



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION NO.: **421-04065**

BY: **Ms. FINLEY (HALDIMAND-NORFOLK)**

DATE: **MAY 31, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **PAM DAMOFF**

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Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Health care services**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

The Government recognizes that helping Canadians get more physically active can help improve their physical fitness and overall health, and that physical activity can be a protective factor for good mental health. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including regular physical activity, helps prevent chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers and may improve cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body composition, bone density, academic achievement, and aspects of mental health including self-esteem.

Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour rates remain high, especially among children and youth. In Canada, at least four of five adults and three of five children and youth aged 5-17 years are not meeting the recommendations of physical activity guidelines.

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults (<http://csepguidelines.ca/adults-18-64/>) and the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults (<http://csepguidelines.ca/adults-65/>) call for 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity each week, in addition to bone and muscle strengthening activities. Similarly, the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (<http://csepguidelines.ca/children-and-youth-5-17/>) call for 60 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for children and youth aged 5–17 years, in addition to muscle and bone strengthening exercises.

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines clearly note, among the list of health benefits, reduced risk of chronic disease, premature death, and improved fitness and mental health as benefits of physical activity. The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth recognize the importance of physical activity for the achievement of cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness, physical and mental health.

In terms of research, the Government of Canada, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), supports a broad range of research aimed at generating new knowledge that will contribute to improving the mental and physical wellbeing of Canadians. For example, over the past 5 years, CIHR has invested over \$26 million in research related to physical activity and health and over \$284 million in research related to mental health and behavioural conditions.

For instance, CIHR is investing in the work of Dr. Louise Masse and her team at the University of British Columbia, whose research looks at the factors that influence adolescents' physical activity, sedentary time and dietary habits as they transition from elementary to secondary school. The hope is that this data can be used to develop targeted programs to address these factors and encourage more positive behaviours in adolescence. CIHR is also investing in the work of Dr. Nancy Salbach and her team at the University of Toronto, whose randomized controlled trial is evaluating strategies for getting older adults to walk outdoors regularly, thereby improving health and well-being, and helping people live independently in the community for longer.

Further, CIHR, in collaboration with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), supports the Canada Research Chair program. Several of the Canada Research Chair holders are undertaking research that is directly related to supporting the mental and physical wellbeing of Canadians. For example, Dr. Catherine M Sabiston, at the University of Toronto, holds the Canada Research Chair in Physical Activity and Mental Health. Dr. Sabiston's research aims to provide scientific evidence that supports how physical activity is linked to, and can help ease, mental health problems. Her team is also developing programs and implementing strategies for sustainable physical activity among Canadians of all ages.

As another example, Dr. Isabelle Dionne, at the Université de Sherbrooke, holds the Canada Research Chair in Exercise Recommendations for Healthy Aging. Dr. Dionne's research aims to improve the health of Canada's seniors by developing exercise recommendations that reduce the risk of chronic disease and physical disability.

PHAC has invested \$112 million and leveraged over \$92 million in non-governmental funding in the Healthy Living and Chronic Disease Prevention - Multi-sectoral Partnerships (MSP Program) program. The MSP Program supports primary prevention interventions that promote healthy living/healthy weights and prevent chronic disease by focusing on the modifiable risk factors (physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, and tobacco use) that underlie conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Budget 2018 announced \$25 million over five years for PHAC to support ParticipACTION to increase participation in daily physical activity among Canadians through the *Let's Get Moving* initiative. This investment aims to change social norms through long-term multi-sectoral partnerships and coordinated public education and engagement to increase physical activity. This initiative aims to increase physical activity levels for less active Canadians who are motivated to increase their activity levels. It will also focus on reaching groups that experience health inequities related to physical activity.

In recognition of the importance of increasing physical activity across Canada, federal, provincial and territorial (F/P/T) governments recently developed Canada's first pan-Canadian policy framework focusing on increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living, *A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving* (Common Vision). The Common Vision is an F/P/T policy framework to help leverage action to

support Canadians and communities to move more and sit less, more often (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving.html>).

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of intervening early to promote mental health and prevent mental illness. Links between physical activity and mental health are highlighted as part of the PHAC Positive Mental Health Surveillance Indicator Framework (<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/positive-mental-health/>).