



Canadian Association of
Physicians
for the
Environment

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Canadian Health Professionals Applaud Paris Climate Change Agreement

YELLOWKNIFE & TORONTO:

“The new climate agreement is a real win for human health,” offered CAPE Board Member, Dr. Courtney Howard, who was in Paris with the Global Climate and Health Alliance during the negotiations of the new Climate Change agreement. “The Paris agreement signals a fundamental shift towards a low-carbon society and provides a framework for protecting health from the worst impacts of climate change” she explained.

“As an Emergency Room Physician working in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories, I am already seeing the health effects of climate change. My emergency room was full of patients who were having trouble breathing when wildfires were raging all around us,” Dr. Howard offered.

The Paris agreement was reached with a groundswell of global support from many quarters including Canadian health professionals who added their voices to the call for a safer and healthier future. Last week, the Global Climate and Health Alliance announced the signatories of declarations calling for climate action representing over 1,700 health organizations worldwide, including CAPE, the Canadian Medical Association and the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Dr Xavier Deau, Immediate Past President of the World Medical Association declared that: “The health of the populations must be the heart of the considerations on climate change.”

According to the World Health Association, air pollution contributes to one in eight deaths worldwide. Many of the solutions to climate change will reduce air pollution as well as greenhouse gases, produce significant health benefits and health care savings around the globe. McGill Public Health resident, Dr. Yassen Tcholakov, who followed the talks closely in Paris noted that: “Effective international collaboration will allow us to address the most crucial health issues that we will face in the coming century while promoting the values of equity and justice held dear by physicians throughout the world.”

Dr. James Orbinski, CIGI Research Chair & Professor in Global Health at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, and Honorary Board Member of CAPE, stresses that the real work begins now: “To do Canada’s fair share, we need to meet and exceed our current emissions reduction commitments. I am getting e-mails from doctors across Canada who are seeing health effects from climate change and who want to help with climate action in their communities.”

The Canadian Medical Association has added its voice to the issue by calling for: the phase-out of coal-fired power plants within 10 years; the implementation of carbon pricing; and the creation of cities that support active modes of transportation such as walking, cycling and transit. Dr. Howard emphasizes, “There is tremendous opportunity to improve health by protecting the planet.”

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