



# ONTARIO NURSES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Official Newsletter of ONEIG  
An RNAO Interest Group

# HELLO Summer

## Political Accountability

EMMA AYUKAWA

This spring, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario was voted in as a majority government. Although reports indicated a historically low voter turnout, we must not be discouraged by this as there are still many people in our province who are actively engaged in politics and issues surrounding health and the environment. Regardless of whether you voted or whether your views align with those of your elected MPP, we each have a responsibility to hold our elected officials accountable in all areas, including health and the environment.

If you are not already aware of who your local MPP is, you can use these tools to find out and learn how to get in contact with them:

I know my riding: <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current>

I don't know my riding: <https://www.ola.org/en/members>

Once you know who your MPP is, you can reach out to their office, follow them on social media, or sign up for their newsletters to find out what they support and how they work for your community. The Legislative Assembly of Ontario also allows you to search for your MPP's names in their transcripts (use the 'Advanced Hansard search') to find out how your MPP represents your riding during sessions.

I encourage you to speak up about the issues that matter to you, your families, and your communities. No cause is too minor, and no voice is too small to make a difference when we work together.

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## Nursing Considerations for the Summer

from Olivia Brundia

As nurses, it is important to consider that summer temperature and activities in Ontario can be dangerous for our patients- regardless of which specialty one works in.

In the summer many people take a summer vacation and engage in water sports and recreation and engage in new and exciting activities they may not be familiar with. It is important to educate our patients about summer safety

Basic water safety such as:  
monitoring children or vulnerable people near the water to avoid accidental drownings, ensuring that there are no warnings posted for algae blooms before entering the water

Sun smart:  
provide teaching on the risk of skin cancers and burns from UV exposure, the importance of staying hydrated to avoid dehydration, signs, symptoms of heat-related injuries, and the risk of exacerbating respiratory conditions from increased pollen and poor air quality.

It may be a good idea to encourage your patients to look into tools such as: Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT), Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), Heat Index, or UV Index

Let's enjoy a safe and happy season by being summer smart! We'd love to hear your summer strategies- tag on your social!

One individual cannot  
possibly make a  
difference, alone. It is  
individual efforts,  
collectively, that  
makes a noticeable  
difference—all the  
difference in the  
world!

~ DR. JANE GOODALL

## On the Horizon ONEIG

## Annual General Meeting this September

keep your eye on your email for registration  
details to come later this summer





# Review Article: The Ongoing Problem of Pollution

Josalyn Radcliffe, PhD(c), BScN, BA, RN

**Pollution and health: a progress update Fuller, Richard et al. The Lancet Planetary Health, Volume 6, Issue 6, e535 - e547**

I was grateful to come across a progress update on the issue of pollution and health published in The Lancet: Planetary Health in May 2022. I think the fierce advocacy to fight climate inaction leads some to forget we are facing multiple, intersecting ecological crises. Pollution is linked to climate change, land degradation, and waste, yet it must also be conscientiously considered and addressed to mitigate the resulting suffering and death. In this article, Fuller, Landrigan et al. do well to provide a high level overview of the crises and burden of pollution and make connections to climate change and waste.

Pollution continues to be one of the top causes of premature death and illness. And while gains have been made through improved water, sanitation, and indoor 'traditional' pollution, these gains are overshadowed by the growing burden of other 'modern' pollutants (outdoor air, lead, chemicals). The death toll is stark: over 6 million deaths were attributed to air pollution alone in 2019, with ambient particulate matter causing 4.14 million deaths. The authors highlight that burning fossil fuels is a major contributor of fine particulate matter, and there is huge potential to benefit human and planetary health through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants by cutting fossil fuel use.

Fuller and colleagues also draw attention to the ongoing burden of lead. Lead continues to be a concern despite celebrated changes (ex. Removal of lead from gasoline). Recently the range of concern has been significantly lowered (from 5 µg/dL to 3.5 µg/dL in the USA) while others declare that there is no safe level of lead. Emerging data demonstrates deeply concerning low-dose impacts to learning and cognition in children.

"...only a small fraction of the many thousands of manufactured chemicals in commerce have been adequately tested for safety or toxicity..."

While the authors point out that there is a huge deficit of information regarding manufactured chemicals, they did provide alarming data regarding immunological, neuro, and reproductive toxicity.

They highlight the increased risk of fertility and neurological impacts during the prenatal and postnatal periods and the relationship between air pollution and infectious disease like COVID19.

While they address the reproductive impacts of plasticizers, referred to often as phthalates, they fail to note to readers the pervasiveness of these chemicals (soaps, vinyl flooring, hairspray and more). It is well-worth emphasizing again the point above, however, that there is very little data to demonstrate safety or risk of many chemicals. Accordingly, major recommendations of the authors are increased research, prioritization and monitoring of pollution. Furthermore, the authors highlight measurement issues as accidental poisoning was the only indicator of chemical risk in the Global Burden of Disease study (2019) relied upon in this article, neglecting the myriad of other impacts.

Overall, this article proves to be a strong overview of the issue of pollution, one that will likely be drawn from for many undergraduate courses. It also highlights the exploitative relationship between countries (where wealthy nations often allow others to take on the environmental burden of the production of their goods), yet misses the opportunity to focus on how 'progress' (industrialization and economic development) is leading us backwards when it comes to health. The environmental silo-ing and need for intersectoral and government action were also highlighted for policymakers, which could be addressed by a health-in-all-policies approach advocated by the RNAO. While the authors note that the four years since their initial report was insufficient time for improvements to be seen, they concluded there has been far too little policy change and action given the magnitude of suffering caused by air, water, and land pollution.

All in all, this article is an effective quick overview of the policy and health landscape. It focuses heavily on the economics of pollution, although the authors do acknowledge and connect pollution to some political and social justice issues as well as connected ecological crises.





# Building Political Relationships

## Hilda Swirsky

We, in Canada, are so very fortunate, to live in a peaceful democracy. We do not have to risk our lives to vote and we have a choice when we vote. Democracy is a precious gift not to be taken lightly or given away through complacency. Voting is one easy strategy for promoting the candidates who reflect and adhere to the society we want to live in.

RNAO including ONEIG perceives the importance of building collaborative beneficial relationships including with political candidates and politicians. Assisting candidates, who need us, during an election campaign is an optimal time to forge ahead in communicating our requests while supporting political candidates who are keenly listening to their constituents and appreciate all the help they can get.

As one of ONEIG/CANE's representatives on the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment- Ontario Climate Change Emergency Challenge, I circulated the letter to York Centre political candidates which CAPE-ON formulated, a letter of requests which RNAO signed onto.



I heard back, in detail, from York Centre's Conservative Candidate Michael Kerzner. Frequently, I heard from each candidate asking me for donations, for my time as a volunteer and finally, as election- day approached, for my assistance during the election- day and of course, for my vote.

Michael Kerzner used to be President and then Past President of Beth Emeth synagogue. When we met on the campaign trail, he acknowledged my efforts to promote environmental sustainability, as he did when he answered the letter of requests that I sent him which CAPE-ON and RNAO promoted. Now, he has been appointed as Solicitor General and we wait to see what the Conservative party will strive for as an answer to environmental protection.

We currently do have on board our federal government and in Toronto, our Mayor John Tory and municipal Councilor James Pasternak, Co-Chair of Infrastructure and Environment who ensured that Toronto's tree canopy increased and that Toronto is moving forward with their Transform Toronto, Net Zero Strategy and are selecting an Advisory Committee to enhance the ideas they will receive from the diverse expertise of their citizens.

Toronto municipal elections take place on Monday, October 24th.



# STOP SPRAWL CAMPAIGN

## WHAT IS URBAN SPRAWL?

By: Cleo Danforth

Urban sprawl is the rapid expansion of urban borders to accommodate new construction of low-density, single-use zoned neighbourhoods (i.e. suburbs).

Think of the town or city where you live, the large areas of only single-family homes in low-density, disconnected suburbs, and the relative proportion of higher-density living areas, including duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, low- and high-rise apartment buildings. Urban sprawl describes the phenomena of continuing to develop further and further outward from the city center instead of reconsidering how space closer to the city centre can be used to create compact and well-planned communities.

## HOW DOES URBAN SPRAWL AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY?

As city boundaries expand, development pushes further and further into wild spaces and valuable agricultural land, damaging ecosystems and impacting the many species that don't do well in human spaces. Even when some green spaces are set aside in these new developments, the creatures living there have been cut off from the rest of their environment, requiring them to make dangerous crossings of highways and human neighbourhoods to find food and mates.

## HOW DOES URBAN SPRAWL CONTRIBUTE TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

The direct effect of urban sprawl is the increased reliance on cars as transport. With single-family homes spreading out further and further from city centers, building a comprehensive and efficient public transit system becomes significantly more challenging. In fact, large populations living in sprawling suburbs tend to harm public transit efforts over time by tipping the political weight instead towards the road and highway infrastructure they must rely on. Additional carbon emissions result from the increased heat and electricity required to maintain so many large, individual homes.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

### GET INVOLVED!

Join the "Stop Sprawl" effort in your local community. Check out the "Stop Sprawl Ontario!" Facebook page for more information.

### LEARN MORE!

Discuss tackling urban sprawl with your family, friends, and political representatives. Learn the details about sprawl in Ontario here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLkje\\_pMTpU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLkje_pMTpU)

Check out this interesting visual tool with AI modelling demonstrating urban sprawl in major Canadian cities here: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/info/2022/03/etalement-urbain-densite-population-villes-transport-commun-changements-climatiques/en>







# WELCOME, ROB!

Hello ONEIG Team!

I am excited to be joining the ONEIG executive as Co-Chair! My name is Rob Samulack. I am a registered nurse in the Emergency Department at the Montfort Hospital in Ottawa. I have also worked as a COVID vaccine immunizer with Ottawa Public Health, as a medicine/surgery nurse at the Smiths Falls Hospital and as a summer camp nurse.

I am the father of two young boys. While going back to school for nursing in 2016, my wife, Rachel, and I lost a son, Aaron, shortly after his birth. While we got fantastic support, we also found many gaps in the system. To channel our grief, we founded Butterfly Run Ottawa to raise money for Roger Neilson House and advocated to all levels of government for increased funding and support for pregnancy and infant loss programs.

When not working, I try to foster a love for nature and responsibility for environmental stewardship in my kids and others by volunteering as a Beaver Scouts leader and cross-country ski coach. I am often found canoeing, skiing, biking, hiking or camping.

I have helped a campaign by the Ottawa Water Study and Action Group to get the sale of bottled water banned in City of Ottawa buildings. The organization aims to reduce plastic waste and reinforce access to clean, public drinking water as a human right.

Rachel and I led a grassroots street calming project for our road. If people feel comfortable walking and biking to school, work, shopping and public services, fewer cars will be on the road. Active transportation makes people healthier, saves money and increases the sense of community. It also reduces pollution, creating a healthier planet. I also occasionally help Bike Ottawa with advocacy for local bike infrastructure projects.



In November 2021, I had the opportunity to go to COP26 with the Christian Climate Observers Program, where I learned climate action is not just about biking, EVs or housing insulation. I learned about climate justice – how the world's most impoverished people are the least at fault but the most affected – loss of homes, droughts, floods, increased disease, mass migrations, refugees, and war. Climate change has already caused all of these.

As a nurse, my job and calling are to care for people and advocate for them. I try to speak as often as I can about climate change and encourage others to do as well. Nurses need to talk more about climate change. Human health is intimately linked with planetary health.

I was asked to come onto the ONEIG executive team to help with the workload as we lead in climate action. I hope that ONEIG will draw more nurses to take action, both large and small. I also hope that ONEIG will demonstrate to non-nurses the importance of ecological determinants of health.

Katharine Hayhoe talks about how the Earth will go on regardless of climate change. Despite decades of people talking about "saving the Earth," the real issue here is "saving us." As nurses, we are uniquely situated to talk about how ecological determinants of health affect people.

I hope to strengthen ONEIG's voice and use it to affect change from nurses at local levels across the province to Queen's Park, Parliament Hill and even internationally. I am excited to see what we can accomplish!

Rob was born at 350 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> (2 May 2022 is 421 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>) and can be found on Twitter @canoebikeski.



# Hilda Swirsky, RNAO LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER!

HILDA HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN ADVOCACY ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, FROM NUCLEAR ENERGY TO PESTICIDES AND WATER, FOR OVER A DECADE AS PART OF RNAO. SHE HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO MANY THROUGH THE YEARS AS SHE FOUGHT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH. WE ALL ARE SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE HILDA AS PART OF OUR TEAM AS OUR CANE (CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF NURSES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT) LIAISON.

SHE WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF ONEIG, RECOGNIZING THE WAYS HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT ARE CLOSELY TIED. WE WERE SO HAPPY TO NOMINATE HILDA FOR THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD THROUGH RNAO, WHICH SHE RECEIVED AT THE 2022 RNAO AGM! PLEASE JOIN US IN CELEBRATING, CONGRATULATIONS, HILDA!

PLEASE FIND THE FULL AWARD WRITE-UP [HERE](#)

[HTTPS://RNAO.CA/ABOUT/AWARDS/RECOGNITION-AWARDS/LIFETIME-ACHIEVEMENT-AWARD-HILDA-SWIRSKY](https://rnao.ca/about/awards/recognition-awards/lifetime-achievement-award-hilda-swirsky)



Pictured Left to right: Hilda Swirsky, Roman Baber, Maria Negri

# Congratulations!





# FUN IN THE SUN

Show us how  
you summer!

Please tag us in your eco-  
friend summer activities  
showing how you celebrate  
health and the environment  
in the summer sunshine!

**DID YOU MISS OUR RECENT WEBINAR:  
GARDENING WITH KITCHEN SCRAPS? PLEASE  
VIEW IT HERE:**

**[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=7CG8YDD-QX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CG8YDD-QX8)**

**CORRECTION FROM THE SPRING NEWSLETTER-  
PG. 3 CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS SHOULD READ:**

**THE CLIMATE CLOCK NOW GIVES US ONLY 10 YEARS (NOT  
MONTHS) TO CROSS THE THRESHOLD TO 1.50C WARMING.**

ENJOY  
SUMMER

Please connect  
with us:



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<https://chapters-igs.rnao.ca/interestgroup/36/about>



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