

President's message

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Summer is over, but many rural communities saw an influx of travellers over the summer months, multiplying the size of the population and increasing demands on local resources. Despite the extra demands and critical staffing shortages faced, I hope you had the opportunity to see friends and family, or simply enjoy some time off. Perhaps, this included connecting with nature, and the beauty of our rivers, forests, beaches, tundra and other vast and varied Canadian terrain.

As we enjoy the beauty surrounding us, we also see many reminders of the climate-related changes affecting our communities. Devastating forest fires and heat waves experienced in 2021 were a stark reminder of the need for community preparedness, particularly in rural areas. Beyond the health human resource crisis facing our healthcare system, climate change and its impacts will be one of the most significant challenges to healthcare faced by rural and remote Canada in the coming years. The SRPC recognises the importance of this issue and is committed to providing leadership and evidence to drive the climate adaptation. At the Rural and Remote Conference in Ottawa, on Earth Day (22 April 2022), a motion was endorsed unanimously at the SRPC's Annual General Meeting asking the federal government to redirect fuel subsidies to support climate crisis adaptation.¹

When faced with the devastating effects of climate change, we have the capacity to leverage our strong connections with our communities, seeking methods to adapt, mitigate consequences and protect the most

vulnerable citizens from health-related effects. Community strength and resilience lead to many potential solutions, whether through team-based care, sustainable growth and development, indigenous community partnerships, youth engagement or technology. We have the opportunity to gather data and share our knowledge and experience with a broader audience, and the SRPC is actively engaged in supporting this work.²

While we gather data, build community partnerships, and speak nationally on the issue, the SRPC must also consider how else we mitigate impacts of climate change. After over 2 years with limited in-person opportunities, we recognise the value of personal connections for our members, but we must also consider effective ways in which to transform our work. We must learn from our experiences in COVID, perhaps looking at virtual options for some meetings, conferences or other events. In doing so, we play an important role in ensuring our summers continue to be ones where we can reconnect with the beauty of the great outdoors.

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2. Available from: <https://rhrsbc.med.ubc.ca/resources/rural-community-resiliency-to-climate-change/>. [Last accessed on 2022 Jul 11].

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