

ENVIRONMENT CANADA ISSUES *SPECIAL* *AIR QUALITY STATEMENT* FOR THE MIDDLESEX-LONDON REGION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 7th, 2023

London, ON –Environment Canada has issued a *Special Air Quality Statement* for London and Middlesex County, as well as other parts of southwestern Ontario, due to higher levels of air pollution caused by smoke from fires burning in northeastern Ontario and Quebec. The level of air pollution is monitored through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' *Air Quality Health Index* (AQHI). As of 12:00 p.m. today, the local AQHI stood at 4 or Moderate Risk, however it is projected to reach 7 later today, which is considered High Risk.

“Not only is our community having to deal with the smoke and bad air quality resulting from the wildfires that continue to burn, but so are many other communities in Ontario and right across the country. We are monitoring the situation closely and will provide updates when they are available,” says Dr. Joanne Kearon, Public Health Physician with the Middlesex-London Health Unit. “Currently, we are not advising that outdoor activities be reduced or cancelled, however, people know themselves the best and we recommend that they listen to their bodies and reduce or stop activities if they experience symptoms.”

To reduce the potential for respiratory issues caused by reduced air quality, consider:

- Reducing outdoor activities if you have lung disease, such as asthma or heart disease; or if you are an older adult, young child, or are pregnant.
- Going indoors if you or someone in your care experiences shortness of breath, wheezing including asthma attacks, severe cough, dizziness or chest pain.
- Taking a break from activities if you do not have access to a space with proper ventilation or move to a public space such as a library, shopping mall or community centre.
- Checking in on people who may be more susceptible to bad air quality.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Listening to your body and reducing or stopping activities if you experience breathing difficulties or other symptoms.
- Contacting your healthcare provider if you have symptoms and they do not improve.
- Being aware of your mental health. Feeling anxious or isolated during an event such as this is normal. If you experience feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression, contact your mental health care provider for advice or visit <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>.

For more information about Environment Canada's *Special Air Quality Statement*, visit: weather.gc.ca/city/pages/on-137_metric_e.html.

Media Contact:

Dan Flaherty, Communications Manager, Middlesex-London Health Unit,
519-663-5317, extension 2469 or 519-617-0570 (cell)

Spokesperson:

Dr. Joanne Kearon, Public Health Physician, Middlesex-London Health Unit

www.healthunit.com