



Human Health and Well-Being

Climate change will affect the health of people living and working in this region. Direct health impacts will come from air and water deterioration, wildfires, flooding, extreme heat, as well as from increased pathogens and disease incidence associated with climate change. Some of the most significant climate change impacts may be indirect, such as compromised food security, chronic stress, displacement due to flood or fire risk, loss of livelihood, and adverse mental health effects. The health burden of climate change will not be felt equally. For example, the very young, the elderly, or people with underlying health issues can be more vulnerable to heat or smoke exposure, and lower income and homeless people will likely have fewer options to protect themselves from extreme weather events and fewer resources to recover from their impacts. Lower income neighbourhoods tend to have fewer green spaces or air conditioned community spaces which provide relief in extreme heat events.

All orders of government will need to enact policies and implement projects to reduce the long term exposure to these health risks, as well as to increase capacity to respond to more frequent emergency situations (see inset box). Working closely with the local health authorities and the Provincial government, local governments can take actions that will reduce health risks due to climate change. Examples include: improving our system of air quality advisories and education about wildfires, planning for building cooling systems, supporting access to local food for low income residents, greening neighbourhoods that house vulnerable people, and ensuring neighbourhoods are prepared for flooding events.

There are health co-benefits from some of the climate actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, walkable communities with increased green spaces promote physical activity and social connections. Reducing vehicle emissions improves air quality and noise pollution. More energy efficient, well ventilated buildings can improve indoor air quality and create more comfortable homes.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Climate change will increase the need for local governments, residents, and businesses to be better prepared for and respond to emergencies like wildfires, flooding, storms and droughts. Local governments can help mitigate risks to health and safety and build resilience through increased emergency management planning and response services.

In some cases, better planning may alleviate some of the damage, and in others, a coordinated response will improve outcomes and recovery. Communities resilient to climate change-related emergencies will be more resilient to other emergencies.

