

Our Commitment to Environmental Sustainability & Planetary Health



Health System
Sustainability



Passionately pursuing a healthy future for our people, patients, and the planet

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Land Acknowledgement

IWK Health is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

We serve women, children, youth, families, and gender-diverse people in the Maritime Provinces, including the traditional territories of the Wəlastəkwiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy Peoples.

These lands are covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, recognizing Indigenous titles and establishing ongoing relationships.

As a health authority, we pledge to work with Indigenous communities to promote reflection, understanding, reconciliation, and action, honoring Indigenous knowledge and addressing historical and present-day harms. We also recognize that the connection to land is integral to sustainability and impacts the well-being and cultural identity of Indigenous nations.



A Message from the President & CEO

At IWK Health (IWK), environmental sustainability is not just a trend, it is a core strategic priority, reflecting our belief that the health of our patients is deeply connected to the health of our planet.

As a leading research hospital, we recognize our responsibility to model climate-conscious healthcare and to drive innovation that supports both human and environmental well-being.

Environmental sustainability first became a strategic priority in Fiscal 2022–2023. During that annual strategic planning process, leadership identified it as key to strengthening its role in children’s health, spurred by the Children’s First Canada → [Top 10 Threats to Childhood in Canada Report](#) highlighting climate change as a top threat to childhood in Canada.

IWK’s Board recognized environmental action as vital to protecting child health and advancing IWK’s broader environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals.

In September 2024, we established the Health System Sustainability portfolio, a transformative step that formalized our commitment to embedding sustainability across every facet of our organization. This portfolio integrates sustainability principles into governance, infrastructure, clinical care, research, and education, ensuring that sustainability is woven into the fabric of how we operate, how we innovate, and how we care.

The endorsement of our → **Sustainability Strategic Framework** in early fiscal 2025–2026 marked another milestone. This framework sets a bold vision for a low-carbon, climate resilient health system, one that prioritizes energy efficiency, waste reduction, climate adaptation, and sustainable procurement, while fostering a culture of environmental accountability and effective patient outcomes.

Our progress is powered by people. From frontline clinicians rethinking resource use, to researchers exploring the intersection of climate and health, to facilities teams upgrading infrastructure for energy efficiency, every corner of IWK is contributing to meaningful change. Grassroots initiatives and large-scale projects alike reflect the creativity, leadership, and dedication of our community.

Together, we are redefining what it means to deliver care in the 21st century. We are building a future where planetary health is not a side project, it's central to our mission and purpose. A future where our hospital not only heals but also protects and preserves. A future where our commitment to patients includes a commitment to the planet they live on.

“ Planetary Health is not just a goal, it’s a responsibility. At IWK, we are committed to creating a health system that heals without harm, protects future generations, and leads by example. Our journey is driven by the passion of our people and the urgency of our times. ”

Dr. Krista Jangaard
President & CEO



What is Planetary Health?

? Planetary health is an emerging field that recognizes the deep interconnection between the health of human populations and the state of Earth's natural systems.

As human activity continues to disrupt climate patterns, degrade ecosystems, and strain natural resources, the consequences are increasingly evident, not only in environmental degradation but also in rising health risks for communities around the world.

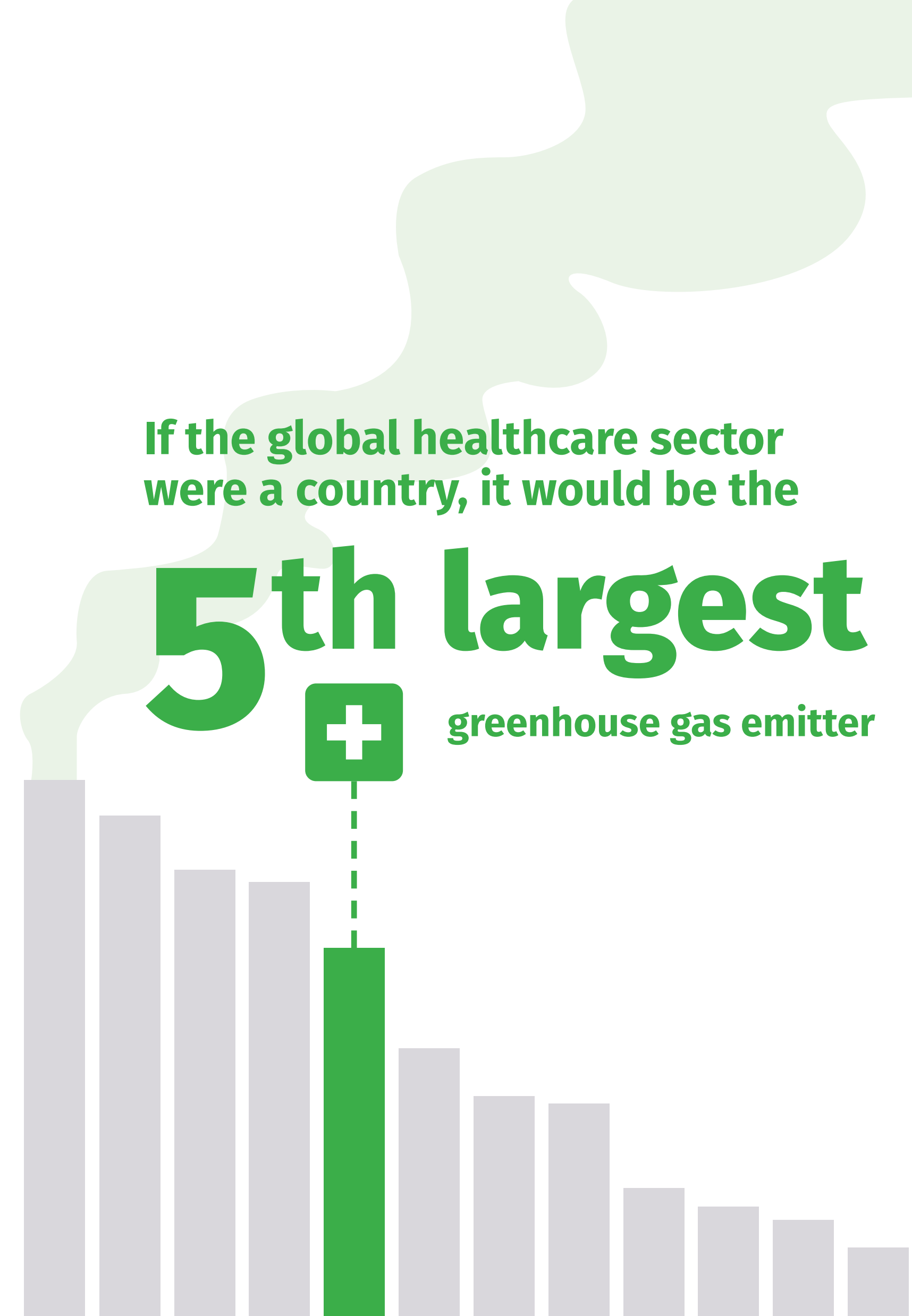
This concept, first articulated by the Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission in 2015, emphasizes that safeguarding human well-being requires protecting the ecological systems that sustain life. From air and water quality to food security and disease patterns, environmental changes are reshaping the conditions for health on a global scale.

Our commitment to environmental sustainability and planetary health is rooted in this understanding. By aligning our strategies with the principles of planetary health, we aim to reduce our environmental footprint while promoting long-term resilience and equity. This includes addressing climate change, conserving biodiversity, and supporting systems that enable both people and the planet to thrive.

The Role of Health Care in Environmental Impact

The healthcare sector itself contributes significantly to environmental degradation. Globally, it accounts for nearly 5% of greenhouse gas emissions, more than the aviation or shipping industries.

From energy-intensive hospital operations to pharmaceutical manufacturing and medical waste, the sector's environmental footprint is substantial. As stewards of health, healthcare institutions have a responsibility to reduce their emissions and lead by example in sustainability.



SOURCE: Health Care Without Harm, 2025

Environmental Impacts on Health Outcomes

The degradation of our natural environment is increasingly affecting health outcomes across populations.

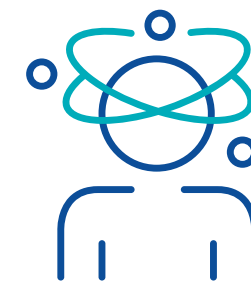
The following overview highlights several key impacts, particularly those most relevant to the patient demographics we serve.



Women and Pregnancy



Children's Health

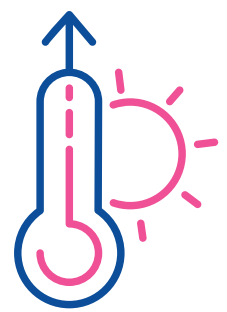


Mental Health

Environmental Impacts on Health Outcomes

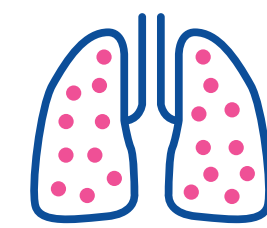
Women and Pregnancy

Climate change and environmental stressors have profound effects on maternal and fetal health:



Preterm Birth and Low Birth Weight

Rising temperatures and air pollution increase the risk of preterm birth by 10% and low birth weight by 7%, contributing to developmental challenges and higher infant mortality.



Air Pollution Exposure

Increased levels of PM_{2.5} and NO₂ are associated with higher risks of stillbirth, low birth weight, and preterm delivery.



Maternal Health Risks

Heat exposure and dehydration elevate the risk of preeclampsia, heatstroke, and preterm labor. These conditions can impair fetal development and reduce placental blood flow.



Gestational Hypertension

Climate-related stressors raise the incidence of hypertensive disorders, increasing the likelihood of severe maternal complications.



Placental Function and Birth Defects

Chronic heat stress is linked to intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) and neural tube defects.

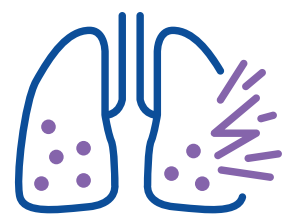


Each additional 1°C in minimum daily temperature over 23.9°C has been shown to increase the risk of infant mortality by as much as 22.4%.

Environmental Impacts on Health Outcomes

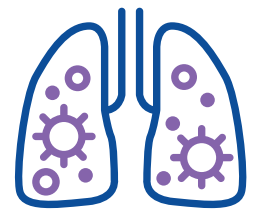
Children's Health

Children are especially vulnerable to climate-related health threats due to their developmental stage and dependency:



Respiratory Illnesses

Poor air quality exacerbated by climate change is driving a rise in asthma and respiratory conditions. This is reflected in increased Emergency Department visits.



Infectious Diseases

Extreme weather and pollution weaken immune responses, leading to frequent respiratory infections.



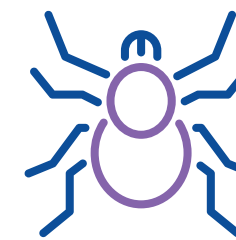
Heat-Related Illnesses

Children face higher risks of heatstroke, dehydration, and kidney damage during heatwaves.



Injury from Extreme Weather

Floods, wildfires, and storms expose children to physical harm and long-term respiratory issues from smoke inhalation.



Vector-Borne Diseases

Warmer temperatures have expanded the range of blacklegged ticks in Nova Scotia, increasing Lyme disease cases. Again, this is reflected in local Emergency Department trends.

Environmental Impacts on Health Outcomes

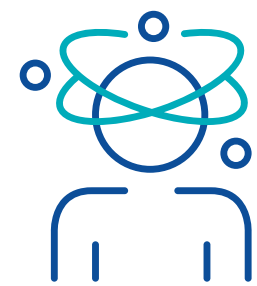
Mental Health

Environmental instability also affects psychological well-being, particularly among vulnerable populations:



Pregnant Women

Natural disasters and extreme weather events increase stress, anxiety, and trauma, which can lead to complications such as high blood pressure, miscarriage, and preterm labor.



Youth Mental Health

Climate-related stressors contribute to long-term mental health challenges in children and adolescents, including anxiety and depression.

A recent study by IWK Health, → [Multi-Systems Adaptation for Climate Change on Child and Youth Mental Health in Nova Scotia](#), highlights the urgent need for coordinated, cross-sectoral responses to support youth mental health in the face of climate change. It emphasizes that a child's rights lens within the development of climate adaptation strategies is a critical step towards protecting where children live, learn, grow and play.



Children are particularly vulnerable to climate change and are disproportionately impacted by adverse conditions due to their developmental stage, dependency, and lack of legal status.

Timeline: The Journey so Far


The Early Momentum 2022-2024

In 2022–2023, environmental sustainability became a formal strategic priority for IWK. A senior lead, project manager, and dedicated team, supported by a steering committee, laid the foundation for IWK’s sustainability journey. By year’s end, the organization was building awareness, capacity, and a go-forward strategy.

Early in 2023–2024, IWK’s sustainability program faced disruptions from staffing changes and competing operational pressures. Even so, the team advanced key work: creating an internal brand, building partnerships, and drafting the first Sustainability Scorecard. These efforts highlighted resilience and reinforced a vital truth, sustainability requires dedicated resources and long-term commitment to be fully embedded in operations.

Challenges and Resilience

Spring 2023: Key staffing changes, Significant operational challenges

October 2023: Commenced  branding campaign

Strategic Priority Milestones

2022-2023

Strategic Priority: Dedicate Ourselves to Achieving Environmental Improvements that Foster a Sustainable Future and Lead to Social and Economical Improvements in the Communities we Serve.

2023-2024

Strategic Priority: Implement the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Phase I Recommendations and Develop a Long-term Sustainability Framework.

A New Chapter 2024-2026

September 2024: HSS Portfolio established, New Executive Lead position

In September 2024, IWK launched the Health System Sustainability portfolio with a dedicated Executive Lead, supported by a steering committee and project team. Together, they developed the Sustainability Strategic Framework, a roadmap to embed sustainability across operations. Released internally in early 2025 and externally soon after, the framework signaled a clear shift: sustainability must move from aspiration to practice.

April 2025: Sustainability Strategic Framework launched



2024-2025

Strategic Priority: Prepare the Organization to Respond to the Climate Crisis and to Champion Nova Scotia’s Climate Change Plan.

2025-2026

Strategic Priority: Integrate Sustainability Into all Aspects of IWK Health by Implementing the Sustainability Strategic Framework.

Impact by the Numbers

In the past two years, we have made strides in measuring and tracking greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, energy and water consumption, and waste generation.

This growing insight into our environmental footprint enables informed decision-making and reflects our commitment to building a healthier, more sustainable future.

Metrics and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Measurement

We began our environmental measurement efforts by tracking Scope 2 emissions from electricity and steam consumption. This foundation has expanded to include broader GHG metrics and additional sustainability indicators, including:



Energy Use: Monitoring both site and source energy to assess operational efficiency.



Waste Streams: Capturing consumption data on disposal, recycling, and composting to benchmark performance and identify areas for improvement.



Water Usage: Tracking consumption to support resource conservation.



Nitrous Oxide: Measuring emissions from medical and operational sources.



Office Paper: Evaluating usage to reduce environmental footprint.

IWK is further advancing its approach to environmental sustainability reporting through the development of enhanced tracking systems for Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions.

Starting in summer 2025 and extending into the fall and winter, we will establish robust frameworks to collect and calculate emissions data across all sources, which will lay the groundwork for a reliable baseline that will inform future reduction strategies. This initiative, once completed, will be a significant milestone, offering critical insights that will guide decision-making and sustainability efforts for years to come.

Key Findings for Fiscal 2024–2025

IWK's baseline inventory offers critical insights into its emissions profile.

Electricity and steam are the primary sources of greenhouse gas emissions, with usage totaling approximately 23 million kilowatt hours of electricity and 168 million pounds of steam, together generating an estimated 34,000 tons of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e). Steam and electricity highlight significant opportunities to reduce emissions through improved energy efficiency.

Nitrous oxide usage totaled 1,600 kilograms, contributing 440 tCO₂e. Given its global warming potential (273 times greater than CO₂ over a 100-year period-tracking), managing nitrous oxide is essential. Even minor leaks or inefficient delivery can lead to substantial climate impacts.

Additional operational metrics include the use of roughly 8 million pages of office paper and the generation of 365,400 kilograms of municipal solid waste. These figures underscore the importance of comprehensive resource management and point to further opportunities for environmental improvement.

Equivalencies by the Numbers

34,000 tCO₂e =

6,800 homes utilize this level of energy per year

14.4 Million

litres of gasoline consumed

8 million pages of office paper =

Over **400**

Barrels of oil, used in paper production and transport

800 metres

Stacked flat or... **1.5 CN Towers**

~800 sheets
Annual paper use of **10,000** Canadians
Per person, per year (assuming)

Enough paper to wrap the Halifax Citadel, end to end **3X**

960 Trees harvested (assuming)

~8,333 Sheets (per tree)

160,000 kg of paper waste

(Based on ~20 lb per 500-sheet ream)

363,400 kg of solid waste =

Waste generated by **5,020** Canadian households in a year

(Assuming an average of ~700 kg per household annually)

+36

Full garbage trucks
(Based on a typical truck capacity of ~10,000 kg)

72000

Barrels of oil consumed

FOR **1** YEAR

7,300 ↗

Passenger vehicles driven

4,500 homes' worth of energy use for one year

1.4 Million

Tree seedlings planted and growing for over 10 years

With a carbon footprint of ~1,000 tCO₂e, a landfilled without methane capture (based on EPA estimates for mixed municipal waste) is equivalent to:

10X Heavier than Halifax icon, Theodore Tugboat

It's enough to fill the Halifax Citadel Parade Grounds with tightly packed garbage bags, stacked shoulder-high

2X The weight of the Scotiabank Centre's ice rink and seating

Approximate weight of Halifax Central Library, books, furniture, and structure
(Weight of IWK's annual waste)

Our Commitment to Environmental Sustainability & Planetary Health

Building a Greener Future: Sustainability Highlights

Over time, IWK has championed a series of initiatives that reflect our deepening commitment to sustainability, each one a deliberate step toward reshaping healthcare through the lens of planetary health.

What follows is a snapshot of that journey: a selection of efforts rooted in collaboration, driven by innovation, and guided by an enduring responsibility to future generations.



Sustainable and Active Transportation

We are not only reducing our carbon footprint, we are also easing parking pressures at the University Avenue site and offering staff more flexible, low-carbon commuting options. In response to growing engagement a dedicated Active Transportation and Smart Trip Coordinator role has been created. This position will champion alternative transportation models, provide education and support to staff, and help embed climate-friendly commuting into the culture of care at IWK.



Sustainable Transportation – Smart Trip EPass Program

IWK continues to advance sustainable commuting through its participation in the Halifax Transit Smart Trip Program, which it joined in October 2021. The Smart Trip Program aims to reduce traffic congestion and lower emissions by encouraging alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel during peak hours, ultimately supporting cleaner air and a smaller carbon footprint.

A central feature of the program is the EPass, a discounted annual Halifax Transit pass offered to employees. The cost is shared between the employer and SmartTrip, and payments are conveniently made through payroll deductions. Although IWK is only obligated to cover 12.5% of the cost, it has chosen to go well beyond that minimum to advance both environmental sustainability and affordability for staff.

In October 2024, IWK increased its monthly contribution from \$11.25 to \$29.75, and later to \$53.75. As a result, employees now pay just \$25 per month for unlimited transit access.

These enhancements have led to a dramatic rise in participation. As of January 2026, 639 employees, representing approximately 16% of IWK's workforce, are enrolled in the program, marking a **520% increase** since its launch.

Active Transportation

As part of our ongoing commitment to expanding active transportation options for staff, IWK launched the Active Transportation Working Group in 2025. With support from provincial government funding, we are upgrading bike infrastructure across the University Avenue site, significantly increasing access and convenience. Once complete, the enhancements will add approximately 50 indoor and 50 outdoor bike parking spaces (an overall 100% increase in spaces), making it easier for staff to embrace low-carbon commuting and contribute to a healthier, more sustainable workplace.

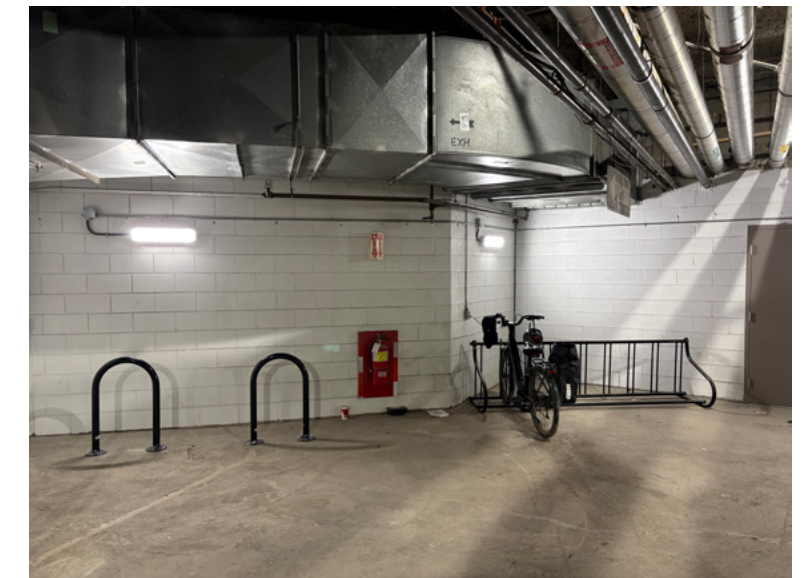
These efforts go beyond infrastructure. They reduce emissions, support healthier lifestyles, and help build a culture of sustainability across the IWK workforce.



Upgraded biking infrastructure on University avenue will add 50 indoor and 50 outdoor bike parking spaces.



New bike parking space:
Parkade west



New bike parking space:
Parkade cage

Pediatric Perioperative Sustainability

The pediatric perioperative program has been at the forefront of integrating environmental sustainability into clinical practice. Over the past two years, operating room teams, including staff and physicians, have spearheaded a series of meaningful initiatives that reflect a shared commitment to greener, more responsible healthcare delivery.

Optimization of Surgical Custom Packs

Surgical packs contain disposable equipment and supplies tailored to specific procedures. Recently, the perioperative team conducted a comprehensive review of each pack type to ensure contents aligned with routine clinical needs. Items that were consistently unused were removed, while infrequently used supplies were shifted to an as-needed basis. This had the effect of streamlining resource use without compromising care.

'Bags & Bins' Campaign

To help reduce single-use plastic and paper waste, the Bags & Bins campaign was launched with a dual focus.

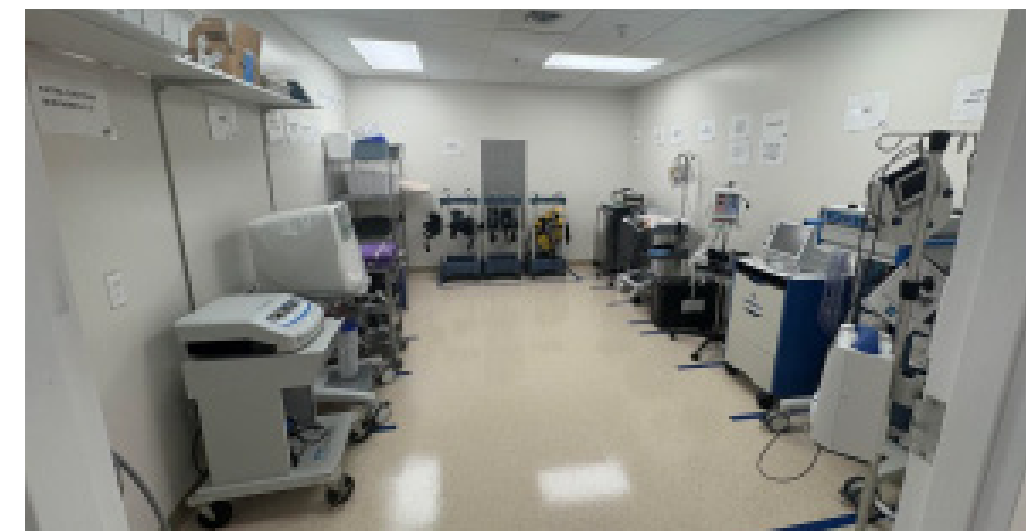
First, families were encouraged to bring reusable bags to hold personal belongings while their child is in surgery. Second, reusable bins were placed under each stretcher to store comfort items, such as stuffed animals and clothing, that accompany children into the operating room. The campaign aims to cut plastic bag usage by 50%, while supporting a more sustainable and dignified care experience.



LEAN 5S Red Tag Event in the OR Sterile Core

With support from the Process and Improvement team, the red tag event leveraged the 5S methodology to reduce waste, enhance accessibility of items, and establish sustainable organizational systems.

During a 30-day red-tagging initiative, 647 low-use items were identified. Of these, 40% were retained for operational needs, 24% were relocated, and 36% were either donated or responsibly disposed of. The overall result was the removal of 230 unnecessary items from key storage areas. A standardized system was also developed to maintain organized, efficient, and optimized spaces moving forward.



↑ Periop lean initiative — post clean-up.

← Orthopedic surgery section with tags at the beginning of the 30-day period. With usage, tags were removed.

“ When I see the IWK not only treating illness but also addressing the root causes that make people sick, I see true leadership!

As someone who’s grown up in and around the IWK, it honestly feels reassuring and hopeful to see the hospital taking sustainability seriously! ”

Jenna Kedy

Youth Healthcare Advocate and Former IWK Patient

Anesthesia

Anesthetic agents like desflurane and isoflurane carry a disproportionately large environmental burden, primarily due to their high global warming potential and prolonged atmospheric persistence.

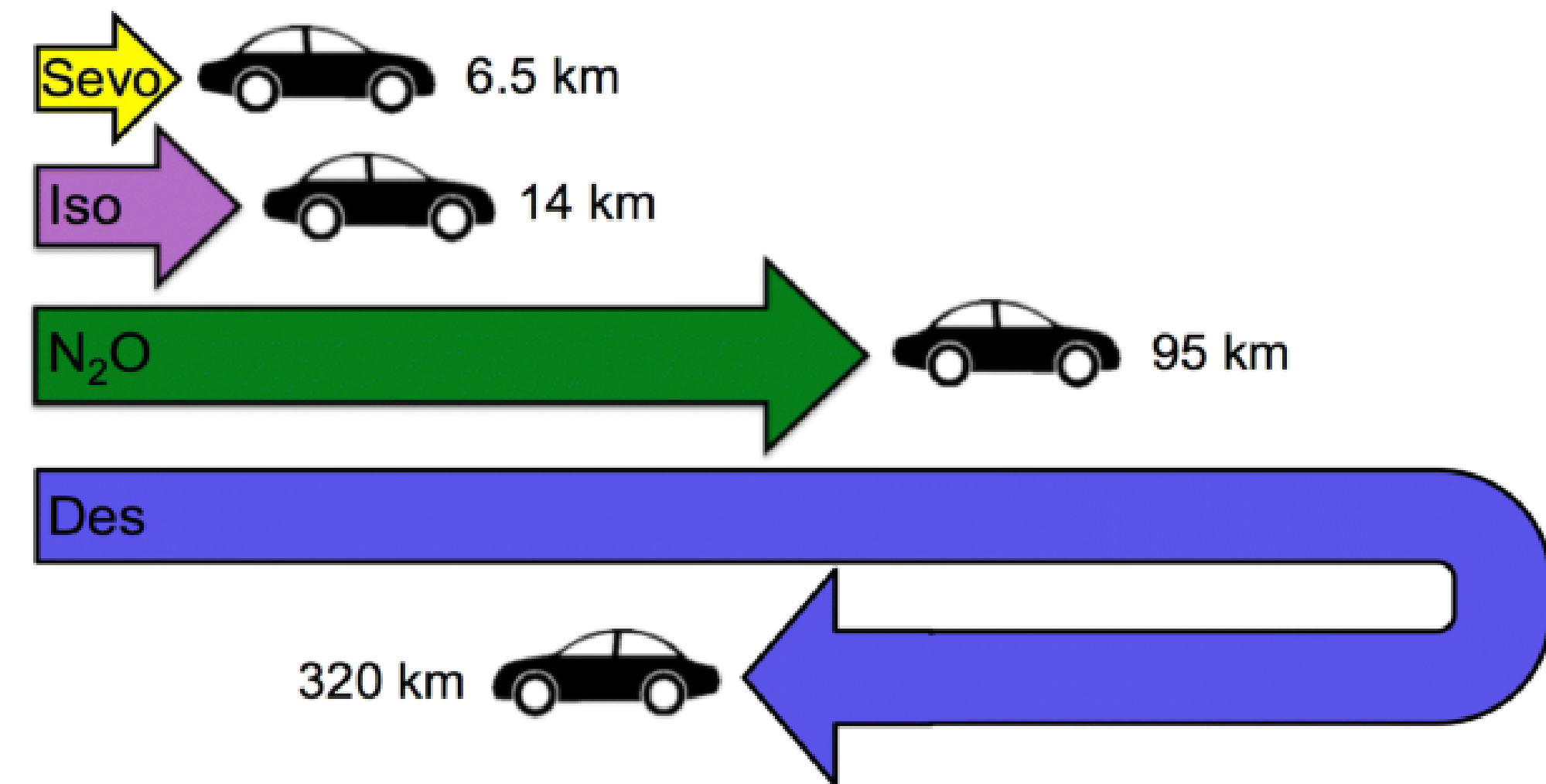
In response to these concerns, IWK eliminated the use of desflurane in 2022, significantly reducing its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Isoflurane use has also been minimized, with limited inventory maintained on an as-needed basis.

Complementing these efforts, a shift from daily disposable anesthesia circuits to a weekly-use system has prevented the disposal of nearly 2,000 circuits each year, dramatically reducing plastic waste and the carbon emissions tied to their production and disposal.



In 2022, IWK eliminated the use of desflurane, significantly reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

CO₂ Equivalent for 1 MAC-hour of Common Anesthetic Gases in km Driven



Hanna, M., Bryson, G.L. A long way to go: minimizing the carbon footprint from anesthetic gases. *Can J Anesth/ J Can Anesth* **66**, 838–839 (2019).

SOURCE: HealthPro Canada: when it comes to sustainability, not all anesthetic gases are created equal

Choosing Wisely

A key component of IWK's sustainability strategy is its active participation in Choosing Wisely Canada, a national campaign dedicated to reducing unnecessary medical tests and treatments.

It is estimated that up to 30% of tests and treatments currently requested and prescribed are likely unnecessary. These practices not only pose potential risks to patients but also consume valuable healthcare resources and contribute to the climate crisis. Choosing Wisely Nova Scotia (CWNS), the provincial arm of the campaign, collaborates with IWK, Nova Scotia Health, Doctors Nova Scotia, and other stakeholders to identify and address overused medical interventions within the local context.

IWK established a Choosing Wisely Program in Spring 2024 with the purpose of identifying areas of overuse at IWK and implementing Choosing Wisely principles of reducing unnecessary tests, treatments, and procedures. IWK's involvement in CWNS underscores its dual commitment to clinical excellence and environmental responsibility. By promoting evidence-based care and resource stewardship, IWK helps reduce the environmental burden of healthcare while enhancing patient outcomes.



Currently, IWK is updating the hospital's febrile infant protocol to align with international guidelines, with the goal of reducing unnecessary lumbar punctures and IV antibiotic use.

Our Choosing Wisely team is also working to reduce unnecessary use of high-flow nasal cannula and is collaborating with the dentistry team to decrease unnecessary antibiotic prescribing for dental pain. In addition, IWK has received Choosing Wisely Canada designation for both Using Blood Wisely and Using Labs Wisely.

Through these initiatives, IWK supports a culture of thoughtful decision-making among clinicians, trainees, and patients. This alignment between clinical appropriateness and sustainability positions IWK as a leader in transforming healthcare delivery for a healthier population and planet.

Supporting a Greener Future – Research Department

The Research Department launched the *Supporting a Greener Future initiative* to embed sustainability into the design and execution of research activities.

By assessing energy and material use across operations, the team has uncovered opportunities to reduce waste and emissions while maintaining excellence in scientific outcomes. This initiative showcases the leadership of IWK's research community in driving innovation that advances both patient care and environmental stewardship.

Energy Improvements

In recent years, the Facilities & Maintenance team has spearheaded major infrastructure upgrades focused on reducing energy consumption and operational expenses.

Notable efforts include installing two high-efficiency chillers and completing an LED lighting retrofit that now covers roughly 95% of IWK's University Avenue location. Additionally, two of the four air handling units at the children's site have been replaced with energy-efficient models, with a third currently being upgraded. These targeted improvements underscore the team's continued commitment to fostering a more sustainable and energy-efficient hospital environment.

Virtual Care – Maritime Medical Genetics

The Maritime Medical Genetics team is among several teams that introduced virtual visits, offering patients and families across the region more accessible care without the need for long-distance travel.

This shift has significantly reduced transportation-related emissions and eased financial and time burdens for families. By leveraging digital health solutions, the team has not only improved access to specialized care but also demonstrated how technology can drive both environmental and social benefits. Notably, patient travel has decreased by an estimated 78%, and clinic no-show rates have dropped, boosting overall efficiency and ensuring more consistent care delivery.



Virtual Care has lowered Maritime Medical Genetics clinic no-show rates and reduced patient travel by an estimated 78%.

Food Services

IWK's Food Services department has long been a pioneer in sustainable healthcare practices, leading the charge since the launch of Dial for Dining in 2008, a patient-centered initiative that reduced food waste by an impressive **92%** from 2008 to 2024.

Building on that legacy, the department introduced seasonal menus to retail food services in 2022. These menus prioritize locally sourced ingredients and in-season produce, minimizing the environmental impact associated with transportation and storage.

In 2024, IWK advanced this work by joining the Province of Nova Scotia's Local Food Pilot Program, delivered in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. The pilot aimed to further increase the use of food produced, processed, or packaged within the province across both patient and retail food services.

Prior to the pilot program, data showed that local food accounted for **21%** of food purchases at IWK's University Avenue location and **12%** at the offsite location. By the end of the four-month pilot, local procurement rose to **25%** and **15%** respectively.

This initiative demonstrates IWK's commitment to strengthening the local food economy, reducing environmental impacts associated with long-distance food transport, and supporting a more resilient and sustainable food system for the province. While work on similar initiatives is currently paused, IWK continues to maintain an ongoing partnership with the Department of Agriculture, who remain engaged and interested in future collaborations aligned with the pilot's objectives.

Looking ahead, IWK also plans to work with the World Resources Institute's Cool Food Program to explore climate-friendly menu strategies, aligning with global efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of institutional food services.



IWK remains committed to reducing the climate impact of the food we serve and intends to continue this work in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture.

Nova Scotia Green Choice Program

IWK has taken a bold step toward climate leadership by enrolling in the Nova Scotia Green Choice Program, a provincial initiative that empowers large electricity customers to source up to 100% of their power from local renewable energy sources.

Recognizing the importance of aligning healthcare operations with planetary health, IWK proactively joined the provincial application for the program and will be included in the second phase of this program. This commitment positions IWK as a key partner in accelerating Nova Scotia's transition to clean energy, supporting the development of new wind infrastructure across the province. By participating, IWK will not only reduce its own carbon footprint but also helps to displace fossil fuel-based electricity with locally generated green power, advancing both environmental and public health goals in tandem.



95% of the IWK's University Avenue location has been retrofit with energy reducing LED lighting.

Grassroots Sustainability Actions

Sustainability thrives in the everyday choices we make and across our teams, grassroots initiatives are proving that even small changes can lead to meaningful impact.

In the Postpartum Discharge Clinic, a creative solution to an extended laundry shortage led to a lasting reduction in laundry use by identifying and eliminating unnecessary practices. In Dentistry, a shift toward digital charting has significantly reduced paper consumption as the team embraces a paper-light model ahead of OPOR implementation.

Elsewhere, ingenuity continues to shine. Staff are repurposing blank fax pages for notetaking, cutting down on waste and reducing the need for new paper products. Teams are also transitioning to digital record-keeping, minimizing printing, reusing cafeteria containers, and recycling wherever possible. Many team members work remotely, reducing daily commutes and lowering carbon emissions. These efforts, big and small, demonstrate how a culture of sustainability can take root in everyday actions, proving that when we each do our part, the collective impact is powerful.

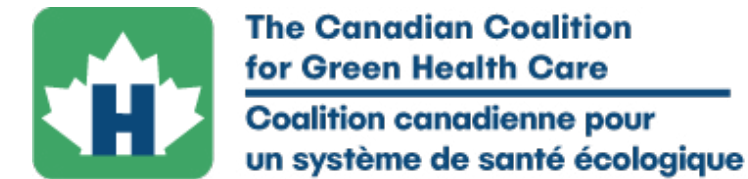
Partnerships

While IWK can embark on its own sustainability journey, real success will happen as the result partnerships and collaborations.



CASCADES

In alignment with our commitment to sustainable healthcare, we are proud to collaborate with → **CASCADES**, a national initiative dedicated to driving environmental sustainability across the health sector through innovation, education, and shared expertise. Our engagement has included active participation in education sessions and communities of practice, contributing to and reviewing the [Strategic Planning for Planetary Health and Sustainable Care Playbook](#), and presenting in a webinar focused on [embedding sustainability into your organization's strategic framework](#). We have also partnered with CASCADES to deliver an education session for IWK staff and physicians on building sustainability into quality improvement initiatives and have supported pilot projects. These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to lead, learn, and contribute to a more sustainable future in healthcare.



Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care

In 2023, IWK joined the → **Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care**, which supports its members in the development of policies and practices to reduce environmental impact. The Coalition offers resources such as toolkits and webinars and collects and reports climate-related benchmarking data from health care organizations across Canada.

Greening Healthcare Infrastructure Committee

IWK plays an active role in the Greening Healthcare Infrastructure Committee, a collaborative initiative focused on reducing energy use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across Nova Scotia's healthcare sector. As a core member alongside the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health, and EfficiencyOne Energy Managers, the committee contributes to data collection, goal setting, and strategic planning aligned with the province's Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. The committee supports the development of energy upgrade roadmaps, identifies emission-reduction projects, and explores financing opportunities, reinforcing its commitment to environmental sustainability and climate advocacy within the healthcare system.



IPSASB Sustainability Implementation Forum (SIF)

The → **International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board** (IPSASB) introduced the IPSASB SRS Exposure Draft (IPSASB SRS ED) 1, *Climate Related Disclosures* in 2024. The SIF is an open forum for public sector entities from around the world, across different levels of government, that are potential future users of the final IPSASB SRS Climate-related disclosures. Stakeholder engagement and feedback is of utmost importance in the development of sustainability reporting standards to ensure the principles proposed in draft standards can be implemented. The objective of the SIF is to gather feedback on the draft SRS based on real-life examples and practice and test whether the proposals in the draft SRS are implementable to inform the development of the SRS and implementation guidance and illustrative examples.

IWK’s Executive Lead, Health System Sustainability is a participant in the SIF. As the only healthcare participant and one of a handful of Canadian participants, IWK brings a vital healthcare perspective to the forum, helping to ensure that the unique operational realities and environmental impacts of healthcare institutions are reflected in emerging public sector climate reporting frameworks. This contribution supports the development of standards that are inclusive, sector-relevant, and capable of driving meaningful climate action across diverse public services.

CEO Climate Action Charter

The → **CEO Climate Action Charter**, launched by Halifax Partnership in collaboration with the Halifax Regional Municipality, is a first-of-its-kind initiative that unites local business leaders in a shared commitment to meaningful climate action. As a signatory, IWK has pledged to embed climate goals into its organizational values, track and transparently report progress, and leverage its operations to drive environmental leadership. By joining this charter, IWK reinforces its dedication to sustainability and positions itself as a proactive leader in advancing climate resilience within both the healthcare sector and the broader Halifax community.

CEO CLIMATE ACTION CHARTER

The purpose of the **CEO Climate Action Charter** is, in the spirit of continuous improvement and collaboration, to encourage each other to take meaningful climate action using the unique operational levers of our respective organizations, while demonstrating leadership to our community. Together, our actions will positively impact people, planet and prosperity in our city and province.

BY SIGNING THIS CHARTER, I COMMIT THAT IN MY ORGANIZATION:

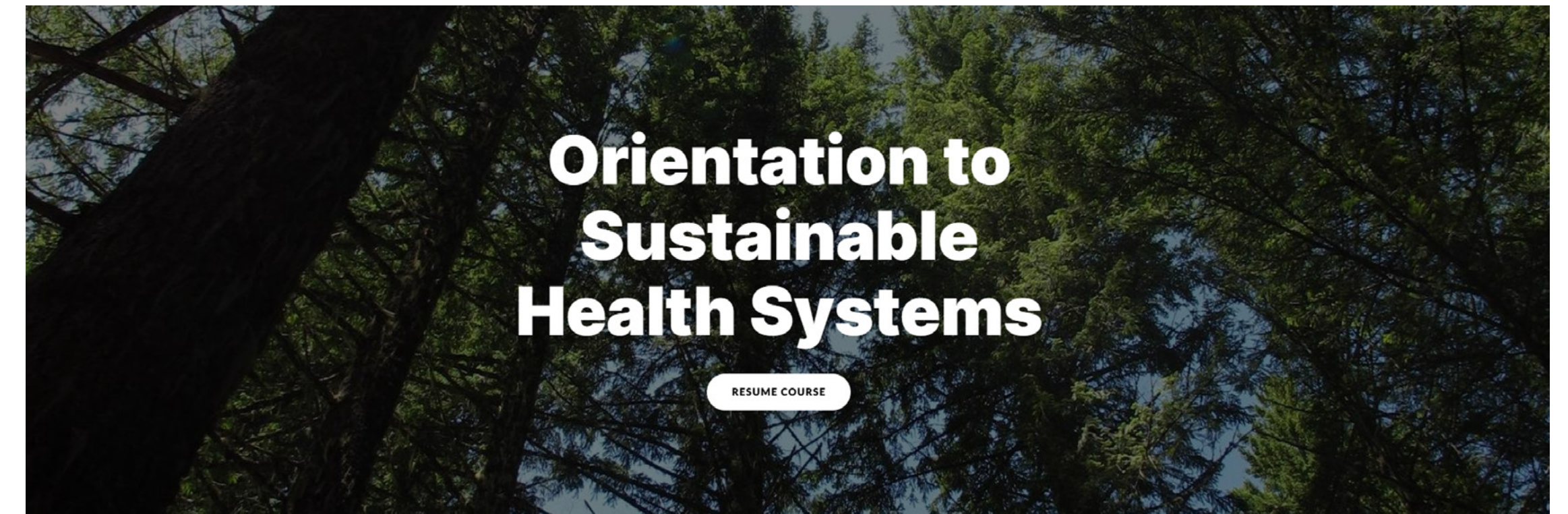
1. **We do the right thing:** We embed climate goals into our organization's culture and values.
2. **We do what we say:** We track and share our climate action goals and initiatives.
3. **We learn and adapt:** We actively share best practices and mentor to progress our climate goals in an ever-changing and highly complex world.
4. **We support an equitable transition to a green economy:** We work together to create solutions that are accessible for all.
5. **We work together:** We leverage our influence and networks to remove barriers and enable progress for collective success.
6. **We are all part of the solution:** We empower people to be climate leaders.
7. **We communicate with government about the impacts of policy:** We participate in two-way communication between government and industry to best enable our abilities to progress climate action.
8. **We help climate action innovators:** We find ways to support new ideas and solutions that accelerate climate action.
9. **We embed climate action in business decisions:** We acknowledge climate action as a business imperative and include climate thinking in business and organizational decisions.
10. **We signal action:** We commit to being vocal about our climate action initiatives to encourage all businesses, organizations and leaders to adopt meaningful, climate-focused change.

Education

IWK recognizes that empowering staff with knowledge is essential to advancing sustainability across the organization. Through dedicated learning modules, ongoing communications, and accessible resources on the staff intranet, we are fostering a culture of environmental awareness and action. The following are examples of education opportunities that support this commitment.

Mobilizing Quality Improvement for Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Healthcare Workshop

As part of our sustainability education efforts, IWK co-hosted a workshop titled *Mobilizing Quality Improvement for Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Healthcare* on May 14, 2025. Developed in collaboration with CASCADES, the Healthy Populations Institute at Dalhousie University, and Choosing Wisely Canada NS, the session equipped healthcare professionals with practical tools and strategies to embed sustainability into quality improvement (QI) initiatives. By combining theoretical insights with real-world examples, the workshop empowered over 30 clinicians, administrators, and QI leaders to drive environmentally responsible, efficient, and effective patient care.



Orientation to Sustainable Health Systems

As part of our commitment to educating staff on sustainability, IWK is proud to be among the first healthcare organizations to offer *Orientation to Sustainable Health Systems*, a concise, 30-minute learning module available through our Learning Management System (LMS). Developed by CASCADES in collaboration with healthcare partners, including IWK Postdoctoral Fellow Dr. Brittany Barber, the course introduces the connection between climate, health, and healthcare systems, while highlighting practical opportunities for environmental improvement. This initiative empowers staff and physicians to engage in climate-conscious care, with an optional, in-depth accredited version also available for those seeking further learning.

Sustainability Strategic Framework

In April 2025, IWK introduced the Sustainability Strategic Framework to embed sustainability into every part of the organization.

The framework is built around four pillars: governance (oversight, measurement, and policy alignment), infrastructure (efficiency, resilience, and resource conservation), people (engaging and empowering staff), and practice (integrating sustainability into care and operations). Together, these areas ensure a comprehensive, system-wide approach.

The framework is also guided by four principles: awareness and culture of sustainability, accountability and reporting, patient-centered care, and evidence-based implementation. These principles act as values that shape decisions, foster transparency, and connect sustainability to both patient care and environmental stewardship.



Strategic Initiatives (2025–2027)

To transform commitment into measurable progress, IWK has developed twenty-seven targeted initiatives across the four foundational pillars.

Together, these initiatives will guide our efforts over the next two years. Many of these initiatives are multi-year undertakings that rely on deep collaboration across departments, clinical programs, and external partners. Each is supported by multidisciplinary teams and detailed workplans to ensure steady, achievable progress. For example, governance initiatives involve policy development and reporting structures led by the Health System Sustainability Office, while infrastructure initiatives are primarily driven by the Facilities team, supported by external partners such as Efficiency Nova Scotia. Staff engagement and clinical practice improvements are championed by frontline teams, physicians, and staff champions who bring these values to life in their daily work.

These actions are designed not merely to meet targets, but to embed sustainability into the very fabric of IWK's operations. Strengthening governance builds the accountability and leadership structures needed for long-term success. Investing in infrastructure reduces energy consumption, minimizes waste, and enhances climate resilience. Empowering people cultivates a culture where staff, physicians, and learners are active participants in sustainability. And rethinking practice ensures that environmental stewardship is seamlessly integrated with patient care, clinical excellence, and innovation.

The work underway today lays the foundation for a more sustainable tomorrow. It is creating sustainability teams across the organization that will champion change in clinical environments, research programs, and operational systems. Our goal is clear: to weave sustainable practices into every aspect of our work, ensuring that IWK continues to passionately pursue a healthy future for our patients, our people, and our planet.

Our Focus Areas and Actions

IWK's sustainability efforts are guided by four interconnected focus areas: governance, infrastructure, people, and practice. Each area represents a vital part of embedding sustainability into the organization and is supported by multi-disciplinary teams who are leading this work.

People

At the heart of IWK's sustainability journey are our staff, physicians, learners, patients and community members. Through education and engagement, we are building a culture where sustainability is a shared responsibility.

Planned initiatives include continuing with an internal sustainability awareness campaign and developing an external communications strategy to highlight progress publicly. We also recognize the importance of partner collaboration, especially with government, indigenous, Nova Scotia Health and the community.



October 6 — National Day of Action on Planetary Health hosted by IWK Health.

These activities will empower individuals to take action and contribute to organizational goals, while also recognizing and celebrating staff-led successes.

Governance

Strong governance provides the foundation for lasting change. Leadership from the Health System Sustainability Office and support from the Sustainability Governance and Strategy Committee and Sustainability Implementation & Oversight Committee will ensure that sustainability is integrated into organizational policy and performance management.

Over the next two years, IWK will evaluate its current governance model and establish clear structures to guide decision-making. This includes creating an organizational sustainability policy, undertaking a materiality risk assessment to identify and prioritize the most significant issues, conducting detailed Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions assessments, formalizing indicators and metrics performance tracking. These efforts will be brought together in an annual sustainability report, ensuring transparency and accountability.

We are also dedicated to embedding sustainable standards and practices throughout our supply chain, ensuring that both the products we procure and the vendors we partner with share our commitment to environmental responsibility.

Infrastructure

Sustainability at IWK also means ensuring that our facilities and systems are efficient, resilient, and future-ready, reducing resource consumption and enhancing climate mitigation while reinforcing long-term operational sustainability.

Infrastructure upgrades often come with significant costs, and with limited government funding available, we are committed to exploring alternative funding strategies. These efforts will help secure the resources needed to support critical enhancements and ensure the long-term sustainability of our facilities

Co-led by the Facilities team and the Health System Sustainability Office, IWK will develop an energy management plan focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from steam and electricity use. A climate risk assessment and resilience plan will further prepare our infrastructure and operations for future climate-related challenges.

Waste reduction is another key priority. Through the newly formed Sustainable Waste Solutions Working Group, we are setting waste diversion goals and implementing strategies to reduce waste, enhance recycling, and improve the safe handling of hazardous materials.

Water efficiency efforts will also be undertaken, with plans to reduce consumption and optimize usage across the organization.

To support these initiatives, we need to build a centralized sustainability and climate data system that will enable consistent tracking and measurement, ensuring accountability and guiding progress for years to come.

Practice

By integrating sustainable practices into our clinical operations, we can enhance patient care while simultaneously promoting environmental stewardship.

We will continue to advance active and sustainable transportation opportunities and education.

In October 2025, we launched a sustainability review of the Emergency Department aimed at identifying opportunities for environmentally responsible improvements that maintain the highest standards of patient care. Insights from this initiative are expected to inform changes not only within the department but also across other clinical areas throughout the hospital.

A dedicated project team is currently working to implement rigid sterilization containers in the operating rooms, offering a more sterile solution while significantly reducing single-use waste.

Central to the practice focus area is the integration of sustainability principles into quality improvement (QI) projects. Through targeted training and education, we aim to equip clinical teams with the tools they need to lead and expand sustainability initiatives. To further boost engagement, we will launch a green team competition and establishing working groups to foster collaboration and innovation.

Maintaining strong alignment between the Health System Sustainability Office and Choosing Wisely Nova Scotia remains essential to ensure our efforts are both impactful and evidence-informed.

Looking Ahead

IWK will continue to strengthen its commitment to sustainability by expanding environmental initiatives, enhancing reporting, and engaging staff and patients in our journey.

By combining strong governance, efficient infrastructure, empowered people, and sustainable practices in clinical care, IWK is building a culture where sustainability is not a side project, it is part of how we care for our patients, our community, and our planet.

To stay informed and contribute, staff are encouraged to visit the “**Sustainability**” section on PULSE. There, you’ll find the latest updates, ways to get involved, and a space to share your own ideas for building a greener future at IWK. Patients and families can stay informed through the → [Sustainability](#) information page on the IWK external website.



Glossary

Carbon Footprint

The total amount of greenhouse gases, specifically carbon dioxide (CO₂), that are emitted into the atmosphere due to human activities. This includes driving a car, using electricity, or producing goods. Our carbon footprint is typically measured in terms of tons of CO₂ emitted per year. The bigger your carbon footprint, the more you contribute to climate change.

Climate Adaption

Refers to adjusting our systems and practices to minimize the damage caused by climate change and to take advantage of any potential benefits.

This includes:

- Building sea walls and flood defenses to protect against rising sea levels.
- Developing drought-resistant crops to ensure food security.
- Modifying infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events.
- Implementing water conservation practices.

Climate Change

Refers to long term changes in temperature, weather patterns, and other aspects of Earth's climate due to the increase in greenhouse gases. These increases lead to global warming, rising sea levels, and shifts in ecosystems.

Climate Mitigation

Involves efforts to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases. The goal is to limit the magnitude of future climate change.

This can be achieved by:

- Transitioning to renewable energy sources like wind and solar.
- Enhancing energy efficiency in buildings and transportation.
- Protecting and expanding forests, which act as carbon sinks.
- Implementing carbon capture and storage technologies.

Climate Resilience

Enhancing the ability of communities, ecosystems, and economies to recover from the impacts of climate change. It focuses on:

- Developing early warning systems for extreme weather events.
- Increasing green spaces in urban areas to manage heat and flooding.
- Strengthening social networks and community resources to support recovery efforts.
- Ensuring that critical infrastructure can quickly bounce back after a disaster.

Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG)

Refers to the three key factors used to measure a company's impact and sustainability. The environmental aspect measures how the company manages its environmental impact (carbon footprint). The social aspect measures how it handles relationships with employees, customers, and communities. The governance aspect measures how the company is run, including leadership, ethics, and transparency.

Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)

Gases in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat absorbing and emitting radiation, resulting in global warming. The main ones are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). They come from activities like burning fossil fuels, agriculture, and deforestation.

Planetary Health

A transdisciplinary field and global movement that focuses on the interconnections between human health and the health of Earth's natural systems. It recognizes that the well-being of human civilization depends on the integrity of the planet's ecosystems and seeks to address the impacts of human-caused environmental disruptions such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution on human health and all life on Earth.

Scope 1 Emissions

Direct emissions that are owned or controlled by a company.

Scope 2 Emissions

Indirect emissions from purchased electricity, heat, or steam.

Scope 3 Emissions

Other indirect emissions, such as those from supply chains, business travel, and employee commuting


Sustainability


The ability to maintain or support a process, system, or activity over the long term without depleting resources or causing harm to the environment, society, or economy. Sustainability focuses on meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable Procurement in Healthcare

Refers to the strategic purchasing of goods, services, and infrastructure in ways that minimize environmental impact, promote social responsibility, and support economic resilience while maintaining high standards of patient care. This includes selecting medical supplies, equipment, pharmaceuticals, and construction materials that are ethically sourced, energy-efficient, low in carbon emissions, and safe for both patients and staff. By integrating sustainability into procurement decisions, healthcare organizations can reduce their ecological footprint, improve public health outcomes, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable healthcare system.

Sustainability Strategic Framework: Key Actions and Initiatives 2025–2027

 **Purpose** To integrate sustainability into all facets of IWK Health

 **Principles**

- Awareness and promoting a culture of sustainability
- Patient-centred approach
- Accountability and reporting
- Evidenced-based implementation

Pillar 1: Governance
Advance structure, measurement, reporting and policies
KEY ACTIONS & INITIATIVES
1. Evaluate current sustainability governance model
2. Create a centre-wide sustainability policy
3. Undertake materiality risk assessment
4. Participate in IPSASB'S climate related disclosures exposure draft Sustainability Implementation Forum
5. Undertake scope 1, 2 and 3 assessment
6. Formalize indicator and metrics performance tracking
7. Prepare and publish sustainability and/or climate report
8. Incorporate sustainable standards and practices into the supply chain
9. Define a sustainability audit framework

Pillar 2: Infrastructure
Enhance infrastructure efficiency and resource conservation
KEY ACTIONS & INITIATIVES
1. Develop strategies to improve the success of financial investment
2. Initiate and execute energy management plan and strategy
3. Undertake a climate risk and vulnerability assessment
4. Deliver safer and sustainable chemicals, toxins, medications and waste management
5. Increase waste diversion rate to 30%
6. Reduce water consumption and enhance water efficiency
7. Implement a centralized sustainability and climate data management system

Pillar 3: People
Promote a sustainable culture and empower people for impact
KEY ACTIONS & INITIATIVES
1. Continue promoting sustainability awareness
2. Initiate an external communication strategy
3. Collaborate with government, Indigenous and other communities
4. Build sustainability considerations in staff recruitment, evaluation and development

Pillar 4: Practice
Build sustainability practices into clinical care and operations
KEY ACTIONS & INITIATIVES
1. Improve active and sustainable transportation opportunities
2. Perform a sustainability review of the Emergency Department
3. Rollout of rigid sterilization container pilot
4. Integrate environmental sustainability into the quality improvement (QI) model
5. Establish a sustainability staff & physician engagement program
6. Formalize sustainability working group structure
7. Continue collaboration with IWK Choosing Wisely Committee



Health System
Sustainability

For more information

Visit:

→ iwk.nshealth.ca

Contact:

→ sustainability@iwk.nshealth.ca



Passionately pursuing a healthy future for our people, patients, and the planet