



**EcoHealth  
ONTARIO**

Engaging Diverse  
Sectors to Protect  
Green Space for  
Human Health

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**EcoHealth Ontario:**  
*fostering improved health through  
natural environments*

- A Network of Partners
- A Shared Vision
- A Gap Identified
- A Common Agenda

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## Network of Partners

### Public Health

- Ontario Public Health Association\*
- Association of Local Public Health Agencies
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
- Toronto Public Health
- York Region Public Health

### Environment

- Forests Ontario
- Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
- Back to Nature Network

\*EcoHealth Ontario Steering Committee co-chairs

### Conservation

- Conservation Ontario
- Credit Valley Conservation\*
- Toronto and Region Conservation

### Parks/Planning

- Ontario Parks Association
- Ontario Professional Planners Institute

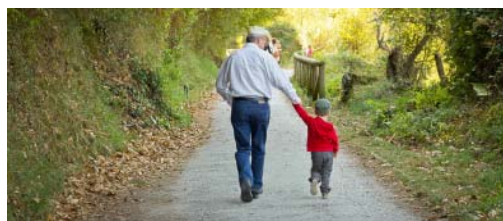
### Academia

- Canadian Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health
- York University
- Lakehead University
- Dalla Lana School of Public Health


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## EcoHealth Ontario Vision

All Ontarians have sufficient access to well-distributed, high quality green space, and are aware of its benefits to their health and wellbeing



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[ecohealth-ontario.ca](http://ecohealth-ontario.ca)  
[@OnEcoHealth](https://twitter.com/OnEcoHealth)

## A Gap Identified

- Growing evidence of the benefits that the natural environment provides to the health and well being of our communities

*Yet we continue to see ...*

- Loss or deterioration of natural features and their functions in Ontario and elsewhere

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## Common Agenda

To bring about policy, design and program changes that foster improved health and wellbeing for Ontarians through:

- better ecosystem quality
- increased green space
- enhanced access to nature



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## Collective Impact Model

Diverse group of stakeholders with a **common agenda** working together on **mutually reinforcing activities**

- Common Agenda
- Shared Measurement
- Mutually Reinforcing Activities
- Continuous Communication
- Backbone Support

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## Collective Impact - Common Agenda and Shared Vision for Change

- Objective:  
To implement win-win strategies to enhance natural environments and human health
- Opportunities for change:  
Policy and programs – provincial, local, watershed, community scale
- Establishing mutually reinforcing activities

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## Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- Collaboration of Diverse Sectors
- Shared values
- Research & Evidence
- Policy
- Awareness & Knowledge



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## EcoHealth Work Groups

### Communications

- Increase public awareness
- develop outreach materials for EcoHealth partners

### Research

- Improve availability of credible, trusted information about ecosystem health linkages
- Undertake and stimulate further research

### Policy

- Increase application of Ecohealth concepts and principles in decision making
- Provide tools to support policy development

# A Call to Action – Targeted Communication

**Ecohealth** What's in a Green Space that makes us feel so good?

**What is Ecohealth?**  
Ecohealth is the relationship between human and environmental health.

**Living Near Trees & Green Space Has Benefits:**  
People who live in neighborhoods with a higher density of trees on their streets report significantly higher health perception and less cardio-metabolic conditions. Trees help to improve air quality and combat climate change. Over 50 years, the average Canadian has absorbed 200 kg of carbon dioxide – plus ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide.

**Walking outside has been proven to provide physical health benefits:**  
Walking outside has been proven to provide physical health benefits.

**5 Things Public Health Professionals Can Do:**  
1 Collaborate with different sectors and disciplines in order to build awareness and influence the protection of green space by highlighting the benefits to human health that encourage compact communities, reduce transportation and access to green space.  
2 Advocate for strengthened green space policies that encourage compact communities, reduce transportation and access to green space.  
3 Review and respond to official plans to encourage support for healthy natural and built environments. Provide health evidence and solutions to protection and/or enhancement of parks and open spaces, forests and natural heritage.  
4 Promote more green space near vulnerable populations (seniors, children, and people living on low income).  
5 Encourage people to take proactive measures in order to avoid public health impacts of climate change (plant shade trees, install 20 mm, avoid heat stress, wear protective clothing to prevent contact with insects carrying Lyme disease and tick-borne illness).

**Who is EcoHealth Ontario?**  
EcoHealth Ontario is a not-for-profit organization that works to improve the health of Ontarians by promoting the benefits of nature. We are a coalition of public health, environmental, and forestry professionals.

**5 Things Forestry Professionals Can Do:**  
1 COLLABORATE with community groups and schools to host walks, tours, and workshops in the forest.  
2 SHARE ideas and stories promoting the wide variety of educational and recreational activities taking place in the forest.  
3 ADVOCATE for forests as crucial to addressing climate change and promoting better health outcomes for all Ontarians.  
4 PROMOTE the connection between forests and other key health benefits (clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration).  
5 INFLUENCE official plans and local greening strategies to emphasize tree cover and access to parks and forests and programs incorporating forests into health initiatives and promotion.

**Infographics, videos. <http://www.ecohealth-ontario.ca/>**



## Professional Outreach

- Presentations at conferences and workshops for public health, community planning, conservation authorities, municipalities and environmental organizations
- EcoHealth in Action Workshop





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## Evidence: Impact of Green Space on Heat and Air Pollution



Urban green space provide significant benefits in terms of cooling effects & reducing air pollution

Benefits directly related to the size, quality and density of greenspace

Recommendations:

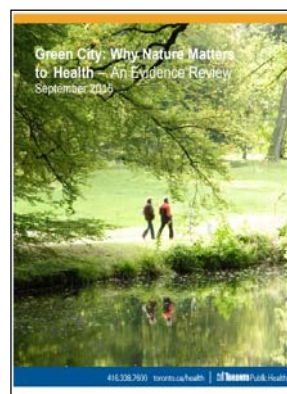
- “more green is better”

David Suzuki Foundation - meta narrative systematic review (supported by EcoHealth Research Work Group)

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## Why Nature Matters to Health

- Green space improves physical health, mental health and well-being
- Frequent access to nearby greenspace is important, especially for children
- Nearby green space may provide added benefit in low-income neighbourhoods



Toronto Public Health Evidence Review (supported by EcoHealth Research Work Group)

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## Casebook: Leveraging the Benefits of Green Space



- Ontario-based initiatives that protect and enhance green spaces
- Describes both environmental and public health benefits

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## Conserving Biodiversity: A Public Health Imperative



Impacts of biological diversity, climate change and social change on human health and wellbeing in Ontario

[Biodiversity and Health website: http://conservebiodiversity.ca/](http://conservebiodiversity.ca/)





## Toolkit: Supports for policy development

### Planning

#### Policy

- Planning Act
- Strategic Plans
- Official Plans

#### Implementation

- Zoning bylaws
- Municipal bylaws

### Public Health

#### Policy

- Health Protection & Promotion Act
- Ontario Public Health Standards

#### Supportive Tools

- Healthy Environments & Climate Change Guideline
- Health Equity Impact Assessment

EcoHealth Ontario  
– the next 5 years

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## Reaffirming our Vision, Shared Agenda & ...

### Issue Statement:

*"There is growing evidence and awareness of the benefits that healthy ecosystems provide to the health and wellbeing of our communities, ...*

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## Challenges

*...and yet,*

- *We continue to see loss and degradation of greenspace, natural features and functions*
- *Climate change is intensifying pressures on human health & wellbeing*
- *There is increasing prevalence of physical & mental health issues*
- *There is inequity in the availability of and access to parks & other green spaces*
- *Public policy to address these issues is fragmented"*

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## A new set of Mutually Reinforcing Activities

- Strengthen collaborations: Theory of Change
- Develop shared set of values in the work of diverse sectors
- Research: Develop a business case for EcoHealth
- Policy: Address barriers and opportunities for policy development
- Outreach: Develop EcoHealth communications campaign

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## Final Thoughts

- **Public Health Imperative:** Mandate related to health protection and disease prevention e.g. addressing climate change & chronic diseases risk factors
- **Win-win:** There are multiple co-benefits of healthy natural environments
- **Collaboration:** Key to achieving healthy natural environments for human health
- **Make the Connection:** See yourself in the picture, engage partners, find synergies, work together on win-win solutions



## Thank You!

Sign up online to receive EHO e-bulletins:

<http://www.ecohealth-ontario.ca/>

Follow us on Twitter at @OnEcoHealth