



Hon. Shannon Phillips
Minister of Environment and Parks

Hon. Sarah Hoffman
Minister of Health

Hon. Joe Ceci
Minister of Finance

CC: Rachel Notley, Premier of Alberta
Dr. Verna Yiu, CEO, Alberta Health Services
Ms. Deb Rhodes, CFO, Alberta Health Services
Dr. Francois Belanger, VP Quality, and Chief Medical Officer

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to you today, as concerned physicians in the Alberta health care system, and members of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, to advocate for the creation and funding of an office of sustainability within Alberta Health Services, funded through the province's carbon fund.

As doctors concerned about air pollution and the climate crisis, we applaud the government's policies to enact a coal phase out, and enact a price on CO2 pollution, as part of the Climate Leadership Plan.

However, in our own workspaces, our hospitals and clinics, we have yet to see the same commitment to energy efficiency and effective waste management policies.

We are deeply concerned that such a large and impactful organization such as AHS currently has limited means of decreasing its environmental and carbon footprints. To review, AHS is an organization with a \$14.9 billion annual budget, managing over 400 hospitals, clinics, and continuing care facilities. Despite this, there is no evidence of any organized sustainability work, either on waste or energy management, aside from one reference to a single project on two hospitals for the entire province (see [Green 'n Healthy Buildings](#)). We find this woefully inadequate.

Like all organizations in Alberta, AHS is actively contributing to the carbon levy, and its contributions will substantially increase over the coming years. However, unlike most businesses, which can actively decrease their carbon footprints through prudent sustainability planning, a government organization like AHS is dependent on budget considerations made by cabinet to fund any mitigation programs (and hence, decrease their exposure to carbon pricing). To date, there are no plans that we are aware of for funding these programs.

We, as a group, request that adequate funds be provided for planning, staffing, and capital costs for an office of sustainability at AHS. We strongly believe that these funds should come from outside the existing AHS budget, as the organization is already under extreme pressure to maintain clinical services in the face of severe budgetary constraints and growing healthcare needs. The money being spent by AHS annually into the carbon levy should be returned to AHS, in the form of grants, to allow for sustainability initiatives within the organization. Not only does this provide a natural funding source without requiring new government spending, it aligns with the revenue-neutral concept of the carbon levy. Moreover, we fear that without reinvestment of these funds into directed sustainability initiatives within AHS, these initiatives will continue to be shelved in favour of clinical priorities. If this occurs, the carbon levy will represent an unrecoverable loss for AHS and the healthcare system, while failing to have the desired impact of improving efficiency and reducing environmental footprint for one of Alberta's largest public organizations.

Funding this initiative would be win-win on multiple fronts. Along with the expected GHG reductions, it would demonstrate great leadership and modeling for other government organizations. We understand that in other provinces where additional funding was provided to hospitals for energy efficiency projects, that significant cost recovery occurs in less than 5 years, so this initiative will pay for itself, with time. Moreover, by improving operational efficiency it will deliver ongoing returns and help to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our healthcare system. Finally, it would signal to all Albertans that this government is not only concerned about individuals and corporate GHG mitigation, but the government's own actions on this important issue.

We will follow up at your convenience to see how we can assist in the matter. We would be happy to engage in a meeting on this, with yourselves and AHS administration, should you deem that such a meeting would be useful.

Healthcare is an essential part of a just, diverse, and prosperous society. However, healthcare continues to have an extremely large environmental footprint, both in terms of resource consumption and waste production. We hope that with this initiative we, as physicians and citizens, can start to transform our workplaces to truly sustainable spaces, of which we can be proud. Our patients, our colleagues, and our children, deserve no less.

Yours Sincerely,

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