

Policy Impacts on the Health of Ontarians

February 13, 2025



CAPE
Canadian Association
of Physicians
for the Environment

Association canadienne
des médecins
pour l'environnement
ACME

Dr Mili Roy

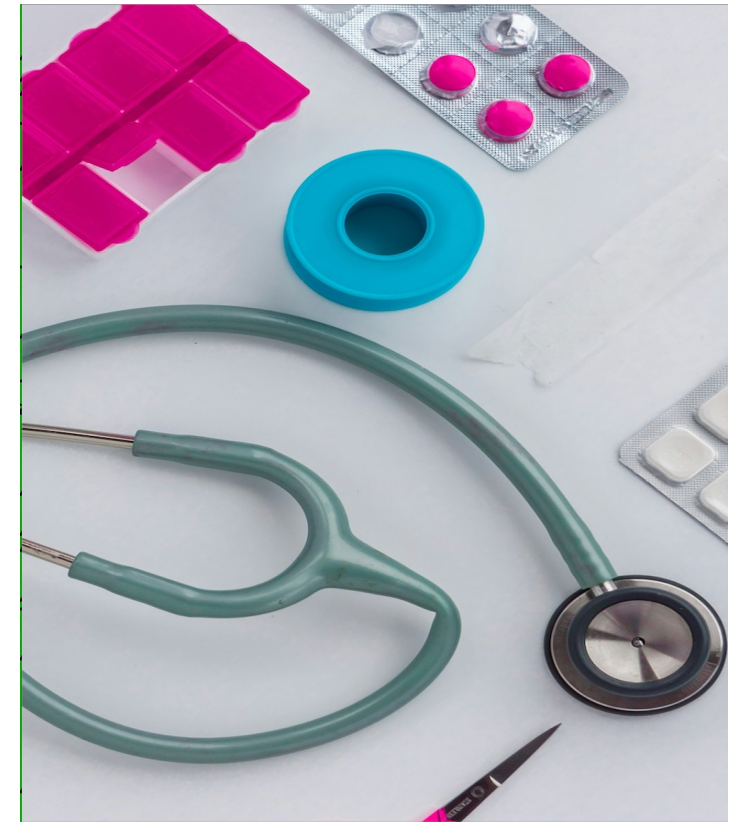
Co-chair, Ontario Climate Emergency Campaign

Co-chair, CAPE Ontario

Faculty of Medicine, Univ. of Toronto

Ontarians & Health

- ▶ Health has always been a top priority for Ontarians
- ▶ The Ontario Health Coalition states “In our 40-years of advocacy ... our health care has never been in such crisis”
- ▶ Beyond health policy, Ontarians’ health is deeply impacted by other policies especially anything failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions & control the climate crisis
- ▶ We can vote for better by understanding the connections



**PLEASE POST YOUR
QUESTIONS IN THE Q+A**

Health Policy & Your Health



- ▶ Ontario has the lowest public health care funding per person in Canada
- ▶ Healthcare budget increases are not keeping up with inflation
- ▶ The health care budget is not being spent in full
- ▶ Public money is flowing into privatizing public hospital services

Health Policy & Your Health



- ▶ Despite a healthcare worker crisis, the current government passed Bill 124 in 2019 capping wage increases for public health and other public sector workers – struck down as unconstitutional by the Courts
- ▶ The health care wage cap was *imposed only on public sector health workers* while for-profits were not capped

Health Privatization & Your Health



- ▶ A record number of healthcare privatization lobbyists have been registered under this government
- ▶ Operating funding for public hospitals increased only 0.5% last year
- ▶ One of the only two for-profit Ontario hospitals (Clearpoint Don Mills Surgical), received a 278% funding increase with the former Minister of Health acting as lobbyist after exiting the Ministry
- ▶ This government has not curbed for profit staffing agencies charging up to triple the price for exactly the same staff employed in the public system

The Bottom Line on Health Privatization



- ▶ **Privatisation reduces the quality of health care and worsens health outcomes**
- ▶ “the best evidence we currently have ... probably...the best evidence we are ever able to collect.” [REF: Lancet Public Health 2024]
- ▶ CMA Policy 2024: “strongly supports a publicly funded health care system where ... care is based on patients' needs and not on their ability to pay”

- ▶ Ontario had the lowest number of hospital beds per capita in Canada in 2022
- ▶ Projected shortfall of 13,800 hospital beds & over 80,000 staff by 2032
[REF: Ontario Council of Hospital Unions]
- ▶ Despite 2018 campaign promise to end hallway health care, the numbers doubled between 2018 to 2024
- ▶ The vast majority of Ontario's hospitals are now in deficit [REF: OHC Feb21/24 report]
- ▶ Unprecedented closures of over 1200 vital services including local ER's, ICUs & labs in 2023
- ▶ The number of Ontarians without a family doctor skyrocketed from 1.8 million in 2020 to 2.5 million now and is projected to rise to a staggering 4.4 million by 2026 [Ref: OMA]



Our Recent Health Outcomes: Where are we now?





Health Impacts of Climate Policy:

Climate change
harms our health
care systems & our
health

Climate Change Harms Healthcare Systems

Tornado that struck Pfizer plant ripped through warehouse where drugs were stored

The company is working with the FDA to assess the extent of the damage and gauge how it will impact the country's already strained drug supply.



Source: NBC July 2021



Photo: Radio Canada International



Patient dies during evacuation of Yellowknife hospital



Aug 2023

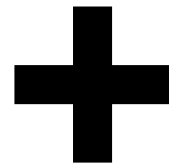
Health harms occur by 2 interconnected pathways when fossil fuels are burned



Carbon Pollution

Planetary heating

Climate Change



Air Pollution

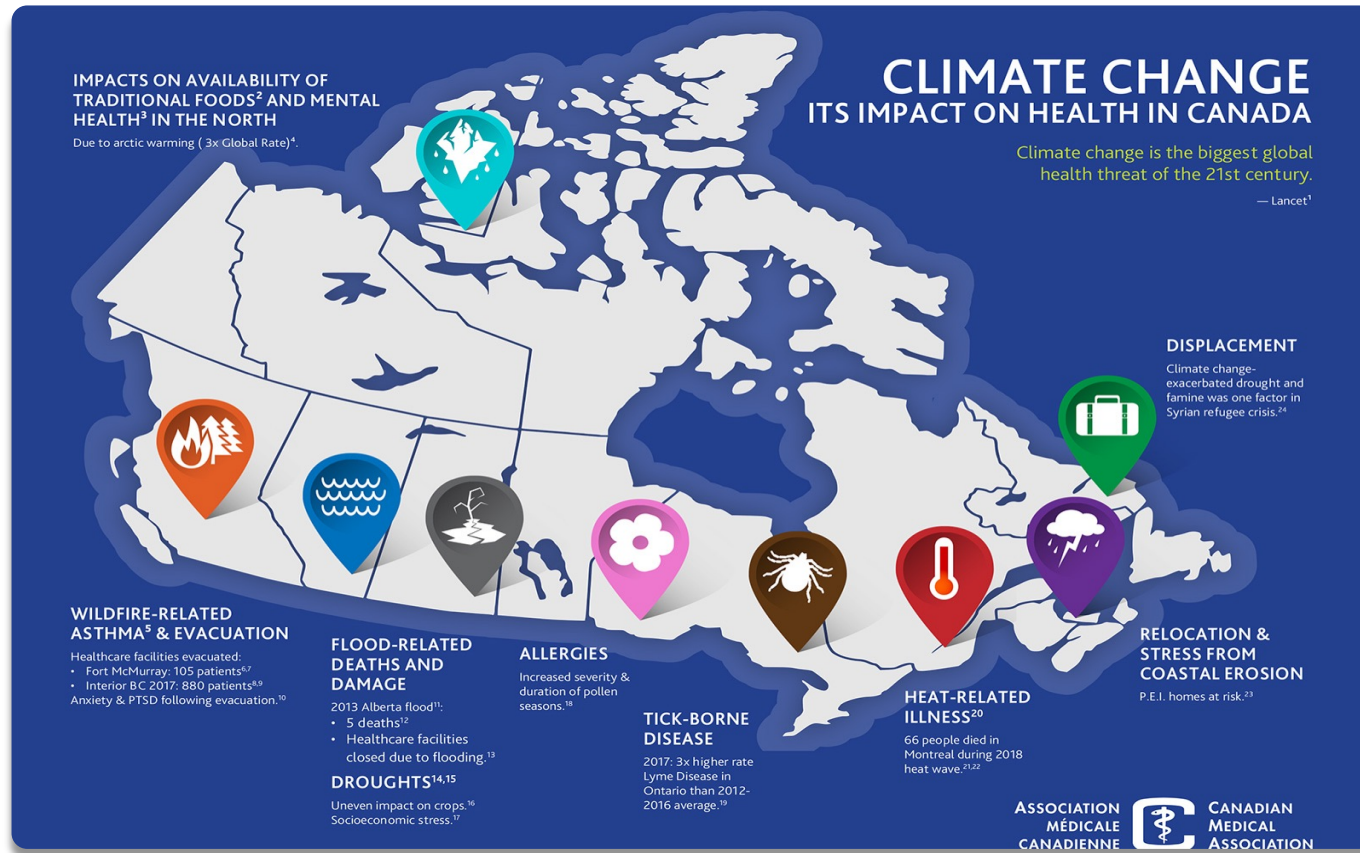
Particulate matter (PMs)

Toxic gases – NO_x especially
impact health



**Health
Harms**

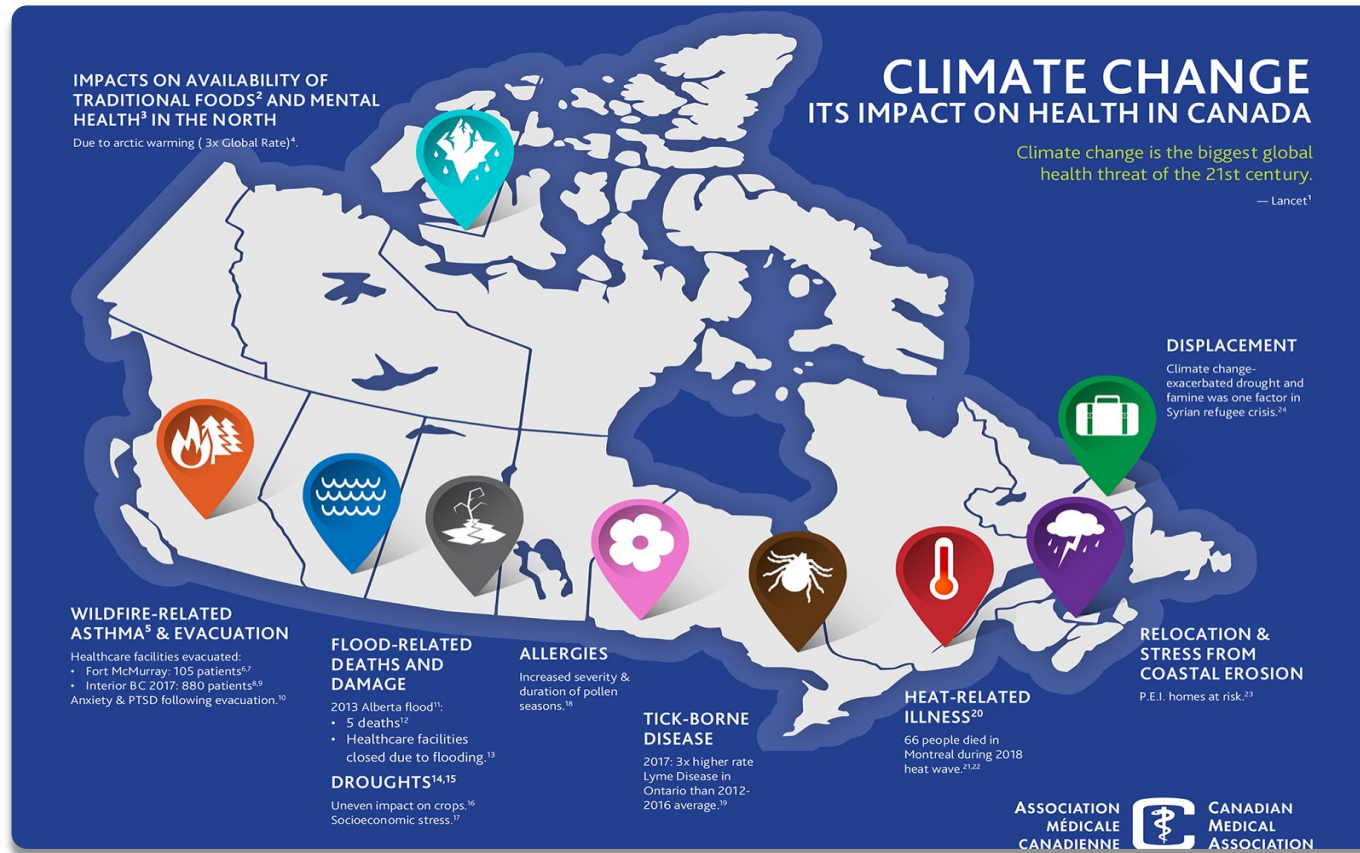
Health Harms of Climate Change



“Climate change is the biggest threat to health in the 21st century and our very survival is at stake”

- Dr Vanessa Kerry, 2023 WHO Director-General, Special Envoy for Climate Change & Health

Health Harms of Climate Change



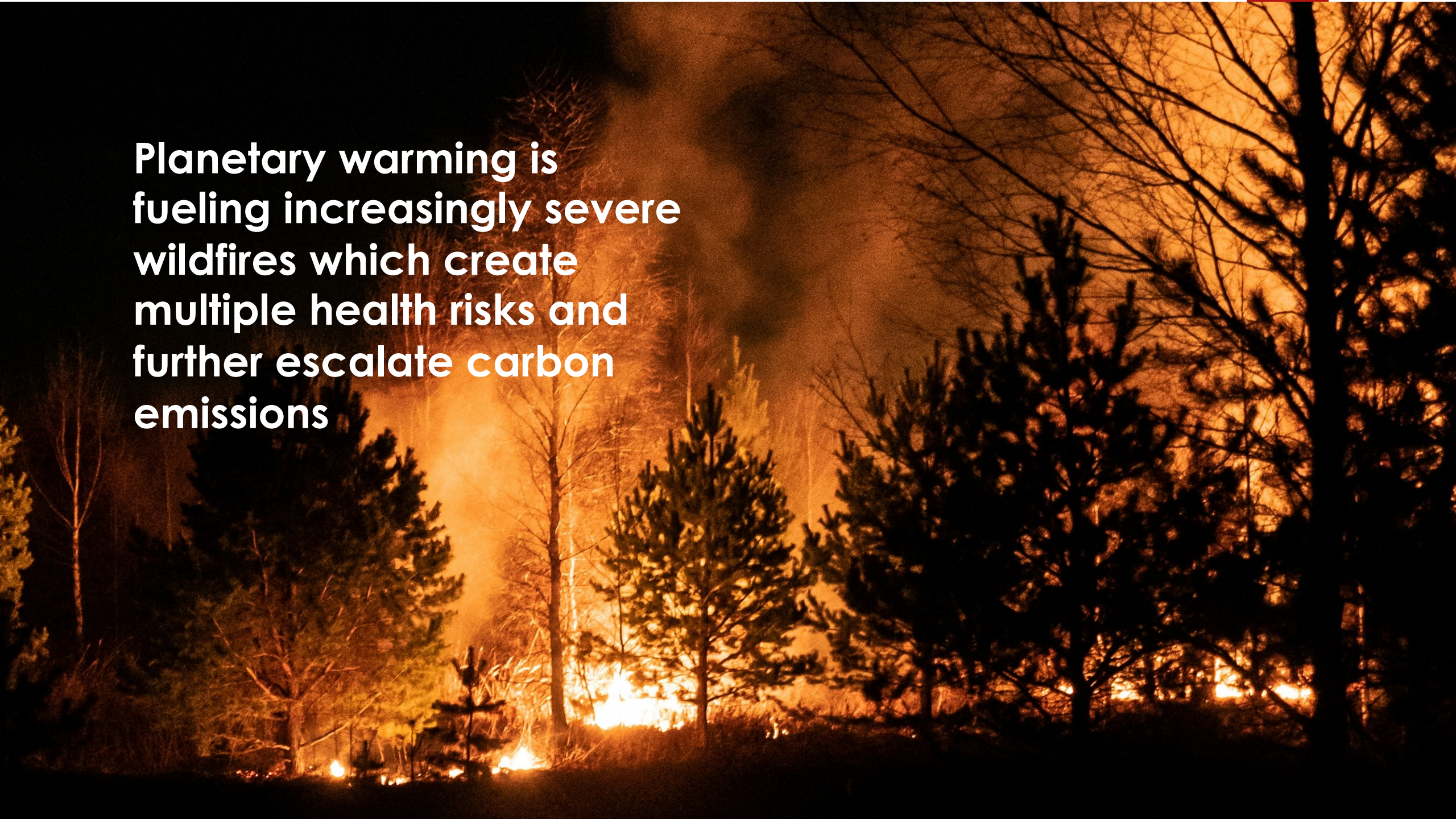
“Climate change is the biggest threat to health in the 21st century and our very survival is at stake”

- Dr Vanessa Kerry, 2023, WHO Director-General, Special Envoy for Climate Change & Health



The 2021 BC heat dome was the single deadliest weather event in Canadian history with over 600 deaths

Planetary warming is fueling increasingly severe wildfires which create multiple health risks and further escalate carbon emissions





The climate crisis is harming housing and food security. Both are social determinants of health.

Infectious Diseases: Climate change may aggravate nearly 60% of all human pathogenic diseases & is increasing antibiotic resistance





Health Harms of Air Pollution

Air pollution Related Deaths & Health Costs

Premature deaths globally due to air pollution:
8.1 million in 2021 [Ref: Unicef 2024]

(impact > US\$5 trillion in 2013, Ref WHO 2022)

15 300 premature Canadian deaths annually

6700 Ontario deaths annually

Ref: Govt of Canada 2022 (2016 stats)

The health harms of air pollution



Skin ageing



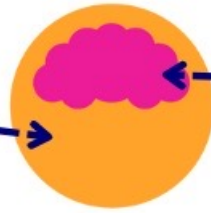
Lung diseases
Asthma
Lung cancer
Lung development
Pneumonia



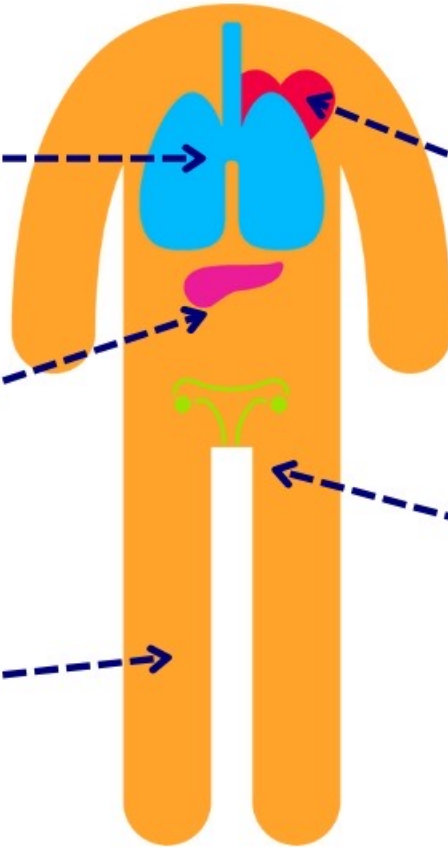
Insulin resistance
and diabetes



Blood clots



Stroke
Brain development
Mental health
Dementia



Heart disease
High blood pressure



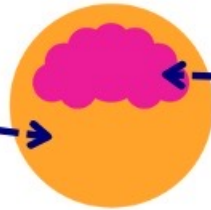
Premature birth
Low birthweight
Decreased sperm quality
Illness during pregnancy



The health harms of air pollution



Skin ageing



Stroke

Brain development

Mental health

Dementia



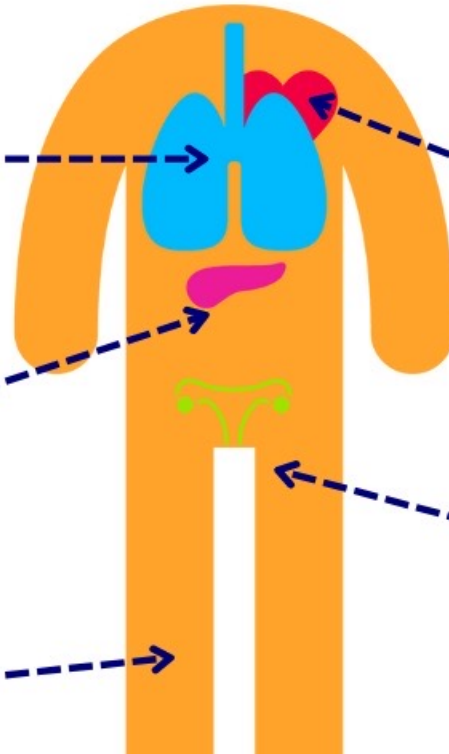
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Blood clots

Health harms occur when PM2.5's and Nox pass through the lungs into the bloodstream to cause disease in multiple body systems



CleanAirDay

The health harms of air pollution



Skin ageing



LUNGS:

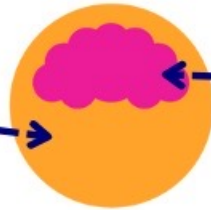
- ASTHMA
- COPD
- EMPHYSEMA
- BRONCHITIS



Insulin resistance and diabetes



Blood clots

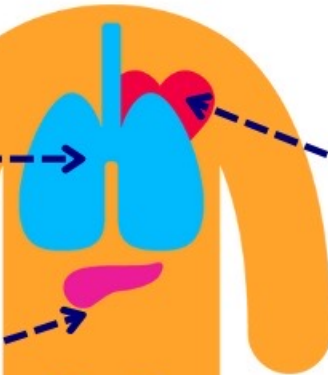


Stroke

Brain development

Mental health

Dementia



Heart disease

High blood pressure



Premature birth

Low birthweight

Decreased sperm quality

Illness during pregnancy



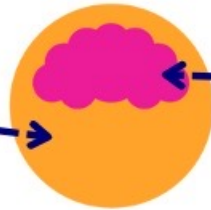
16 June 2022

CleanAirDay

The health harms of air pollution



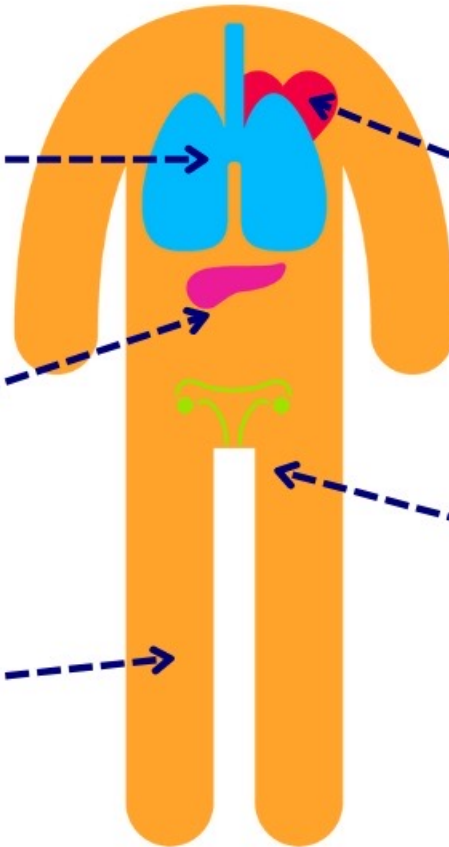
Skin ageing



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Pneumonia



CARDIOVASCULAR:

- HEART ATTACKS
- ARRHYTHMIAS
- HYPERTENSION
- BLOOD CLOTS

* Hospital admissions higher when SO₂ higher



Insulin resistance
and diabetes



Low birthweight
Decreased sperm quality
Illness during pregnancy



Blood clots

The health harms of air pollution



Skin ageing



Lung diseases

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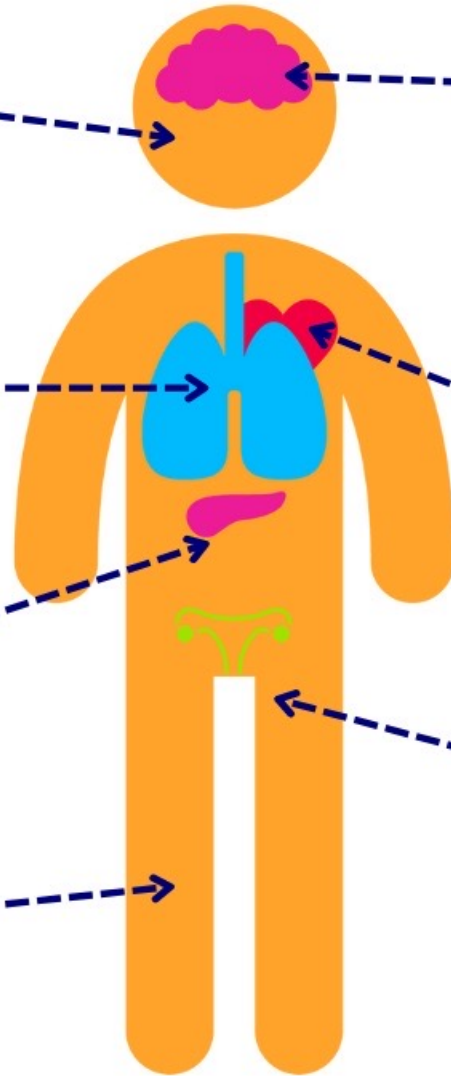
Pneumonia



Insulin resistance
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Blood clots



NEUROLOGIC:

- STROKE
- DEMENTIA
- PARKINSON'S
- ADHD
- ALS



Heart disease

High blood pressure



Premature birth

Low birthweight

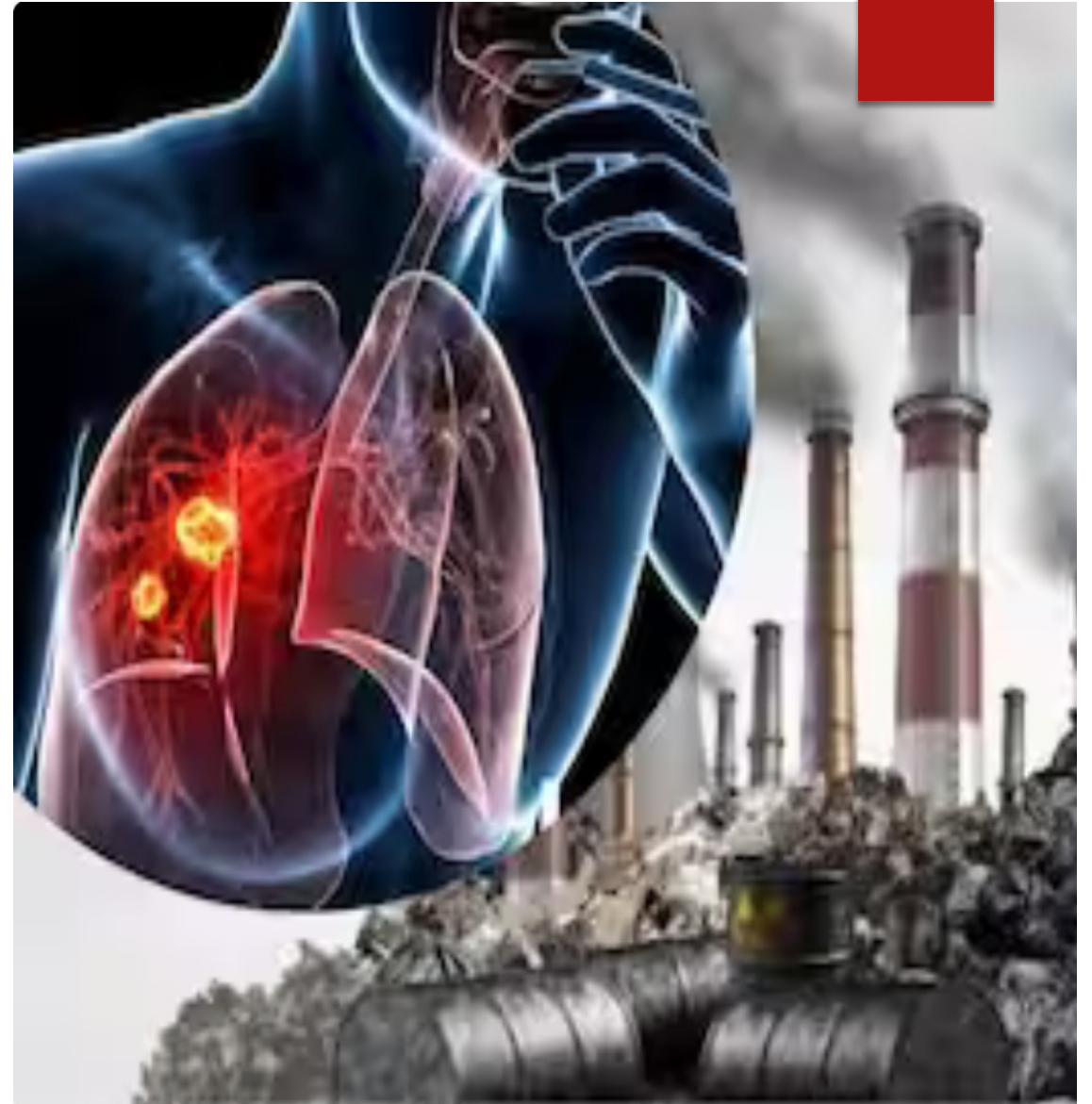
Decreased sperm quality

Illness during pregnancy



Air Pollution Causes Multiple Types of Cancer

- ▶ Lung
- ▶ Leukemia
- ▶ Breast
- ▶ Other



Air Pollution Risks to Pregnant Women & Infants

- ▶ Low birth weight
- ▶ Premature births
- ▶ Still births
- ▶ Birth defects



Climate Change & Air Pollution Harm Mental Health

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Stress
- Suicide
- Disproportionately affect youth



Energy Policy & Health

- ▶ Any fossil fuel based energy policy such as gas is expensive & harmful to human health
- ▶ Nuclear energy is the most expensive energy option & too slow to meet urgent energy needs
- ▶ Canada to date has NO permanent solution for decades of accumulated radioactive nuclear waste with experts deeply concerned with health risks of Chalk River disposal and DGRs (deep geological repositories)
- ▶ May discuss further in Q+A



Housing Policy & Health: Housing is Fundamental to Health



- ▶ Under the current government homelessness increased 25% over past 2 years to hit record highs (80,000 in 2024 – with 1400 encampments) [Ref: AMO 2025]
- ▶ Auditor General 2021: “Ministry does not have an overarching strategy ... for the reduction of homelessness”
 - ▶ Lack of affordable housing is worsening homelessness in Ontario
 - ▶ Communicable diseases escalate
 - ▶ Increased usage of fire, paramedic, emergency room services

- ▶ Under the current government, new housing starts are at a 69 year low [Ref: FAO]
- ▶ The “More Homes Built Faster Act” not only tried to build over the Greenbelt which was pushed back, but also undermined affordable housing & renters’ rights in many ways that were not reversed
- ▶ Supportive housing: \$500/month
Hospital bed: \$12,000/month
Prisoner > \$9,000/month
[Ref: Parliamentary Budget Officer]
- ▶ Permanent housing for up to 3,000 emergency shelters users could save \$60 million/year [City of Toronto, 2020 cost analysis]

Housing Policy & Health: It is healthier, safer & cheaper to house people



Food Security & Health: Food is fundamental to health

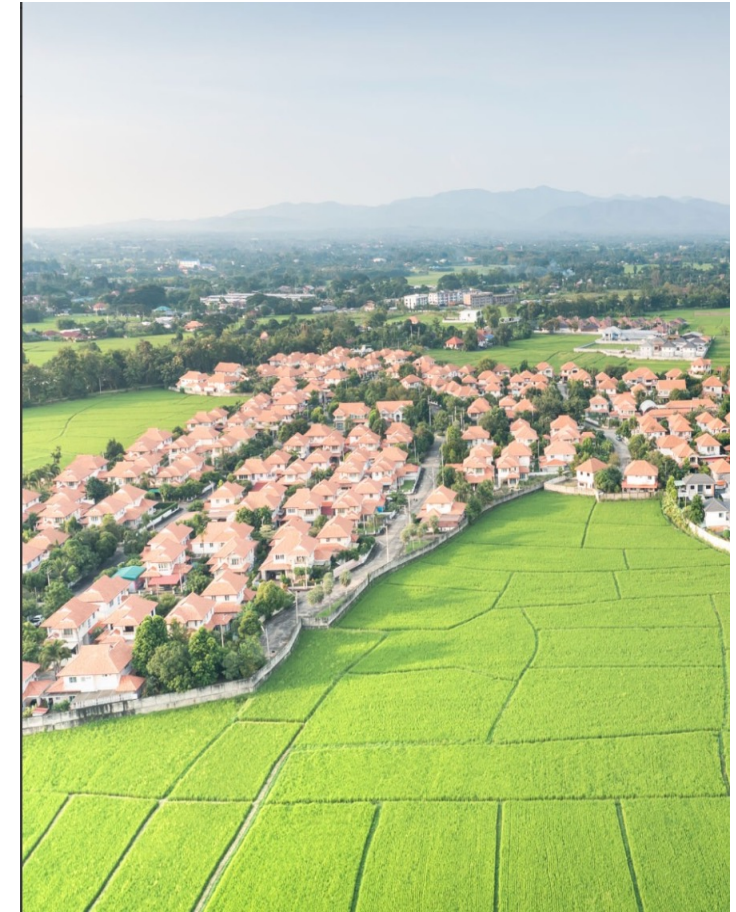
- ▶ Foodbank use is at record highs (25% increase since 2023)
- ▶ Main drivers:
 - ▶ Unaffordable housing & cost of living
 - ▶ Precarious employment
 - ▶ Failing government support programs

Ref: Feed Ontario 2024



Food Security & Health: Food is fundamental to health

- ▶ Poor climate policy driving the climate crisis & current land use policies destroying over 300 acres of farmland every day disrupt Ontario farmers' ability to grow food
- ▶ This increases food insecurity, harming Ontarians' health
- ▶ This also damages our food independence to Grow Local Eat Local with the threat of US tariffs





Vote for a better future

Let's demand & vote on strong policies protecting our health by protecting our environment.

Together we can make it happen!

Thank you



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