

**Health Officers Council
Ecological Determinants of Health Standing Committee
Terms of Reference (version: September, 2018)**

Preamble:

We recognize that as a species, humans are part of the ecosystem and have a role to play in protecting and caring for the ecosystem.

The concept of the ecological determinants of health was proposed by a Working Group of the CPHA in their 2015 report Global Change and Public Health: Addressing the Ecological Determinants of Health - the Report in Brief. The report noted:

There are many ecological processes and natural resources essential for the health and wellbeing of humans and other species. They constitute Earth's life-supporting systems.

The ecological determinants of health include adequate amounts of oxygen, water and food upon which life depends. Other vitally important ecological processes and natural resources include the ozone layer that protects Earth's surface from high levels of UV radiation; the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles that circulate nutrients needed for plants and thus for all our food; systems to detoxify wastes through natural processes, and abundant fertile soil, freshwater and marine aquatic systems within which to grow food and other plants. For humans, particularly for the development of human cultures and civilizations, three further requirements are materials to construct our shelters and tools, a source of abundant energy and a reasonably stable global climate with temperatures conducive to human and other life-forms. Collectively, the natural systems that produce these 'ecosystem goods and services' are THE fundamental determinants of human health and wellbeing.

Not only are we 100% dependent on the 'goods and services' of the natural systems we are a part of, our mental, emotional and spiritual health is dependent on the health of natural landscapes and ecosystems that we live in.

Given our dependence on the health of the planet, we have a responsibility to consider the impacts of our actions and decisions on the health of the ecosystem.

Objectives:

1. To build awareness of the ecological determinants of health, and the population health implications in BC of the global and regional ecological changes that are underway
2. To propose actions that should be taken by the general HOC membership on important trends and emerging issues related to the Ecological Determinants of Health in BC.
3. To promote relationship building and partnerships between public health practitioners in BC and with external stakeholders.
4. To advocate for coordinated and innovative action on issues on pertinent to the Ecological Determinants of Health.

Current Membership:

- Fraser Health
- Interior Health
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Northern Health
- Island Health
- First Nations Health Authority
- UVic
- SFU
- BCCDC

* Ad hoc membership at discretion of the SC

Membership will include at least three members from HOC, in addition to members from other agencies.

When participation by the member is not possible, an alternate can be designated. Members will remain in place as long as their respective organizations feel they are the best representative.

The co-chair roles will be reviewed by the SC on an annual basis and must be members of HOC.

Accountability:

This is a standing committee of the HOC and is accountable to the Council. The SC will help identify relevant issues related to the Ecological Determinants of Health, and present those to HOC for discussion.

Members of the SC are accountable for commitments made at the committee table, and will be expected to deliver on these commitments in a timely manner.

The SC will report to the Council on an annual basis.

Meetings:

Meetings will take place on a bimonthly basis. Two in-person meetings per year will be held as at the HOC face-to-face meeting, with the remainder held by teleconference.

Decision Making:

The SC will strive to make decisions by consensus. In the event that consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be made by majority vote.

Quorum:

A majority of SC members must be present at meetings to have quorum for decision making. Members who do not attend meetings are expected to abide by decisions made by a quorum of the committee.

Secretariat Support:

Secretariat support for the SC will be shared by the co-chairs.

Secretariat support includes making meeting arrangements, meeting minutes, maintaining the terms of reference, maintaining a current member contact list, and other administrative or coordination tasks as required.