



An active Canada is a stronger Canada.

**PARTICIPACTION'S 2017 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION TO THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

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Introduction

There is an opportunity for the Government of Canada to bring real change to physical activity in this country—in both what we do and how we do it. While we do know that people are learning that unstructured play is a great way for children to be active, that sport solves social problems and that sitting is bad for our health, physical activity and sport must be seen as family priorities, and not just pastimes. The need to enable Canadians to embrace a more active lifestyle is growing, given our aging population, our sedentary work lives and the intense lure of screen-based technologies for our youth. The most important part of health care is prevention—staying fit and reducing the risk of disease. We cannot wait to increase our focus on prevention, or the physical inactivity issue of today will result in the critical health-care and productivity issue of tomorrow. ParticipACTION offers a reputable, informed perspective on how to enhance public health promotion to ensure Canada is healthy, prosperous and connected through physical activity. An active Canada is a stronger Canada.

The issue

Canadians of all ages are not moving their bodies enough to get the benefits of regular physical activity, which include reduced risk of chronic disease, better scores in reading and math, better fitness, more fun, healthy body weight and improved mental health.ⁱ

According to the *ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*, only 9% of children and youth get the recommended 60 minutes of heart-pumping activity they need every day. And, only 20% of adults get the recommended 150 minutes per week.ⁱⁱ When asked about the number one thing Canadians could do to improve their health, 80% say they would like to be more physically active.ⁱⁱⁱ Plus, the latest research shows that sitting too much is bad for you, even if you're active enough the rest of the time.^{iv} At ages 3-4 our kids spend half their waking hours sedentary; for 5-11-year-olds it's 57 per cent of the time, and for 12-17-year-olds it's 68 per cent. Perhaps this shouldn't come as much of a surprise, because parents are their children's most important role models, and Canadian adults are sedentary 9.5 hours a day.^v

The direct and indirect costs associated with physical inactivity already cost the Canadian taxpayer 3.7 per cent of health-care costs.^{vi} Globally, high-income countries like Canada are actually less active. According to the World Health Organization, the prevalence of inactivity in high-income countries (33%) is double that in low-income countries (17%), which is partly due to insufficient participation in physical activity during leisure time and an increase in sedentary behaviour during occupational and domestic activities. Likewise, an increase in the use of "passive" modes of transport has been associated with declining physical activity levels.^{vii}

As a society, we have engineered opportunities for spontaneous movement, such as playing outdoors or getting places on foot, out of our lifestyles. We have to focus on enabling and supporting Canadians to sit less and move more in their daily lives.

The solution

ParticipACTION believes in a style of leadership that includes close collaboration, meaningful engagement and dialogue with citizens and stakeholders, including private and public sector, indigenous communities and not-for-profit and charitable organizations. ParticipACTION employs this approach to its unique and significant role in championing the physical activity issue in this country.

ParticipACTION's main goal is to contribute to 10% of Canadians sitting less and moving more by 2020. Physical inactivity is a difficult and complex problem and ParticipACTION is committed to be an active contributor to finding solutions and helping to implement them. The ParticipACTION brand is the iconic physical activity brand in Canada, with massive awareness and equity that can be used by government to make physical activity more desirable and accessible to all citizens. With proper resources, ParticipACTION's extensive networks can be leveraged by the federal government to reach more Canadians where they live, work and play.

ParticipACTION requires a one-time commitment of \$1 for each Canadian, dispersed over the next five years (\$35.5 million, or \$7.1 million per year for the next five years) to:

- 1. Develop a comprehensive National Physical Activity Plan**
- 2. Establish a Physical Activity Leadership Council**
- 3. Launch a national active living campaign**

First, ParticipACTION will work with the federal government, provincial/territorial governments and the physical activity sector in Canada to lead the establishment of a comprehensive **National Physical Activity Plan** based on Active Canada 20/20 and aligned with the 2012 Canadian Sport Policy and the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada. A national physical activity plan would establish measurable goals for the nation—clear targets and outcomes, identify actions based on evidence, focus on key priority actions, build on current strengths, identify strategies to address gaps and provide focus and opportunity for coordinated action and evaluation. As is outlined in Active Canada 20/20, and was acknowledged by federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation in 2015, the complex challenge of increasing physical activity for all Canadians defies single-solution approaches—partnerships and collaboration across all sectors of society are needed to get the results we want and Canadians deserve.

Second, ParticipACTION will support a mechanism for sector alignment and coordination driven by ParticipACTION's existing Research Advisory Group, the ParticipACTION Advisory Network and including the establishment of a **Physical Activity Leadership Council** made up of public, private and not-for-profit organizations, which will share information, discuss trends and issues and work together to address challenges. An integrated mechanism would accurately reflect the fact that responsibility for physical activity promotion is shared by many facets of society, from urban planners to coaches, lawmakers, paediatricians and parents.

Third, ParticipACTION will create a national **active living campaign** that leverages the power of the ParticipACTION brand to engage and mobilize all Canadians to achieve a more active lifestyle through physical activity and sport. The ParticipACTION Community Challenge, a legacy of the ParticipACTION 150 Play List program, will go beyond building awareness of the importance of physical activity to providing a population-wide opportunity to leverage wearable tracking technologies (step counters, health monitors, smartphones) and rally communities to track their cumulative physical activity. Individual achievements will ladder up to community goals, encouraging competition, and will be supported by a national campaign to identify and declare the "most active community in Canada" on an annual basis.

With increased support from the Government of Canada, ParticipACTION will use its 45-year history of physical activity leadership to facilitate the development of a national physical activity plan, coordinate a mechanism to integrate sport, physical activity and health and align multi-partner efforts through a new, nationwide campaign. In turn, we will all have greater impact. As physical activity levels increase, relative risk of chronic disease falls. An investment in ParticipACTION is an investment in the long-term health and prosperity of Canada.

An active Canada is a healthy, prosperous and connected Canada. An active Canada is a stronger Canada.

The rationale

A more active Canada is good for our collective health. Recent research from the Conference Board of Canada's *Moving Ahead* series shows that even a modest increase in Canadians' movement over the next 25 years would reduce the incidence of debilitating chronic diseases, resulting in 222,000 fewer hypertension cases, 120,000 fewer diabetes cases, 170,000 fewer heart disease cases and 31,000 fewer cancer cases. Plus, premature mortality would be reduced by 2.4 per cent by 2020, translating into more than 6,600 lives saved.^{viii}

A more active Canada is also good for business. In addition to lives saved, the CBOC indicates that if we got just 10 per cent of Canadian adults to sit less and move more starting in 2015, we would reduce Canada's health-care costs by \$2.6 billion and inject \$7.5 billion into the Canadian economy by the year 2040.^{ix} Through reduced mortality and absenteeism in the

workforce, modest, achievable changes in movement behaviours can produce substantial and significant productivity gains for the entire country.

The WHO's member states' voluntary global target for noncommunicable diseases is a reduction of 10% in physical inactivity by 2025, to be achieved through population-based, multi-sectoral, multidisciplinary and culturally relevant policies.

Canada needs a pan-Canadian physical activity framework and a plan of action.

It pays to invest in prevention. Every dollar spent to promote healthy eating and physical activity saves \$6 in the cost of caring for people with chronic diseases.^x Canada needs strategic investments in physical activity to support Canadian families by helping them to sustain a higher quality of life, and to support our economy, by helping our country to sustain a more affordable, high-quality health-care system. In 2012, Canada's total health-care expenditure amounted to 10.93 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.^{xi} 85% of Canadians agree that federal and provincial/territorial governments should devote a greater percentage of the health-care budget to preventive measures.^{xii}

A more active Canada is good for communities. Canadians strongly value (77%) physical activity and sport for their roles in strengthening communities by reducing crime, supporting new immigrants and refugees, bringing people together and bolstering the economy. Furthermore, when it comes to children and youth, 83 per cent of Canadians believe community sport can instill character in young people by teaching them pro-social values and positive life lessons.^{xiii}

Sport and physical activity can be used to address a range of community priorities, including health promotion, Aboriginal youth engagement, economic revitalization, newcomer settlement, citizen participation and conflict resolution. New citizens indicate that sport is a natural and universal connection point, and helps them learn the social landscape and soft cultural skills, while offering access to informal, but vital, social networks.^{xiv}

Physical activity, playground to podium, connects our country in ways almost nothing but an overtime goal can, forges national spirit and instills pride in what it means to be Canadian. An active Canada is a stronger Canada.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission in greater detail with the Committee.

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