

AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN LONG-TERM CARE HOMES



Climate Change & LTC

This Guidebook is our call to action for sustainability in long-term care homes. **The climate crisis is a health crisis** - fossil fuels are the single biggest contributor to air pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally. Health care contributes 5% of the GHG emissions in Canada, which is higher than the airline industry. Climate change and extreme weather events cause loss, displacement, and trauma that disproportionately affects marginalized communities.



Long-term care homes (LTCH) have specific characteristics that make their residents more vulnerable to health impacts of climate change, such as age and pre-existing health conditions. The Canadian Association for Long Term Care has created a [position statement](#) highlighting the need for protection of residents from the consequences of climate change. They also outline specific challenges LTCH may be faced with in a climate crisis, including disruptions in supply chains, maintaining appropriate temperatures during heat events, infectious disease outbreaks, operational sustainability during emergency responses, and more.



How You Can Be a Leader

1

Establish a "Green Steering Committee" to guide the implementation of changes and build on the work to date.



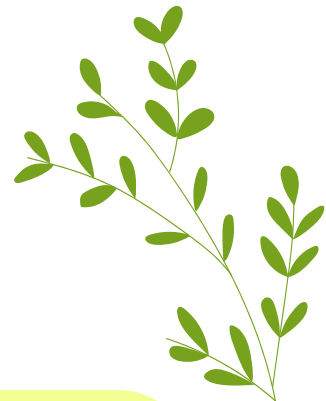
2

Educate colleagues / community through our personal examples.



3

Seek out sustainability and education-related certifications through PEACH and PGME.



What Can I Do?



Reduce Environmental Impact at Work

- Bring your own water bottle to or coffee mug to work and try to minimize single use items and encourage others to do the same



Partnerships

- Build partnerships with groups who share our goals and support efforts to increase sustainable practices in our community
- Explore PGME sustainability programs, courses & certifications



Climate Literacy

- Increase team members' knowledge of the impacts of climate change and the work that needs to be done - Start the conversation!
 - Discuss with staff and colleagues how they are incorporating sustainability into their treatment choices and daily practices.
- Work with the Leadership team to advocate that all procurement efforts are evaluated through an environmental sustainability lens:
 - Order only from suppliers with clear net-zero goal and plans
 - See our full [guidebook](#) for details



Clinical Care

Quality, evidence-based, patient-centered medical care is also environmentally friendly care!

- Advance Care Planning
 - Healthcare interactions have a significant environmental impact, with hospital stays producing an estimated 30.3 kg CO₂e/bed-day. Prioritizing home care, which generates just 1.3 kg CO₂e/bed-day, can substantially reduce emissions. Similarly, long-term care stays produce 3.5 kg CO₂e/bed-day. Thus, interventions like Advance Care Planning, informed consent, and reducing unnecessary transfers not only align end-of-life care with patient values but also help lower overall emissions ([ref article](#)).
 - [The Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians' Choosing Wisely](#) recommends: "Evidence shows advance care planning improves patient and family satisfaction, reduces the likelihood of patients receiving hospital care at the end of life and the number of days spent in hospital, and increases the likelihood of receiving hospice care."
 - See the [Sustainable Healthcare for Serious Illness & End of Life Care](#) Guidebook as well.
- Reduce Unnecessary Care and Medications
 - Familiarize yourself with [deprescribing guidelines](#), and [PEACH's Options for Sustainable Prescribing Guidebook](#). A few "Don'ts" inspired by [Choosing Wisely Canada](#) recommendations:
 - Don't order screening or routine chronic disease testing unnecessarily
 - Don't do a urine culture unless there are clear signs and symptoms of a UTI
 - Don't continue or add long-term medications unless there is an appropriate indication
 - Don't use a medication for long-term risk reduction if life expectancy is shorter than the time to benefit of the medication
 - Prescribing practices can significantly impact the environment. For example, a Ventolin inhaler produces emission equivalent to driving approx. 140 km. Reducing overprescribing and using alternatives, such as dry powder inhalers (DPIs), can help lessen healthcare's impact
- Prepare for the effects of a changing climate
 - Seniors are at higher risk for heat-related illness due to limited temperature regulation, chronic conditions, and lack of cooling. LTC can enhance resilience by implementing cooling strategies and raising awareness among residents and staff (a Resilience Toolkit will be published soon!)

Tips for Hamiltonians

Travel

Look for eco-friendly alternatives for daily and out of town travel (eg. walking, biking, public transport, or carpooling). For information regarding secure bike parking locations, Hamilton's Bike Share initiative, and cycling infrastructure, please visit and explore the [City of Hamilton's website](#)

Utilize Virtual Platforms

Assess the trade-offs when meeting virtually or in-person, with an effort to choose virtual as often as possible

Reducing Environmental Impact at Work

Explore the [PARO Resident Enhancement Funds](#) in an effort to support sustainability initiatives in your workplace and consider the [PGME Social Accountability Grant](#) to support sustainability-focused projects.

Department Events

Explore these [top-rated plant-based eateries in Hamilton](#) using the interactive restaurant location map

Climate Literacy

Reach out to PEACH Health Ontario for more information about our educational rounds. Check out the [PEACH Health Ontario website](#) for additional resources and guidebooks

Partnerships

Explore [PEACH's special projects](#), such as [Trees for Life's Trees for Health program](#), as well as the City of Hamilton's [Community Environmental Initiatives](#)

Leadership

Participate in PEACH's evening champions course to build confidence and leadership

CONTRIBUTORS

This mini guidebook is adapted from PEACH Health Ontario's guidebook of [Environmental Stewardship: An Implementation Guide for Boards, Management, and Clinical staff: Meeting Long Term Care Standards and Beyond](#)

- QR Code for Guidebook:



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