

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Air Quality

The way our communities are designed can impact the air we breathe. In communities where homes are far from schools, jobs and shopping, people drive more frequently and for longer distances. Vehicle emissions are a major contributor to air pollution and greenhouse gases (GHGs) that directly contribute to climate change. These emissions are not just from driving, but also from idling on city streets, in parking lots and while waiting at drive-thrus. The location and number of industries and high traffic corridors also affect the level of air pollution in a community.

Air pollution is associated with asthma and other respiratory diseases, heart disease, cancer and premature death. While poor air quality affects everyone, the young, seniors and those with health problems are more likely to experience illness, hospitalization or premature death. When we design and plan our communities, we need to carefully consider air quality impacts to sensitive populations (e.g., homes, child care centres, schools, retirement homes and long term care facilities).

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675

york.ca/HealthyBuiltEnvironment

25-PH3-057

DID YOU KNOW?

- Health Canada estimates that air pollution from human sources contributes to an estimated 6,600 premature deaths in Ontario and 358 premature deaths in York Region.
- York Region's Official Plan has policies that improve air quality by prioritizing walking and cycling, discouraging single occupancy vehicle use and supporting public transit. Other policies require certain development plans to provide air quality impact studies to protect sensitive populations.
- The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) provides current information on local air quality and helps individuals make decisions on how to protect their health.
- According to Statistics Canada, the average commute time for those mainly travelling to work by car, was 24.5 minutes in May 2023, higher than in May 2021 (22.9 minutes) and May 2022 (24.0 minutes).

York Region

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You make a difference when you...

- Walk, cycle, use public transit or carpool. If you must drive, combine trips to be efficient, and reduce vehicle idling. Consider Electric Vehicles (EV) or hybrids which emit fewer pollutants
- Check the Air Quality Health Index daily for real-time air quality levels and forecasts to help plan your outdoor activities. Visit airhealth.ca for more information and to download the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) WeatherCan app or check the ECCC website
- Conserve energy: purchase energy efficient appliances, install heat pumps, unplug electronics not in use and use major appliances during off-peak hours
- Learn more about your municipality's official plan and how it affects air quality

Municipalities show leadership when they. . .

- Consider air quality in decisions about land use planning, transportation, community design and in official plans, development applications and strategic documents
- Support initiatives on renewable energy production, heat pump systems, energy efficient buildings, local food production, reduced travel, and hybrid and electric vehicles for fleets
- Increase the number of safe cycling and walking routes and improve access to public transit
- Work with stakeholders to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions
- Ensure homes, child care centres, schools, retirement homes and long term care facilities are not located near sources of emissions

BE AN ACTIVE PARTNER WHERE YOU LIVE, LEARN, WORK AND PLAY.
Participate in building healthy communities!