

## Think piece for the 2016 PHABC Summer School (July 11-12, 2016)

### “Promoting Health and Sustainability: The Case of Climate Change and Energy Use”

*Climate change presents “an unacceptably high and potentially catastrophic risk to human health.” (UCL-Lancet Commission)*

Public health practitioners, like many Canadians in general, often do not fully appreciate the significance of climate change and the implications it holds for their practice and communities. The challenge, once one begins to learn about the potential impacts of climate change, is to avoid a “Chicken Little” response and resort to running about wildly declaring the sky is falling.

The situation may seem bleak. Experts agree that climate change poses major threats to human health, to human and animal populations, to our ecological stability, and human social, financial, and political stability and well-being (see Text Box). As well, climate change poses significant ethical challenges as well as challenges to global health and health equity.

However, as this year’s PHABC summer school will demonstrate, climate change also offers opportunities and hope, and much that public health can contribute. Indeed, the skills and capacities of public health practitioners are exactly the tools required if we are to

effectively act to mitigate (prevent) the and build resilience for the worst expectations that climate change brings.

The skills of surveillance, strengths with gathering and assessing data, developing positive and effective interventions, working with community partners, creating healthy public policy and designing responses to emergency situations –are just some of the everyday tool kit of public health practitioners that can be readily directed to the challenges of climate change and to the creation of healthier and more sustainable communities.

This year’s PHABC Summer School will bring together individuals involved in the delivery of public health activities and experts in climate change and health to examine the role of public health with respect to climate change. We will apply the Ottawa Charter and consider the implications for **action** at the individual, health care system and community level for health and health equity.

*The most recent report on health impacts by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assesses the probability of major increases in ill-health by mid-21<sup>st</sup> century due to climate change as follows:*

- *Very high confidence*
  - *Greater risk of injury, disease, and death due to more intense heat waves and fires*
  - *Increased risks of food- and water-borne diseases*
- *High confidence*
  - *Increased risk of under-nutrition resulting from diminished food production in poor regions*
  - *Consequences for health of lost work capacity and reduced labor productivity in vulnerable populations*
- *Medium confidence*
  - *Increased risks of vector-borne diseases*

*The IPCC also points out that there are health co-benefits from reducing emissions of other climate-altering pollutants released by fossil fuel combustion, with important implications for policy in the areas of energy, transportation and agriculture.*

*One estimate is that climate change already causes 400,000 deaths annually, while another 4.5 million deaths annually are linked to air pollution, hazardous occupations and cancer associated with our carbon-intensive energy system; this could rise to 700,000 and 6 million annual deaths respectively by 2030.*

**CPHA report on Ecological Determinants of Health, 2015**



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Concepts such as the ecological determinants of health will be introduced and tools and resources to support action will be explored. In particular, training in spatial information (*Google Earth*) and BC specific climate modeling (*Plan2Adapt*) will be offered as a concrete process to support local thinking and action on climate change.

#### ***The health and other co-benefits of a more sustainable society***

*The health co-benefits of a more sustainable society are not limited to the largely protective but very important function of minimizing the harm to health from global ecological change, important though that is. What is often overlooked is that there are very large health costs to our current way of life, and thus very large potential health benefits resulting from a shift to a more sustainable society. There is a considerable overlap in a large number of policy areas of importance to both health and sustainability. The application of a health and sustainability 'lens' to public policy in many areas of policy would result in the creation of healthier public policies and healthier societies and communities.*

*Among the key policy areas where there are significant health and sustainability co-benefits are energy, agriculture and food, and urban design and transportation.*

**CPHA report on Ecological Determinants of Health, 2015**

In small local groups, we will discuss and map some of the capacities and resources that already exist at the community level, in three key areas of health co-benefits that arise from the creation of more sustainable communities, as identified in the CPHA report on the ecological determinants of health (see Text Box).

The PHABC Summer School is a unique and valuable opportunity for concerned and motivated practitioners from across a range of disciplines and locations across the province to come together to learn from and with each other, with the support of leading thinkers and innovators. The results include increased knowledge and competencies in this cutting edge issue of interest and importance to public health in BC, familiarity with practical tools and strategies and renewed enthusiasm for tackling the pressing issues that the future is fast imposing on us.

**For more information about registration** please contact [staff@PHABC.org](mailto:staff@PHABC.org)

*Please note that there will be no food provided, and that Day 1 will be a working lunch. So you will need to bring your own lunch. Consistent with the idea of a low-meat diet that we will be exploring, you may want to look at recipe ideas at [www.meatlessmonday.com/favorite-recipes/](http://www.meatlessmonday.com/favorite-recipes/)*

**For more general information visit:** [www.phabc.org/event/2016-summer-school/](http://www.phabc.org/event/2016-summer-school/) **or Contact** PHABC Summer School organizer at: [coordinator@phabc.org](mailto:coordinator@phabc.org) OR (604)316-2286

### **Want to learn more before the Summer School starts?**

- CPHA Discussion Paper "Global Change and Public Health: Addressing the Ecological Determinants of Health" ([www.cpha.ca/uploads/policy/edh-discussion\\_e.pdf](http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/policy/edh-discussion_e.pdf)) and the 100-page technical report – the 'Report in Brief' ([www.cpha.ca/uploads/policy/edh-brief.pdf](http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/policy/edh-brief.pdf))
- Canadian Public Health Association, Climate Change and Health [www.cpha.ca/en/programs/ccah.aspx](http://www.cpha.ca/en/programs/ccah.aspx)
- IPCC (2014) *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Chapter 11. Human Health: Impacts, Adaptation and Co-Benefits) Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press
- American Public Health Association, Public Health Opportunities to Address the Health Effects of Climate Change, [www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2015/12/03/15/34/public-health-opportunities-to-address-the-health-effects-of-climate-change](http://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2015/12/03/15/34/public-health-opportunities-to-address-the-health-effects-of-climate-change)