

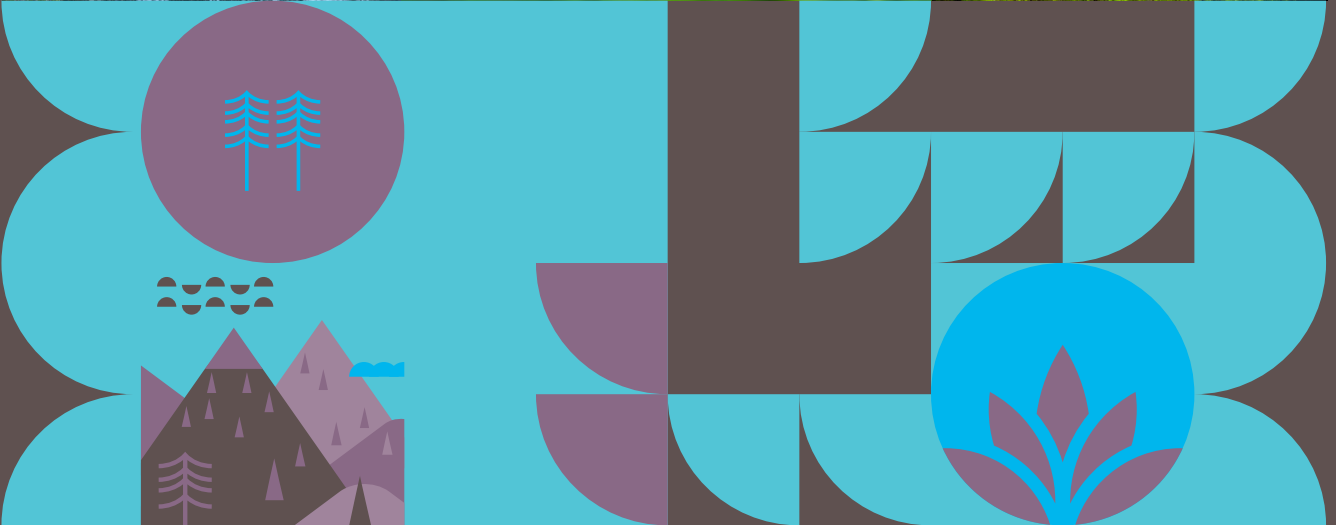
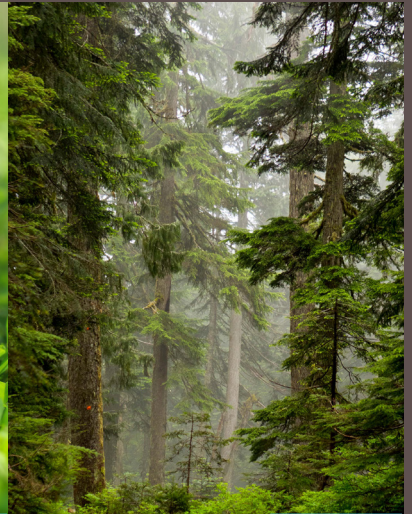


**Providence  
Health Care**  
How you want to be treated.



**Sustainability**  
Proactive financial and  
environmental stewardship

# Providence Health Care Planetary Health Strategy (2024-2029)





We would like to humbly and gratefully acknowledge that the work guided by our Mission: Forward Strategic Plan and this aligned planetary health plan, will be delivered on the unceded, traditional and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish People — and, in particular, the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/ Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh).

First Nations have been stewards and caretakers of the lands and waters since time immemorial. We affirm that efforts towards reconciliation are directly tied to the environment and respecting the land, plants and animals.

We acknowledge that there is much to be learned about environmental stewardship from First Nations traditional knowledge, histories and teachings.

*“Connection to the earth, the early beginnings took a millennium to create a sustainable environment for us all. Every living creature, every element that it took, that we all take for granted. It took years to develop, the lands and waters that formed, everything we need to live, breathe and carry on our existence. We need to remember, we need to respect and we need to protect.”*

*- Squamish Knowledge Keeper and Ethnobotanist, T'uy't'tanat, Cease Wyss*

Catholic health care organizations, including Providence Health Care (PHC), are deeply committed to the care of the planet, recognizing that the health of our environment directly impacts the health of individuals and communities. Guided by the principles of Catholic social teaching, particularly the concepts of integral ecology and the preferential option for the poor, we embrace a holistic approach to healthcare that emphasizes stewardship of creation and sustainability.

Our Planetary Health Strategy reflects this commitment by integrating environmental responsibility into our operations, promoting sustainable practices, and supporting policies that protect the Earth for future generations. By fostering a culture of environmental awareness and action, we strive to create healthier communities. In doing so, we affirm our dedication to the common good and the dignity of every person, ensuring that our mission of compassionate care extends beyond the walls of our facilities to encompass the well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants.



## A MESSAGE FROM FIONA DALTON, PRESIDENT & CEO



As we unveil our new Planetary Health Strategy, I reflect on our progress since 2019, when we first identified sustainability as one of the Foundational Principles of our seven-year strategic plan, Mission: Forward. The United Nations defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>1</sup> For all of us, this definition should not only serve as a guideline, but as an urgent call to action.

Since then, we have made significant progress in actioning our commitment. People across Providence, such as our Facilities Management Office, New St. Paul’s Hospital Project design teams, and the grassroots Environmental Stewardship Team formed in April 2022, have all played pivotal roles in advancing our goals. In May 2024, we appointed our first Planetary Health Lead - Quality & Utilization Improvement, marking another significant step forward.

So, we have made progress, but the imperative to accelerate this progress is increasingly obvious. In health care in BC, we are on the front lines of witnessing the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on human health. We care for patients who have been displaced by wildfires and floods, and we directly see the impact of declining air quality and increasing temperatures on the health of the patients we serve.

As an organization driven by social justice, it is crucial that our actions reflect our Mission, Vision, and Values. Pope Francis reminds us that the care of people and ecosystems are inseparable: “Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice.” In his May 2015 publication *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis emphasised the responsibility of everyone to address the environmental challenges that we face.<sup>2</sup>

We must also acknowledge the tie between planetary health and our commitment to reconciliation. Human-caused global environmental changes, such as pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss inequitably impact First Nations communities. This is despite these communities contributing the least worldwide to emissions and other environmental changes.<sup>3</sup>

The Canadian health care sector is responsible for 4.6% of Canada’s total greenhouse gas<sup>4</sup> emissions through high-energy use, waste production and medical supply-chain procurement. It’s not right to give health care a free pass on planetary health. There is a lot that we can do and a lot that we need to do. This strategy is our plan to do more, and it requires us all to act and think in ways that consider our environment. When it comes to the future of our planet, demanding change isn’t enough – we must also initiate it. I am motivated by the passionate individuals throughout our organization who champion sustainable practices every day. Their ongoing dedication affirms my belief that together, we can create a healthier planet for future generations to come.

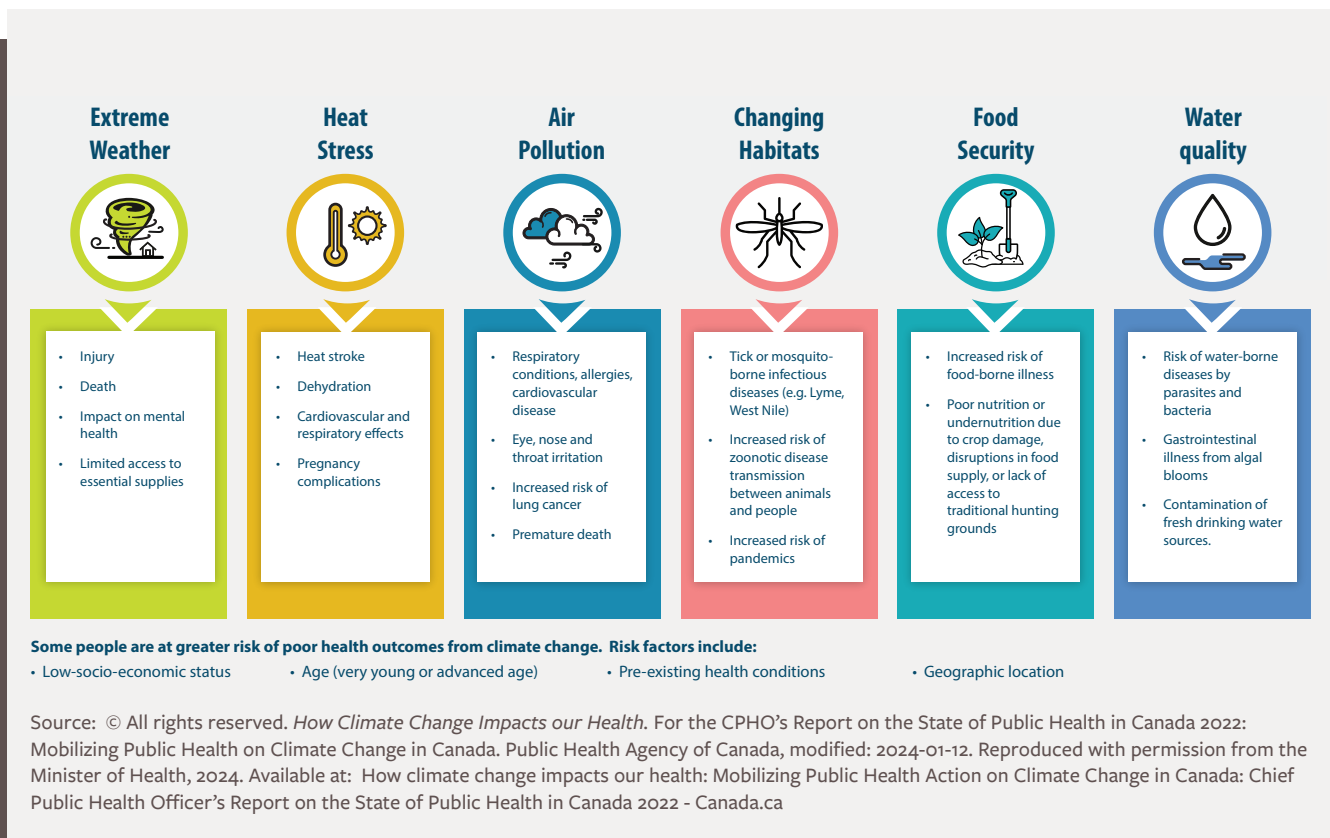


## WHY WE MUST TAKE ACTION

Climate change presents multi-layered risks to the well-being of people and communities, with profound implications for public health and health care delivery. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and floods, contribute to increasing heat-related illnesses such as cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, and mental health challenges associated with the stress and strain of experiencing such incidents. The disruption of food and water security and the spread of vector-borne diseases further exacerbate health risks, disproportionately affecting populations like the elderly, those with chronic illnesses and from low-income communities.<sup>13</sup>

Canada is warming almost twice as fast as the global average. The rise in mean global temperatures of 1.5 degrees by 2040 is predicted to result in further increases in precipitation, sea level rise, and extreme weather events that not only impact human and ecosystem health, but also the resilience of our health care infrastructure and our ability to deliver care.<sup>14</sup> For example, extreme weather events can affect our facilities infrastructure and operations, by damaging building envelopes and straining heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Reliable delivery in our supply chain could be disrupted, leading to lack of medications, devices, food, and waste disposal. Access to critical support services such as transportation, power, water supply and others may also be compromised.<sup>14</sup>

This context is the driver of our plan, and the basis of our strategic directions.



## ORIENTATION TO OUR MISSION, VISION, VALUES AND PLANETARY HEALTH STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Providence Health Care’s Mission and Values— Spirituality, Integrity, Stewardship, Trust, Excellence, and Respect—guide us in delivering compassionate, holistic care that honours the dignity of every individual. These values align closely with the concept of integral ecology. In the words of Pope Francis: “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis, which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”<sup>2</sup> (LS 139) Our Planetary Health strategy recognizes this inseparable link between social and environmental health. By implementing sustainable practices that honour both human and environmental well-being, we seek to embody PHC’s Mission and Values, advancing the common good and protecting the dignity of all for future generations.

Aligned to PHC’s Mission: Forward strategic plan, our five-year planetary health strategy advances our cross-organizational work towards a more sustainable future. We strive to not only meet but exceed the BC Clean targets for 2030. To do so, it will take all of us, working collectively with our PHC “can do” attitude, to take meaningful action and decrease our footprint.

Planetary health, defined as “a solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analyzing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on Earth,”<sup>25</sup> offers a renewed way forward at PHC.



Providence Health Care  
**Mission: Forward  
Strategic Plan 2019–26**



**Sustainability**  
Proactive financial and environmental stewardship

### Our planetary health strategic directions



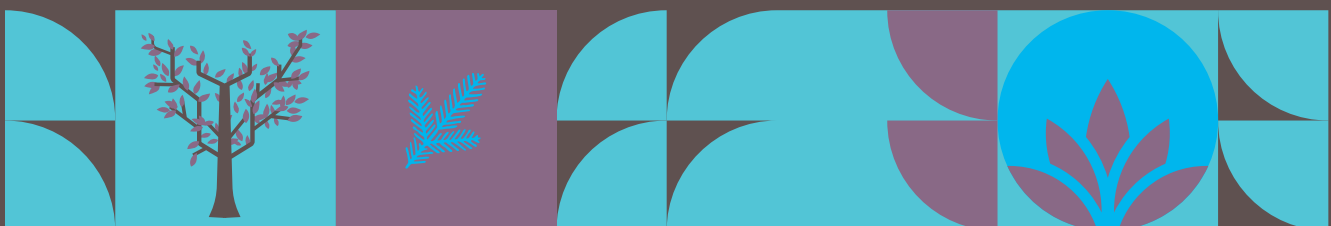
**REDUCE OUR IMPACT**



**BUILD OUR CAPACITY**



**DEVELOP OUR RESILIENCE**



## REDUCE OUR IMPACT

### Why this?

It is imperative to capitalize on the unique position of health care to lead by example and influence system-wide transformation, to instill hope and to create a movement towards sustainable health and services. The path forward holds many opportunities to continue reducing our environmental impact through clinical and non-clinical action. Reducing our impact requires a collective effort at the individual, organizational and community-wide level to meet and exceed the CleanBC 2030 targets. Whether it is through a continued commitment to decreasing waste, increasing our energy efficiency or reducing our reliance on the burning of fossil fuels, everyone has a role to play.

### What will change?

Across our organization we will undertake projects that reduce our impact on climate change and our ecosystem. We will move the dial on reducing harmful greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through new approaches to our environmental and food services, facilities management and clinical practice. Our new facilities will exceed environmental sustainability and climate-resiliency standards. We will emphasize measuring baseline performance so we can truly understand where and how we are having an impact. Whenever possible, we will focus on “upstream” changes to reduce the amount of waste we generate. When we can’t reduce, we will divert waste into recycling streams and amplify opportunities for reusability to maximize the lifecycle of products in a safe and environmentally conscientious manner. Recognizing the crisis of biodiversity loss, we will launch projects that involve the PHC community in promoting ecosystems and human well being, such as enhancing natural spaces with tree planting and beehives.



#### GOALS:

1. **Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions**
2. **Achieve net zero unnecessary waste**
3. **Implement planet-forward food practices**
4. **Improve water performance**
5. **Care for the natural environment**

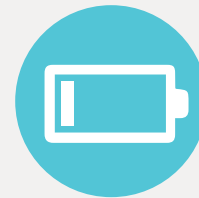
## BUILD OUR CAPACITY

### Why this?

The journey towards integrating planetary health in our service delivery requires a long-term, sustained commitment to expanding our awareness, knowledge, skills, practices, systems and infrastructure. This does not happen quickly, but through sustained capacity building as well as champions leading the way. All of us can play a part in taking steps forward. When taken collectively, 1,000,000 small steps are transformative. We know that levels of knowledge, understanding and skill differ, but we will place effort on advancing and equalizing. Moreover, we know that seeing is believing, so we plan to demonstrate what is better for the planet is better for patients, residents, staff and medical staff. Through innovation and real action, we can collectively lead the way in advancing sustainability.

### What will change?

You will see systematic efforts to integrate planetary health into our recruitment approaches, orientation, training, daily practices and decision-making across the organization. We will partner with teams across the organization to pilot and expand clinical practices that amplify high-quality/low-carbon care at our facilities. We will reach across the province and country to learn from and promote partnerships that support advancement in sustainability, research, and practice. Staff and medical staff will find avenues to advance their planetary health innovations through funding awards. We will also represent PHC on provincial committees and health-care forums to ensure we are promoting change within our sphere of influence.



### GOALS

1. **Build common understanding & organizational culture**
2. **Promote climate informed practice & using the Quality Improvement (QI) approach**
3. **Provide opportunity for staff/medical staff engagement & innovation**
4. **Impact systems through advocacy for policy and provincial/national approach within our sphere of influence**

## DEVELOP OUR RESILIENCE

### Why this?

Anticipating and adequately preparing for increasing climate-related events will better support our staff, medical staff, patients and facilities to withstand, respond, cope with, and recover from such risks. Taking a proactive approach to emergency preparedness and enhanced health system resilience planning reduces the magnitude of negative consequences attributed to being exposed to climate-related shocks. Moreover, it also provides the opportunity to develop comprehensive plans to equitably support populations who experience higher degrees of complexity, many of which are cared for across PHC sites.

### What will change?

We will work with providers and provincial partners to empower patients/residents and staff/medical staff through teaching and resources that promote understanding of the health risks of climate change. We will continue to address infrastructure needs of our older facilities to minimize vulnerabilities and ensure patient and resident wellness as we experience climate impacts. We will continue to lead in the design of our new builds to ensure they meet the highest standards of sustainability and resilience. Additionally, we will amplify the work of Health Emergency Management BC (HEMBC) to ensure we are all well prepared for disaster response and recovery.



### GOALS:

1. **Support resilience of patients & residents, staff & medical staff**
2. **Improve PHC infrastructure to withstand climate shocks**
3. **Ensure PHC operations are robustly prepared for disaster response & recovery**



## MOVING OUR PLAN FORWARD

Every year, we will create an effective cross-organizational work plan that outlines our objectives and key results for the year ahead with responsible persons assigned to advance the work.

To remain accountable for achieving our plan, we will monitor our progress. Our Office of Strategy & Results will check in with teams on a quarterly basis to facilitate the monitoring process, and to aid in problem solving and working through barriers.

We will also report our progress through a transparent platform so that our PHC community can follow our collective advancement. Additionally, we are committed to reporting to our governing bodies through our Mission: Forward strategic reporting processes.



## OUR PATH TO THIS PLAN

The work spanned January to October 2024. To draft the foundations of this plan, we formed a planetary health advisory group with leaders from Facilities Management, Quality, Practice & Research, Strategy, and Medical Staff. The work was facilitated and coordinated by the Corporate Director of Strategic Planning and Management and the Planetary Health Lead. Executive sponsorship provided by the Chief Strategy Officer & VP, Governance. We reviewed and built on the foundational work of provincial and national colleagues, particularly the work of CASCADES Canada<sup>14</sup>, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Fraser Health Authority, Interior Health Authority, in addition to international exemplars like the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

With the recognition that success requires collective action and cross-organizational commitment, we engaged a large cross-section of passionate staff, medical staff, and leaders across PHC to validate the foundations of our strategy (proposed directions and goals) and to provide input and ideas, which were used to build the work plans that truly represent our commitment.

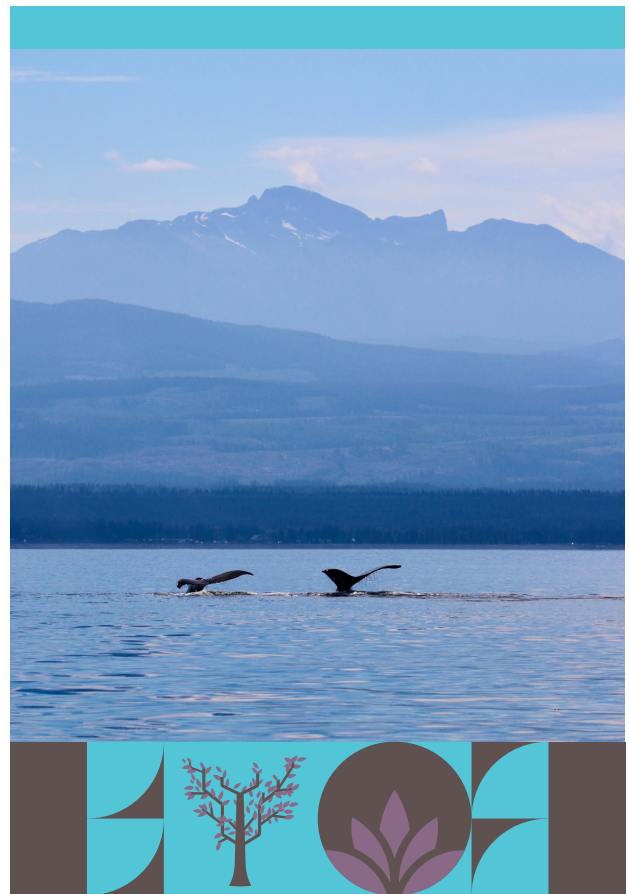
The teams that provided input and advice included: PHC Environmental Stewardship team (ESTeam); Senior Director Leadership Team (SDLT); Mission, Ethics & Spirituality team; Indigenous Wellness & Reconciliation team, and the Regional Energy & Environmental Sustainability team.

### We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals who provided ideas and direction through 1:1 discussions or small group sessions:

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- Sophie Chan (Food Services)
- Jennifer Chapman (Regional EES, Sustainability Consultant)
- Ileana Costrut (Regional EES, Sustainability Consultant)
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- Liz Flores (Quality, Safety & Accreditation)
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- Derreck Lee (Professional Practice Medication Safety)
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- Karmen Wong (ESTeam Waste WG)

## APPENDIX – DEFINITIONS:

- **Climate Change:** A change of climate, which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.<sup>6</sup>
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** “Adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects. It refers to the changes in processes, practices and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change.”<sup>7</sup>
- **Climate Change Mitigation:** “Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from human activities.”<sup>8</sup>
- **Greenhouse Gases (GHGs):** Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. Examples include, carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous Oxide, Fluorinated gases.<sup>11</sup>
- **Integral Ecology:** An approach recognizing the deep interconnection between environmental, social, economic, and cultural issues. It calls for holistic solutions that address both environmental degradation and social injustices, advocating for harmony between humanity and the Earth by caring for creation, combating poverty, and restoring human dignity.<sup>2</sup>
- **Planetary Health:** “A solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analyzing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on Earth.”<sup>25</sup>
- **Resilience:** “The capacity or ability to anticipate and cope with shocks, and to recover from their impacts in a timely and efficient manner.”<sup>9,10</sup>
- **Stewardship of Creation:** One of the 10 principles of Catholic social teaching. The Earth is sacred and we have a responsibility to protect and to cherish the Earth’s ecological diversity, beauty and life-sustaining properties. Together, we must hold it in trust for future generations.<sup>12</sup>
- **Sustainability:** “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>1</sup>



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