



West Park Healthcare Centre:

Healthcare Climate
Change Resiliency
Project

Case Study Submission

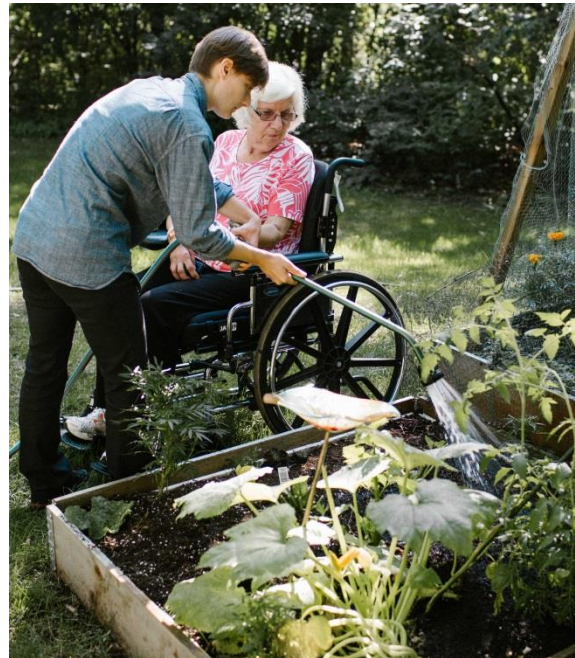
West Park Healthcare Centre (West Park) is an integrated campus of care located in the West end of Toronto specializing in rehabilitative care. West Park is a facility dedicated to helping patients with life changing injuries or illnesses, such as; lung disease, diabetes, stroke, amputation, or musculoskeletal disorders navigate the road to recovery, realize their potential and reclaim their lives.

Modern day healthcare facilities, such as West Park, are now challenged by environmental interference as a result of a climate change. The City of Toronto has already begun to see the detrimental effects of extreme weather patterns created by a changing climate, including; a significant climb in maximum daily temperature, more frequent long lasting heat waves, and increased extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall.

Many Ontarians would remember the devastating impact of the ice storm of December 2013. A rare, historical weather event that resulted in much of Eastern Canada being coated in as much as thirty millimeters of ice over a span of a few days. The effects of the ice storm were devastating, paralyzing much of the city's essential services. Power outages swept a vast majority of the city leaving approximately 300,000 Torontonians in the dark for several days, nearly sending the Greater Toronto Area into a state of Emergency. West Park also lost power requiring immediate access to emergency resources. For three consecutive days to follow there were unplanned service interruptions to power supply causing a significant strain on much of the organization's emergency resources and supplies. Back-up generators were activated to supply power to critical infrastructure and patient care equipment.

Extreme temperatures and increased precipitation are also becoming more prevalent within Toronto weather trends. Rising temperatures, humidity advisories and poor air quality now contribute to an environment that predisposes West Park's vulnerable patient population to additional injury or illnesses. The

same inclement weather conditions also subject West Park staff completing strenuous outdoor assignments to undo occupational injury or illness.



Above: Patient assist with in one West Park's many Recreational Therapy Gardens.

As a leading healthcare facility with a tenacious focus specializing in respiratory rehabilitation the Centre has established additional precautions and corresponding procedures to ensure the respiratory safety and well-being of staff, physicians, volunteers, students, and patients. West Park will now operate in accordance with the Government of Canada Air Quality Health Index report.

"Patient and staff safety are a top priority at West Park," says President and CEO, Anne-Marie Malek. "Our new Air Quality Health Index and Operations Policy and Procedure will support staff in safe decision making when planning or promoting outdoor activities," she continues. "This will not only reduce the detrimental health risks associated with undo exposure to increasing air pollution, but it will also assist in preparing West Park for a future that is resilient to the emerging challenges of climate change," she concludes.



Above: A few of West Park Healthcare Centre's respiratory patients enjoying the campus grounds!

Future plans to ensure resiliency to inclement weather at West Park include a division of emergency response action plans branching from the existing emergency Code Grey system

that supports climate specific threats or disasters. The emergency response action plans will identify vulnerable areas subject

to potential failure or unavailability as a result of inclement weather. Such areas include; building infrastructure, electricity, potable water, telecommunications systems, or information technology systems. The response plans will assist teams with a planned and systematic approach to emergency response with the least possible impact to organization operations.

In effort to continually improve operations at West Park Healthcare Centre the organization will continue to provide exemplary care inspired by innovation and exceptional performance and consistently review and evolve practices to ensure resiliency and preparedness to the emerging challenges of modern day healthcare.

References:

1. Government of Canada; Air Quality Health Index. (2017). Retrieved From: https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/onag-001_e.html
2. Government of Canada; Air Quality Health Index Categories and Health Messages (2015). Retrieved From: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/cas-aqhi/default.asp?lang=En&n=79A8041B-1>
3. Green Facts; Facts on Health and the Environment. Respiratory Irritants. (2017). Retrieved From: <https://www.greenfacts.org/glossary/pgrs/respiratory-irritant.htm>
4. J.Renee. What Is Strenuous Activity? (2017) Retrieved From: <http://healthyliving.azcentral.com/strenuous-activity-5723.html>
5. Thompson, Peter. J. (December 22, 2013). 'Catastrophic ice storm' slams into Toronto, strands travellers across the province. <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canada-ice-storm-travel-chaos-power-outages-as-massive-storm-hits-ontario-quebec-and-maritimes/wcm/c0644d69-fb39-4dba-b097-c120313664d3>
6. Miller, Sara. G. (February 16, 2017) Here's How Climate Change Can Cause More Air Pollution (All By Itself). <https://www.livescience.com/57913-climate-change-will-increase-air-pollution.html>
7. Health Canada. (2009) Understanding the Health Effects of Climate Change. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/climate-change-health/understanding-health-impacts-climate-change.html>.The Government of Canada.
8. Transform TO. (2015) Talk Transformation! Resilience and Adaptation to Extreme Weather. [https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Environment%20and%20Energy/Climate%20and%20Energy%20Goals/Transform%20TO/PDFs/23-09-2015%20TransformTO%20Workbook%20Results%20Summary%20\(AODA%20Compliant\).pdf](https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Environment%20and%20Energy/Climate%20and%20Energy%20Goals/Transform%20TO/PDFs/23-09-2015%20TransformTO%20Workbook%20Results%20Summary%20(AODA%20Compliant).pdf) The City of Toronto.