

# Realizing the Health Benefits of Green Spaces in a Changing World

The Ontario Public Health Convention

## Workshop Report



*Prepared by: Karen Morrison and Suzanne Barrett on behalf of EcoHealth Ontario. These notes reflect the general nature of the meeting and the small group discussions. If there are errors or omissions, please contact Dr. Karen Morrison ([kmorriso@yorku.ca](mailto:kmorriso@yorku.ca))*

**24 March 2015**

**9:00 – 16:00**

**Allstream Centre, Exhibition Place  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada**



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## Workshop Partners



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## Introduction

There is growing understanding of the complex linkages among the natural and built environments and human health. Nature can help mitigate a wide range of physical and mental illnesses associated with modern lifestyles, urbanization, and changing climate. Unfortunately, current patterns of urban development are eroding and reducing access to natural areas and affecting the capacity of human settlements to be resilient to extreme weather events.

In recent years, a number of public health organizations in Ontario have begun to work with the planning, parks and environmental sectors to assess the evidence linking green space to health and to explore its implications for public policy, programs and planning decisions.

This workshop was hosted by EcoHealth Ontario, Forests Ontario, and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. It brought together ninety-six professionals from a variety of sectors to discuss the links among health, well-being, and green space and to explore future opportunities for ecohealth-themed collaborations in this area.



The agenda for the day's meeting is included in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains a full list of the workshop participants and their affiliations. Appendix 3 provides the panel questions, and Appendix 4 summarizes the workshop evaluations submitted by participants.

## Presentations

The morning presentations introduced the themes of the workshop: public health, green space and climate change in Ontario. The presentations are available on the EHO website (<http://www.ecohealth-ontario.ca/index.php/resources>) and are summarized briefly below.

## Welcome and Background:

### Burkhard Mausberg, CEO, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Dr. Mausberg introduced the audience to the Greenbelt and showed a video illustrating its expansion since 1945. He highlighted the importance of a series of 2005 reports by the Ontario College of Family Physicians that focused on the health impacts of urban sprawl and created an early health argument for the protection of the greenbelt. He highlighted the health benefits of the greenbelt plan, including containing urban sprawl, reducing car use, protecting farmland, regulating air and water quality, climate change mitigation, natural heritage system protection, active recreational opportunities and the creating of sustainable employment for more than 160,000 people.

Dr Mausberg encouraged the audience to participate in the current Town Hall discussions being held throughout the region on the future of the area, either in person or electronically through the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He noted the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation's support for several EcoHealth Ontario initiatives, including this workshop. He highlighted the objectives of this workshop to:

1. bring greater profile and awareness to the strong links between healthy natural environments, access to natural spaces and the health and well-being of communities;
2. share information about health benefits of natural spaces;
3. identify challenges and needs in the fields of public health, medicine, planning, parks and environment; and,
4. encourage policies and programs that promote and enhance the human health benefits of green spaces, such as Ontario's Greenbelt.



## Introduction to EcoHealth Ontario:

### Mike Puddister, Director, Credit Valley Conservation Authority

Mr. Puddister introduced the audience to the newly formed EcoHealth Ontario collaborative and noted the overlapping mandates among public health, provincial and municipal planning and parks, local environmental and watershed agencies as well as non-governmental organizations as they relate to human health and well-being and the environment. He pointed to the growing evidence and awareness of the benefits that the natural environment provides to the health and well-being of our communities, at the same time as we continue to see the loss or deterioration of natural features and their functions throughout the province.

He noted that EcoHealth Ontario had its roots in collaborative projects starting in 2009, and it has since grown through the sharing of perspectives, vocabulary and mandates to find common objectives among professionals from a range of different sectors. He noted that the group has been guided by the

Collective Impact<sup>1</sup> process that recognizes institutional constraints while identifying mutually reinforcing activities, such as common messaging, partnering at public events, supporting research and spreading the word. He outlined EcoHealth Ontario's goals and objectives, current partners and workplan, and invited the audience to join the network via the sign up form on the website ([www.ecohealth-ontario.ca](http://www.ecohealth-ontario.ca)), and to follow EcoHealth Ontario on Twitter @OnEcoHealth.

### **Agenda review and overview of the process: Suzanne Barrett, Facilitator, EHO Coordinator**

EcoHealth Ontario's coordinator, Suzanne Barrett, welcomed the participants and reviewed the day's agenda (Appendix 1) with the audience. She emphasized the importance of the afternoon round table discussions for providing input to the newly formed collaborative.

### **The natural environment: why it matters to public health: Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit**

Dr. Gardner started his presentation by recognizing that public health has only recently rediscovered the built environment and its links to public health. He highlighted the 2006 "Places to Grow" report as a driver of this reemergence of interest in the impact of the built environment on health. He provided examples of the clear support being provided by public health for healthy community design principles, including active transportation. Nonetheless, Dr. Gardner noted that there appears to be less active interest and concern over the links between public health and nature, maybe because most people live in cities and are not directly dependent on natural ecosystems for food or shelter.

By answering his own question "what did nature ever do for us?" Dr. Gardner articulated a number of the irreplaceable services that natural systems provide in support of human health and well-being. He contrasted our current success as a species (life-expectancy, population growth, urbanization, etc.) with our genetic pre-disposition for an active hunter-gatherer lifestyle that depends on natural ecosystems for survival. He noted that we have engineered physical activity (and nature) out of our lives, leading to an increase in so-called "evolutionary mismatch" diseases, which did not exist before civilization or agriculture. Addressing the imbalance between our genetic predisposition and our living conditions requires changes to our current way of living and our definition of health. He pointed to a 1995 definition of health as "a state in which humans and other living creatures with which they interact can

**... We need to rediscover  
the links among human health  
and well-being  
and natural ecosystems.**

*Dr. Charles Gardner*



<sup>1</sup> Collective impact has been defined as "the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a complex social problem" (<http://www.fsg.org/OurApproach/WhatIsCollectiveImpact.aspx>)

coexist indefinitely” as an improvement over the 1948 WHO definition of health<sup>2</sup> because the 1995 definition recognizes our need to think about both human and natural systems. Dr. Gardner pointed to the new Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care initiative on climate change as a critical opportunity to enhance the sector’s voice in these issues. He ended his presentation with a call for the audience to become involved in discussions around these themes, and reminded us that nature provides the basic and essential needs for our species and enables our civilization to exist – we need to rediscover the links among human health and well-being and natural ecosystems.

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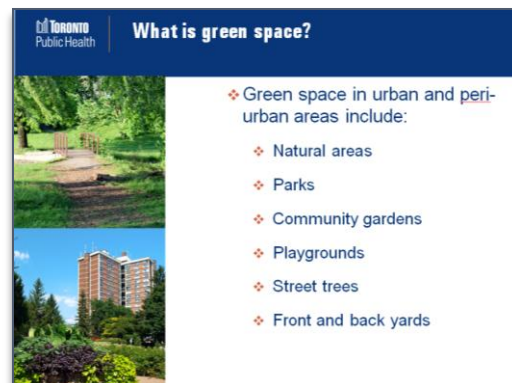
<sup>2</sup> Health, as defined by the World Health Organization (1948) “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.



## Green space, health and well-being: a review:

### Ronald Macfarlane, Manager, Health Public Policy, City of Toronto

Mr. Macfarlane summarized the findings of a literature review that was conducted for Toronto Public Health on the linkages among health and well-being and green space. He noted the current concerns in the City of Toronto related to the built environment and health, including air quality, physical activity and mental health. The review was commissioned to address the following questions: Does green space play a role in maintaining health and a more dense and growing city? What are the characteristics of green space that are important for health? To answer these questions, a clear definition of green space was required. For the purposes of the review, green space in urban and peri-urban areas included: natural areas, parks, community gardens, playgrounds, street trees as well as front and back yards.



106 studies published since 2000 were included in the review. Of these, 2 of 3 studies found lower all-cause mortality with higher green space, 1 of 2 found lower morbidity with higher green space and 7 of 9 reported better general health with higher green space. 28 of 39 studies showed improved wellbeing with more greenspace and 26 studies showed a positive association with mental health. Results were also summarized as they related to green space and physical activity, healthy weights, ADD/ADHD, respiratory health, birth outcomes and equity.



It was noted that the quality of the space is important for health. Several potential adverse health outcomes were also noted, including links to asthma, pollen allergies and poisonous plants (contact dermatitis and ingestion). In summary, Mr. Macfarlane noted that the overall strength of evidence related to the impacts of green space on health is weak or moderate, that both small and large green spaces are of value, that good maintenance of green spaces increases their beneficial health impacts and that the association between green space and better health is likely stronger for disadvantaged populations.

## Green space, air quality and heat: a review:

### Tara Zupancic, Director, Habitus Research

Ms. Zupancic summarized a recent report by the David Suzuki Foundation on green space, air quality and health that aimed to address the following research question: What is the evidence that green space can support health in urban communities by reducing heat and air pollution?

... All types of green space can have health and well-being benefits for the community and that size, density and connectivity maximize their impact.

*Tara Zupancic, Habitus Research*

102 studies were included in the review. They focused predominately on heat and air pollution mitigation individually, with a few studies addressing both themes. The review found that all types of

green space can have health and well-being benefits for the community and that size, density and connectivity maximize their impact. Several of the studies focused on trees, buildings and traffic and found that there were potential positive and negative outcomes depending on the site. These studies highlighted the need for place-based discussions of health and green space.

The use of green barriers to protect vulnerable populations was found to have a variety of benefits. The diversity of the flora in the green space increases both its impacts and its resiliency. The research also highlighted issues of inequity in relation to access to good quality green space. Recommendations from the study included: to examine spatial differences at local scales as part of larger greening strategies; to explore diverse greening strategies to meet green density needs in urban areas; to continue to provide cost\benefit analysis to support program planning; and to prioritize vulnerable areas.

## Panel Discussion

The moderator for the discussion was Kim Gavine, General Manager, Conservation Ontario.

The panelists were:

1. Helen Doyle, Manager, Public Health Branch, York Region
2. John McNeil, Manager of Forestry, Town of Oakville
3. Erica Phipps, Executive Director, Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment
4. Paul Ronan, Executive Director, Ontario Parks Association
5. Rob Voigt, Chair, Planning Issues Strategy Group, Ontario Professional Planners Institute

The questions posed to the panelists are included in Appendix 3.

Ms. Doyle introduced the currently policy landscape in Ontario related to ecology and health and remarked on the value of inter-sectoral dialogue on this topic. She noted that communicating the multiple co-benefits of green space to health is of vital importance, and pointed to the useful but costly and limited information coming from many of the studies that focus on only one health parameter. In this respect, the literature reviews synthesizing the available information are very useful. She pointed to the value of local intervention studies that can help improve policy.

The need to make not only scientific, but also economic, arguments in favour of greenspace protection was another key theme. For example, Mr. McNeil stated that when the economic value of Oakville's 1.9 million trees was quantified, it led to significant changes to municipal policies. There are currently some studies that link environmental parameters, such as smog days and proximity to green spaces, to hospital visits and calls to emergency services. These studies should be compiled and circulated, and



additional economic valuation studies commissioned in order to more effectively speak to decision-makers in their language of choice.

The point was made that green space in Toronto is currently underutilized, particularly in the critical 15:30-17:00 after-school time frame, due in part to challenges with the permitting process and in some areas to concerns over safety. A number of potential solutions to these challenges was mentioned. It was noted that opponents of change to the status quo will often invoke concerns over liability without any real understanding of what that means for the City or the School Board. This is a means of shutting down dialogue and invoking fear and should be clearly confronted as such. Any incremental increase in liability (given that, as Mr. Voigt joked “the City is already liable for everything”) is not a viable deterrent to enhanced public use of green space given the multitude of benefits to society.

Mr. Ronan indicated that there is a need to develop specific interventions to enhance ownership of and engagement with green spaces in low-income and immigrant neighbourhoods. There are a number of cultural factors that should be explored to better understand the potential for park use in different areas of the City. He pointed to the importance of early outdoor experiences in shaping family’s attitudes and interests. In addition, mechanisms to engage communities in the protection and maintenance of the park are well-known and could be implemented in conjunction with various partners.

Ms. Phipps spoke of the importance of linking current work on contaminants and children’s health with efforts to increase children’s access to green space, given the potential synergies. She quoted John Hoyt (*Politics for a Humane, Sustainable, Future*) to reinforce the message that we have to think both about the kind of Earth we are leaving to our grandchildren *and* the kind of children we are leaving to the Earth.

There was a discussion of the perverse policies currently in place that create artificial trade-offs between in-class education and outdoor experiences for students by including the maintenance of green space as a line item in the School Board budget. These green spaces have social and public health benefits that extend well beyond the classroom (and even from within the classroom, as seeing nature through the window has been shown to increase test scores) and should be included in the, much larger, Public Works budget of municipalities. This would reduce the current marginalization of schoolground greenery. It would also promote healthy outdoor activity, and mitigate some of the adverse health effects of a lack of canopy cover in playgrounds and other areas. Mr. Voigt noted that in some playgrounds, temperatures on metal slides can reach 50+ degrees Celsius – a temperature that can burn children’s skin. It was noted that more research is not necessarily the issue here (we all know that trees provide shade) and that planners can proactively collect their own information to inform policy.

... There is a need to develop specific interventions to enhance ownership and/or engagement with green spaces in low income and immigrant neighbourhoods.

*Paul Ronan, Ontario Parks Association*

## Small group discussions

The objectives of the small group discussions were to:

- evaluate the current level of integration of ecohealth concepts in different professional sectors;
- identify priority actions for different sectors, including opportunities for collaboration; and
- identify activities that EcoHealth Ontario can undertake to contribute to the realization of the health benefits of green space.



To realize these objectives, two rounds of small group discussions were held. The first (A) focused on the current status of ecohealth initiatives in various sectors and the second (B) on suggestions for action.

## Discussion Questions

The workshop participants were asked to self-identify with the following sectors at the workshop: health, environment, parks and recreation, planning, education and other. The number of participants from each sector is summarized in Table 1. A brief summary of the discussion questions follows.

**Table 1. Number of workshop participants by sector**

Sector	Number of Participants
Environment	26
Planning	22
Health	16
Education	10
Parks & Recreation	5
Other	5
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>84</i>

## A Is “ecohealth” on the radar for your sector?

### *A1: To what extent is “ecohealth” thinking on the radar in your sector?*

By “ecohealth” we mean a broad, holistic view of the relationships among the environment, society and human health and wellbeing.

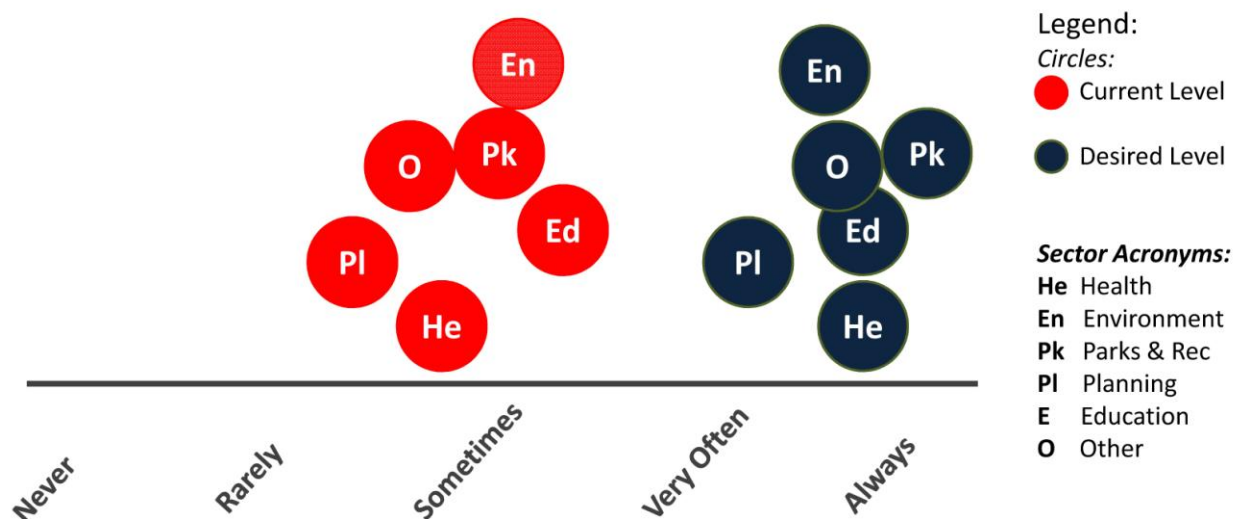
To answer this question, participants were asked to place red and blue dots (representing current and desired future status), labeled with their sector name, on a Likert scale to agree or disagree with the following statement, using the following range of answers: never, rarely, sometimes, very often, always.

***Ecohealth is integrated into the plans, policies and programs of my sector.***



The results of this exercise are summarized in Figure 1. Representatives of the public health, parks, education and planning sectors showed a high degree of similarity in their responses to the question. The responses of the environmental and other sector representatives were more diverse. This is likely due to the wide range of subject area expertise and employment among the respondents.

The figure suggests that there are examples of ecohealth policy and practice currently in place in the Province that can provide a foundation and precedents for future work. It also suggests there is both interest in and work to be done to better integrate a broad, holistic view of the relationships among the environment, society and human health and wellbeing into the policies of a wide range of sectors.



**Figure 1. Results of Exercise A1: Level of Integration of Ecohealth Thinking in Selected Policy Arenas**

## *A2 How to you refer to “ecohealth” in your sector?*

It was noted that ecohealth seems to be an emerging terminology and that education and clarity on what the term means is important at this stage. In some sectors, such as acute care, the concept is not mentioned at all, with the closest link likely being well-being. The participants indicated that a wide range of terms is currently used to represent ecohealth-type relationships, for example:

- Healthy communities, cities, lifestyles
- Healthy ecosystems
- Ecosystem approaches to health
- Ecosystem approach
- Community based participatory research
- Transdisciplinary, equity-focused, policy-action framework, policy-driven, often community based
- Ecosystem services
- Sustainable communities, design, development
- Sustainability
- Quality of life
- Human well-being
- Integrated watershed management
- Triple bottom line
- Nature and health
- Green space
- Environment and human health interface
- Health and well-being
- Hazard exposure
- Green infrastructure
- Nature connection
- Ecological design
- Complete communities
- Active Transportation
- Smart growth
- Natural connectivity
- System approach
- Environmental and social justice
- Social and environmental determinants of health
- Resilience
- Biodiversity
- Place-based planning (work, live, play)
- Opposite of nature deficit disorder
- Outdoor learning
- Ecoschools
- Quality of life
- Green living
- Eco-communities
- Spirit language
- Community happiness
- Ecotopia
- Eco-urban design
- Garden cities
- Healthy by design
- Ecological footprint
- Living city
- Carrying capacity
- Stewardship
- Nature connection
- Conservation medicine, conservation biology
- Forestry and public health collaborative (York Region)

This wide range of terms represents a range of different schools of thought, historical programs and policies as well as new programs and ideas. The diversity is a strength of the ecohealth movement. Nonetheless, it also poses a challenge for EcoHealth Ontario as it seeks to unite those interested in a broad, holistic view of the relationships among the environment, society and human health and wellbeing under a common umbrella.

Several slogans from different groups and programs were cited as indicating ecohealth thinking, for example: A Destination for Natural Inspiration (Scanlon Creek); A Watershed for Life (LSRCA Vision Statement).; and Healthy Hikes (Conservation Ontario and partners).



The term One Health had a very low profile in the responses given, perhaps due to its current narrow focus on veterinary medicine, wildlife epidemiology and zoonotic infectious diseases. The field has a number of parallels with ecohealth, however, which will be explored at the upcoming December 2016 joint Ecohealth/One Health Conference of the International Association for Ecology and Health in Melbourne, Australia.

Several participants also noted that ecohealth is not synonymous with the term environmental health, which itself has different meanings for the public health and environmental science sectors. Others noted that the WHO Healthy Communities program has not typically focused on greening initiatives and that ecosystem health also tends not to reference humans. There was also a concern that the term ecohealth would be construed by biologists as the health of the ecosystem itself.

There was some mention of how the theme of ecosystem services has opened the door to discussions about human health and well-being, but that this is a relatively new development.

*It is recommended that a glossary of some of these alternative terms for ecohealth be created and posted on the EcoHealth Ontario website (with hyperlinks to more information about each) in order to recognize and support the inclusion of different schools of thought, historical trajectories and sectoral and disciplinary specializations in the collaborative.*

### *A3 How is “ecohealth” currently manifest in your sector?*

The majority of the workshop participants stated that ecohealth was at least somewhat on the radar of their sectors in exercise A1. In this section, the participants were asked to identify specific programs, policies or groups that represented current ecohealth-type thinking in Ontario. The results are summarized in Table 2, below.

**Table 2. Summary of programs and policies identified by workshop participants as indicative of ecohealth thinking**

Theme	Program	Policy
Health	Healthy cities Health Impact Assessment Human Health Risk Assessments Community Health Family Planning	Ontario Public Health Standards
Wellness	Fitness and participation in parks Healthy hikes Mood walks Biking and hiking programs Employee wellness Student mental health Active transportation Rehabilitation and prevention programs in nature Public health and forestry partnership	Improved trails and wayfinding Accessibility legislation Prescribe nature walks
Environment	Tree planting Canopy cover initiatives Climate change impact studies Water quality awareness LEED and green buildings Greening hospitals Extreme heat programs Local food Regional natural heritage systems	Protection of forests, trees and farmland Climate change mitigation strategies Climate change adaptation policies Biodiversity strategy Building standards Urban heat island in official plans Urban Official plans Provincial policy statements
Education	Ecoschools Urban agriculture, community and school gardens Children’s outdoor charter Outdoor education programs	

The planners noted that such programs are included in Official Plans, Provincial Plans and Provincial Policy Statements and perhaps to some extent Conservation Area management plans. They also noted that the application of these policies was highly place-based and was influenced by situation-specific



considerations, local governance, community input and the understanding of the terms involved. Some specific recommendations included:

- Increasing Parkland Dedication maximums under the Planning Act;
- Bolstering Official Plan policies regarding the quantity and quality of parkland dedication;
- Establishing ecohealth as a strategic priority at the level of the approval authority; and
- A provincially required 30% canopy cover target and other targets for street trees, trail systems, active transportation and green space linkages.

In addition, it was suggested that on-going consultations across agencies should be required for new developments, and a culture that would require a mandatory consideration of ‘elective policies’ (i.e. complementary policies with no legislated status) should be instilled in planners. It was pointed out that work on parks and greenspaces should be eligible for green infrastructure funding.

One participant felt that the planning sector would refer to the environment but not necessarily connect it to public health, particularly in rural areas where this connection is not seen as a priority. Another noted that in theory ecohealth is recognized through regional and provincial legislation and within city strategies, but in reality nothing much is done.

Peel Region’s Health by Design strategy was mentioned, as was the City of Mississauga’s Living Green initiative and Evergreen. Halton Regional Forests, Halton Food, Toronto Natural Environment Trails Strategy and Toronto Parks and Trails Wayfinding Strategy were also identified as promoting good practice. McMaster University’s mental health program for students was identified as a program linking student to nature. One participant stated that a new provincial policy that would require all schools to become ‘ecoschools’ and follow best practices in environmental facilities management is needed. This would send a strong message to society about the need to protect and enhance the connection between the next generation of Ontarians and the natural world, and build on some of the points raised during the panel discussion.



Several participants noted that for the activities they listed, improved health and well-being was really a by-product of what they were doing, rather than a driver for the activity. They expressed a need to recognize and explain the human health and well-being benefits of work they are already doing.

One participant used the matrix in Table 3 to organize a range of examples. This table has been expanded with the addition of responses of other participants.

**Table 3. Examples of Ecohealth Integration into various Policy Arenas**

Arena	Examples
Legislation	• Planning Act, Greenbelt Act, Places to Grow Act, Environmental Protection Act, Clean Water Act
Provincial Plans	• Greenbelt/Growth Plan
Municipal Plans	• Municipal Official Plans, Living Green Master Plan
Policies	• Provincial Policy Statement
Regulations/Standards	• Water quality, air, noise, building code, tree protection, environmental, building, accessibility,
Strategies	• Cycling, biodiversity, Great Lakes, trails, wayfinding, forest management, climate change, natural heritage, source water protection
Guidelines	• Sustainable development, low impact development, urban design
Guidance/Education	• Conferences, pre-planning frameworks, Ontario Professional Planners Institute learning sessions
Funding Programs	• Community energy plans, Green Belt Foundation
Networking/Collaboration	• EcoHealth Ontario, Community stewardship groups, events

It was noted that ecohealth was starting to be incorporated into project evaluation criteria, and that it could be an “extra benefit” for activities that are carried out for another purpose. The need to apply ecohealth concepts to build support for environmental restoration efforts that have health benefits (e.g. clear air, climate change mitigation, recreation, etc.) was also noted.

The use of social media, digital storytelling, infographics and graphic montages was recommended, in addition to advocacy, webinars, position papers, consultations, research reports, visioning exercises, codes of practice, statements of values and the engagement of front-line service providers (e.g. linking environmental protection/exposure reduction to health promotion)

*It is recommended that EcoHealth Ontario compile examples of a suite of current activities that seek to enhance the links between ecosystems and public health in order to better communicate the range of activities and themes that are available to the ecohealth community to affect change and to highlight the work already underway. The ecohealth community could help lobby for enhanced access to existing green spaces by marginalized groups.*

#### ***A4 What are the barriers to including more ecohealth considerations in your sector?***

The main barriers identified by the workshop participants can be grouped into the following seven themes. The short paragraphs highlight some of the common themes from the discussions:

##### **i. Research**

Due to the vagaries of our research funding model, ecohealth falls between the mandates of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. Ecohealth research tends to encourage collaboration with stakeholders that creates new opportunities for discussion, collaboration and mentoring. Intervention and health outcome research is needed. The evidence, causal link, and strength of association are complex in the area of identifying the direct health benefits of greenspace, thus slowing action. Another challenge is the mismatch between the information and data needed and that which is available. There are serious issues around whose knowledge counts (whose knowledge is 'expert'), given that ecohealth has physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual health dimensions.

New research collaborations are needed, for example, an intervention study could be conducted to examine urban forestry and public health outcomes on a specific neighbourhood-scale greening strategy. Other collaborations among academics, the community, NGOs and government would also be valuable.

More research is not necessarily the most urgent priority, however, particularly since it tends to measure narrowly bounded, directly relationships and does not capture the complexity and co-benefits of ecohealth work. The public health sector is strongly focused on (some would say the 'myth of') 'evidence-informed' or 'evidence-based' policy-making. However, traditional epidemiology studies have limited utility to develop policy in this field (as opposed to other health issues such as, for example, obesity and smoking).

##### **ii. Evidence**

Evidence includes research (as per the above) but also information that can be readily collected by practitioners for current problem-solving (e.g. go and sit in a park!). Evidence can be a barrier when it is too narrow, specific or fragmented to contribute to policy work. There is a need for 'reasonable science' (not absolute proof, but enough for 'applied science') in public health, community and environmental planning. What are the thresholds for making a business case for this work?

Synthesis and meta-narrative analysis, such as was conducted in the two research studies, can counteract some of these limitations. Including research from other disciplines, such as social science and the humanities, is needed.

Ecohealth faces the same paradox as other forms of health prevention – success (health and well-being) may be invisible and is hard to measure. It is much easier to measure mortality and morbidity.

### **iii. Capacity**

We need more people who are able to communicate in a sophisticated way with professionals in a range of sectors (including public health, environmental science and planning) to facilitate dialogue and exchange. Public health education should better incorporate the environmental sciences and vice versa. Webinars and a range of practical training tools are needed. Regular workshops on ecohealth themes would be useful.

Champions and innovative thinkers are needed. Risk taking and failure should be recognized as positive learning experiences in an entrepreneurial policy environment. Political 'fear' related to trying out new arguments and promoting new policies is a concern. Internal resources and time may be limiting factors. Additional challenges include lack of political will and the limited capacity of decision-makers to articulate ecohealth priorities.

### **iv. Funding**

There is a need to access funding that will allow for collaboration. This funding will need to be fairly secure as it takes time to be inclusive. When talking about public health there is a tendency for some forms of expertise to be valued over others; for example, community perspectives are often marginalized (lived experience is often seen as less valuable than other forms of evidence/knowledge). EcoHealth Ontario has an opportunity to demonstrate the value of a range of knowledge systems to address fundamental questions and concerns related to environmental change and human health and well-being.

### **v. Good Stories**

The lack of clear and compelling current examples is a barrier to helping people understand what ecohealth is and what it stands for. A casebook of examples, links to current projects, short videos and other forms of storytelling would help fill this gap and could be used by collaborators in a range of fora. Some ecohealth benefits are not immediate or tangible and so are difficult to communicate. Stories can be used for 'myth-busting' purposes that help reframe current debates and can help inform the development of a shared suite of values. Stories are also needed to address the question 'so what?' regarding the value of ecohealth.

Another participant pointed to the challenge that has been created by people who have been indoctrinated into thinking that participating in environmental programs, or expressing an interest in environmental issues, is political and requires the adoption of an entire political outlook. The use of stories that highlight leaders from across the political, cultural and religious spectrum would be helpful in mainstreaming and de-politicizing this issue.

### **vi. Sector Priorities**

The engagement of the bureaucracy is a key barrier but also creates an opportunity for cross-sectoral dialogue that transcends political appointments. Structural issues that prevent cross-sectoral



collaboration are a challenge. Competing and perverse policies need to be identified. There is some concern that ecohealth may become 'just another voice'. Competing priorities and vested interests (and lobbying) are a barrier. For example, developers clearly want to maximize the short-term value of their land and do not want to set aside original natural vegetation. It is cheaper for them to clear-cut an area and then plant it and add a stormwater pond. The long-term value of greenspace includes enhancing and protecting property values and thus property tax revenues should be promoted to decision-makers. The lack of buy-in, lack of interest and the challenge to existing beliefs are additional barriers.

## **vii. Policy Translation**

The place-based nature of many of the issues and recommended interventions make blanket policies potentially (but not necessarily) difficult. More research is needed on this theme. The translation of current policy into practice is already fraught with difficulty; ecohealth policies would be no different. Better oversight of the quality of life implications of current policies is needed.

In addition to these seven themes, a lawyer in the group noted that there is currently no right to a healthy environment in the Canadian Charter for Rights and Freedoms, but that there was the potential for Charter litigation through Section 7 (Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person) in particular under Section 15 (Equality). An additional point was made regarding the need to have the concepts that support ecohealth thinking recognized in law, such as, for example, the term cumulative effects.

## **B Priority actions and collaboration opportunities**

*In order to more fully realize the health benefits of green spaces, what are your recommendations for action?*

*B1 In your own sector?; B2 In collaboration among two or more sectors?; and, B3 By EcoHealth Ontario?*

To answer these questions, participants were asked to individually brainstorm their answers and record them on sticky notes for the facilitators. In addition, each table was asked to come up with 2-3 recommendations from their small group. These recommendations were then grouped into the following eight themes:

- **Education** – of decision makers, in public health and medicine, inter-sectoral. Take advantage of existing training programs (for example, OPPI could add ecohealth to its Continuing Education Units); include ecohealth in school curricula; and engage grassroots community groups.
- **Marketing and Communication** – storytelling, common messages, social media, additions to existing signage/communication efforts, and engaging skeptics. Resources are needed for professionals in various sectors to better consider green space implications in their work. A focus on children (next generation) was proposed. Alignment with Conservation Ontario's Watershed Report Cards would be beneficial. It would be useful to develop a casebook or short video of projects that are considered to be a success by multiple stakeholders. Synthesize research into plain language reports. Send a synthesis and a copy of this workshop report to the Premier's office.

- **Funding** – committed and sustained, including green infrastructure funding.
- **Collaboration** – networking, partnerships, joint submissions and reports, more events like this workshop – perhaps quarterly to maintain momentum and build the collaborative network. Need to engage missing sectors including physicians; identify champions. Partner with Green Infrastructure Ontario to comment on Provincial Plan review and collaborate in other areas.
- **Measurement** – both quantitative and qualitative, cost-benefit analysis, multiple co-benefits.
- **Advocacy** – on specific policies (e.g. Provincial Policy Statement, Greenbelt Plan, Growth Plan, etc.). Develop a LEEDs type designation for ecohealth.
- **Policy** – draft guiding principles or sample policy statements and white papers, use “ecohealth in all policies” frame.
- **Research** – including cost-benefit analysis and health outcomes, support intervention research – i.e. research that is designed to track the effectiveness of a project or program.

*It is recommended that EcoHealth Ontario identify and pursue a few key strategic messages and/or policy positions that help Ontarians realize the health benefits of green space in the coming years.*



## Synthesis of Workshop Themes

**Clear links between green space and public health** – There are numerous examples of studies linking green space to public health and the literature is becoming stronger as more studies are conducted. The majority of studies, however, are narrowly focused on a single health parameter and a narrow range of greenspace parameters.

**Some known hazards** – Some negative associations have been found, particularly with respect to asthma, allergies, dermatitis and some air quality (biological volatile organic compound) issues. The greening of street canyons requires particular attention, given the potential for certain tree species to trap pollutants close to the ground. Nonetheless, all these issues can be addressed, and the weight of evidence supports a link between good quality, accessible greenspace and improved public health and wellbeing.

**Place-based** – Local social and environmental characteristics are important for determining the potential health effects, both positive and negative, of greening an area. This is particularly the case when addressing health inequity, because good quality greenspace can raise property values and drive out low income residents, thus having a perversely negative impact on the health and wellbeing of low income residents. It is also the case for the planning and design of greenspaces in order to maximize the benefits of green corridors and canopy cover. There are numerous anecdotal benefits of street greening, including reductions in road rage.

**Current suite of perverse policies & perspectives** – There is currently a lack of integration between ecology and health that has created artificial divisions between actions taken to enhance ecosystem resilience and those taken to enhance human health. Numerous examples were presented in the workshop, including the mindset that as an increasingly urban population we “don’t need nature”; the fact that school greenspace maintenance budgets are put in an artificial and illogical competition with classroom resources; that playgrounds are poorly designed and too hot in the summer; that liability is raised as an argument against investing in green space, etc.

**Opportunities for action** - There are a number of opportunities for action, including advocacy programs directed at the School Boards, and interventions in public consultations related to planning legislation. There is a clear need for examples and narratives that show the multiple co-benefits of linking ecology and health in Ontario, and there is a number of programs currently in place that should be leveraged to help promote these ideas in a wide range of sectors. There is also a clear need for continued inter-sectoral dialogue on these issues in Ontario.

**Importance of an intergenerational perspective** – The critical issue of climate change requires all citizens to adopt an intergenerational perspective linking human and ecosystem health. There is a need to seriously and systematically think about the kind of earth we are leaving to our grandchildren, particularly as we become a more ethnically diverse and urban country.

## Workshop Evaluation

Every effort was made to engage the participants in the workshop evaluation process. This included reminders throughout the day of the importance of filling in the evaluation form provided in the registration kit, and a draw for a prize at the end of the day to encourage full participation in the evaluation. Eighty-four evaluations were received.

The workshop received a very positive response. Most respondents said that it was ‘great’ or ‘good’, with the majority indicating ‘great’.

Forty-two (50% of the total) respondents stated that they would change their work as a result of the workshop, with another 26 people indicating that they might make changes. Only six people said “no” and five said that they didn’t know yet.

Thirty-one (37% of the total) respondents indicated that they expected to start a new collaboration, with another 32 people indicating that they might start a new collaboration. Only five people said “no” and 13 said they didn’t know yet.

Detailed results of the evaluation process are provided in Appendix 4.

... It was a very interesting, enlightening and inspiring day!

... Everyone seemed thrilled, both with the day we shared, and the possibilities and ideas going forward.

... Congratulations on a great success!

## Summary of Recommendations

1. *It is recommended that a glossary these alternative terms for ecohealth be created and posted on the EcoHealth Ontario website (with hyperlinks to more information about each) in order to recognize and support the inclusion of different schools of thought, historical trajectories and sectoral and disciplinary specializations in the collaborative.*
2. *It is recommended that EcoHealth Ontario compile examples of a suite of current activities that seek to enhance the links between ecosystems and public health in order to better communicate the range of activities and themes that are available to the ecohealth community to affect change and to highlight the work already underway. The ecohealth community could help lobby for enhanced access to existing green spaces by marginalized groups.*
3. *It is recommended that EcoHealth Ontario identify and pursue a few key strategic messages and/or policy positions that will help Ontarians realize the health benefits of green space in the coming years.*



## Next Steps

The EcoHealth Ontario steering committee will meet in May 2015 to discuss the workshop and determine the next steps. Working groups on different themes are envisioned, and EcoHealth Ontario members will receive regular email updates, in addition to the information posed on Twitter (#OnEcoHealth) and on the EcoHealth Ontario website ([www.ecohealth-ontario.com](http://www.ecohealth-ontario.com))

## Appendices

- 1 – Agenda
- 2 – List of Participants
- 3 – Questions posed to Panelists
- 4 – Workshop Evaluation Summary Report

## Appendix One – Agenda




Possibility grows here.

Pre-TOPHC Workshop

### Realizing the Health Benefits of Green Spaces in a Changing World

March 24, 2015, 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM. Allstream Centre, Toronto.

## AGENDA

<b>8:30 AM</b>	●	<b>Registration and refreshments</b>
<b>9:00 AM</b>	●	<b>Welcome and background</b> Burkhard Mausberg, CEO, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
<b>9:10 AM</b>	●	<b>Agenda review</b> Suzanne Barrett, Facilitator, EHO Coordinator
<b>9:15 AM</b>	●	<b>What is EcoHealth Ontario?</b> Mike Puddister, Director of Restoration and Stewardship, Credit Valley Conservation
<b>9:25 AM</b>	●	<b>The natural environment: why it matters to public health</b> Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
<b>9:50 AM</b>	●	<b>Round-table ice-breaker: Why are you interested in ecohealth?</b>
<b>10:00 AM</b>	●	<b>Green space, health and well-being: a review</b> Ronald Macfarlane, Manager, Healthy Public Policy, Toronto Public Health
<b>10:25 AM</b>	●	<b>Green space, air quality and heat: a review</b> Tara Zupancic, MPH, Director, Habitus Research
<b>10:50 AM</b>	●	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:15 AM</b>	●	<b>Panel discussion</b> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px; margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Helen Doyle, Manager, Public Health Branch, York Region</p> <p>John McNeil, Manager of Forestry, Town of Oakville</p> <p>Erica Phipps, Executive Director, Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment</p> <p>Paul Ronan, Executive Director, Ontario Parks Association</p> <p>Rob Voigt, Chair, Planning Issues Strategy Group, Ontario Professional Planners Institute</p> <p>Moderator: Kim Gavine, General Manager, Conservation Ontario</p> </div>
<b>12:30 PM</b>	●	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>1:15 PM</b>	●	<b>Round-table discussion 1: Is "ecohealth" on the radar for your sector?</b>
<b>2:25 PM</b>	●	<b>Round-table discussion 2: Priority actions and collaboration opportunities</b>
<b>3:35 PM</b>	●	<b>Plenary: Key messages and actions</b> Karen Morrison, Facilitator, Vice-President, International Association for Ecology and Health
<b>3:55 PM</b>	●	<b>Next Steps</b>
<b>4:00 PM</b>	●	<b>Adjourn</b>

## Appendix Two – List of Participants



Possibility grows here.



Pre-TOPHC Workshop

### Realizing the Health Benefits of Green Spaces in a Changing World

March 24, 2015, 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM. Allstream Centre, Toronto.

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Lesley	Adams	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Gena	Ali	Office of Sustainable Planning, Halton Region
Clare	Ambraska	Flemingdon Health Centre
Brad	Anderson	Regional Municipality of Durham
Sue	Arndt	Evergreen
Ian	Arnold	
Miranda	Baksh	Student
Suzanne	Barrett	EcoHealth Ontario
Candace	Battig	
Kevin	Behan	Clean Air Partnership; York University
Alexandra	Belaskie	York University
Michael	Bender	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Melissa	Benner	Ontario EcoSchools
Robin	Beveridge	
Colleen	Bonner	Credit Valley Conservation Authority
Thomas	Bowers	Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
Alexandra	Brodka	McMaster University
Ian	Buchanan	Regional Municipality of York
Martin	Bunch	York University
Mary-Ann	Burns	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Lance	Carlson	
Peter	Chee	
Sandy	Clee	Simcoe County District School Board
Adeline	Cohen B	University Health Network
Jessika	Corkum-Gorrill	City of Mississauga
Carolynne	Crawley	FoodShare Toronto
Jayme	Crittenden	Conservation Ontario
Kelly	De Fogain	Ontario EcoSchools
Sarah	de Jonge	Student
Brian	DePratto	TD Bank
Jayson	Doll	Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Victor	Doyle	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Helen	Doyle	York Region Community and Health Services
Benoit	Duquette	South Nation Conservation Authority
Stephanie	Ellens-Clark	Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services
Anne	Farrell	City of Mississauga

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Dilhari	Fernando	Invasive Species Centre
Stephen	Foster	
Mieke	Foster	
Charles	Gardner	Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Kim	Gavine	Conservation Ontario
Thelma	Gee	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Kristy	Giles	
Kelly	Graham	
Carla	Grant	Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation
Sunday	Harrison	Green Thumbs Growing Kids
Jamaal	Haynes	Student
Mark	Howard	City of Mississauga
Erin	Howley	Student
Jessica	Iraci	City of Toronto
Kayla	Kalalian	Simcoe County District School Board
Robin	Kang	Ontario Public Health Association
Kemal	Kapetanovic	Student
Diana	Keay	
Jonah	Kelly	Regional Municipality of Durham
Brian	Kemp	Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority
Andrew	Kett	Credit Valley Conservation
Bill	Kilburn	Back to Nature Network
Marianne	Kingsley	Toronto Public Health
Tatiana	Koveshnikova	Credit Valley Conservation
Suzan	Krepostman	
Jessica	Kukac	Simcoe County District School Board
Karen	Kuzmich	
Diane	LeBreton	
Jane	Lewington	Conservation Ontario
Zanita	Lukezich	Evergreen
Darryl	Lyons	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ronald	Macfarlane	City of Toronto
Kathy	Macpherson	Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
Burkhard	Mausberg	Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
Vicky	McGrath	TRCA
Shelley	McKay	Forests Ontario
Alan	McNair	McNair Consulting
John	McNeil	Town of Oakville
Mary Catherine	Mehak	Mehak, Kelly & Associates Inc.
Karen	Morrison	CoPEH Canada
Caroline	Murphy	
Michelle	Ng	Region of Peel
Lionel	Normand	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)
Katie	Novacek	
Elizabeth	Oakley	Toronto and Region Conservation
Carol	Oitment	Min. of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Mickey	Palha	The Living City Foundation
Kate	Pankov	TRCA

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Kim	Perrotta	Creating Healthy and Sustainable Environments
Erica	Phipps	Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment
Arvin	Prasad	Regional Municipality of Peel
Michael	Puddister	Credit Valley Conservation
Danijela	Puric-Mladenovic	Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto
Asim	Qasim	York Region Public Health
Bob	Rogers	
Paul	Ronan	Ontario Parks Association
Peter	Rudiak-Gould	
Bartholomew	Ryan	
Jo-Anne	Rzadki	Conservation Ontario
Caroline	Samuel	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Michelle	Sawka	Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition
Myles	Sergeant	Trees for Hamilton
Karen	Shelstad	The Lawson Foundation
Aryne	Sheppard	David Suzuki Foundation
Matthew	Shilton	
Thea	Silver	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Ravi	Singh	Forests Ontario
Karen	Sun	City of Toronto
Wayne	Terryberry	Mcmaster University
Tony	Tobias	Pangaea Media & Music Inc. / Wild Metropolis
Robert	Voigt	Ontario Professional Planners Institute
Pegeen	Walsh	OPHA
Robert	Walters	
Kelly	Weste	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Marina	Whelan	Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Alan	Wiebe	Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury
Richard	Wyma	Essex Region Conservation Authority
Greg	Zala	
Tara	Zupanic	Habitus Research



## Appendix Three – Questions Posed to Panelists

**Note:** For simplicity, “Urban green space, health and well-being” is referred to as “the Health and Wellbeing report” and “The Impact of Green Space on Heat and Air Pollution in Urban Communities” is referred to as “the Environmental Health report”.

### Helen Doyle 1

**Preamble:** The **Environmental Health** report states that “evidence on the direct health benefits of heat and air pollution mitigation from urban greening is growing, but epidemiological studies are severely lacking”.

**Question:** If you could commission a study to address this gap, what would your priority be? Is more science the answer?

### Helen Doyle 2

**Preamble:** The Health and Wellbeing report shows that increased green space density is directly linked to as many as 13 different positive health outcomes.

**Question:** If you had an opportunity to explain to your Board of Health that they should advocate for more green space in York Region, which public health outcomes would you emphasize? In other words, which health challenges can be most effectively addressed with green space?

### Robert Voigt 1

**Preamble:** The **Environmental Health** report recommends that urban planners should explore diverse greening strategies to meet green density requirements to address the urban heat island and air pollution issues. The Health and Wellbeing report also calls for renewed attention to the nature and distribution of urban green spaces to promote health and wellbeing.

**Question:** To what extent are human health and wellbeing already incorporated into land use plans and policies across Ontario? What are the biggest challenges?

### Robert Voigt 2

**Preamble:** Focussing on a specific example, Ontario’s legislative framework to protect green space includes the Greenbelt Act. The Greenbelt was established primarily to protect farmland and natural systems from urban development.

**Question:** To what extent do you think the Greenbelt is also an investment in health and wellbeing and why? Is it working?

### Paul Ronan 1

**Preamble:** Both literature reviews conclude that we need more equitable distribution of green spaces in urban areas to better realize their benefits in terms of health and resilience to climate change.

**Question:** What are the specific challenges of creating and maintaining parks in low income neighbourhoods and how can they be overcome?

## **Paul Ronan 2**

**Preamble:** Both literature reviews emphasize the importance of nature – wildlife habitats, urban forest, green roofs etc – in our cities.

**Question:** What is the current thinking in the parks profession about incorporating nature into urban parks systems? Do the literature reviews (1) support what parks planners are already doing and/or (2) suggest some new considerations that parks planners should take into account?

## **John McNeil 1**

**Preamble:** The **Environmental Health** report recommends 30 – 50% green density targets for urban communities. Presumably a significant amount of this would be urban tree canopy in parks as well as street trees.

**Question:** Is there a commonly accepted target for the urban tree canopy in Ontario municipalities? How far are we from achieving this and what are the greatest barriers?

## **John McNeil 2**

**Preamble:** Both literature reviews focus on urban areas, but many in the forestry sector are talking about “One Forest” – that was the theme of the Forests Ontario AGM last month. i.e. we need to think about urban and rural forests as one interconnected system in order to fully realize the ecosystem services and health benefits they can provide.

**Question:** Can you comment on the values of trees and forests in rural areas like the Greenbelt in relation to the health of people in both rural and urban communities?

## **Erica Phipps 1**

**Preamble:** The Environmental Health Report documents evidence for reduction of air pollution by urban forests and other greenspace. A key focus of your work at Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and Environment has been on the importance of reducing children’s exposures to toxic chemicals and pollution.

**Question:** Do you see a connection between CPCHE’s toxics agenda (the ‘brown’ agenda) and the issues we are discussing here today (the urban ‘green’ agenda)?

## **Erica Phipps 2**

**Preamble:** The increasingly popular concept of nature deficit disorder has been linked to a host of disorders in children, including anxiety, depression, attention deficit, myopia and obesity as well as poor school performance.

**Question:** Should we orient public policy to address the widening disconnect between today's children and the natural world? For example, do you see a role for policies to increase access to urban green spaces as part of a broader strategy for chronic disease prevention and brain health?

## Appendix Four – Workshop Evaluation Summary

*Prepared by Ravi Singh, Forests Ontario and Jane Lewington, Conservation Ontario*

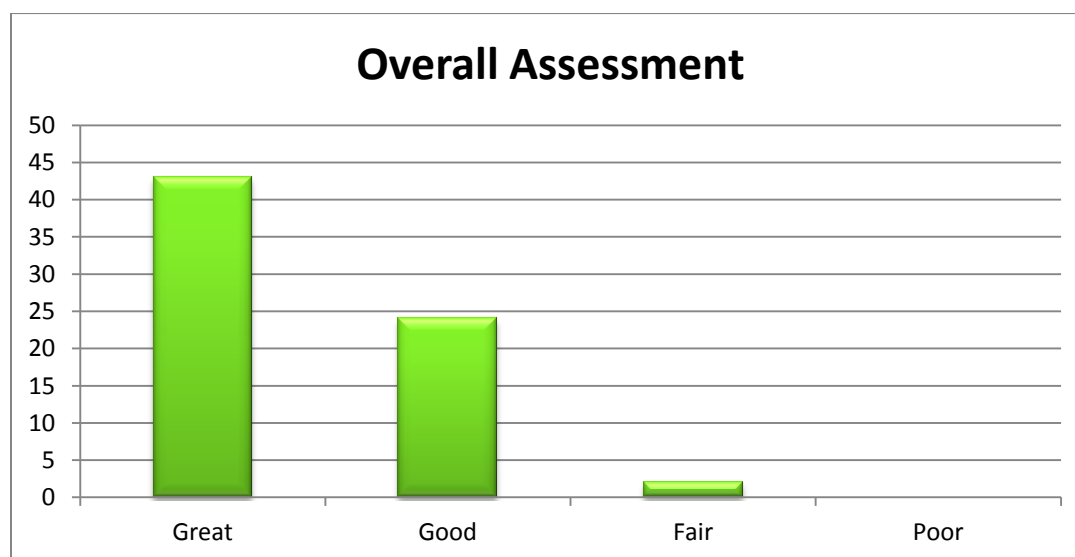
### Introduction

Eighty-four people, representing 88% of participants at the 2015 EcoHealth Workshop, submitted an evaluation. This is a very high return. The breakdown of respondents includes:

Education (10%)	Planning (26%)	Public Health (20%)
Parks/Recreation (7%)	Environment (24%)	Other (13%)

### General Assessment

The workshop received a very good response with most respondents indicating it was ‘great’ or ‘good’, with the majority indicating ‘great’.



Of the 13 comments received, a very high majority was very complimentary, particularly praising the content, structure, and diversity of the sectors and people. Three comments noted the engagement opportunity for participants. Two people suggested the next steps could be a review of case studies (one suggested it could have been included in the program). There were no outright criticisms – just a very few constructive suggestions such as suggesting that the breaks and flow could have been paced better and that some time outdoors would have been beneficial.

## Workshop Presentations

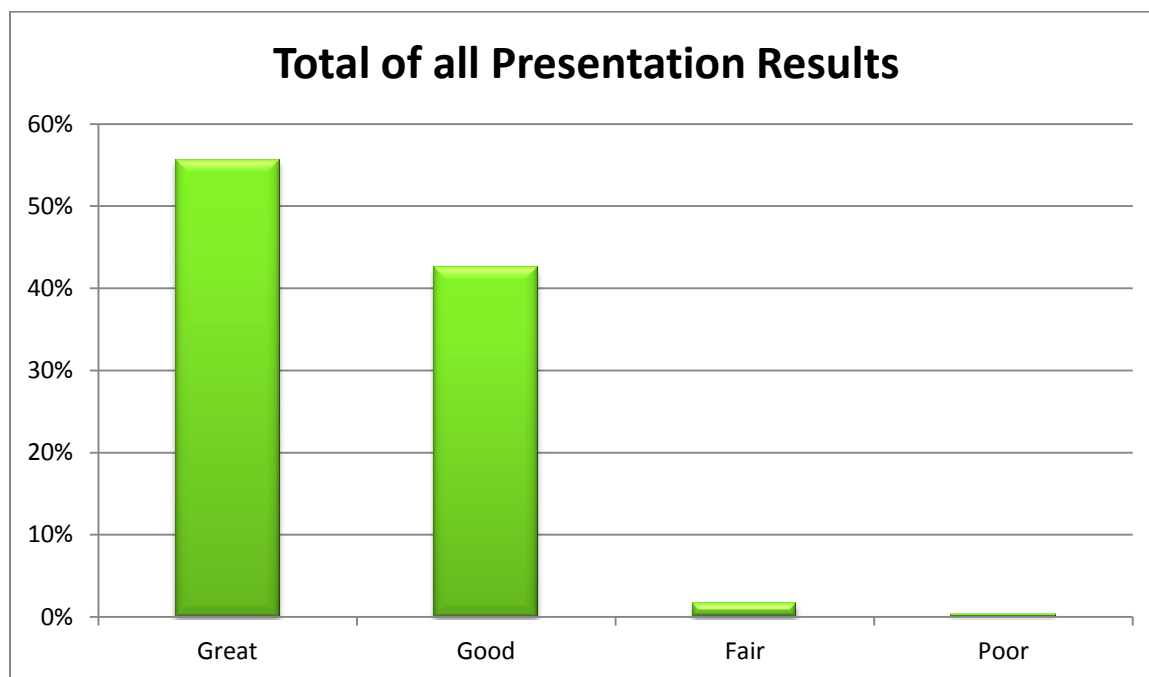
*Natural Environment: Why it Matters to Public Health* (Dr. Charles Gardner)

*Green Space, Health and Well-Being: A Review* (Ronald MacFarlane)

*Green Space, Air Quality & Heat: A Review* (Tara Zupancic)

With the exception of three people, all the plenary presentations were rated either 'great' or 'good' by approximately 97% of the respondents, with the majority of respondents rating them 'great'.

Six comments were received; four praised the content and speakers; one suggested sharing the information more widely; only one comment indicated dissatisfaction.



## Other Activities

### Morning Plenary – What is EcoHealth Ontario?

All but one person felt this introduction to EcoHealth Ontario was either 'good' or 'great', with respondents split between the two rankings.

### Morning Panel Discussion

The morning panel discussion was also well received by respondents with over 90% ranking it either 'good' or 'great'. Most of the responses indicated 'great'. Three people chose 'fair'. The eight comments provided about the panel discussion included favourable observations about the diversity of the

panelists and their expertise. One comment suggested it was too long and a second one recommended more time for questions.

### **Roundtable Discussions**

Both roundtable discussions received a high majority of 'great' or 'good' rankings.



#### **Roundtable Discussion 1: Is EcoHealth on the Radar Screen for Your Sector?**

Almost all of the respondents ranked this roundtable either 'good' or 'great', with a slight majority saying 'good'. The nine comments were generally complimentary about the time allotments, discussions, diversity of sectors represented, and variety of questions. One felt it was too long and another wasn't fond of the sticky notes.

#### **Roundtable Discussion 2: Priority Actions and Collaborations**

Only two comments were submitted – one suggesting it should have happened earlier in the day for those who had to leave early and a second suggesting the time allotment was too long. With the exception of three people, the other respondents all ranked this roundtable as 'good' or 'great'.

#### **Afternoon Plenary – Key Messages and Actions**

Only half of the regular number of respondents rated this session. Those who did were consistent with the roundtables – only two people ranked it as 'fair' and the rest ranked it as 'good' or 'great', equally split.



## **Additional Questions**

**Future Work – Do you anticipate changing any aspect of your work as a result of something you learned at this workshop?**

Forty-two (50% of the total) respondents replied that they would change their work as a result of the workshop, with another 26 people indicating that they might make changes. Only six people said “no” and five said that they didn’t know yet.

**Future Work – Do you think you will start a new collaboration as a result of this workshop?**

Thirty-one (37% of the total) respondents indicated that they expected to start a new collaboration, with another 32 people indicating that they might start a new collaboration. Only five people said “no” and 13 said they didn’t know yet.

## **Additional Comments**

### **General**

- Great introduction to EcoHealth.
- Well facilitated.
- Generally a fine effort – interesting and worthwhile.
- Met new people that could lead to new collaborations.
- Great workshop. Would be helpful to have resources posted on website along with general messaging about the connection between human health and natural environment.
- Very happy to hear about the literature reviews on environment and health.
- Learned about potential collaboration between EcoSchools and public health on greening school grounds.
- Up to municipal council to invest in various ideas that would promote Ecohealth. Planning staff would need a business plan to support this. It should be easier but is not.
- Great opportunity to exchange ideas and hear perspectives and learn!
- Great day for breaking down silos.

### **Structure of Workshop**

- More dynamic presentations (e.g. video, interactive dialogue).
- Mix-up round table timing to allow greater interaction and perhaps have participants move around as opposed to staying at same table.
- Would have liked to dive deeper into a few areas and learn more about what is being done.
- Give participants opportunity to send in questions ahead of time for guest speakers.
- Would be worthwhile to have more opportunities to move around and engage with others at the workshop and to integrate more multimedia in presentations.

### **Future Suggestions**

- Some great information and conversation but felt like people in room already understood health-green space connections.
- Need to include participants of diverse cultures, especially First Nations, on panels.
- School boards and education sector should be more present.
- Need to follow-up with a 'practices' workshop that showcases case studies.
- Greater diversity of participants (women, people of colour, ability).