

Healthy Children for the Next Generation



Building the Capacity of Policymakers In Children's Environmental Health

Overview

Issue

The health of all children living in Canada is at risk from environmental hazards. (Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment, 2005)

Objectives

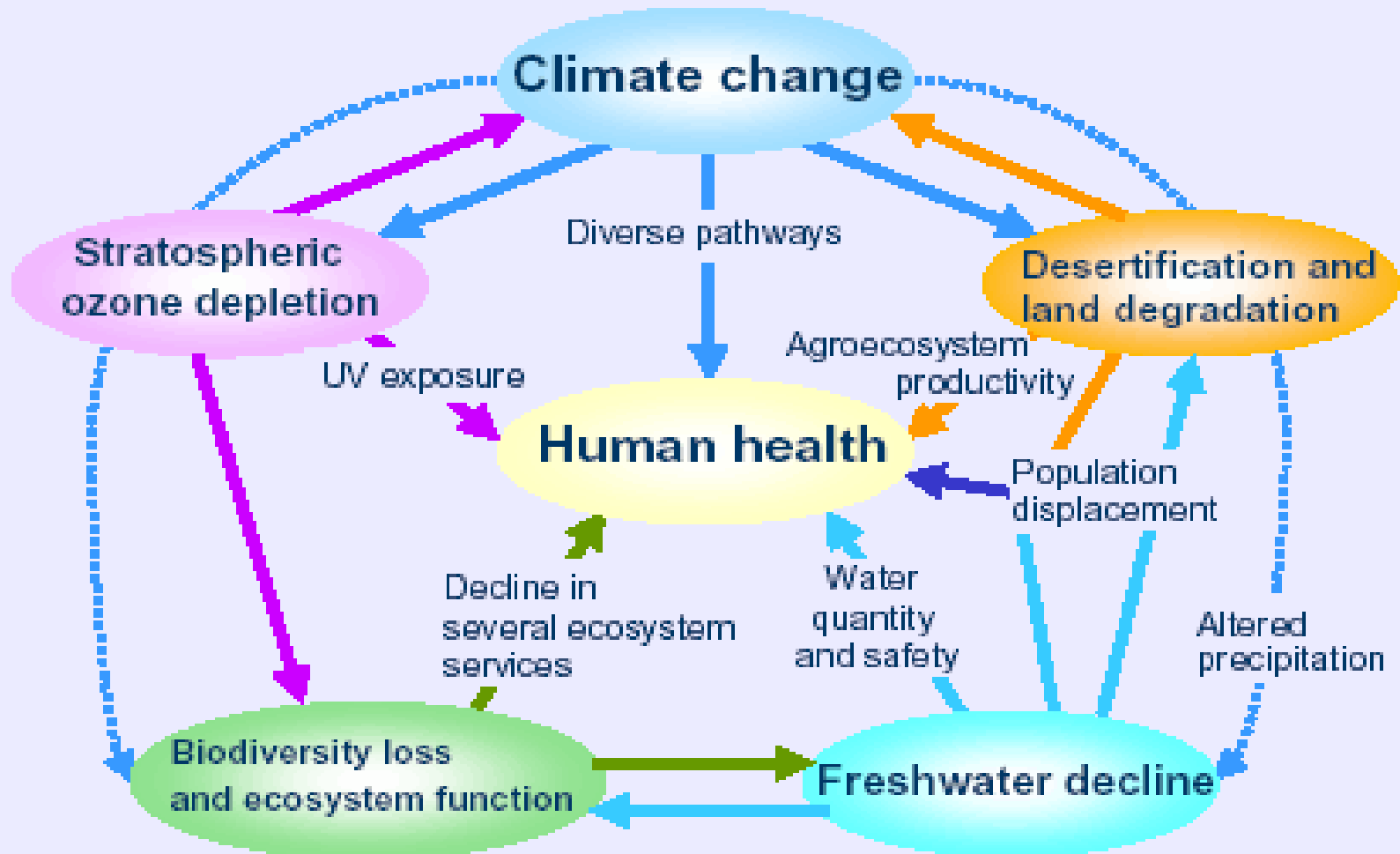
- Increase knowledge of children's environmental health issues and the need to protect children from environmental threats
- Describe international context
- Describe Canadian context
- Identify the work of the New Brunswick Collaborative on Children's Environmental Health and Team Policy
- Call to Action

Determinant of Human Health



Global environmental influences

© WHO, 2006. <http://www.who.int/globalchange/en/index.html>



What We Know

- Children are more highly exposed to substances in the environment (hence more vulnerable) than adults, due to:
 - **body mass** (kg for kg of body weight, a child will drink more water, eat more food and breathe more air than an adult)
 - **physiology** (e.g., breathing is more rapid, ability to metabolize and excrete contaminants is less developed than in adults)
 - **behaviours** (children tend to be more active, explore their environment orally, and play lower to the ground where contaminants settle)
 - Children have a longer lifetime ahead of them (more time to accumulate exposures and have them manifest as health problems)

What We Know

- Certain childhood disorders are on the rise, e.g., asthma, learning and behavioural problems, birth defects, low birth weight, childhood cancers.
- Many chemicals are not regulated and perhaps inadequately evaluated.
- Scientific knowledge on the effects of many chemicals on children's health and development remains insufficient.
- Environmental exposures are largely preventable.



What We Know



Children world-wide are entitled to grow and live in healthy environments.

~ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

International Progress

- **World Health Organization**

Global Plan of Action for Children's Health and the Environment: 2010-2015 (Draft)

- **Europe**

The Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (2004)

- **United Kingdom**

A Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the UK (2009)

Canadian Progress

- *First Steps in Lifelong Health: A Vision and Strategy for Children's Health and Environment in Canada (2008)*



Achieving the Vision of Children's Environmental Health Protection

Results of the 2008 Canadian Consultation:

- Recommendations for immediate actions and integrated strategies
 - to protect the developing fetus and child from the known and suspected health risks posed by hazardous chemicals in consumer products and indoor and outdoor environments



First Steps in Lifelong Health: A Vision and Strategy for Children's Health and Environment in Canada

Achieving the Vision

Action is needed in three core areas:

1. Research
2. Law and Policy
3. On-the-ground Protection

New Brunswick Collaborative on Children's Environmental Health

Working collaboratively to reduce children's exposures to environmental contaminants

Areas of focus include:

- education for families and professionals
- research
- policy and legislation
- consumer products

Team Policy

Objectives:

- Development of legislation (e.g., a Bill of Rights) to uphold the rights of children to a healthy environment
- Finding a mechanism to apply a 'children's environmental health lens' to relevant provincial legislation, policies and programs
- Specific provincial legislative, regulatory or policy initiatives to reduce children's exposure to contaminants

Bill of Rights

Primary Policy Goal

To work toward an equitable and sustainable society in which all New Brunswick children breathe clean air, both indoors and out, consume safe food and drinking water, and are protected from the risks posed by environmental contaminants, such as those found in many consumer products.

Bill of Rights

Strategy

Contribute to and support the N.B. Environmental Bill of Rights, recognizing the particular vulnerabilities of children to environmental risks and acknowledging the link between health and environment.

NB Environmental Law Society
www.sade-els.org

Children's Environmental Health Lens

Primary Policy Goal

To establish Children's Environmental Health as a central organizing principle for healthy public policy.

Strategy

Apply a 'children's environmental health lens' to all relevant legislative, regulatory or policy initiatives, and recommend appropriate action, through a mechanism such as:

- an existing interdepartmental committee (e.g., the Interdepartmental Deputy Ministers' Committee on Wellness)
- new mechanism (e.g., a secretariat for children's environmental health).

Reduce Children's Exposure to Contaminants

Primary Policy Goal

Promote precautionary policies and programs to prevent and reduce harmful environmental exposures during fetal and childhood development.

Strategy

Monitor and take action on the following:

- Specific legislation and policies that are relevant to children's environmental health
- Determining the levels of environmental contaminants that have accumulated in New Brunswick children
- Quantifying the burden to the health care system of child health conditions associated with environmental risk factors
- Measuring child health outcomes

Call to Action

- Become a **Champion** for Children's Environmental Health!
- **Contribute** to the work of the N.B. Collaborative for Children's Environmental Health:
 - Join a team.
 - Spread the word in your organization.
 - Engage your agency.
 - Follow the listserv.



Call to Action

We call on *governments* and *policy-makers* at all levels to understand and address links between health and the environment and to incorporate these links into policy decisions through legislative and budgetary actions.





My future is in your hands.

Contact information

- **Website:** www.nben.ca/aboutus/caucus/ceh/index.htm
- **Strategic Committee**
c/o New Brunswick Environmental Network
(506) 433-6010
nben@nben.ca
- **Team Policy co-chairs**
Bonnie Hamilton Bogart – Policy Education
Results Planning Ltd
(506) 488-1888
bonniehb@nb.sympatico.ca

Sharon Flatt – Bill of Rights
Conservation Council of New Brunswick
(506) 639-9929
sflatt@nb.sympatico.ca

Thanks!

Questions?