



**LET'S HAVE A  
CONVERSATION ABOUT  
HEALTHY PLACES**

**Toward Healthy  
Canadian Communities!**

**CO-DESIGNING  
THE ACTIVE  
CITY**

# *Did you know that the way we build our communities impacts health?*

*Find out why designing for health is important, what public policy has to do with it, and what you can ask your political representative to make it happen.*



## **What is a healthy place?**

An environment that promotes healthy behaviours like walking, cycling, socializing, playing, and healthy eating for all ages, abilities, incomes, and cultural backgrounds.

## **ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS CANADA**

**The Active Neighbourhoods Canada program has been developing design schemes based on community feedback for the past ten years. These aim to promote more liveable, walkable and vibrant communities.**

**Visit [ParticipatoryPlanning.ca](https://www.participatoryplanning.ca) for more**

## Why Healthy Places?

We are facing a health crisis: we are increasingly sedentary, and chronic conditions like diabetes and obesity are on the rise. Adapting the built environment can improve health and health equity. Healthy places have many benefits: they are age-friendly, climate-friendly, and good for the economy.

### How to use this tool ?

The development of healthy communities is not only the business of elected officials!

This tool aims to initiate conversations on the topic, from coast to coast!

This document provides evidence on health, economy, equity and environment. Use it in discussions with decision makers to influence the development of healthy Canadian communities. This tool also proposes questions to be addressed to decision-makers or candidates for election in public debates and discussions.

Healthy places are everyone's business... It's your turn!

*“Changing the built environment could significantly influence people’s daily physical activity.”*





**- Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Health Officer of Canada**



# Health for All Ages

By 2032, 1 in 4 Canadians will be a senior. Walkable communities can reduce social isolation and improve access to amenities. Canadian children are increasingly sedentary and experience obesity, but creating safe and walkable communities can help reverse these trends.

## DID YOU KNOW?

	<p>Physically active children have <b>better academic achievement</b> and concentration.</p>	
<p><b>4-5 times</b> the risk of hospitalization for seniors experiencing isolation.</p>		<p><b>48 km</b> of cycling per week can reduce the risk of heart disease by <b>46%</b>.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">In Canada:</p>	 <p><b>1 billion hours</b> of volunteer time are contributed by seniors annually. Without access to their city and community, seniors cannot make these contributions.</p>	<p><b>\$10 billion</b> is the estimated cost of inactivity annually.</p>
	<p><b>8.4 hours</b> engaged in sedentary behaviour among children and youth, on average.</p>	<p><b>D+</b> on physical activity among children and youth (ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth).</p>

**What can you ask your representative or candidate?**

### It's your turn!

- Knowing that the leading diseases in Canada are linked to sedentary lifestyles, what policies and investments would you implement to ensure community design promotes active living?
- How do you envision shaping communities to respond to the needs of an aging population, who may be less mobile, and more likely to be socially isolated?
- How do you envision creating communities in which kids can play and travel safely?

# Healthy Economy

Healthy design can reduce health care and congestion costs, and increase productivity. Commercial districts and homeowners benefit from healthy design through increased property values and increased sales.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**\$10.1 billion** is the cost of congestion for Greater Vancouver, Greater Toronto and Greater Montréal in 2015.



**0.03 % to 0.17 %** increase in home values alongside a 1 point increase in WalkScore™ for Québec in 2015.



**\$255/trip** is the average amount spent by cycling tourists in Ontario. That is **\$84** more than the average visitor at **\$171/trip**.

**\$1.2 billion** is the total spending generated by bicycle tourism and the bike industry in Québec. This industry alone creates the equivalent of **10,000 jobs**.



**What can you ask your representative or candidate?**

### It's your turn!

- What role does sustainable and active transportation play in your Economic Development plan?
- How will you address congestion in Canadian communities?
- What role should a social cost-benefit analysis play in Canadian public policies on transportation?

# Health Equity

People living in low-income areas are more likely to have poor infrastructure: less green space, fewer sidewalks, and less connectivity. They experience more traffic and pedestrian collisions. As a result, they disproportionately experience poor health.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**The more affluent are 3-4 times more active.** Households in Alberta with an annual income between \$125,000 and \$149,000 are 3-4 times more likely to be physically active than those with less than \$20,000.



In Calgary, Montréal and Toronto, neighbourhoods with lower household incomes are correlated with **more pedestrian collisions**.



**\$8,600-\$13,000** is the annual cost of owning a motor vehicle which represents 20 % of a middle-class household, after-tax income.



In Ontario, lowest-income children are **52 %** more likely to be struck, compared to highest-income children.

**What can you ask your representative or candidate?**

### It's your turn!

- What would you propose to ensure all neighbourhoods are safe and welcoming for pedestrians and cyclists?
- How will you ensure the participation of historically marginalized communities (e.g. urban indigenous, recent immigrants) in the design of public space throughout Canada?
- What would you propose to ensure kids have access to high-quality parks, regardless of their socio-economic status?

# Healthy Environment

Healthy places are climate-friendly. Developing walkable and bikeable communities contributes to reducing household greenhouse gas production.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**2/3** of household greenhouse gas emissions are from transportation in Canada.



**32 %** increase in household transportation emissions 1990–2008.



**14,440 premature deaths** annually linked to air pollution in Canada.

**4,35 million** trips could shift from motor vehicles to bicycles because they are **5 km** or less in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

**1:10** is the environmental footprint ratio of someone cycling vs. driving to work.



**What can you ask your representative or candidate?**

### It's your turn!

- What role does sustainable and active transportation play in your Climate Change plan?
- What type of subsidies do you think Canada can implement to foster smart-growth and conservation of greenfield land?
- What type of investment would you make to improve sustainable and active transportation options?

# Inspiring policies from coast to coast

1. Bike BC: a Province of British Columbia initiative that contributes half the funds for cycling projects in towns and cities.
2. Ontario Cycling Strategy funds cycling infrastructure, creates legislative change to promote road safety and invests in cycling training programs.
3. Québec's Sustainable Mobility Policy aims for 70 % of the population to have access to transportation choices - at least four sustainable transportation options - and a 20 % reduction for the average travel time between home and work.
4. Edmonton Vision Zero: Edmonton was the first city in Canada to adopt this policy, and since 2015, collisions with pedestrians have decreased by 21%, and cyclists by 27% (2018).

## Want to keep the conversation going?

- Get in touch with your elected officials or candidates.
- Ask questions from this toolkit to a local debate.
- Host a debate of your own or a workshop with a local organization.
- Share what you've learned on social media using #healthyplaces.
- Share this tool with organizations within your community their members and partners.



Our policy toolkit links you to resources to help you structure a workshop, propose directions to influence public policies, help your community join the movement, and more!



Montréal Urban  
Ecology Centre



Sustainable  
Calgary



the centre for  
active transportation

## Active Neighbourhoods Canada

Equitable access to healthy built environments for all Canadian communities.

Visit [ParticipatoryPlanning.ca](https://www.participatoryplanning.ca) for more