



More active. More productive.

**PARTICIPACTION'S 2018 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION TO THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

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Executive Summary

The loss of personal and financial productivity due to physical inactivity costs the Canadian health care system \$4.3 billion each year. Twenty-two million adults (80%) and 5 million children (91%) are not active enough. If just 10% of the country sat less and moved more, we would reduce health-care costs by \$2.6 billion and inject \$7.5 billion into the Canadian economy by the year 2040. Plainly put, a more active Canada is a more productive Canada.

Shifting our entire population to be more active requires a systems approach to coordinate changes at the individual, social and cultural, environmental and policy levels. In order to help achieve this, ParticipACTION, as the voice of physical activity for 45 years, recommends:

- A persistent and collaborative full-court press approach centred around a comprehensive, long-term public education and engagement physical activity movement led by ParticipACTION.
- A federal investment of \$10 million per year for a minimum of five years to support the ParticipACTION *Let's Get Moving* Movement.
- To achieve the massive reach required for success, ParticipACTION will leverage the \$10 million in federal investment each year to generate matching funds and support from other public and private sector sources.

This investment would complement and build on funding that the Government of Canada is currently making in other aspects of health and well-being, such as mental health.

ParticipACTION would welcome the opportunity to appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, whether in Ottawa or at another of the Committee's hearings across Canada, to discuss this submission in more detail.

We thank the Committee in advance for its consideration of our important request.

The issue

Canadians are paying a hefty price tag for a sedentary population.

- The estimated health care costs of physical inactivity in Canada total \$6.8 billion/year.ⁱ
- Of those costs, \$4.3 billion are indirect costs, which account for 3.6% of overall health care costs in Canada.ⁱⁱ

To better understand what this really means, the indirect costs of physical inactivity can be described as the loss of personal and financial productivity due to poor health.

As the world has progressed rapidly in advancing technology and ways of life, society has inadvertently engineered daily movement out of peoples' lives—we are living a modern life that does not support or encourage us to do one of the basic things that make us healthy. Move.

Inactivity is now the fourth leading cause of death worldwide, responsible for over 3.2 million deaths each year.ⁱⁱⁱ In Canada, our citizens are sitting far too much and moving far too little:

- 22 million Canadian adults (80%) are NOT active enough.
- 5 million Canadian children (91%) are NOT active enough.

Even though this is a global problem, Canada is less successful than other developed countries in addressing it. The *2017 UNICEF Index of Child and Youth Well-being and Sustainability* ranks Canada 29 out of 41 in its ability to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being. And Canada gets a D- grade for overall child and youth physical activity in the *ParticipACTION Report Card*, putting it at the back of the pack in global comparisons of our grades against those of 37 other countries around the world.

The solution

Physical activity is often misunderstood. People often think that getting more active means going to the gym, and that being fit means being thin. Regular physical activity isn't about just about fighting off obesity or building muscles; it's a fundamental aspect of a healthy, productive and happy life.

Plainly put, a more active Canada is a more productive Canada.

Physical activity improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, and negative mood and by improving self-esteem and cognitive function. It significantly reduces the number of sick days and disability days that employees take. It also lowers the risk of stroke and heart attack, improves test scores in math and reading, promotes concentration, keeps your thinking, learning and judgment skills sharp as you age, and improves sleep.

Even a modest increase in Canadians' movement over the next 25 years would result in reduced incidence of debilitating chronic diseases. Getting just 10 per cent of Canadian adults to sit less and move more would reduce Canada's health-care costs by \$2.6 billion and inject \$7.5 billion into the Canadian economy by the year 2040.^{iv} Every dollar spent to promote healthy eating and physical activity saves \$6 in the cost of caring for people with chronic diseases.^v

A more active Canada is also 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 and bringing people together. Sport and physical activity can be used to address a range of community priorities, including Indigenous youth engagement, economic revitalization, newcomer settlement, citizen participation and conflict resolution.^{vi}

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the solution requires policies that are population-based, multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and culturally relevant.^{vii} When a problem cuts across all facets of society—including education, health care, urban design, workplace policy, transportation, community infrastructure and sport systems—it requires all facets of society working together to fix it.

We have to enable and support Canadians of all ages to sit less and move more in their daily lives. Shifting our entire population to be more active requires a systems approach to coordinate changes at the individual, social and cultural, environmental and policy levels.^{viii}

The Government of Canada is currently working with provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation (SPAR) to develop a *Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada*. The *Common Vision*, when finalized, and if accompanied with significant investment, will help stimulate the coordinated and collaborative policies and action required to support physical activity and sedentary behaviour reduction opportunities for Canadians.

Recommendation

ParticipACTION has a 45-year history of promoting health-enhancing physical activity in Canada. ParticipACTION works with its many partners to help Canadians sit less and move more through engagement initiatives—national programs that inspire, support and motivate communities and Canadians to be more active; and thought leadership—research and public education to keep practitioners and people informed of the latest relevant physical activity and sedentary behaviour science.

Once thought of as the Pioneers of the PSA in Canada, ParticipACTION has evolved into an evidence-based health promotion organization that uses the sophisticated tools of behaviour-change theory to shift perceptions and patterns in people's daily lives.

Raising awareness of the dangers of sitting too much and moving too little is not enough to change lifestyles. To get Canadians to change, it is essential to create a social climate in Canada where habitual physical activity is part of the daily fabric of our lives. People are more likely to be active if it is seen as 'normal,' and if their friends and peers are also active.

Sustained, persistent and collaborative public engagement efforts are required to provide opportunities for Canadians to get active and shift public perceptions about what it means to be active in this country. ParticipACTION has a track record of successfully leveraging government funding it receives towards securing major funding from private and other public sources, to create massive multi-partner public engagement initiatives.

As the cornerstone initiative of the new F-P/T *Common Vision*, ParticipACTION proposes a new multi-year, multi-channel national engagement initiative called the ParticipACTION *Let's Get Moving* Movement. It will be built around a core program that individuals can interact with digitally to record activity and be reinforced with credible messages and content, significant public education and learning opportunities, a national multi-media campaign, community events and activities and local partnership activities. This massive and sustained movement will build on the momentum and impact created by ParticipACTION's sesquicentennial physical activity program—the ParticipACTION 150 Play List, will reinforce efforts outlined in the *Common Vision*, maximize coordination across the entire physical activity sector and minimize message confusion.

To support Canadians of all ages and in multiple settings, from home to the workplace, ParticipACTION will work with all levels of government and the private sector, including its network of partnerships with national and regional NGOs and over 5,000 physical activity

organizations at the local level (schools, public health units, clubs, municipalities, etc.) to coordinate efforts. The core initiative would be further reinforced through public education, research, knowledge translation and thought leadership activities to help demystify and tackle some of the barriers that people face when getting active in Canada.

To create a social climate where more physical activity and less sitting are social norms, ParticipACTION recommends:

- **A persistent and collaborative full-court press approach centred around a comprehensive, long-term public education and engagement physical activity movement led by ParticipACTION.**
- **A federal investment of \$10 million per year for a minimum of five years to support the ParticipACTION *Let's Get Moving* Movement.**
- **To achieve the massive reach required for success, ParticipACTION will leverage the \$10 million in federal investment each year to generate matching funds and support from other public and private sector sources.**

The impact

The new ParticipACTION *Let's Get Moving* Movement would impact at least 10% of the Canadian population. Over five years, the *Let's Get Moving* movement will:

- I. Contribute to a 10% increase in participation in daily physical activity among Canadians.
- II. Contribute to a reduction of 1 hour per day spent engaging in daily sedentary behaviours among Canadians and allow them to be more productive.
- III. Increase by 10% the number of Canadians who are very confident they can be active most days of the week.
- IV. Increase by 10% the number of Canadians who intend to be active in the next six months.

The ParticipACTION *Let's Get Moving* Movement will help ensure longer, healthier lives for Canadians, which will have positive implications for the economy, health care finances and labour force productivity.

Conclusion

In order to make physical activity a more desirable, assessable and vital part of everyday life in Canada, we need to give people opportunities to move more, and support them to do it at the individual, social and cultural, environmental and policy levels.

ParticipACTION will never be able to solve this problem alone, but we will always be part of the solution. As the voice of the physical activity sector in Canada since 1971, ParticipACTION consistently accesses and marshals support from the broader physical activity and private sector, playing a key role in connecting organizations. ParticipACTION can help steward, broker and convene partnerships across multiple sectors at all levels to deliver a collaborative movement that will better the lives and wellbeing of all Canadians.

Effective, evidence-based public engagement initiatives, combined with the right messaging, education and supports, will allow us to help Canadians sit less, move more and be more productive. Eventually, being active will just be part of what it means to be Canadian.

ⁱ Katzmarzyk PT1, Janssen I., Can J Appl Physiol. 2004 Feb;29(1):90-115. The economic costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity in Canada: an update.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15001807>

ⁱⁱ Katzmarzyk PT1, Janssen I., Can J Appl Physiol. 2004 Feb;29(1):90-115. The economic costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity in Canada: an update. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15001807>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_inactivity/en/

^{iv} Fares Bounajm, Thy Dinh, Louis Theriault *Moving Ahead: The Economic Impact of Reducing Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behaviour*. The Conference Board of Canada, October 24, 2014

^v Public Health Leadership Council. (2013) Make No Little Plans: Ontario's Public Health Sector Strategic Plan. Retrieved from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/make_no_little_plans/docs/make_no_little_plans.pdf

^{vi} The Canadian Institute for Citizenship, *Playing Together, July 2014*. Retrieved from: https://www.icc.ca/en/insights/Sports/PlayingTogether_FullR%20Online_Final.pdf

^{vii} WHO Fact Sheet http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_inactivity/en/

^{viii} <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3fcb/9a53d28caf8e15e8eb61d94c701a62b4f478.pdf>