

Key Takeaways

What We Heard: Common Themes

Perspectives on infectious disease and climate change: Themes from the IDCC Forum, Public Health 2021 Symposiums, and CPHA Key Informant Interview Report

- During the Infectious Disease and Climate Change Forum and Public Health 2021, presenters highlighted current contexts and research on infectious disease and climate change, including findings, data and lessons learned.
- CPHA recently interviewed 16 professionals from public health, climatology, planning and more, and produced a Key Informant Interview Report on the current state of infectious disease and climate change in Canada.
- Common themes from the key informant interviews and Forum and Symposium sessions included the **complexity** and **urgency** of the issues; the need to centre **equity and Indigenous knowledge**; the importance of **modelling and surveillance**; and the role of **strategic communication** and **community adaptation and planning**.

Theme 1: Complexity and urgency

Key informants stressed the inherent complexity of the issues—but also the urgency of acting now to mitigate coming risks. Forum and Symposium speakers agreed we need urgent, coordinated action across sectors and silos.

- Nick Ogden told us the risks are only going to become more pressing, complex and uncertain.
- Ian Mauro was clear, when it comes to mitigation, we are likely in the most important decade in human history.

Theme 2: Equity and Indigenous knowledge

Key informants often spoke of the importance of a health equity lens. During the Forum and Symposiums, this theme emerged even more clearly, grounded in community examples from the City of Toronto to Yellowknife.

- Imara Rolston, Anne Gloger and Blake Poland told us we need to centre the perspectives of marginalized communities when preparing for complex shocks and stressors like COVID-19 and climate change.
- Isaaq Ahmed, a grassroots organizer, detailed resilience-building projects in Scarborough, Ontario.
- Courtney Howard and Ian Mauro recommended foregrounding Indigenous perspectives on the interconnectedness of ecological and human health as we work to address the issues at hand.

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Theme 3: Modelling and surveillance

In both key informant interviews and Forum presentations, we heard that modelling and surveillance are the best tools Canada has to anticipate and plan for infectious disease and climate risks.

- Nick Ogden explained how modelling looks in real time at vectors, disease spread and climate conditions.
- Samira Mubareka shared data from an Ontario study tracking orthobunyaviruses in mosquitoes, livestock and people. The study will use weather, vector and disease data to model future risks.
- Bernadette Ardelli discussed a study to test mosquitoes and ticks across Manitoba for emerging pathogens. Results so far show almost 40 viruses, including viruses of concern, in mosquitoes.
- Jacqueline Badcock told us how hospital-based and veterinary labs are collaborating in New Brunswick to identify blacklegged ticks, and how the province is tracking emerging and established tick populations.

Theme 4: Strategic communication

Several key informants spoke about the role of public health in communicating clear, science-based information. Presenters shared many examples of using strategic communications tools to educate providers and the public.

- Ian Mauro told us about the power of storytelling and the potential of filmmaking to reach audiences.
- Elaine Barrow (ClimateData.ca), Jade Savage (eTick.ca) and Ian Mauro (Climate Atlas of Canada) shared their expertise in using visual mapping to show projected climate variations and tick spread.
- Todd Hatchette highlighted a toolkit helping to identify and treat early Lyme disease.

Theme 5: Community adaptation and planning

Key informants said municipal planning has an important role to play in addressing climate-health risks. Several Forum and Symposium presenters shared real-world examples of how planners are helping communities adapt.

- Birgit Isernhagen told us about local risk assessments undertaken by Ottawa Public Health and the Northwest Territories for Ottawa, Zak's Harbour and Ulukhaktok. Planners used data from ClimateData.ca.
- Anne Gloger and Imara Rolston discussed the creation of the City of Toronto's first Resilience Strategy.
- Ian Mauro shared how municipal councillors in Selkirk, Manitoba are readying for climate change impacts.