

MEDIA RELEASE

Iconic buildings and landmarks across Canada Go Blue, highlighting antimicrobial resistance risks and need for action

Canada, November 17, 2023 - Canadian buildings and landmarks are lighting up blue at the close of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (Nov. 18-24) to increase the visibility of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), build understanding of the public health threat, and spark action. To date, over 50 [sites across Canada](#) have signed on.

The Canadian colour campaign aligns with that of global leads, including the World Health Organization (WHO), which declared antimicrobial resistance (AMR) one of the top 10 global health threats. Campaigns around the world echo similar messages, encouraging the public, healthcare providers in human and veterinary medicine, and agricultural producers to recognize the need for wise use of antibiotics and more efforts to prevent infections.

In Canada, most people don't recognize the harm AMR is causing, what contributes to the problem, or how they can help. Go Blue campaign supporters, which include the Public Health Agency of Canada, the National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCCID), and partners in health, academia and government across the country, hope to change this.

"Antimicrobial resistance is here in Canada, causing more severe illness, long stays in hospital and death in cases where antibiotic therapies can no longer treat an infection," said Dr. Yoav Keynan, Scientific Director at NCCID. "This is not a battle healthcare can win alone. Go Blue is a call to action for all of Canada. *Everyone* can help by practicing good hygiene, preventing infections, staying up-to-date with vaccinations and having conversations about whether or not an antibiotic is actually needed."

The 2019 report, [When Antibiotics Fail](#), published by The Council of Canadian Academies, highlights risks of AMR and potential future impacts to Canadians. According to the report, approximately 1 in 4 infections are already resistant to the first line antibiotics used to treat them. As it stands, 5,400 people die as a direct result of antimicrobial resistance in Canada each year. If we continue to overuse antibiotics, the rate of resistance is likely to grow to 40% by 2050, with annual deaths upwards of 13,700.

Dr. Brad Langford, an Antimicrobial Stewardship Pharmacist Specialist, champions the Go Blue campaign with optimism about what can be achieved. "Unfortunately, misuse and overuse of antibiotics is driving resistance and making infections more difficult to treat, but we *can* act now to reverse this trend. One important strategy is to use antibiotics more judiciously, like not using antibiotics for infections caused by viruses such as the common cold and influenza".

Canada has recently developed an [action plan](#) to address AMR which will require effort from policy makers, health care providers, agricultural leaders, and the general public to successfully reduce this threat. The public can promote these efforts through the campaign by visiting participating landmarks, or the campaign website (www.AntimicrobialAwareness.ca), for photos to post on social media with the hashtag #GoBlueforAMR. Use a suggested post or share why AMR matters to you.

National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases and partners in the Network for Coordinated AMR Awareness will have spokespeople available for interview on Friday, Nov24.

For more information, please contact Brad Langford at: brad.langford@utoronto.ca. For information about the campaign and resources for the public and healthcare providers, visit: www.AntimicrobialAwareness.ca