Presentation by EcoHealth Ontario

*Green City: Why Nature Matters to Health*

Toronto Board of Health

EcoHealth Ontario’s Co-Chairs:

Mike Puddister, Deputy CAO & Director Watershed Transformation, Credit Valley Conservation Authority

Pegeen Walsh, ED, Ontario Public Health Association

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Our Purpose

- Develop shared values among public health, medical, education, planning, and environmental sectors and new collaborative relationships between them.
- Share information to enhance systems thinking and improve health outcomes through improved ecosystem quality and access to green spaces.
- Encourage policies and programs to advance the protection, restoration, and enhancement of ecosystem services for the health and well-being of communities.
Who We are

Steering Committee:
- Public Health – 4 Public Health Units (incl. Toronto) & Ont. Public Health Association
- Watershed Management – Conservation Ontario; Credit Valley & Toronto & Region CAs
- NGOs – David Suzuki Foundation, Forests Ontario
- Academia – Canadian Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health
- Planning – Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Plus a Growing Network:
- Friends of the Greenbelt, CAPE, Ontario EcoSchools, LEAF...
- Including over 160 agencies, groups and individuals

Supported by:

Our Focus

Reverse Disturbing Trends:
- The loss or deterioration of natural features and their functions in Ontario.
- Increasing prevalence of human health issues (e.g. respiratory disease, obesity and other chronic illnesses).
- Greater climate change impacts.

Capitalize on Opportunities:
- Growing evidence and awareness of the benefits the natural environment provides to our communities’ health and well being.
- Realizing health benefits from environmental protection and restoration, at neighbourhood/urban scales.
Reasons for EcoHealth’s Support

- Adds to our understanding of the relationship between green space and human health;
- Recognizes the importance of preserving, maintaining and protecting green spaces;
- Supports increasing Toronto’s Canopy Cover;
- Highlights the implications for those that are most vulnerable;
- Values school sites as community assets and the need to keep them accessible;

Reasons for Support (Cont’d)

- Prioritizes green space investments areas, including creating parks in high need neighborhoods;
- Calls for strengthened policies on green spaces in provincial land-use planning;
- Requires a cross-city approach (e.g. municipal planners, parks and rec and other divisions of the city).
EcoHealth ONTARIO

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Thank You