

# Health and Climate:

## Building a Resilient and Healthy Future

### Purpose

This document highlights the connection between climate change and rising health risks and recommends measures to reduce climate-related health issues while supporting provincial climate objectives.

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### Issue Summary

Climate change is intensifying health risks in New Brunswick, including heat-related illnesses, respiratory issues, the spread of diseases carried by insects, and mental health challenges. These risks need urgent attention and action to protect public health and well-being. (CCNB, 2019)

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### Background and Challenges

- Climate-related health risks, like extreme heat and diseases carried by insects, are straining an already overburdened health system. Vulnerable populations, like Indigenous Peoples, seniors, low-income families, and racialized communities, are disproportionately affected due to systemic inequities (IPPC, 2022)
  - Energy poverty contributes to these challenges, with 36.3% of New Brunswick households facing high energy cost burdens. This limits their ability to maintain safe indoor temperatures, contributing to increased health risks during extreme weather events (Human Development Council, 2024).
  - National and international studies, including reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), show the urgent need for action to address the health impacts of climate change, particularly for vulnerable populations (IPCC, 2022 and WHO, 2023)
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## Recommendations

1. Develop a Climate and Health Action Plan that addresses systemic inequities and prioritizes vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous Peoples, seniors, and low-income families.
  2. Allocate funding to programs that reduce energy poverty, improve air quality, and enhance housing infrastructure.
  3. Establish a coalition of healthcare professionals, environmental scientists, social justice expert and community organizations (including indigenous communities) to develop evidence-based policies that are fair for everyone.
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## Significance and Impact

- Climate change is exacerbating health inequities in New Brunswick, with vulnerable populations—like Indigenous Peoples, seniors, low-income families, and racialized communities—bearing the brunt of heat-related illnesses, poor air quality, and energy poverty (IPPC, 2022)
  - Addressing the connection between health and climate change requires tackling systemic issues, such as inadequate housing and lack of access to energy-efficient solutions, to build resilience and reduce long-term healthcare costs. Partnerships between healthcare professionals, environmental scientists, and community organizations can ensure evidence-based, fair policies that improve public health and advance provincial climate goals.
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## Analysis

### Impact on Stakeholders and Rightsholders

#### 1. Vulnerable Populations

- **Indigenous Peoples:** Climate change poses significant threats to traditional lands and livelihoods of Indigenous communities, leading to health disparities (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).
- **Seniors and Children:** These groups are particularly susceptible to heat stress and respiratory conditions exacerbated by climate change. Extreme heat events can increase mortality rates among seniors by up to 10% (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).

#### 2. Healthcare Systems

- Climate-related health risks are projected to increase healthcare spending significantly if no measures are taken (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).

### 3. Policymakers

- Balancing public demand for action with the costs of inaction is crucial. Studies show that every dollar invested in adaptation can yield significant savings in avoided damages, including healthcare costs (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).

## Risks and Opportunities

### Risks:

- Rising healthcare costs from climate-related illnesses, coupled with an aging population, will put further strain on New Brunswick's healthcare system (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).
- Delaying action risks widening health inequities, as many New Brunswick households face energy poverty, limiting their ability to adapt to extreme weather (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).

### Opportunities:

- Reducing air pollution improves public health and prevents premature deaths, showing the benefits of addressing climate and health together (Health Canada, 2022).
- Training healthcare and social service providers in climate resilience can create jobs while improving public health outcomes (Health Canada, 2022).

## Current Status

- Although New Brunswick has recognized climate change's impacts on infrastructure and the economy, health has been largely overlooked in climate adaptation plans (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).
- Successful collaborative programs like the Enhanced Energy Savings Program have reduced energy costs for low-income families while improving health outcomes (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).
- Regional models from Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia provide valuable lessons for integrating health and climate strategies in New Brunswick (NB HealthADAPT Project, 2022).

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## Key Contacts

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