

# CLIMATE CHANGE

## *Promoting Health by Protecting the Planet*

by *Kim Perrotta & Dr. Courtney Howard*

*Executive Director of CAPE & CAPE Member*

In 2009, the esteemed medical journal, *The Lancet*, declared climate change the “biggest global health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” This year, the *Lancet* turned that idea around when it stated that “tackling climate change could be the greatest global health **opportunity** of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

Climate change affects many factors that shape human health — air quality, drinking water, infectious diseases, food supplies and housing. It is already harming the health of people in Canada and around the world. This summer saw Canadians in the west evacuated from their homes from wildfires, while nearby cities were shrouded in smoke. Farmers in Alberta have been struggling with crops decimated by drought, while the elderly and young in eastern Canada have been stressed by record-breaking heat waves.

The World Health Organization estimates that climate change will produce 250,000 additional deaths, each year, between 2030 and 2050 from heat

exposure, diarrhea, malaria and under-nutrition. Children and the elderly will be the hardest hit as will low income countries. But Canada will not be immune. Scientists predict that Canada will experience more frequent and more severe heat waves, smog episodes, thunderstorms, floods, ice storms, wild fires and droughts with climate change — changes that many of us have already witnessed.

**But climate change can be stopped** and many of the measures needed to combat climate change will create other, more immediate benefits for health, and cost savings for our health care system. Energy conservation, renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, and active modes of transportation such as cycling and public transit, can improve air quality, increase levels of physical activity, reduce vehicle-related deaths, and/or improve mental health, while reducing emissions that contribute to climate change. The actions needed to protect the planet can create healthier lives for all of us.



Canadian Association of  
**Physicians**  
for the  
**Environment**

## PROMOTING HEALTH BY PROTECTING THE CLIMATE

For more information, see [CAPE.CA](http://CAPE.CA)

