



**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY  
2022-2025**



## LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

At the 2021 climate summit in Glasgow (COP26), health leaders and activists from across the planet signalled that climate change has become one of the greatest public health crises of our time. With international health sectors themselves consuming vast amounts of energy and generating immense waste, 45 countries including Canada pledged to cut carbon from their health systems, focus on waste reduction and build infrastructure resilient to the extreme conditions of the future.

At SickKids, we intend to be part of the solution. True to our vision of **Healthier Children. A Better World.** we recognize that we must not only safeguard the health of children, but also the health of the planet they inhabit.

Aligned with our **SickKids 2025** aspiration to mobilize a green-friendly organization, this Environmental Sustainability Strategy provides a blueprint for SickKids to lead, partner, and advocate toward for a healthier planet. Implementation begins as we advance a multi-year campus redevelopment, providing an opportunity to embed green-friendly infrastructure at our foundations, complemented by evolved partnerships, investments, and culture shifts that will have ripple effects for generations.

Progress in the fight against climate change necessitates individual and collective action. No matter what role you play within the SickKids community, you are part of the journey to a greener future.



**Ronald Cohn**  
President & CEO



**Laurie Harrison**  
Vice-President Finance  
and Chief Financial Officer

# DEFINITIONS

## **Sustainability**

Maintaining the integrated health of the environment, economy, and society today such that it does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## **Environmental Sustainability in Health Care**

An environmentally sustainable health-care organization improves, maintains, or restores health, while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and leveraging opportunities to restore and improve it, to the benefit of the health and well-being of current and future generations.

## **Climate Change**

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil and gas), which produces heat-trapping gases.

## **Climate Resiliency**

Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate.





# WHY IS ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT?

**“The health of a child born today will be impacted by climate change at every stage of their life. Without significant intervention, this new era will come to define the health of an entire generation”<sup>1</sup>**

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Regardless of who we are, where we live, and what we do, we all have an obligation to one another to sustain the planet we share. Our present actions have a direct impact on our future. Practicing environmental sustainability ensures that we make the right choices today to ensure a healthy tomorrow for everyone.

1. Watts N, Amann M, Arnell N, et al. The 2019 report of The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: ensuring that the health of a child born today is not defined by a changing climate. Lancet 2019; vol. 394: 1836-78.





# HEALTH-CARE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Hospitals consume immense amounts of energy, water and resources and produces significant emissions through the direct use, procurement, and disposal of goods and services that impact our environment.

The health-care sector emissions is responsible for 4.6% of the national total impacting the health of **Canadians** resulting in **23,000 disability-adjusted life years** lost annually.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of Canada's **Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act** requires the country to incrementally reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the goal to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Canada's health-care sector will play a key role in helping the country meet this target.



## Energy

### **2X more energy**

is used by health-care facilities per square foot than typical office buildings. They are the second most energy-intensive type of commercial building.<sup>2</sup>



## Emissions

### **33 million tonnes**

of greenhouse gas emissions are linked to Canadian health-care activities. That is more emissions than the entire country of Denmark.<sup>3</sup>



## Water

### **1.5% of scarce water**

is consumed by health systems globally. Hospitals are often the largest water users in a community, with inefficient uses driving avoidable expenditures.<sup>4</sup>



## Waste

### **5 million tonnes**

of wastes are caused by health-care institutions including but not limited to medical waste and unsustainable materials.<sup>5</sup>

1. <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002623>

2. <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/191/48/E1342>

3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30063712/>

4. <https://theconversation.com/health-care-has-a-huge-environmental-footprint-which-then-harms-health-this-is-a-matter-of-ethics-142651>

5. <https://practicegreenhealth.org/topics/waste/waste-0>



## HOW WE GOT HERE...



# 490+

SickKids Staff from various levels of the organization contributing



# 425+

Sustainability Survey Responses



# 55

Staff contributing directly to strategy via workshops



# 16

Departments and councils supporting various focus sessions

## GUIDANCE FROM OUR STAFF

“Environmental Sustainability is an incredibly important initiative/goal. The organization needs to invest to help us become a national leader in this area!”

“I feel as though there is so much that could be done, but it is not prioritized within the organization.”

“I think it’s important to promote its environmental sustainability initiatives internally for greater success in the program – I like the idea of cultivating a green health-care culture”

“We have a lot of work to do to get to the ideal place for environmental sustainability. As a large hospital we can be doing better at all levels.”

“Thank you for all your efforts in mobilizing a greener workspace!”





## OUR AIM AND MISSION

### OUR AIM

A Greener SickKids. Healthier Children. A Better World.

### OUR MISSION

To drive environmental sustainability throughout the organization by leveraging a common goal and engaging all stakeholders to build a culture that contributes to “healthier children” and a “better world” through our unwavering commitment to environmental sustainability.

Achieving our vision and mission requires a holistic approach that rethinks and reshapes the way we operate and how our organization interacts with the environment.



## OUR HOLISTIC APPROACH CONSIDERS...

Reducing waste, energy use, water use, and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as partnership with vendors toward investment in green-friendly infrastructure.

Helping staff, patients, families, and our community to rethink how they interact with the environment and how we deliver care.



Preparing for current and future storms, floods and extreme temperature events that may create emergencies increasing pressures on health resources.

Playing an active role in community efforts, generating research highlighting the impacts of climate change on child health, and advocating for action with provincial and federal governments.

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY MAP

## 2022-2025



### OPERATE FOR TOMORROW, TODAY

- Minimize waste across the organization
- Pursue sustainable energy & smart water
- Advance a green and sustainable supply chain
- Promote active and clean transportation



### ADVOCATE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

- Advocate for action on climate change as a social determinant of health
- Build climate resiliency and mitigate risk
- Embed environmental sustainability in campus redevelopment
- Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG's)



### FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE CULTURE

- Establish an environmental sustainability office
- Increase staff learning and engagement on environmental sustainability initiatives
- Implement benchmarking and best practices
- Drive transparency and accountability through reporting



# ADVOCATE FOR CLIMATE ACTION



## **Advocate for action on climate change as a social determinant of health**

- Partnering to advance environmentally sustainable health systems
- Generate research highlighting the impacts of climate change on children's health
- Collaborating with Federal, Provincial, Local governments

## **Build climate resiliency and mitigate risk**

- Prepare for extreme weather that may create emergencies increasing pressures on health resources
- Mitigate supply chain and infrastructure disruptions to minimize impact on delivery of care

## **Embed environmental sustainability in campus redevelopment**

## **Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG's)**

- Drive projects and initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases across the organization (e.g. Renewable energy projects)

Climate change and the impact to our environment and our health is a global crisis. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that hospitals will suffer increasing shocks and stresses related to climate variability and change; and will impact facilities, staff, patients and increase the number of people seeking health care. SickKids has the responsibility and the unique opportunity to respond to this crisis. We need to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and impact to the environment, while shaping a path to a climate-resilient hospital.

### **Our Goals:**

- GHG net zero by 2050



# OPERATE FOR TOMORROW, TODAY



## Minimize waste across the organization

- Minimize the use of environmentally toxic substances and pollutants
- Reduce, reuse & recycle supplies and equipment

## Pursue sustainable energy and smart water

- Reduce energy/water use and improve energy/water efficiency
- Expanding district energy

## Advance a green and sustainable supply chain

- Sustainable procurement approaches
- Develop sustainable food systems; vegetarian options; move away from resource intensive meat options

## Promote active and clean transportation

- Promote green modes of transportation (e.g. Electric Vehicle and an active lifestyle)

Our commitments to environmental sustainability will be evident in how we develop, operate, and maintain all areas of the hospital. We want to lead by example and take advantage **today** of any opportunities to change our behaviour and processes, so that we can reduce our environmental footprint and build a better **tomorrow**.

### Our Goals:

- Energy Use Intensity by 2040: < 40.09 kg/m<sup>2</sup>
- Water Use Intensity by 2040: < 1.99 m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup>
- Waste Diversion by 2040: > 80%





# FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE CULTURE



## **Establish an environmental sustainability office and resource center**

### **Increase staff learning and engagement on environmental sustainability initiatives**

- Engage staff through committees and workshops to participate and implement environmental sustainability initiatives
- Foster an environmental sustainability continuous improvement mindset
- Establish departmental accountability for environmental performance
- Develop training and resources to educate staff, patients and the community on environmental sustainable practices

### **Implement benchmarking and best practices**

- Ongoing benchmarking of other hospitals and industries to drive environmental sustainability results, establish best practices and implement technology improvements

### **Drive transparency and accountability through reporting**

- Annual reporting for transparency and accountability

Recognizing the importance of environmental factors in the health of children and future generations, SickKids will act as responsible stewards for a healthy planet through environmental leadership, mobilization of socially responsible staff, and communication of progress on these commitments to our community.

#### **Our Goals:**

- Develop environmental sustainability office & resource center
- Annual reporting



# OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

## Governance

The strategic plan will be supported by a governance structure consisting of an environmental sustainability office, committees and working groups to ensure we hold ourselves accountable to deliver our environmental sustainability objectives.

## Implementation

The initiatives required for the implementation of the key objectives relating to the strategic directions will be detailed in specific action plans over the life of the strategy.

## Reporting

The progress against our commitments and goals outlined in the action plans will be assessed, measured, and reported on an annual basis.



# IMPACT THROUGH ALIGNMENT

In order to build a pathway to impact change beyond the boundaries of our hospital, the SickKids Environmental Sustainability Strategy aims to align itself with the objectives of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the World Health Organization on sustainable health systems, Environmental Protection Act, Toronto TransformTO and other related guidance.

Through our commitments, the Environmental Sustainability Strategy provides a roadmap to achieve a more sustainable future and supports the vision of SickKids 2025 strategic plan.



## Mobilize a Green-Friendly Organization

