Seniors: The Missing Piece to the Climate Puzzle

How seniors are being impacted by climate change and why being a senior involved in the climate movement matters.

By Ella Moore

When looking at climate change dialogue we often see youth at the front and center as the new generation who will deal with the impacts of climate change in the future, but seniors are dealing with the impacts of climate change now. Growing up in the Creston Valley, a town known for its senior population, I know that seniors are a powerful political block who have lots of knowledge and power that should be recognized in the movement. Seniors are one of the most vulnerable communities to climate change, and yet the marketing and dialogue with them lacks significantly. In Canada's national climate plan their is no national seniors strategy and through a study done in 2025 it showed that there has been very limited prioritization of older adults in Canadian climate adaptation policies.

But, just how are you as seniors being affected by climate change? Well, senior populations are a vulnerable group to the effects of climate change due to age related physiological changes, pre-existing health conditions, and limited mobile and adaptive capacity. So anytime there is a heat wave, flood, air pollution, fire, you are a community that feels its affects fast and furious (cite) Your health is going to be impacted by the changing climate as air quality gets worse and natural disasters become more severe and more frequent. According to the world meteorological organization the number of disasters has increased 5 times and globally a weather, climate or water hazard has occurred very day on average over this last 50 year period(cite). Though we can adapt to aging and climate change separately we risk a solution in the area of aging adversely affecting the area of climate change (cite). For example if we increase fuel prices in order to discourage use we might make seniors unable to properly to heat their homes or unable to access car transportation which may be the only transportation accessible to them due to many people being on fixed incomes (cite).

Not only is climate change affecting your health though, but it’s also affecting your families and the future generations. Climate change is having both direct and indirect impacts on the physical and mental health of children and youth. It is also on a broader scale threatening underlying social and environmental determinants of health. After hurricanes and wilder fires their is and in increase of domestic violence and child abuse (cite). It’s not just about the health of your families and the future generation though but the land they live on as well. If we do not address climate change adequately we will experience more intense wildfires, longer lasting droughts, stronger storms, sea level rising effects on our natural environments such as outbreaks of pests or pathogen infection among other impacts (cite). These impacts will change the way future generations are able to be on the land and will cause the need for

rapid adaptions. Leaving a legacy of protected natural spaces and clean air and water is important for the safety, health, and wellbeing of future generations.

After all this you may be thinking but why is it so important that seniors are directly involved with climate action? Seniors make up 19% of Canadians are aged 65+ making it 7 million people in our population (cite). In fact the senior ratio is so high in Canada more people are 65+ than there are children under 15. Though there is rhetoric that seniors care less about climate change this doesn't actually match statistics within Canada as 46% of seniors are concerned and 30% are very concerned about climate change which is similar to all other age groups (cite). Seniors are a large active group of people that participation from would make a judge difference in the movement.

There can be barriers to getting involved as seniors, but don't worry we are here to help! If you are feeling like you don't have the needed education to get started a great resource from Seniors for Climate Action Now is "The SCAN! Climate Crisis Glossary" which helps define some of the jargon and terms used in the environmental movement which can help you navigate further research and educational spaces. Or if you are struggling to figure out how to get involved look into advocacy groups and volunteering opportunities such as Seniors For Climate or Seniors for Climate Action Now. Both these organizations have easy ways to participate in political action such as easy access petitions and access to templates for writing. You can also go into local community groups such as ours, the Creston Valley Climate Action Society. If the activism route isn't right for you that's also ok! Even just talking to your friends and family about why climate change matters and encouraging others to support climate initiatives is important. Telling your personal experiences connecting to climate change can help creat impactful evidence of the effects of climate action.

If we want the climate movement to succeed we need seniors' help and their knowledge. Advocating for the specific need of seniors is needed and is best done by the people who will be affected by the policies. Advocating for easier conservation of energy, use of public transit, and ways to maintain crucial social networks are needed. Advocating the climate movement for inclusion through the removal of personal and accessibility barriers like com[uter illiteracy, supporting ways to participate in different health and ability leavers, and making more senior specific education resources available. Making yourself heard as seniors in the climate movement will be integral to the climate movement's successes. We need you and all you have to offer, which is indeed a lot.

About the author:
Ella Moore is a third year student at the University of Victoria working towards her bachelors in both Environmental Studies and Indigenous Studies. She is also working towards a certificate in Transformative Climate Action. She was born and raised in the Creston Valley and has received the award of Junior Citizen of the Year in 2023 from the community for her community involvement.