

KEY MESSAGES FOR USE BY CAL MEMBERS

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The following key messages are for CAL members to use whenever they are communicating about physical activity through their networks. They are not intended to be slogans or act as copy for promotional materials. Instead, they are intended to reflect the general ideas or impressions CAL members would like to communicate to target audiences.

The issue:

- Physical inactivity has reached epidemic proportions in Canada.
- We are facing an inactivity and obesity crisis in this country that can only be compared to smoking for its negative impact on the health care system in terms of cost and chronic disease. The risk factors of physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits contribute to being overweight, having high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol as well as diabetes.
- In Canada, two million people suffer from Type II Diabetes, and the incidence among children is rising dramatically. It's a disease that is entirely preventable through moderate levels of physical activity and good eating habits.
- Aboriginal Canadians suffer from Type II Diabetes four times more often than the general population.
- Today, we conservatively spend approximately \$2,800 a year on health care for individual living in Canada. Health care spending, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, is increasing at a rate of approximately 4.7% per year.
- Canada's health care spending was estimated at \$121.4 billion dollars (10% of the Gross Domestic Product of Canada) in 2003, up from \$84 billion spent in 1998.
- There is a lack of financial commitment from all levels of government and no specific action has been proposed. Current estimates place the cost of physical inactivity in Canada at \$5.3 billion (\$1.6 billion of direct costs and \$3.7 billion in indirect costs) and the cost of obesity in Canada at \$4.3 billion (\$1.6 billion of direct costs and \$2.7 billion of indirect costs) in health care expenditures.
- It is estimated that 40% of chronic illness can be prevented and that 25% of all medical costs are attributable to a small number risk factors like smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and poor nutrition.
- ¼ of children and ½ of adults are overweight – jeopardizing their life expectancy, their health and their quality of life.
- Childhood obesity in Canada has almost tripled over the past 15 years and less than half our children get the recommended amount of daily physical activity.
- The cost of health care will soon become unaffordable to most Canadians and our children will be saddled with chronic diseases like never before unless we do something immediately.
- Increasing the physical activity levels of all Canadians is a critical piece of the chronic disease prevention puzzle, and one of the best investments governments can make in health promotion.
- If Canadians were to become more active, there would be:
 - 26% fewer deaths from type II diabetes;
 - 20% fewer deaths from colon cancer; and
 - 22% fewer deaths from cardiovascular disease.



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What CAL members (local, provincial and national levels) are doing:

- The membership of CAL is well positioned to make a significant contribution to reducing physical inactivity in Canada and raising the profile of physical activity on the public agenda.
- CAL has developed a Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy that is being widely acclaimed.
- The Strategy – a game plan for physical activity in Canada – responds directly to the F-P/T Ministers' February 2003 agreement to increase physical activity levels by 10 percentage points in each province and territory by 2010.
- The Strategy is not a one-off approach to getting Canada active. Rather, it's about creating sustainable, long-term change, barrier-free communities. It's about re-engineering physical activity back into daily life by ensuring that where Canadians live, learn, commute work and play are barrier-free with respect to physical activity. It's about making a significant investment.
- We have a plan of action. What is now needed is national leadership, a significant investment from the federal government, and most of all, we need to work together.
- CAL looks forward to working in close cooperation with governments to maximize current and future opportunities, and find creative solutions to reduce current barriers and obstacles to a healthy, active Canada.

What government can do:

- The Healthy Living Strategy identifies physical activity as one of two new areas of emphasis for Health Canada, but no strategy or resources have been put in place to support action for physical activity.
- The 13 P/T Ministers have committed to an increase in physical activity of 10 percentage points in each province and territory by 2010. Many provinces and territories are beginning to make significant investments in physical activity, but federal efforts are lacking.
- There remains a profound and urgent need for the federal government to champion a physically active Canada and to act in partnership with the physical activity community to implement the Strategy.
- The Government of Canada must make physical activity a priority for the health of Canadians.
- Tackling the physical inactivity crisis will require the same kind of investment that governments have put into anti-smoking campaigns in the past.
- Increased physical activity levels can save health care dollars. CAL has recommended that the federal government invest approximately one hundred million dollars annually on physical activity. This is less than .5% of total health care spending.



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