



Perth District Health Unit

Rosana Pellizzari, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

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Dr. Sheela Basrur
Assistant Deputy Minister &
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Public Health Division
Hepburn Block, 11th Floor, 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1R3

Dear Dr. ^{Sheela}Basrur:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Health of the Perth District Health Unit to express their firm belief that Environmental Health programming at the local level needs to be enhanced. In order to achieve this, the Board of Health is requesting that the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines be revised to include Environmental Health as a separate and expanded program area.

The Perth District Health Unit is called upon to respond to many environmental health issues such as indoor and outdoor air quality, pesticide exposures, and the presence of contaminants in land used previously for industrial purposes. We are also invited, in our role as public health providers, to provide input into conservation and local environmental planning decisions. Environmental health issues are often perceived as a priority by both the public and politicians and there is an expectation from the community that the Health Unit should provide a leadership role. However, the reality is that our Health Unit lacks the staff, resources and expertise to address these issues effectively.

Public Health Units are the logical providers to address environmental health issues for their communities but this will not happen unless this mandate is articulated by revised Mandatory Programs which include Environmental Health. With a strong mandate, Boards of Health can advocate for appropriate resources and ensure that our contributions to environmental concerns are better planned, more comprehensive, and proactive rather than merely reactive or nonexistent.

Given Operation Health Protection's agenda to review and revise the Mandatory Programs, we are hopeful that you will seize this opportunity to recognize the environment as an important area for public health activity so that local Public Health Units can be empowered to assist their communities to address the environmental issues that influence and impact on their health.

Yours truly

Rosana Pellizzari, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

cc: George Smitherman, Minister of Health
Dr. Garry Aslanyan, President, OPHA
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, alPha ✓
Siobhan Kearns, Chair, ASPHIO
Mike Duncan, President, CHIPHI