road vehicles & off-road equipment - is the most significant source of emissions and exposure within the City.
- Fuel consumption for activities such as home heating and electricity generation is a significant source of air pollution within the City.
- Large point sources such as coal-fired generating stations, steel plants and refineries in southwestern Ontario and the mid-western United States are significant sources of smog.

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The following priority areas are identified in the *Agenda for Action on Air and Health*.

Reduce emissions in the transportation sector

- Provide significant and sustained funding to public transit to increase ridership across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA);
- Curb urban sprawl and integrate land-use and transportation planning across the GTA to decrease dependence on vehicles and encourage alternative modes of transportation;
- Eliminate the selling of off-road diesel fuel in large urban centres; and
- Provide funding to reduce air emissions from transit buses and school buses.

Reduce emissions associated with fuel and electricity consumption

- Phase out coal-fired power plants;
- Aggressively promote energy efficiency (e.g. 40% reduction by 2020);
- Aggressively promote renewable energy sources, such as wind generators;
- Encourage co-generation with high-efficiency natural gas generators.

Reduce emissions from point sources

To address point sources that impact on local air quality:

- Improve the Certificate of Approval process (accelerate update of air standards, update dispersion models used, conduct thorough consultation on new risk management framework).

To address point sources that contribute to regional air quality concerns:

- Develop a regional air quality plan that mandates significant reductions over time in smog-forming precursors from Ontario's industrial sector.

Support systems for air quality improvements

- Develop health-protective air standards to drive action.
- Establish consultation processes that are fair, transparent and equitable.
- Produce and share information that can be used to assess, monitor and evaluate the impact of air quality policies on local and/or regional air quality.
- Enhance resources to build air quality capacity within the public health sector.
- Collaborate on social marketing campaigns that encourage behavioural shifts needed.
- Improve the provincial Air Quality Index and smog messaging system.