



PUBLIC HEALTH AND A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Canada along with the 192 other members of the United Nations ratified the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.¹ This agreement provides a shared agenda for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. Three of the 17 goals directly address the environment, including:

- SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resource's for sustainable development; and
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

The Government of Canada provided a Voluntary National Review² which highlights progress being made to achieve these goals. The Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) recognizes and supports the Government of Canada's efforts to address them.

CPHA has an extensive history of supporting efforts to improve the environment and society beginning with our support of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986)³ which recognized that a stable ecosystem was a pre-requisite for human health and that a socio-ecological approach should form a basis of this work. By the early 1990's it was apparent that Canada, and the world, were not on track to achieve sustainable development or effectively protect natural ecosystems. At that time, the Association declared the environment its first priority and published a related discussion paper.⁴ That work described the link between human health, the social determinants of health, and ecosystem health and called for change in the way decision-makers formulated policy and programs. In 2015, CPHA revisited the issue, and released a discussion paper entitled: *Global Change and Public Health: Addressing the Ecological Determinants of Health*.⁵ In addition, the Association has advocated for the elimination of asbestos from consumer products and coal-fired power plants, and been granted intervener status for the court cases regarding the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*.

In spite of continuing efforts, environmental degradation remains the greatest challenge that the world is facing. As a result, in 2018, CPHA renewed its commitment to advocate for decisive action to stabilize and improve the environment as there is a clear link between human health, wellbeing and the environment.

The Association's first actions are to prepare position statements on different aspects of this issue. The first four will be:

- climate change;
- pollution and ecotoxicity;
- resource depletion; and
- biodiversity.

Others will be developed as the need arises. In addition, we commit to advocate for those policies and programs that will lead to improvements in our environment.



REFERENCES

1. United Nations, 2015. Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.
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4. Canadian Public Health Association, 1992. Human and Ecosystem Health: Canadian Perspectives, Canadian Actions. CPHA, Ottawa.
5. Canadian Public Health Association, 2015. Global Change and Public Health: Addressing the Ecological Determinants of Health. Ottawa. Available at: https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/assets/policy/edh-discussion_e.pdf.