

*Dear Minister Phillips,*

In response to the call for public comments to Bill 4, the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018, the Middlesex-London Health Unit has prepared a short submission to contribute to the review process.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) believes strongly in promoting a healthy environment and protecting the health of our communities consistent with our legislative mandates laid out by the Ministry of Health and Long Term-Term Care. Recent changes to these mandates include the introduction of the *Healthy Environments and Climate Change Guideline* which seeks to assist boards of health in developing approaches for promoting healthy built and natural environments to enhance population health and mitigate environmental health risks. Specifically, the Guideline presents existing and new population-based activities to address the health impacts of environmental health issues, which include climate change and environmental exposures of public health significance.

The Guideline supports the development of strategies that raise public awareness and reduce environmental health risks, allowing for evidence-informed program delivery to address the needs of priority populations within local communities. The objective of this guideline is to identify approaches for boards of health that must be used or considered to achieve the following:

- Enhance public health capacity to address risk factors in the environment, including the impacts of climate change, using population-based activities (e.g. Vulnerability Assessments).
- Identify and enable mitigation of risk factors related to environmental exposures that can contribute to the burden of illness.
- Facilitate upstream, preventative strategies for advancing healthy built and natural environment initiatives using standard provincial approaches.
- Align existing public health initiatives across boards of health to ensure optimum delivery from both the Healthy Environments and Chronic Disease Prevention Standards.

The MLHU has been actively addressing actual and anticipated risks to public health associated with climate change. In 2014, a comprehensive report, titled “*Assessment of Vulnerability to the Health Impacts of Climate Change in Middlesex-London*”, was completed to identify these risks associated with climate change in our region. The MLHU collaborated with representatives from most sectors in the community, identified local threats, vulnerable populations, and associated community resources and susceptible to the effects of climate change. The go-forward plan resulting from this assessment remains consistent with the Guideline. This work includes seeking collaboration with community partners at all levels to develop effective community-based strategies that reduce exposure to health hazards and promote healthy built and natural environments. These strategies must also support the collection of objective evidence to monitor the value of adaptive and mitigative strategies, the identification of changing risks and hazards, and the facilitation of effective knowledge transfer (education) at all levels of the population.

In this regard, the MLHU has shown leadership in developing formal strategies to address extreme weather events and in seeking strategies as to how best to engage and support community partners. The MLHU acknowledges the importance of the provincial government’s leadership role in recognizing the public health impacts of climate change by supporting efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the need for adaptive strategies.

The work done to produce the Middlesex-London Health Unit's Vulnerability Assessment has helped to illustrate the need for a provincial climate change strategy that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, improves air and water quality, and protects ecosystems sensitive to the effects of climate change. While it is recognized that the provincial government's intent is to discontinue the 'Cap and Trade' program, we encourage the Province to strive to ensure similar carbon reductions are nonetheless achieved. The Middlesex-London Health Unit also recommends that the Province ensure comprehensive prevention and mitigation strategies continue to be developed and enacted to help safeguard Ontarians from the population health risks associated with climate change including food-, water-, and vector-borne diseases, air pollution, environmental health hazards, extreme weather events, and food and water scarcity.

We thank you for the opportunity to present comments and we hope that you will find the attached report valuable to your review.