

PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

Climate Change and Human Health Crises

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century calls on the next federal government to invest in strategies and programs that support strong healthy people in Canada regardless of their economic and social status.

A higher standard for Canadian families

Climate change is identified as [“the greatest health threat of the 21st century”](#) and it is recognized that [“the effects of climate change are being felt today and future projections represent an unacceptably and potentially catastrophic risk to human health.”](#) Many of the policies needed to fight climate change could also produce health benefits, reduce health care costs (i.e., utilization, transportation), and improve social cohesion and equity in our communities.

It’s time for Canada to do better.

Call to action

The Coalition is calling on the next federal government to take leadership in the development and implementation of an effective, evidence-based climate action plan that will help achieve the emission reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

Why it matters

In Canada, provincial, territorial and federal governments have [committed to making change](#), and important steps have been taken by some provincial and territorial governments, and the federal government over the last several years, but our work is far from complete. The [Auditor General of Canada](#) found that climate emissions in 2020 are projected to be 111 MT (megatonnes) above Canada’s 2020 target of 620 MT.

The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) has identified the effects on health resulting from climate change as:

- Increases in atmospheric temperature are projected to increase morbidity and mortality due to heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke, heat edema, heat rash, heat stress, acute cardiovascular disease and renal disease;
- Reduced air quality from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will likely increase morbidity and mortality due to asthma, ischemic heart disease, stroke, acute lower respiratory infections, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
- Vector-borne diseases are increasing in prevalence and are likely to continue their advance as warming temperatures expand the geographic range of insects and other species; and

A Higher Standard for All Canadians

- Extreme weather events, including flooding, droughts, cyclones, hurricanes and wildfires are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. Changes to weather and extreme weather events threaten food security, housing and infrastructure and result in lost income for those affected by the event. Climatic instability is expected to undermine crop yields, Indigenous hunting and gathering practices, and fishery production.

Climate change is harming the physical and mental health of Canadians. Cardiorespiratory impacts from worsening air pollution due to wildfires [left many Canadians ill in recent summers](#). Emergency evacuations and population displacement from wildfires and floods have been associated with [trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder](#).

In the [Canadian Arctic](#), where temperatures have increased by up to 3°C from the 1950s, health risks are increasing from food insecurity resulting from decreased access to [traditional Indigenous foods](#).

Meanwhile, [Lyme disease](#) has spread into new regions in Canada and more intense and prolonged pollen seasons have the potential to [exacerbate hay fever and asthma](#).

Questions for the candidates

1. Do you accept the scientific evidence that climate change is caused by human behaviour and is having a negative impact on the health of Canadians?
2. Does your party have an effective, evidence-based climate action plan that demonstrates a national approach to how Canada will achieve the emission reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C, based on our commitments in the Paris Accord and the Pan-Canadian Framework?
3. Will your party develop and properly fund policies and programs to support an equitable transition for farmers, workers, and their communities who will be affected by the transition to a low carbon economy?

Resources

- [CPHA Discussion Document: Global Change and Public Health: Addressing the Ecological Determinants of Health](#)
- [Lancet Countdown 2018 Report: Briefing for Canadian Policymakers](#)
- [Council of Canadian Academies Report: Canada's Top Climate Change Risks](#)

About the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century

The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21) is a national network of 21 non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and research organizations that share the common goal to improve and sustain the health of Canadians. CCPH21 advocates for public policy to ensure that adequate public health functions are in place and information is made available to protect and promote health, and prevent disease and injury. CCPH21 aims to help all stakeholders work together for the future of public health by generating ideas and potential policy directions for discussion among both the public and decision-makers.

A Higher Standard for All Canadians