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Air pollution peril: Ignoring the evidence

As a climate denier Ford is unwilling to acknowledge that climate issues are already injuring and killing people in Ontario. Ford government has consistently ignored significant harm to Ontarians caused by air pollution. The World Health Organization calls air pollution the “silent killer” because its widespread effects are often not ascribed to toxic air.

Pollutants poison our air

Related to but not identical with Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, air pollutants are in fact a different mix of noxious gases (carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen and sulphur oxides) that hover much closer to the surface of the planet where people and animals live and work. They are mostly caused by emissions from gas-powered vehicles and plants, and chemically managed agriculture.

Ford’s Public Health department is silent about the diseases and premature deaths caused by pollution. His cuts to environmental regulation and environmental testing, his cuts to the drive clean program, the lack of support for

a transition to electric vehicles, his increased reliance on self-reporting of emissions by individual companies, and his support of more highways and at the expense of wetlands and green areas are endangering our health.

Health effects go far beyond respiratory illnesses to organ and muscle damage, dementia, kidney problems, infertility and cancer. As with any illness, the poor and the racialized are disproportionately affected.

His climate breakdown blinders are killing us.

The effects of pollution must be exposed

According the Global Burden of Disease project, air pollution “ranks as the 11th largest risk factor overall for premature death and disability in





Canada, and is the top environmental risk.”¹

In 2021 Health Canada estimated that as of 2016 air pollution contributed to 15,300 annual premature deaths across Canada of which 6,600 were in Ontario.² However, no figures are currently available from Ontario Public Health.

The government advice we are given is to avoid traffic jams.³

The Climate First/People First Solution:

- ! Tell the truth about the lethal effects of air pollution in all its forms (transportation, air circulation in buildings, agriculture).**
- ! Restore support for Electric Vehicles (EVs).**
- ! Stop paving over wetlands to build highways.**
- ! Establish a strict system of regulations and inspections of cars, trucks and buses on our roads.**
- ! Establish programs that allow house and apartment building dwellers to test and clean the air that circulates in their homes.**

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/2021-health-effects-indoor-air-pollution.html>

² *ibid*, Table 5

³ <http://www.airqualityontario.com/press/faq.php>