

Position Paper | October 2022

# Getting Started: LTC Call to Action on Climate Change

## Introduction

In recent years, Canadians have witnessed a range of extreme weather-related events that have had an unprecedented impact on their daily lives. These events, such as flooding and extreme heat have been linked to the growing impact of climate change, which has increased calls for all citizens to take action and collectively reduce our carbon footprint and overall environmental impact.

Governments at all levels have introduced emissions reductions plans, through the introduction of carbon pricing and emissions caps, and green investments, and a variety of industries have followed suit with their own action plans.

Like all industries, healthcare organizations also need to consider steps to reduce their climate footprint. To date, work in this area has focused on larger hospital organizations, but long-term care homes also have a role in tackling climate change.

In Canada there are 2,076 long term care homes who care for 198,220 residents. The primary responsibility of all long-term

care homes is to meet the care needs of residents and support their quality of life. The World Health Organization has declared climate change as the largest threat facing humanity, noting that climate sensitive health risks can significantly impact older adults.

As such, long term care homes of all sizes and infrastructure age need to actively consider how residents can be impacted by climate change events and what strategies can be implemented to address them. It is also essential that long term care homes consider their environmental footprint and what steps they can take to reduce or eliminate their impact.

Overtime, climate change is also anticipated to become an important consideration for financial and operational sustainability. As extreme weather events become more common and the health impacts are more common, it is anticipated

the risks associated with climate change could further impact insurance and capital financing access for long term care homes as banks and insurance companies increasingly look to homes to develop climate risk assessments.

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## Position Statement of the Canadian Association for Long Term Care

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care acknowledges addressing climate change is critical to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our resident; contributing to the social fabric of the communities we serve; ensuring the sustainability of long-term care homes; and protecting the planet for future generations.

Long term care homes have reasons to develop a climate action plan. CALTC members acknowledge that this includes:

**Societal Responsibility:** Governments, organizations and individuals can all work to make changes in daily activities to collectively achieve environmental targets. This is a strategic consideration that boards and/or senior long term care leaders need to identify as a priority.

**Protection of Residents:** Climate change weather events should be anticipated to continue, resulting in new considerations for emergency response plans. For example, supply chains for normal supply deliveries could change or be delayed due to flooding, so homes need to have alternative options on how to access supplies and services that can be quickly implemented when needed.

**Operational Sustainability:** This ranges from decarbonizing the homes supply chain to consider removing single use products where appropriate, letting suppliers know this is an important priority for your home, or using more energy efficient light bulbs and appliances or solar power options when this level of investment can be made. Additionally, generate onsite power generation through Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems through a low carbon or carbon neutral fuel such as Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) and Biogas. It will allow LTC homes to produce limited amount of electricity for keeping their critical equipment running during emergency adding resilience and low carbon electricity to the LTC homes.

CALTC acknowledges that homes across Canada have a range of variables that impacts what climate actions they can address, such as existing infrastructure, access to experts, and limited resources. However, it is the position of CALTC and its members that all homes can consider initiatives, both big and small, that will make a collective impact.

We know that LTC home operators are committed to residents and their families and are working to strengthen senior care in Canada for the future. Many have already taken significant action to address climate change through a range of initiatives, including modernization to more efficient heating and cooling systems, measuring their carbon footprint and introducing carbon offset programs, such as planting trees.

Climate change will present many systemic challenges over the next decade that requires advanced planning at the home level and transition of our energy and product consumption. CALTC calls on long term care homes in Canada to assess their environmental footprint and begin to take organizational action.

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## Getting Started

CALTC encourages LTC homes to develop a climate plan. With differing resources, we acknowledge that some homes may not be in a position to take immediate action and may be looking at longer-term initiatives. Key areas of focus in considering where to start include:

- 1. Assessment:** Considering your current environmental footprint and which operational aspects contribute the most to the footprint.
- 2. Mitigation:** Considering how to reduce your carbon footprint and setting goals to mitigate your impact that can be achieved over time.
- 3. Resilience:** Preparing for the impact of extreme weather conditions, ranging from building infrastructure improvements to emergency response planning.
- 4. Leadership:** Governance and management leadership is needed to establish climate action as an organizational responsibility. Strategic planning, budget support and a climate sustainability committee can drive the organizational policy that directs day to day consumption. This can open new opportunities for resident, families, and staff engagement to support the effort.

## Action Plan to Start

As an option to get started, homes can begin with a range of internal climate actions that fit the home's current capacity and resources:

1. **Carbon Footprint:** this is a term that represents the amount of carbon dioxide and other carbon compounds emitted due to the consumption of fossil fuels by a particular person, group, or organization. There are three types of emissions that homes can begin to consider:
  - a. **Direct emissions from sources controlled by the home itself.** This can include vehicles, onsite-power generation and other equipment, . As an example, homes can consider the age of the heating and cooling systems and determine if they can operate more efficiently if replacement isn't an option.
  - b. **Indirect emissions from energy bought by the home.** This can include sources of energy that a home purchases that includes electricity (kWh), natural gas (GJ/m<sup>3</sup>), propane, diesel, etc. This energy is used for running equipment such as furnaces, boilers, stove, steamer, air handling units, vehicle etc. As an example, homes can consider what appliances are in the home, and if they have an energy efficiency rating. An energy efficiency rating could be added as criteria in the capital equipment procurement plan, or opting low carbon fuel, adopting natural gas instead of propane.
  - c. **Other indirect emissions.** This can include material use, waste, procurement supply chains, and staff transportation. Homes can consider a waste management program to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost. Incentivize staff to consider their transportation method to work and review the homes supply chain to select the greenest options of available products needed.
2. **Carbon Off-Sets.** This is the reduction of carbon emissions to offset emissions being made somewhere else that can't be reduced. For long term care homes who have older infrastructure and building systems, this approach can be an important part of a climate action plan. Examples of Carbon offsets include tree planting, installing a wind turbine generator, or installing solar panels.
3. **Auditing and Net Zero Emissions.** The best way to understand the carbon footprint of a home and the impact of carbon offsets, is to conduct an ASHRAE level 1 and 2 energy audits that produces a measurement of the homes carbon footprint, perform building energy benchmarking activity, and allows for the measures to be repeated periodically to understand if any reductions have been achieved. There are several available carbon footprint audit tools for homes to reference (see below for examples), but there are consultants who can support this work and provide expert guidance to homes on those the steps. Net zero is a term used when the amount of carbon emissions produced are completely reduced or off-set by strategies such as tree planning and using green energy sources.

#### Online calculators:

- [How to measure your carbon footprint | BDC.ca](#)
  - [Calculator for greenhouse gases and common air contaminants – Canada.ca](#)
  - [Not your average calculator – Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator \(nrcan.gc.ca\)](#)
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## Action Plan to Get to the Next Level

CALTC and its members, encourage all LTC homes to consider what they can do today to initiate a climate action plan, even with limited resources to start. These plans can grow and develop over time to include audits and measuring of carbon footprint and offset strategies with an ultimate goal of reaching Net Zero Emissions. As plans evolve, expert support to create an emission reduction strategy will be needed to support a home's efforts as infrastructure renewal will likely be required. Homes who invest in a climate action plan as an organization, may want to produce a public report that offers public transparency on the home's activities related to the homes work in Environmental, Social and Governance outcomes, often referred to as an ESG report. These reports demonstrate the homes leadership and progress, commitment to their vision, mission and organizational objectives. These reports are often produced as part of the overall financial oversight and leadership of the home but can also serve as a public accountability method to the home's local community.

Long term care homes in Canada must work to address ongoing risks, such as the pandemic and staffing shortages, but we must begin to anticipate emerging and future risks and prepare now. Tackling climate change, and its direct and systemic impact on the long-term care sector is not going to happen overnight, but planning can begin now.

## About CALTC

The Canadian Association for Long Term Care (CALTC) is the national voice of long-term care, delivering resident-centred care services to seniors across Canada when they can no longer live at home. Since its inception in 2002, CALTC has been working together to share information, best practices, and evidence to improve the quality of care provided to residents in long-term care, no matter where they live.



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