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Ford is Making Us More Vulnerable to Climate Hazards

Around the turn of the century, it became clear that climate breakdown was not a worry for the future. It was upon us, big time. Ontario was already getting hit by more frequent and intense heat waves, droughts, thunderstorms, ice storms, floods, even tornadoes.¹

A few of the impacts we've seen included:

- Significant floods in Windsor and Tecumseh, London, Toronto, Mississauga, Thunder Bay, Kenora and many other communities. (Kashechewan First Nation has been evacuated 14 times in less than two decades due to floods or flood risk.) We have seen floods inundate agricultural land and damage crops; damage homes and buildings, roads, culverts, bridges, sewers, stormwater lines, other underground services, shorelines and parks ...
- Storm damage from intense thunderstorms with lightning and strong winds; hail storms; tornadoes; freezing rain and ice storms
- Loss of forest cover, threats to and evacuation

of local communities from wildfires, especially in Northern Ontario

- Deaths and illnesses precipitated by heat waves, which also worsen air pollution
- Expanded insect populations that can better survive in warming winters, including the blacklegged tick which carries Lyme Disease, as well as agricultural pests.

Local governments clean up after each extreme weather event, spending funds that should go to better services and infrastructure, housing and social programs, education and daycare, public health and nature conservation, and to rapid emissions reduction.

Some Ontario municipalities and regional governments were alarmed enough to start work on adaptation programs to make their communities



¹ Adapting to Climate Change in Ontario: Report of the Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation, November 2009



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more secure. They developed heat warning and response systems, created new stormwater ponds, and enlarged culverts. They also started spending more on street trees and green spaces and provided financial incentives for green roofs and other protective actions.

In 2007 the Ontario government got into the act, appointing a panel of climate scientists and adaptation experts to help Ontario plan for the impacts of climate change. In 2009, the panel produced an important report, with fifty key adaptation recommendations.

The government responded with its 2009 adaptation strategy.² It wasn't perfect, but it did commit to integrating climate adaptation into the plans of every relevant government department. Crucially, adaption would feature in Environmental Assessments, Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessments, the Building Code, guidance for Building Retrofits, Drinking Water Management, Stormwater Management, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation, Forest Management, Land Use Planning and more. Work in these areas went ahead, slowly and hesitantly. However, climate adaptation and resilience were definitely on the table.

All of this came to a grinding halt with the election of the Ford government in 2018. It jettisoned almost every new adaptation initiative, leaving the province more – not less --vulnerable. Apparently, there was too much

alarm about climate breakdown. Too many restrictions on Ford's developer buddies. Too much money promised to unprofitable entities like municipalities, conservation authorities and scientists.

A year and a half later, in November 2019, Ford inexplicably appointed yet another expert panel to produce yet another climate breakdown impact assessment.³ This new group, which included some of the same scientists involved in the 2007 expert panel, submitted its report in November 2021. Ford is keeping this report secret for now.

Meantime, it's business as usual. And as long as the Ford government is in power we all remain at the mercy of climate change.

What's the alternative? We need a government that will:

- ! Acknowledge the current and future impacts of our rapidly changing climate and reinstate plans and programs to protect Ontarians from the damages**
- ! Publicly release the 2021 report prepared by the Advisory Panel on Climate Change, which may provide us with information we need to update and activate an Ontario adaptation strategy**
- ! Provide funding for the rapid development of new local and regional flood maps, heat maps, and wind maps that incorporate climate projections and show expected future impacts**

² Climate Ready: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014.

³ Ontario Launches First-Ever Climate Change Impact Assessment, Ontario Newsroom, August 14, 2020



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- !** Provide funding to protect and restore forest cover, wetlands, urban green spaces and street trees, shorelines and other natural features that reduce the impact of flooding and extreme heat
- !** Reinstate and expand funding and decision-making authority of Conservation Authorities so they can effectively implement vital flood control work
- !** Rapidly adopt into Ontario regulations recent Canada Standards Association (CSA) codes that take into account expected impacts of climate change on infrastructure such as stormwater and wastewater systems, roads and bridges (the recent Canadian Highway Bridge Design Code could improve the resilience of 175 Ontario bridge projects annually)
- !** Use climate projections to beef up the next Ontario Building Code to increase resilience of new buildings against winds, floods and sewer backups, and excessive heat (e.g. hurricane straps, backwater valves, “cool” roofs, ventilation etc.)
- !** Update the Ontario Planning Act to require municipalities and regional governments to consider climate change impacts in planning decisions.