

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

1ST SESSION, 43RD LEGISLATURE, ONTARIO
2 CHARLES III, 2023

Bill 160

**An Act to provide for the development of a strategic action plan
respecting the impacts of the climate crisis on health,
as well as the establishment of the Climate Crisis and Health Secretariat
and a science advisory board**

Co-sponsors:

Ms B. Karpoche

Mr. P. Tabuns

Private Members' Bill

1st Reading December 6, 2023

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill enacts the *Climate Crisis Health Action Plan Act, 2023*, which requires the Minister of Health to do the following:

1. Develop and publish a strategic action plan that aims to ensure that Ontario's public health and health care systems are prepared for the health risks caused by the impacts of the climate crisis.
2. Establish the Climate Crisis and Health Secretariat whose responsibilities include assisting the Minister with the development, revision and implementation of the strategic action plan.
3. Establish a science advisory board to advise the Minister with respect to climate change science and health sciences and the impacts of the climate crisis on public health.

The Act requires that the strategic action plan be reviewed and, if necessary, updated at least every four years.

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Preamble

It is increasingly clear that the climate crisis will have a substantial impact on human health and that health crises can be profoundly debilitating for our society, as evidenced by the impact of COVID-19.

Health care and public health planning have so far been based on an assumption that tomorrow will be much like today. It is increasingly apparent that this assumption is false. In order to protect human life and property and to provide as much stability for our society as possible it will be important to understand and plan for the changes that are expected. The appearance of novel diseases or the destruction of homes by extreme weather events are examples of risks to human life. Now is the time to develop our understanding of and our plans to minimize the damage caused by these kinds of risks.

Therefore, His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

Definition

1 In this Act,

“Minister” means the Minister of Health or such other member of the Executive Council as may be assigned the administration of this Act under the *Executive Council Act*.

Climate crisis and health initiatives

2 (1) The Minister shall,

- (a) on or before the second anniversary of the day on which this Act receives Royal Assent, develop and publish a strategic action plan that aims to ensure that Ontario’s public health and health care systems are prepared for the health risks, including those relating to mental health, to Ontarians caused by the impacts of the climate crisis, including a significant rise in extreme heat incidents, an increase in vector-borne diseases, the appearance of novel contagious diseases, negative impacts on air quality due to increased heat, forest fires and other causes, escalating ice, wind and other storm-related activity, flooding and negative impacts on water quality;
- (b) establish the Climate Crisis and Health Secretariat to perform the functions assigned to the Secretariat by this Act; and
- (c) establish a science advisory board, consisting of public health professionals and climate scientists, to perform the functions assigned to the board by this Act.

Review of strategic action plan

(2) On or before the fourth anniversary of the day this Act receives Royal Assent and every four years after that, the Minister shall review the strategic action plan and make any changes to the plan that the Minister considers necessary to ensure that the plan best meets its stated aims.

Plan to be public

(3) The Minister shall ensure that the plan and any amended plan are published on a web site of the Government of Ontario.

Contents of strategic action plan

3 (1) The strategic action plan shall,

- (a) identify key health risks to Ontarians caused by the impacts of the climate crisis;
- (b) identify communities and populations vulnerable to the identified health risks;
- (c) set out a plan to communicate to public health organizations, community health organizations, health care facilities, health professionals and the public strategies to mitigate the negative effects of the climate crisis on health;
- (d) establish government programs that aim to advance research on the impacts of the climate crisis on mental and physical health;

- (e) identify and assess existing strategies to prepare for and deal with the risks and impacts of the climate crisis on health;
- (f) identify health care infrastructure projects that are of critical priority for addressing the impacts of the climate crisis on health;
- (g) prepare a plan to provide funding and guidance to public health units and health care facilities to enable them to assess their vulnerabilities and develop climate adaptation plans;
- (h) set out modelling and forecasting tools to be used to assess the impacts of the climate crisis on health; and
- (i) provide for measures to support the development of academic and regional centres of excellence that will be capable of identifying, assessing and improving best practices for assuring the wellbeing of Ontarians in the face of the climate crisis, as well as providing input to the Minister on related issues of public policy.

Strategic action plan to include monitoring

(2) The strategic action shall also provide for the development, continual improvement and integration of systems to monitor the impacts of the climate crisis on health and the capacity to respond to those impacts.

Same

(3) Without limiting the generality of subsection (2), the systems shall provide for the monitoring of the following matters:

1. Water-borne, food-borne and vector borne infectious diseases.
2. The appearance of a novel contagious disease.
3. Respiratory and cardiovascular health, including responses to aeroallergens, air pollution and toxic exposures.
4. The impacts of extreme temperatures on health, including premature deaths, hospital admissions and morbidity.
5. The health effects of air pollution, including heightened sensitivity to air pollution.
6. Mental and behavioural health related to extreme weather events and incremental changes in climate.
7. The health of indigenous people, Black and racialized people, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, members of low income communities and members of any other communities vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis on health.
8. Harmful algal blooms.
9. Extreme heat and weather events, including drought, storms and flooding events.
10. Food insecurity resulting from shrinking access to food, potential disruptions to food supplies and decreasing agricultural output, as well any decreased nutritional value of crops.
11. Disruptions in access to routine and acute medical care.
12. Any other prescribed matter.

Mandate of the Climate Crisis and Health Secretariat

4 (1) As directed by the Minister and the Environment Minister, the members of the Climate Crisis and Health Secretariat shall,

- (a) assist with the development, revision and implementation of the strategic action plan;
- (b) gather and disseminate information on the physical, mental and behavioural health consequences of the climate crisis in Ontario;
- (c) track data on environmental conditions that are indicators of health risks related to the climate crisis;
- (d) expand capacity for modelling and forecasting health effects that may be climate related;
- (e) perform research on the relationship between the climate crisis and health outcomes;
- (f) identify locations and population groups at greatest risk for specific health threats, such as increased heat stress, degraded air and water quality, food or water-related illnesses, vector-borne illnesses, threats to pulmonary or cardiovascular health or to mental and behavioural health and food, water and nutrient insecurity;
- (g) communicate the health related impacts of the climate crisis, including risks and costs associated with the climate crisis and ways to reduce them, to the public;
- (h) develop partnerships with other levels of government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, organizations representing healthcare professionals and those representing healthcare providers, universities and international organizations in order to more effectively address domestic and global health aspects of the climate crisis;
- (i) provide advice, data or information to any of the organizations referred to in clause (h) relevant to the development and implementation of preparedness measures related to the health effects of the climate crisis;

- (j) provide technical assistance and support to municipalities and First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in assessing preparedness to deal with the negative risks and impacts of the climate crisis on health and strategies to respond to those risks and impacts;
- (k) develop and implement preparedness response plans for health related threats, such as heat waves, severe weather events and infectious diseases;
- (l) develop training programs for public health and health care professionals to better enable them to respond to the health threats posed by the climate crisis and communicate health risks to the public; and
- (m) perform any other function that the Minister or the Environment Minister considers advisable.

Definition

(2) In this section,

“Environment Minister” means the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks or such other member of the Executive Council as may be assigned the administration of the *Environmental Protection Act*.

Functions of the science advisory board

5 (1) The science advisory board shall,

- (a) provide scientific and technical advice to the Minister on the domestic and international impacts of the climate crisis on public health, including populations and regions particularly vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis, and strategies to prepare for and respond to the impacts of the climate crisis on public health; and
- (b) advise the Minister on the most recent scientific developments in climate change science and health sciences for the purposes of developing and revising the strategic action plan.

Composition

(2) The science advisory board shall be composed of not less than 10 and no more than 20 members appointed by the Minister.

Members

(3) Members of the board shall have expertise in public health or the provision of health care services or expertise in climate science.

Development and revision of strategic action plan

6 (1) In developing or revising the strategic action plan, the Minister shall,

- (a) have regard to the most recent scientific developments in climate change science and health sciences as identified by the science advisory board; and
- (b) ensure that the persons and organizations referred to in subsection (2) are consulted with.

Consultation

(2) The following are the persons and organizations referred to in clause (1) (b):

1. Other members of the Executive Council as the Minister considers appropriate.
2. Representatives of First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Black communities.
3. Municipalities and other organizations responsible for public health.
4. Members of the scientific community.
5. Representatives of communities most at-risk of experiencing negative health outcomes as a result of the climate crisis.
6. Organizations representing health care professionals and those representing healthcare providers.
7. Any other person or organization that, in the view of the Minister, should be consulted.

Regulations

7 The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting any matter necessary or advisable to carry out effectively the intent and purpose of this Act, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may make regulations,

- (a) governing the implementation of the strategic action plan;
- (b) prescribing matters for the purposes of paragraph 12 of subsection 3 (3);
- (c) governing the procedures of the science advisory board, including procedures for making any recommendations to the Minister as well as the duties and responsibilities of members of the board.

Commencement

8 This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.

Short title

9 The short title of this Act is the *Climate Crisis Health Action Plan Act, 2023*.