



***PARTICIPACTION***

*Let's get moving.*

**Towards a legacy of physical activity in Canada**

Federal Pre-Budget Submission  
The Standing Committee on Finance

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## **Executive Summary**

ParticipACTION's iconic Canadian brand has been synonymous with physical activity for over 40 years. When the organization was closed due to lack of funding from 2001 to 2007, there was a gap in leadership across the physical activity sector and limited access to credible physical activity information through ParticipACTION messages and public service campaigns. During that time period, moderate activity levels during leisure time fell from 51.8% in 2003 to 50.4% in 2007. Since the organization was reinstated with generous federal support, those national rates rose significantly from 50.4% in 2007 to 55.2% in 2013.

With health care funding increases to jump from \$30 billion per year in 2013-2014 to \$40 billion per year by the end of the decade, we cannot afford to turn our back on the progress we have made through ParticipACTION's leadership.

Canadians overwhelmingly—85 per cent of them—agree that federal and provincial/territorial governments should devote a greater percentage of the health care budget to preventive measures.

ParticipACTION delivers the best value for the taxpayer because it leverages federal monies to secure additional investment from other partners and corporations—each federal dollar invested in ParticipACTION is multiplied by seven through corporate and other investments in the organization. 9 in 10 Canadians agree that the government should support ParticipACTION, and among those who have children under 12 living at home, agreement is almost universal (97%).

## **Recommendation**

Given that a more physically active population will be less likely to develop heart disease, certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, experience less anxiety and depression, do better academically and live longer.

Given that the health care system is being crippled by diseases that are *preventable*.

Given that physical activity can improve population health and save the Canadian economy upwards of \$5.3 billion annually.

Given that ParticipACTION already successfully supports millions of Canadian children and families with education and opportunities to be more active.

Given that the 2014 federal budget did not renew more than half of ParticipACTION's funding.

**ParticipACTION recommends the Government of Canada sustain its commitment to physical activity and fiscal sustainability through health care prevention by renewing ParticipACTION's annual federal funding of \$4.5 million.**

**Renewed federal investment will enable an urgent expansion of ParticipACTION's mandate and will be directed to three new, national initiatives that:**

1. Harness emerging technologies such as wearable fitness trackers to enable Canadians to move more on a daily basis through tracking and incentives
2. Reduce harmful sedentary behaviour

3. Target Canadian adults, many of whom are parents and role models, in the workplace

### **The Inactivity Crisis**

Our children must move more. While the message is simple, the issue is dire—the 2014 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card assigned a D- to Canada because only five per cent of Canadian children and youth are active enough to meet daily physical activity requirements. Kids spend 63 per cent of their free time being sedentary.

One in three Canadian children is overweight or obese, and this is a heavy burden for our youngest citizens.

At first, we may not see the size of our kids as a measure of their future productivity, but it is.

At first, we may not see the lack of kids in parks and playgrounds as an economic issue, but it is.

Over the past generation, our children have become fatter and less fit, and this forecasts significant health and social challenges in the future related to cardio-metabolic disease, mental health, academic achievement and economic productivity.

When quality of life is diminished through ill health and lack of fitness, it follows that we have an underproductive society. The economic impact of physical inactivity is substantial, estimated at \$5.3 billion, or 2.6% of total health care costs in Canada in 2001

Moving forward, our health care funding will increase by \$30B per year in 2013-2014, to more than \$38B per year in 2018-2019, to \$40B per year by the end of the decade.

New evidence has emerged that indicates a high level of sedentary behaviour negatively impacts health, independent of other factors including weight, diet and physical activity. For example, a 12-year study of 17,000 Canadian adults found that those who spent most of their time sitting were 50% more likely to die during the follow-up than those that sit the least, even after controlling for age, smoking and physical activity levels. Basically, sitting still for long periods is bad for you, even if you're otherwise active.

Kids aged 3-4 spend 5.8 hours a day being sedentary, those aged 5-11 spend 7.6 hours and those aged 12-17 spend 9.3 hours. Perhaps this shouldn't be a surprise, as adults spend 9.5 hours sedentary each day—the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Active parents have active kids and ParticipACTION wants parents to step up—and stand up—for their kids' health by enabling them to sit less and move more.

### **The Opportunity for Action**

The tragedy—and the opportunity—is that we're crippling ourselves with diseases and outcomes that are *preventable*. We do have the power to change.

After only ten minutes of exercise, the body begins to undergo metabolic changes that last up to an hour. The long-term health benefits of regular physical activity include a reduced risk of 25 chronic conditions including cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. And getting kids active can help them in many other areas of their lives:

**Physically active kids are smart kids.** Active kids get better academic scores in reading and math.

**Physically active kids are happy kids.** Active kids have better mental health and reduced anxiety and depression.

**Physically active kids are team players.** Involvement in school sport and physical activity builds stronger attachment to school and protects against bullying and other negative behaviours.

**Physically active kids learn better.** Physical activity supports kids with developmental or learning differences like ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Physically active kids thrive.** Youth involved in sport and various physical activities are more likely to eat healthily and less likely to smoke, engage in sexual activity or feel bored or hopeless.

Through physical activity, we can increase quality of life, achieve wellness, increase productivity, improve educational outcomes and prevent obesity, chronic conditions and other social ills, such as delinquency and crime.

ParticipACTION has been a pioneer in social marketing since 1971. With renewed funding, ParticipACTION would seize an urgent opportunity to capture the potential of wearable fitness trackers, which are exploding in popularity, to enable behaviour change with a new, national tracking and incentives initiative.

While awareness of sedentary behaviour as an independent risk factor is increasing, Canada does not currently have sedentary behaviour guidelines for adults and there is still much education required. ParticipACTION has 89% aided brand awareness in Canadian adults and is a credible resource for inspiration and information to help Canadians sit less. With renewed funding, ParticipACTION would roll out a national health promotion initiative targeted at reducing sedentary behaviour in the Canadian population.

Canadians work spend an average of 36.6 hours per week at work—60% spend their *entire workday seated*. With renewed funding, ParticipACTION would roll out a new initiative targeted at getting Canadian adults more active in the workplace.

Enabling Canadian adults to change their behaviours is essential, as they are the parents of our youngest generation, and research shows that **role modeling of physical activity is the most important facilitator for positive childhood physical activity behaviours.**

If we take action to get families healthy and more active by targeting the lifestyle behaviours of parents, our communities will be more prosperous and our futures more secure.

### **Leadership is Legacy**

Currently, our overall child and youth physical activity levels lag behind those of Mozambique, New Zealand, Mexico, Kenya, Nigeria, England, Colombia, Ghana, Finland and South Africa. The Government of Canada has the opportunity to elevate our country into a position of global leadership on physical activity by renewing increased support for ParticipACTION.

Active, healthy living is fundamental to a productive, prosperous country, but inactivity is a multifaceted issue that requires a multifaceted solution. The Government of Canada is in a position to work more closely with ParticipACTION to maximize its preventive health care agenda. Through its funding of ParticipACTION thus far:

- Canadian moms have been educated on the importance of healthy, active play. Over 72% of those who saw ParticipACTION's Bring Back Play campaign ads took action to get their kids more active.
- Over 47,000 Canadians visit ParticipACTION's website for physical activity information each month.
- Over 4,300 local sport organizations, public health departments, schools, doctors and recreation providers in the ParticipACTION Network regularly access information and resources about getting active. 89 per cent of partner organizations agree ParticipACTION is successful in advancing and communicating knowledge on the issues associated with physical activity among Canadians.
- Over half of the 3.6 million Canadians that have participated in the annual RBC Sports Day in Canada said the program *increased* their intention to be healthy and active. The International Olympic Committee features RBC Sports Day in Canada in its global guide to managing sport and physical activity programs geared to the general population.
- Over 95 per cent of the 4,267 local community organizations that administer ParticipACTION Teen Challenge said it increased physical activity levels and knowledge about the importance of physical activity among their 316,000 registrants. Over \$4.1 million in private-sector grants have been deployed to communities through the program.

### **The Cost of Not Investing in ParticipACTION**

The 2014 federal budget stated that “the Government recognizes the importance of physical activity and healthy lifestyles for young Canadians,” yet the majority of federal funding for ParticipACTION, an organization dedicated to supporting the physical activity and health of families, was not renewed, reducing its budget by \$2.5 million.

Without this additional funding to leverage for private-sector and provincial/territorial investment—which ParticipACTION has achieved at a ratio of 7:1—its ability to reach all Canadians, engage local communities in major national initiatives and provide vital education and information about physical activity are drastically weakened. This threatens the progress we have achieved through ParticipACTION's partnership with the Government of Canada.

When the organization was closed due to lack of funding from 2001 to 2007, there was a gap in leadership across the physical activity sector and limited access to credible physical activity education through ParticipACTION public service campaigns. During that time period, moderate activity levels during leisure time fell from 51.8% in 2003 to 50.4% in 2007. Since the organization was reinstated, those national rates have risen significantly from 50.4% in 2007 to 55.2% in 2013.

9 in 10 Canadians agree that the government should support ParticipACTION, and among those who have children under 12 living at home, agreement is almost universal (97%).

ParticipACTION is a proven vehicle for maximizing Canada's health promotion and disease prevention investment.

Active, healthy living is the lynchpin of a productive workforce and economy and a guarantor of a healthier future for our country. If we renew our investment in physical activity through ParticipACTION now, the Government of Canada can lead our country closer to economic prosperity and fiscal sustainability.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, we could save \$76 billion over the next ten years by tackling the five main risk factors for heart disease: smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, high blood pressure and lack of fruit and vegetable consumption.

If we do not take strengthened action on the physical inactivity crisis in our country, health care costs from preventable illness such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease will be unsustainable.

**A renewed \$4.5 million annual investment in ParticipACTION is an investment in a healthier and more secure future for all Canadian families. It is an investment in the education, the inspiration, the knowledge, the programs and the support that our communities access through ParticipACTION to be more physically active and productive.**