



PAN-CANADIAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

The Coalition for Active Living

is a national action group of over 40 organizations advocating to ensure that the environments where Canadians live, learn, work, commute and play support regular physical activity. The CAL is responsible for the development of this Pan-Canadian strategy. The CAL is funded by the Physical Activity Contribution Program of Health Canada. Visit www.activeliving.ca.

Physical Activity: A Key Health Determinant

Physical activity (as a personal health practice) is a key health determinant. All of the other determinants of health (such as education, income, gender, environment) influence participation in physical activity. Conversely, an active or sedentary lifestyle can positively or negatively influence the other determinants.

Choices to be active do not exist in a vacuum. Many Canadians face barriers and inequities that make it more difficult to be regularly active. Supportive social and physical environments are necessary to enable active choices.

The population-health approach suggests that educating people about physical activity is not enough. Individual behaviour changes are important, but need to be balanced with strategies for environmental change. Environmental and policy interventions that address all of the interacting determinants of health and healthful behaviour are required.

The Vision

The environments where all Canadians live, learn, commute, work, and play support the choice to be physically active.

The Goal

To implement a comprehensive, national, integrated, and collaborative strategy to promote health through increasing the physical activity levels of all Canadians, with a short-to-mid term target of a 10% increase in each province and territory by 2010.

The Principles

1. Federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments will work with the voluntary sector to develop and implement policies and legislation to fully support a comprehensive, integrated, and sustained strategy.
2. Barriers to physical activity will be removed from the physical and social environments in which Canadians live, learn, commute, work, and play.
3. Strategies will ensure that all Canadians can choose to be physically active.
4. Evidence and best practices combined with community needs and assets will guide the work of all sectors.
5. A comprehensive research and surveillance system will ensure that information about current trends and effective policies and programs will be easily accessible.



GETTING CANADA ACTIVE

THE FUNDAMENTALS

The Strategy

The Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy is not a one-off approach to getting Canada active. It is about creating sustainable long-term change. This requires a significant investment in comprehensive, sustained, and effective action. The Strategy identifies strategic priorities that are essential for long-term success and builds a framework for action in the short-to-mid term. Periodic review of the impact of collective actions is a necessary component in order to refine and guide future action.

Strategic Priorities

Governments, agencies, charities and citizens are working to make a difference. Their actions must form a visible and cohesive movement. Working together, they will shape an active Canada built on supportive, barrier-free communities. A strong foundation must be built through the development and renewal of community assets, which meet the needs of all Canadians, and look to our future, by developing healthy, active children.

Strategic Directions

Collaborative intersectoral action based on five approaches will enhance population health and improve the quality of life of all Canadians by reducing physical inactivity. Common solutions will advance goals in other sectors: reducing emissions from automobiles; contributing to sustainable growth in communities; and enhancing the social fabric of the nation. Actions focus on: policy and legislation; coordination across sectors; integration with other strategies such as chronic disease prevention, environment, sport,; training and development; leadership; capacity in all sectors; and delivery of programs and services.

Strategic Priorities

Create Physical-Activity Friendly Communities

Physical activity must be re-engineered into daily life by ensuring that communities where Canadians live, learn, commute, work, and play are barrier-free. Three approaches will build a strong foundation:

- Designing for inclusion of all Canadians
- Revitalizing community infrastructure
- Nurturing active kids

Build the Movement

A value-added brand is required to mesh the actions of national, provincial and local action into a cohesive whole. Linking actions to create a visible social movement will create excitement and help foster an active lifestyle as a cultural norm.

Strategic Directions

The membership of the Coalition for Active Living has identified five components to guide efforts nationwide. Actions within each of these five component areas are required to achieve the strategic priorities.

- Healthy Public Policy
- Community Physical Environments
- Supportive Social Environments
- Public Education
- Research Development and Knowledge Exchange



TAKE ACTION NOW!

CREATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The physical activity demands of daily life have decreased due to technological progress and the development of urban sprawl favoring the automobile. Overwhelmingly, Canadian adults are aware of the health benefits of physical activity and, over the last twenty years, Canadians have become more active in their leisure time. Yet, the choice to be active is not always easy. Active modes of transportation are rarely considered let alone given priority within municipal transportation plans. Safety concerns keep one in five Canadians from walking, wheeling and bicycling more. For many, walking to shop or do errands is a thing of the past. Choosing the stairs may take concerted effort to even locate the stairs in public buildings.

Over half of children have physical education classes two days a week or less. Two thirds of children have access to school-based opportunities, but four in ten parents believe that these programs are not adequate to meet their child's needs. Playing outside after school is no longer the norm. Indeed, by-laws or regulations may preclude playing in the street.

Community infrastructure is aging. There is increasing pressure on road systems in cities due to increased automobile ownership and travel. Recreational facilities may no longer be located where convenient for the majority of citizens and may no longer meet the needs of most citizens. The active choice is often the difficult choice.

Physical activity must be re-engineered back into daily life through the creation of barrier-free communities. Barrier-free communities are inclusive. They must be designed for all population groups, respecting cultural differences within communities and across the nation, and recognizing the needs of Canadians with various abilities and personal circumstances. To improve health, a comprehensive approach to development and redevelopment of community infrastructure is urgently needed to create more livable communities and improve the physical environment. A comprehensive plan is to make communities, schools, parks and local facilities safe and supportive of physical activity for our children.



STRATEGIES TO CREATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Healthy Public Policy

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a paradigm shift among policy makers in various sectors that supportive social and physical environments are essential to sustain a basic level of physical activity among children and adults. - Negotiate bi-lateral and tri-lateral agreements to implement the actions recommended by the Active Transportation Roundtable, Active and Healthy Schools Roundtable, the Roundtable on Children in Living Poverty and the Blueprints for Action (like Moving to Inclusion). - Engage policy makers in recreation and other sectors to create barrier-free communities for physical activity (land use, urban design, and transportation, schools, community-based organizations and workplaces). - Revise urban planning regulations to focus on safe, complete (i.e. mixed use) communities. - Ensure barrier-free design is universally adopted in order to support active living opportunities for the broadest range of citizens. Identify population groups requiring customized approaches due to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systemic barriers (e.g. Aboriginals, women, persons with disabilities, children in poverty, etc.) ▪ Cultural differences (e.g. residents of Quebec, Northern Canadians, new immigrants, etc.) ▪ Increased risk of obesity (e.g. children, middle-aged men, genetics, those overweight) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Differential trends in long-term, leisure-time participation (e.g. older adults, low income earners, rural). - Explicitly recognize active transportation and physical recreation in the greenways, transportation, land use, urban designs and facility development within Official Community Plans Tie funding of new facilities to the existence of an Official Community Master Plan. - Broaden federal and provincial/territorial infrastructure programs to include retrofitting of aging facilities in addition to the construction of new infrastructure. - Enact legislation at the Provincial/Territorial level to enable joint community and school infrastructure development, the use of community resources in physical education programs and the incorporation of physical activity into early childhood care and education programs. - Implement a Physical Activity Impact Assessment similar to the requirements for environmental assessments. - Fund an Active Transportation Coordinator in every province and territory to promote walking, wheeling and bicycling as an alternative to motor vehicle transportation. - Mandate daily physical education from Kindergarten through secondary school graduation. |
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- Reinstatement of health and physical education consultants at every school board and provincial department of education.
- Develop guidelines and tools for physical activity in childcare settings.

- Explore the feasibility of designating an amount equivalent to a portion of the Child Tax Credit benefit to be used to physical activity strategies for children.

Community Physical Environments

- Develop model guidelines for building codes, development by-laws, and transportation plans (like bike facilities, safe, lit stairwells, shower, lockers, etc.).
- Develop and promote urban and rural planning regulations to encourage physical activity.
- Develop, review and revise municipal master plans to ensure that opportunities for physical activity are explicitly included in all facets of the plan and barriers to an active lifestyle eliminated.
- Develop a community master plan for transportation that explicitly places higher priority on active transportation (walking, wheeling and bicycling) than on motorized vehicle transportation.
- Ensure trails and pathways are safe, accessible, conveniently located and linked to a variety of destinations.
- Create a federal/provincial/territorial infrastructure program to fund community projects that support physical activity, such as trails, indoor facilities, and creative urban design.
- Ensure dedicated funding for the development and maintenance of physical activity infrastructure, paying particular attention to the

needs of rural areas where community facilities often serve as a social hub of community life, but where the ability to fund facilities have been lost by many communities.

- Ensure that infrastructure that supports physical activity is accessible to all regardless of income level. This includes greenway corridors, bike lanes and paths, safe sidewalks, support facilities to transportation corridors, neighbourhood connectivity, traffic calming, and major park loops.
- Develop active transportation facilities at major workplaces, schools, community-based organizations and business areas and provide inter-modal supports e.g. (transit bike racks, etc).
- Renew aging community assets like waterways, parkland, transportation systems and facilities to support active choices.
- Require the development of appropriate facilities for physical activities within retirement communities for older adults.
- Ensure that the specific needs of children and youth are addressed in adopting physical activity-friendly policies and practices for land use, urban and school design, and transportation (e.g. safe routes to schools).



Supportive Social Environments

- Encourage and support integrated community coalitions across sectors.
 - Recognize model communities and document successful approaches.
 - Use the federal, provincial, territorial health agreements to include physical activity counselling as a reimbursable expense by physicians.
 - Provide incentives for workplaces that support physical activity (improvements might include better lighting and safety, installation of showers, providing daycare for employees taking part in physical activity, etc.).
 - Implement interventions to create workplaces, schools, community-based organizations and neighbourhoods, which are more supportive of physical activity. Include outreach initiatives within these venues to engage less active populations.
 - Develop evidence-based interventions based on best practice, e.g., signage, prompts and incentives.
 - Ensure that local environments are safe from crime and traffic threats.
 - Provide community programs that provide social support to participants (e.g. walking programs).
 - Examine the feasibility of tax incentives to encourage physical activity participation.
- Review the broad base of health promotion models and interventions to identify best practices and approaches that have been found to be unsuccessful (to avoid pitfalls) as well as those that are successful.
 - Design health behaviour change programs that are adapted for individual needs of targeted populations (children and youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, and so on).
 - Employ culturally sensitive approaches to reach specific inactive populations and to recognize the particular needs of Quebec within federal-provincial/territorial plans.
 - Examine barriers in current programs and services faced by population groups such as scheduling priorities, facility design, program offerings, corporate culture, etc.
 - Review and ensure that any user-fee policies foster inclusion and eliminate the possibility of marginalizing underserved groups.
 - Where absent, create reciprocal shared-use agreements covering the joint use of school and municipal facilities so that schools may use municipal facilities and the municipal sport and recreation departments may use the school facilities after school hours.
 - Using a community development approach, determine a model for early physical activity interventions for children and youth that are community-based, collaborative, sustainable, and build on existing programs. Examples of innovative practices include Saskatchewan's "In



Motion” project, participation in YMCA programs (camping, recreation, child care, health and fitness), Quebec After School Initiative, and Nova Scotia’s Active Kids/Healthy Kids Strategy.

- Continue collaborative approaches between schools, community-based organizations, municipalities and sport and recreation facilities to jointly promote and support physical activity among children and youth.
- Strengthen existing linkages between schools and the community and integrate community

Recreation and Parks programming with school physical activity programming.

- Foster participation-based ‘everyone plays’ approach to physical education, intramural and sport and recreation programs.
- Ensure that daily physical activity is re-engineered into school life (curriculum design, opportunities before and after school, during lunch and recess and physical education).
- Recognize model schools. Identify and promote success factors for realizing their achievements.

Public Education

- Use the messages of the social marketing campaigns to support local action (e.g. community campaigns to increase walking, active commuting, stair climbing, etc.).
- Use public education efforts to provide information, generate discussion, and influence attitudes and values about physical activity and physical activity behaviours.
- Use the awareness generated by social marketing campaigns to create social change at the local level (in communities, workplaces, schools and community-based organizations) that is necessary to facilitate individual behavioural change.
- Use social marketing techniques to increase awareness and understanding of the role of community assets (waterways, park land, transportation systems and facilities) in enhancing the quality of community life and their role in supporting an active lifestyle.
- Target social marketing efforts including mass media to engage and validate the needs of

various population groups within the overall social marketing campaigns. Campaign messages would aim to reduce barriers faced by low-income people and families, Canadians with a disability, new Canadians, Aboriginals, older adults, and girls and women.

- Employ social marketing efforts to create a broad-based understanding that the physical development of children and youth is an essential component contributing to quality of life now and in the future. A sense of ownership is required by decision-makers responsible for education, land use, transportation and health promotion.
- Identify and engage role models who are relevant to various population segments to help disseminate key messages.
- Develop leadership training programs to enhance the skills and understanding of the barriers and needs of various population groups.



- Increase understanding that the physical activity level of children and youth is a crosscutting issue that is the responsibility of all, not one group, one sector, or certain jurisdictional levels.
- Review and improve curricula for teacher training (including early childhood educators, health professionals, urban planners, transportation engineers, etc) to emphasize the importance of physical development of children to long-term health and quality of life.

- Recommend guidelines for physical education specialists and provide ongoing professional development for teachers responsible for physical education and physical activity programming.
- Support efforts to increase physical activity at school through social marketing efforts targeted to parent's, school trustees' and principal's associations.

Research and Knowledge Exchange

- Provide research funds from national and provincial granting agencies to assess and evaluate programs and services as per the recommendation of the 2003 Roundtable on Physical Activity Research.
- Uncover and communicate the critical elements of effective, comprehensive, community-based interventions
 - to change physical activity policies (including developing healthy public policy)
 - to develop healthy social and physical environments, and
 - to initiate community-based prevention programs.
- Develop more comprehensive research and surveillance systems in order to implement knowledge about effective strategies and current trends in policies, plans, and practices to reduce physical inactivity.
- Build on existing surveillance and monitoring systems to track progress among various population groups and monitor the removal of barriers and attainment of basic minimum

requirements for physical activity-friendly communities.

- Negotiate bi-lateral agreements between governments across levels and with research granting agencies to implement the recommendations of the 2003 Roundtable on Physical Activity Research. The areas identified as requiring research were: cost benefit analyses; interventions; increasing participation among children and youth; barriers; and increasing community capacity. This research needs to be conducted within a framework that facilitates knowledge exchange.
- Require 15% of all program funding be directed to evaluation (including formative, process and impact) to help build the best-practice base for interventions.
- Include population groups in research designed to build the case; understand barriers; formulate appropriate strategies and programs; build capacity and improve measurement methods.
- Develop valid and reliable measures for assessing the physical activity level of children and youth.



- Monitor participation in sedentary activities among children and youth.

- Commission a national study to make a compelling business case for mandatory physical education in our school system.



TAKE ACTION NOW! BUILD THE MOVEMENT

Governments, agencies and citizens are involved in creating an active Canada. Recognizing the public health burden posed by sedentary living, federal and provincial governments are working in collaboration to combat sedentary living and stem the obesity and diabetes epidemics. Local governments are implementing changes in various sectors to address the issue of physical inactivity in their communities. Three and a half million citizens volunteer their time and expertise to support physical activity programs.

Yet, these myriad actions appear disjointed. They require the reinforcing and motivating lens of a visible social movement supported by a sanctioned nation-wide priority for physical activity to forge these actions into a cohesive whole and build a cultural trademark for physical activity.

STRATEGIES TO BUILD THE MOVEMENT

Healthy Public Policy

- Develop and adopt a National Physical Activity Policy. The National Physical Activity Policy would form the basis for linkages across jurisdictions with Healthy Living, chronic disease prevention, environment, transportation, education, sport, and social justice.
- Create a bi-lateral agreement between the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Governments through a mechanism like the National Recreation Statement to develop an umbrella brand for the movement that adds value to national, provincial/territorial and local actions.
- Ensure coordinated leadership through a national centre of expertise that includes cross-sectoral participation and which would develop policy and program recommendations. This centre should also sponsor or fund training and development for practitioners on physical activity interventions.
- Engage the members of the Coalition for Active Living to forge the movement and ensure that everyone can have access to the brand to tie their actions to the movement. To do this,
 - Ensure that the brand communicates an immediate urgency for change, supports the actions across sectors that are required to achieve the goal to increase physical activity by 2010.
 - Ensure that the brand fits with a broad perspective (health, recreation, environment, transportation, education, social justice, and so on).
 - Ensure that the brand has staying power beyond 2010 as it will take a long time to reverse current trends.



- Ensure the brand remains fresh by taking innovative approaches and using humour.
- Promote a new attitude to physical activity through social marketing, including mass

communication and media campaigns. More specifically, increase understanding of the societal barriers to an active lifestyle and how they can be addressed among citizens and decision-makers.

Community Physical Environments

- Ensure that the brand incorporates the idea of fundamental systemic change in all environments where Canadians live, learn, commute, work, and play.
- Ensure that the brand compliments the Smart Growth movement generally, and active transportation, specifically.
- Use social marketing campaigns to increase understanding of the barriers to an active

lifestyle in the physical environments of communities and the changes required.

- Recruit experts and agencies responsible for legislation and policy affecting the physical environments of neighbourhoods, schools, community-based organizations, workplaces and transportation systems (e.g. urban planners, developers and transportation experts) into the Coalition for Active Living.

Supportive Social Environments

- Use the communication campaigns to create and reinforce physical activity as a social norm.
- Link the brand to signage that cue individual choices to be active (like taking the stairs at work).
- Identify and promote key characteristics that create Active Workplaces, Active Schools and Active Communities.
- Capitalize on opportunities to leverage the coverage of events like the World Health

Organization's annual Move for Health Day, etc to reinforce the brand and messages to get Canada active.

- Link brand to other strategies and groups with common goals (e.g. Healthy Living, Sustainable Development, etc.).
- Connect the movement with municipal strategies to ensure that it is a bottom-up and broad-based. Identify the success factors that contributed to creating Active Cities and share these between communities.



Public Education

- Immediately launch a campaign to communicate critical messages, particularly related to walking (e.g. minimum of 10,000 steps required daily, etc.).
- Continue a series of mass media campaigns to create and reinforce the movement. Build messages for different target groups within the common brand; stage messages with the campaign (e.g. first steps, keep moving, etc.).
- Link local and provincial/territorial communication campaigns to the mass media campaigns and promote the use of the brand for programs, services and actions among members of the Coalition for Active Living to form a cohesive whole.
- Develop and deliver a nationally coordinated (but locally delivered and focused) public education campaign that is tied to the media campaign. Funding for the campaign would be distributed federally, provincially, regionally, and locally. Campaign messages would aim to reduce barriers faced by low-income people and families, Canadians with a disability, new Canadians, Aboriginals, older adults, and girls and women.

Research and Knowledge Exchange

- Build on existing monitoring and surveillance systems to track the impact of the movement.
- Track prevalence, correlates and determinants of physical activity (and sedentary activities) across the lifespan (focusing on developing valid and reliable measures for children and youth).
- Monitor recognition of the brand and awareness of the campaign messages, particularly those associated with mass media campaigns.