

Mobilizing nature to fight the big three: wildfire, flooding and extreme heat

The reality of climate change is hitting home in Canada. On an almost daily basis, Canadians are seeing communities consumed by wildfire, homes flooded, and vulnerable people suffering under extreme heat.

It's against this backdrop that the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo, is releasing [new, easy to follow guidance on ways residents can protect their property by working with nature to limit the impacts of extreme weather](#) – think planting a rain garden to absorb water and avoid basement flooding, using shade trees to reduce direct sunlight from heating a home, or trimming your lawn and pruning trees to reduce potential fuel sources.

When it comes to extreme weather, the definition of what is “green” has gone beyond an initial focus on decarbonization, to simultaneously considering climate resilience and nature.

“We need to use the whole toolbox of nature-based and built solutions to prepare for climate change, including around our own homes,” said Joanna Eyquem, who led development of the new infographic. “Solutions that work with nature not only lower risk; they can also bring many health and quality of life benefits. But we need the right solutions in the right places. For example, within wildfire risk zones, a different approach is required to limit fuel sources near the home, such as pruning lower branches to create clearance from the ground, and removing conifers close to the house”.

Actions in the infographic will help Canada achieve recently announced targets in the newly minted National Adaptation Strategy (NAS), which calls for household protection, including:

- By 2025, 60% of Canadians, including northerners and Indigenous Peoples, are aware of the disaster risks facing their household.
- By 2025, 50% of Canadians have taken concrete actions to better prepare for and respond to climate change risks facing their household.

Effective communication with residents on climate risks and home-level solutions is key to meeting NAS targets over the next few years.

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“Finalization of the National Adaptation Strategy is a step in the right direction – we now need follow through,” said Dr. Blair Feltmate, Head of the Intact Centre. “This includes getting everyone on board using clear guidance, so that resilience is embedded in everyday decisions.”

The new “Working with Nature at Home” guidelines are freely available and can be tailored for specific audiences. They are part of a [suite of “three-step” guidelines](#) developed to help Canadians tackle flooding, wildfire and extreme heat.

Governments and businesses can help residents to help themselves by distributing this free guidance before the next disaster hits.

About Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation:

The [Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation](#) is an applied research centre at the University of Waterloo. The Centre was founded in 2015 with a gift from Intact Financial Corporation, Canada’s largest property and casualty insurer, and helps homeowners, communities, and businesses to reduce risks associated with climate change and extreme weather events.

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