

Climate Change & Health in British Columbia: From Risk to Resilience

Background

Climate change has been declared to be the single greatest health threat to humanity. The health system and communities are increasingly challenged by its impacts. As the climate continues to change, health risks will increase from more frequent and intense extreme weather events and through air, water, food, infectious and vector-borne disease, and mental health. Adaptation measures are critical to reducing the health impacts of climate change that we are already experiencing. Collaboration and partnerships are essential!

Under the provincial [Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy](#) (CPAS), the BC Ministry of Health and health authorities are working on actions to assess climate impacts, build knowledge and capacity to prepare and respond, and promote cross-sectoral collaboration on innovative, evidence-based solutions grounded in cultural safety and health equity.

Purpose

The *Climate Change and Health in BC: From Risk to Resilience* project is being championed by the Climate Resilience and Emergency Management teams (at the BC Ministry of Health) with the health authorities to understand better the links between climate change and health in B.C., including a focused look at the extreme heat, wildfire, flood, and drought events in recent years. The objective of the project is to:

- **Synthesize current knowledge and information** on the impacts of climate change on health and the health system in B.C., including priority hazards, exposure pathways, and risk and resilience factors through evidence review and partner engagement;
- Deliver **knowledge translation and mobilization activities** to build public and health sector capacity and awareness to assess, adapt and respond to climate change; and
- Identify and document promising practices, lessons learned, innovative solutions and stories from the field that demonstrate **effective and equitable adaptation measures** in B.C. to inform climate resilient health policies, programs, and services.

Methods

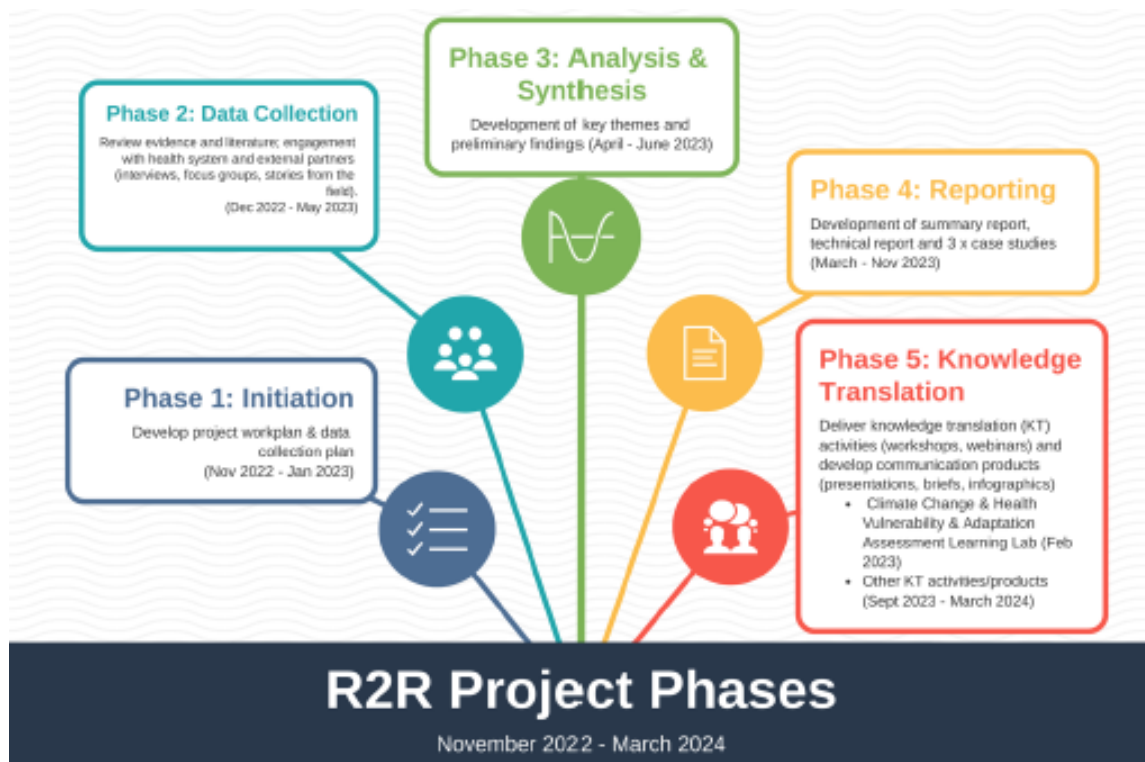
Specifically, this project is reviewing the impacts of climate hazards in B.C. on: i) health and well-being and (ii) the health system (health services and operations as well as health facilities and infrastructure), including consideration of adaptive capacity and stories of resilience.

Population & Public health	Health Services & Operations	Health Facilities and Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and well-being, including physical and mental health• Determinants of risk & resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce• Supply Chains• Emergency Management• Patient Care• Health information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impacts to health facilities and health-related infrastructure from extreme weather events (e.g. heating/cooling, air filtration systems, drinking water treatment systems, power)

This project aims to lay the groundwork for provincial & regional health assessment and generate evidence to inform climate action planning to protect and promote health and health system resilience.

Project Approach

Project activities between November 2022 – March 2024 include a comprehensive knowledge synthesis of climate hazards that pose the greatest threat to health in B.C.; an in-depth sub-analysis of recent extreme heat, wildfires, flooding, and drought events; engagement with key health partners and service providers; and knowledge translation activities to raise public awareness and build health sector capacity to assess, adapt and respond to climate change.



What has emerged?

Through our engagement, focus groups, interviews and sharing circles, the Cowichan Watershed Board Co-governance structure has come forward numerous times as a structure that we would love to highlight in the Risk to Resilience report—the ‘whole of watershed’ approach to managing, protecting, and stewarding the land.

Our request

We hope for a story to be able to appear in the public Summary and Technical reports to share with other communities and levels of government as they move towards their own climate action and watershed planning processes in developing trust, understanding, and backed with sincere commitment. If interested, we welcome the best way to craft this story, e.g., providing a draft version for the Board's kind consideration and review or another preferred approach. Thank you!

For more information on this project, please contact: HealthClimateResilience@gov.bc.ca