

# NWT Physical Activity Strategy

## Introduction

Regular physical activity relieves stress, builds muscle strength, reduces disease and injury, improves cardiovascular health, and helps maintain healthy body weight. Current studies show that only 15% of Canadian adults and almost 7% of young Canadians meet new physical activity guidelines which are the minimum requirements to maintain or improve health. A 2007-2009 CAN PLAY report (Canadian Physical Activity Levels among Youth) states that only 31% of children and youth in Canada are accumulating 60 minutes of physical activity per day. ParticipAction states that “the economic burden of physical inactivity is estimated at \$5.3 billion and the burden to the healthcare system is estimated at \$2.1 billion.” To address this inactivity crisis, several plans have been created by Canadian organizations including the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, the Active Canada 20/20 Strategy and the Canadian Sport Policy 2.0.

The inactivity condition in the Northwest Territories is just as bleak. Less than half of the population participates in enough physical activity to maintain or improve their health. The 2011 NWT Health Status Report states that proportions of NWT residents 12 years and older who reported moderate or higher physical activity decreased from 54% to 41% since 2003 and 63% of NWT residents are overweight or obese compared to 51% of other Canadians. Currently, several NWT groups and organizations in the sport and recreation sector are doing their best to help keep people active; however there is no overarching NWT specific guide. It is evident that the NWT needs to take action to find a solution to the inactivity crisis by creating a physical activity strategy.

## Working Group

A working group has been initiated as the first step in addressing the challenge of increasing physical activity rates in the NWT. The goal of the group is to provide direction, insight, support and feedback on the development of the Northwest Territories Physical Activity Strategy which will support residents to become more physically active. The working group includes a representative from the NWT Recreation and Parks Association, Sport North Federation, NWT Sport and Recreation Council and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

## Planning Workshop

The working group agreed that a preliminary facilitated workshop with additional stakeholders is an important next step in the development of a process, approach and scope for a possible physical activity plan. Two to three representatives with responsibilities and interests in the areas of sport, recreation, and physical activity and health results in the Northwest Territories will be invited to the workshop by each working group member. These representatives will be a combination of community, government and non government representatives. The purpose of the workshop is to develop recommendations related to the preliminary work in developing a NWT Physical Activity Strategy.

A facilitator is needed help direct the group to a cohesive decision on the elements listed below. They are to lead discussions, compile thoughts and help manage and support the group's decisions.

Workshop Outcomes:

- a. What is the best process for addressing the challenge of increasing physical activity rates in the NWT?
- b. What is the scope of that process?
- c. What is the best approach for addressing the challenge?
- d. Who should lead this process?

The group should also discuss what other documents should be consulted during the creation of the strategy.

## Background

The Government of the NWT is demonstrating that increasing the physical activity and the health of its residents is important through their strategic plan. To achieve the goal of vibrant, healthy communities, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' 2010-2015 Strategic Plan states that a planned action is the implementation of a multi-faceted physical activity strategy by 2012.

The performance measures for the physical activity strategy are:

- Meet or exceed national physical activity targets
- Increase the number of certified community government recreation leaders and maintainers from the baseline of 2010, with the long-term goal of 100% certified
- Complete longitudinal evaluations by 2015 on the implementation of youth and volunteer strategies

Besides MACA's strategic plan the Department of Health and Social Services also states in their 2011-2016 strategic plan that in order to improve the health status of the population, it is a priority to work in collaboration with MACA to develop health promotion activities aimed at keeping youth active.

Another organization whose strategic plan is important to consider is the NWT Sport and Recreation Council (SRC). The SRC is funder for the sport, recreation and active living sector. The SRCs mandate, which was handed down by the Minister of MACA includes the priority to increase participation in physical activity for youth and adults in all communities in the NWT and to key NWT populations.

## Supplementary Documents:

In addition to current NWT initiative to increase physical activity there are several Canadian guidelines and strategies currently in place that are worth reviewing. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines provide tips to achieve minimum required levels of physical activity and health benefits. Active Canada 20/20 is a physical activity strategy and change agenda for Canada and the Canadian Sport Policy 2.0 is a guide for all governments, institutions and organizations throughout Canada that hold a stake in sport and its positive impacts on individuals, communities and society. The Canadian Sport for Life, Long Term Athlete Development Module is a clear path to better sport, greater health and higher achievement.

These four documents are significant however it is even more important to consider the adaptability of these documents in a northern context. The adaptability is crucial in order to meet the needs of northerners.

### **Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines:**

It is apparent from the Canadian physical activity rates and obesity levels that Canada needs to move towards healthier lifestyles. To help with this move, the Public Health Agency of Canada supported the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) and ParticipAction in reviewing the latest science on physical activity and in developing new physical activity guidelines for Canadians.

CSEP is the gold standard of health and fitness professionals dedicated to getting Canadians active safely. They provide the highest quality customized physical activity and fitness programs, guidance and advice based on extensive training and evidence-based research. ParticipAction is a national non-for-profit organization solely dedicated to inspiring and supporting active living and sport participation for Canadians. Together, after four years of research analysis, these two organizations launched the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines in January 2011.

The new guidelines were created because change is needed. Based on the fitness levels and daily physical activity statistics for youth and adults, an increase must be made in order to preserve the health of Canadians. The guidelines provide instructions and tips to achieve required levels of physical activity and health benefits. Specific guidelines including the amount and type of physical activity required are available for children age 5 – 11, youth age 12 – 17, adults age 18 – 64 and for older adults age 65 and older.

ParticipACTION and CSEP have also created Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines. These guidelines counsel Canadians on recommended limits to children and youth's recreational screen time and other sedentary behaviour. Both physical activity guidelines and sedentary behaviour guidelines are important to help shift Canadians thinking toward physical activity and improve their way of life.

### **Active Canada 20/20, A Physical Activity Strategy and Change Agenda for Canada**

In addition to the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, Active Canada 20/20 is another Canadian approach to help increase the physical activity rates and health of Canadians. Active Canada 20/20, A Physical Activity Strategy and Change Agenda for Canada is the response to the urgent national need to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary living. Eighty five percent of Canadian adults and 93% of Canadian children and youth do not achieve the minimum level of physical activity necessary to ensure long-term good health and well-being.

Active Canada 20/20 provides a clear vision and a change agenda to describe what Canada must do to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior, thereby reducing risk and achieving the many benefits of a society that is active and healthy. It demonstrates the actions that we must take to strengthen Canada, by making physical activity an important cultural trademark.

Active Canada 20/20 is designed to engage decision makers and rally the collaborative, coordinated and consistent efforts of all stakeholders at every level to make a difference for the well-being and sustainability of our communities, our country, our social programs and, most importantly, our people.

Numerous stakeholder consultations are taking place to solicit organizations' and Canadians' support, engagement and endorsement prior to a presentation of Active Canada 20/20 to Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation (SPAR), Health and Education in June 2012.

### **Canadian Sport Policy 2.0 – February 14, 2012, Draft**

A third essential national document crucial for review when creating an NWT Physical Activity Strategy is the Canadian Sport Policy 2.0. This policy is a guide to desired results. It offers the opportunity to contribute to the policy's goals in a way that is in line with current mandates.

The Canadian Sport Policy (CSP 1.0) was originally created in 2002; however a new policy (CSP 2.0) has taken its place to reflect additional stakeholders and is more ambitious in its vision and goals and more reflective of the roles sport plays for Canadians in their communities than the CSP 1.0.

CSP 2.0 Vision is for a dynamic and innovative sport culture that promotes value-based engagement and excellence in sport. In this vision, Canada is a leading sport nation where all Canadians are enabled to pursue sport to the extent of their abilities and interests, including performing at the highest competitive levels; and where sport delivers benefits, for increasing numbers, to individual health and well being, and contributes to the socio economic outcomes.

Policy Goals, based on spheres of participation and the policy's specific objectives:

- Sphere: Introduction to sport  
Goal: All Canadians have the fundamental skills, knowledge and attitudes, to participate in structured and unstructured sport.
- Sphere: Recreational Sport  
Goal: All Canadians have the opportunity to participate in structured and unstructured sport, for the purposes of fun, health, socializing and relaxation, delivered in a manner that maximizes community-building impacts.
- Sphere: Competitive Sport  
Goal: All Canadians have the opportunity to improve and measure their performance against others in competition, in a safe and ethical manner.
- Sphere: High performance Sport  
Goal: Canadians, in increasing numbers, are systematically achieving world-class results, through fair and ethical means, at the highest levels of international competition, and are promoting positive values through sport at home and abroad.

CSP 2.0 sets direction for all governments, institutions and organizations throughout Canada that hold a stake in sport and its positive impacts on individuals, communities and society. CSP 2.0 also seeks to strengthen the networks, resources and infrastructure at the heart of the sport system, but also at the heart of community-building, through the deliberate engagement of new partners – experts in their fields, on local issues and in outreach to the populations they serve. It is basically intended as a “roadmap” that establishes high-level direction and desired outcomes and provides the flexibility to contribute to the goals in a manner that is consistent with existing mandates. CSP 2.0, 2012

“The health and well-being of the nation and the medals won at major Games are simple by-products of an effective sport system.” Canadian Sport for Life, 2005

### **The Canadian Sport for Life, Long Term Athlete Development Module**

Science, research and decades of experience all point to the same thing: kids and adults will get active, stay active and even reach the greatest heights of sport achievement if they do the right things at the right time. This is the logic behind the Long-Term Athlete Development model (LTAD).

There are seven stages within the LTAD model. Stages 1, 2 and 3 develop physical literacy before puberty so children have the basic skills to be active for life. Physical literacy also provides the foundation of those who choose to pursue elite training in one sport or activity after age 12. Stages 4, 5 and 6 provide elite training for those who want to specialize in one sport and compete at the highest level, maximizing the physical, mental and emotional development of each athlete. Stage 7 is about staying Active for Life through lifelong participation in competitive or recreation sport of physical activity.

Not only is the LTAD based on the best research in sports science and coaching and training best practices but it is also driven by the concern for the health of all Canadians. LTAD aims to mitigate the inactivity trends by promoting lifelong engagement in physical activity and sport.