



Climate Change Toolkit for Health Professionals

Factsheet: Engaging in Climate Change Solutions as Health Professionals

Introduction

As health professionals, we can have a powerful influence on the views and behaviour of the public and on the actions of policy-makers and decision-makers because:

- We are seen as trusted and credible messengers; and
- Canadians care about their health and the health of their families; and
- The health frame is one of the more effective way to encourage behavioural change on climate change.

At CAPE, we believe that we are most effective when we focus on climate policies and practices that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that provide fairly immediate health co-benefits and healthcare savings (See Modules 5 and 6) and climate adaptation programs that minimize the impacts of climate change on human health (See Modules 6 and 7).

Engaging our Patients and the Public

As health professionals, we are well situated to:

- Educate our patients and the public about the actions that can and should be taken by individuals to protect

themselves and their families from climate-related health risks such as heat waves, insect- and mite-borne diseases like West Nile virus and Lyme's disease, smoke from wildfires, and power outages from extreme storms;

- Encourage our patients and the public to make behavioural changes that are healthy for them, their families, and the planet.

Engaging our Peers

We can engage our peers on climate change by:

- Preparing articles for peer reviewed journals;
- Giving presentations at Grand Rounds, health-related conferences, and student workshops;
- Preparing articles for hard newsletters and blogs for our professional and volunteer associations;
- Organizing fun events such as nature hikes, bike rides, and clothing swaps;
- Building climate change and the ecological determinants of health into the educational curriculum at our universities and colleges; and
- Offering training on climate change through our professional and volunteer organizations.



Working for Change within our Communities


We can work for change within our communities by:

- Building support from the public;
- Using traditional media and social media to engage the public;
- Engaging policy-makers and decision-makers with formal submissions, letters, e-mail messages, phone calls and meetings;
- Collaborating with other organizations that have complementary expertise who share our policy interests and organizations that are likely to approach a campaign using different messages that will appeal to different audiences;
- Working within our workplaces for climate mitigation and adaptation policies, programs and practices;
- Working within our educational institutions to weave climate change into our curricula;
- Pressing universities to adopt divestment policies that would move their investments away from fossil fuels; and
- Working through our professional and volunteer associations for divestment policies and positions on national targets for climate change programs.

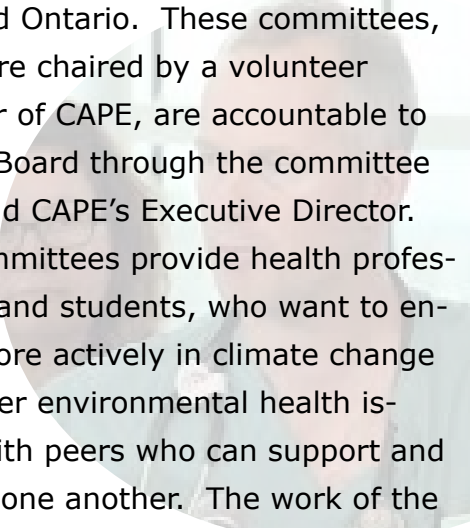


How CAPE Can Help

Many health professionals who are members of CAPE find it helpful to engage with



local community groups in their role as a CAPE member. They find that it can add weight to their comments by demonstrating that their views are shared by others who belong to this national organization that is run by physicians and other health professionals.



Over the last three years, CAPE has established four regional volunteer committees – in BC, Alberta, Quebec, and Ontario. These committees, which are chaired by a volunteer member of CAPE, are accountable to CAPE's Board through the committee chair and CAPE's Executive Director. The committees provide health professionals and students, who want to engage more actively in climate change and other environmental health issues, with peers who can support and mentor one another. The work of the committees is supported by CAPE staff with website and social media support.

NOTE: References for this Factsheet can be found in Module 8 of [CAPE's Climate Change Toolkit for Health Professionals](#).