

Executive Summary



Active communities,
healthy Canadians

The Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy: Getting Canada Active

Canada's physical activity community has maintained for many years that this country is facing an inactivity and obesity crisis that can only be compared to smoking for its negative impact on the health system – in terms of quality of life and the cost to treat chronic disease.

63% of Canadians are considered inactive – costing the health system \$5.7 billion more than if they were active.¹

In the face of ongoing indifference on this issue at many levels, the members of the Coalition for Active Living (CAL) led the development of a bold, new strategy aimed at increasing physical activity levels among Canadians.

The Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy is the result of 18 months of consultation with notable experts in physical activity in Canada – from the voluntary sector, health, education, physical activity, and federal and provincial/territorial governments. Widely recognized as the game plan for physical activity in this country, the Strategy will require significant investment to create sustainable long-term change.

A New Approach

Physical activity is key to personal health and well-being. The most significant health benefits are achieved when the inactive introduce activity into their daily lives. However, many Canadians face barriers that make it more difficult to be regularly active (e.g. time, income, age). Supportive social and physical environments are necessary for making physical activity the easy choice.

Educating people about physical activity is not enough. Individual behaviour changes are important, but need to be balanced with strategies for environmental change – those that address all of the interacting determinants of health (e.g. education, income, gender, environment) and healthful behaviour.

The Strategy

The Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy is about creating sustainable, long-term change. It is a comprehensive, national, integrated and collaborative plan to promote health through increasing physical activity levels by 10 percentage points in each province and territory by 2010 – a commitment of the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Recreation and Fitness.

The components of the plan complement each other. Implementing only one or two components weakens the impact. Ultimately, environments where Canadians live, learn, commute, work and play will support the choice to be physically active.

Strategic Priorities

Create Physical Activity-Friendly Communities

Reintroduce physical activity into daily life by ensuring communities are barrier-free. To build a strong foundation:

- include all Canadians;
- revitalize community infrastructure; and
- nurture active kids.

Build the Movement

The actions at national, provincial/territorial and local levels need to be meshed into a cohesive whole.

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada

Strategic Directions

Healthy public policy

– a significant investment in comprehensive, sustained and effective action on physical inactivity.

Community physical environments

– a supportive infrastructure for physically active lifestyles.

Supportive social environments

– environments that support physical activity and provide the “culture” in which we can learn or change lifestyle behaviours.

Public education

– information, discussion, and the influencing of attitudes and values about physical activity to create a climate conducive to social and behavioural change.

Research and knowledge exchange

– the identification of effective strategies and current trends in policies, plans and practices to reduce physical inactivity.

Governments, agencies, charities and citizens are working to make a difference. Their actions must form a visible and cohesive movement.

To this end, the Strategy identifies two main strategic priorities that are essential to long-term success, and build a framework for action in the short-to-mid-term:

- creating physical activity-friendly communities; and
- building a movement.

The Strategy also identifies five strategic directions to guide collaborative efforts nationwide within each of the two strategic priority areas:

- healthy public policy;
- community physical environments;
- supportive social environments;
- public education; and
- research development and knowledge exchange.

Actions will focus on: policy and legislation; coordination across sectors; integration with other strategies (e.g. chronic disease prevention, environment, sport); training and development; leadership; capacity in all sectors; and delivery of programs and services.

The Strategy is founded on five main principles:

- that governments at all levels will work together with the voluntary sector;
- that barriers to physical activity will be removed;
- that strategies will ensure that all Canadians can choose to be physically active;
- that a comprehensive research and surveillance system will ensure that information about trends and best practices will be easily accessible; and
- that evidence and best practices combined with community needs and assets will guide the work of all sectors.



The COALITION FOR ACTIVE LIVING is a national action group of more than 60 organizations advocating for health promotion and disease prevention through physical activity. Our goal is to ensure that the environments where Canadians live, learn, commute, work and play support regular physical activity.

A full copy of the Pan-Canadian Physical Activity Strategy is available at www.activeliving.ca, or by emailing: info@activeliving.ca