

Multi-stakeholder Position Statement: Toward an Environmentally Responsible Canadian Health Sector

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JOINT POSITION STATEMENT

Toward an Environmentally Responsible Canadian Health Sector

Context

Health, health care and the environment are linked inextricably. Environmental contaminants have been associated with congenital health issues, including cancer, birth defects, respiratory and cardiovascular illness, gastrointestinal ailments, and death — and an increased demand for a range of health care services.

The health sector is a significant part of Canada's economy, contributing approximately 8% of gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, the sector uses considerable energy, consumes large quantities of plastics, paper and other resources, and produces significant solid, liquid and gaseous waste. With the improvement of health care technologies and a growing awareness of environmentally responsible practices, there is an increased opportunity for reducing the health sector's environmental footprint. Although there are important health, financial and ethical reasons for adopting such practices in the health sector, a number of challenges exist, including financial, technical and administrative.

Vision

We envision the health sector as a leader in integrating environmentally responsible practices into the delivery of health care. We also see it as an advocate in sharing information on best practices and encouraging Canadian and Canadian organizations to limit their environmental footprint. In a green health sector, minimizing negative impacts on the environment would be a priority for all organizations and individuals in their day-to-day practices and at all levels of decision-making.

A Collaborative Approach

Achieving our vision requires a collaborative approach to delivering environmentally responsible health care. For example:

- **Enhance health infrastructure:**
 - Support investment in covering physical plant infrastructure that allows for the use of facilities that function more efficiently; use clean technologies; and meet core environmental standards for energy efficiency, water management and waste management.

*Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and Canadian Hospital Association (CHA) jointly prepared this position statement. Environmentally responsible care in the health care sector (2009).