



# FITNESS WORKS

WINTER 2000

## *An Invitation for Partnership Opportunities with the Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work (CCHALW)*

### **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES:**

Over the past three decades, a significant number of leaders have become involved in the advancement of active living in the workplace. In the past, committees and organizations have been formed to mobilize leaders and engage them in collective action focused on advocacy, promotion, resource and professional development, and networking activities. One of these is the national organization called the **Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work**. It has been through many transformations in the past ten plus years and today exists as a volunteer-operated organization working on a project-to-project basis with the following mission statement guiding its work:

The Council's mission is to promote healthier workplaces by providing leadership and support to active living professionals and the business community.

Although the Council has undertaken many quality initiatives over the years, it recently became clear that its mission and scope had to be revised in light of a number of emerging trends and issues:

- ◆ A large number of active living and workplace health professionals are not aware of the Council and its activities ('Who are we?' and 'What do we do?')
- ◆ Some professionals feel left out since our mission statement focuses on 'active living' professionals
- ◆ The Council has very limited resources and must become self-sustaining
- ◆ A number of organizations dedicated to the advancement of comprehensive health in the workplace are being created. They are attracting a large number of professionals who are or could be interested in active living, but who have broader and more comprehensive interests and needs

- ◆ New information technologies provide ongoing and more effective ways of networking with professional communities
- ◆ A number of associations, private-sector providers and organizations are developing comprehensive health and active living resources for and at the workplace
- ◆ Since active living is a component of comprehensive workplace health or one of the possible solutions to health issues in the workplace, it is far more likely to be promoted as part of a larger comprehensive health framework

Upon review of the above trends and issues, the Council decided to refocus and reach out to the broader community through a direct, targeted strategy detailed in the next paragraphs.

### **TWO MAJOR INITIATIVES**

At a time when partnerships and new technologies are both opportunities and necessities, there are two major initiatives that the CCHALW will focus on:

1. **Active participation in key national organizations committed to health in the workplace** to which active living could make significant contributions and simultaneously, be advanced. The idea is to be actively involved in the activities and agendas of other organizations rather than establishing a parallel network and set of activities. The Council is far more likely to succeed by partnering and taking collaborative action. Participation may sometimes include support for individuals already involved in similar organizations who have an interest and some expertise in active living.
2. **To take a leadership role in the promotion and exchange of information, ideas, and industry tools.** By utilizing technology, such as the internet, the CCHALW will be able to understand the needs of decision-makers and

professionals, who are likely to use and promote active living as part of workplace health. From this understanding will come an opportunity for connecting people with resources and expertise and guiding collective action on issues that will help to advance active living in the workplace.

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### **MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE LIVING AT WORK**

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### **Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work**

The mission of the Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work (CCHALW) is to promote healthier workplaces by providing leadership and support to Active Living professionals and the Business Community.

#### **AREAS OF INTEREST**

- *Advocacy and Promotion*
- *Partnership and Networking*
- *Resources Development*
- *Management*

## **THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council would therefore be redefined as an inclusive (virtual) place and a community of experts, advocates and professionals (active living, occupational health, human resources, and other interested health providers) where:

- ◆ Needs could be expressed and fulfilled
- ◆ Information and tools could easily be accessed
- ◆ Experiences and expertise could be shared
- ◆ Joint projects could be initiated.

The CCHALW's focus will remain on active living, but as part of broader workplace health frameworks and

initiatives. The Council believes that this type of cooperation and sharing with other workplace health organizations is the most advantageous way of advancing its mission. By focusing on two major initiatives, the Council acknowledges its limitations as a volunteer organization but proudly challenges others to step forward to work together in creating opportunities for active living in all workplaces.

# CALL TO ACTION! IT'S TIME TO PARTICIPATE!

## **THE PURPOSE...**

The Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work (CCHALW) is assembling a group of experts, advocates and professionals engaged in the fields of active living, occupational health, human resources, fitness, wellness and other affiliated health professions who will volunteer their knowledge regarding the use or promotion of active living as part of an overall workplace health approach. The outcome of this sharing will be healthier workplaces across the country and the advancement of active living strategies within a collaborative professional community.

## **THE METHOD...**

This exchange and sharing of information and expertise will primarily be accessed through the Internet. The CCHALW is currently developing a web site and plans to launch online activities and services in the year 2000. In addition, there will be links to other organizations that are involved in advancing healthier workplaces and employees, research entities that are undertaking supportive projects and resource providers that may provide products and services to assist in the promotion of active living in the workplace.

## **THE TIMELINES...**

It is anticipated that the Web site and listserver will be operational early in the 1st half of the year 2000. To accomplish this feat, participation is required from numerous individuals and organizations across the country. Contact the CCHALW as described in *The Process* with your information and ideas.

## **THE EXPECTATIONS...**

As a professional with expertise and/or experience in the field of active living in the workplace, your volunteer commitment would include fielding questions and addressing issues, as requested by the List Mother (Coordinator of the Listserve). The concept of a forum to share knowledge with others has a predicted outcome of creating opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on a large scale.

## **THE PROCESS...**

To volunteer, send an e-mail to [bray.todesco@sympatico.ca](mailto:bray.todesco@sympatico.ca) with a brief (under a 100 words) profile listing your past/current education/work/volunteer experiences as it relates to promoting active living in the workplace.

For more information or clarification, contact Suzanne Bray, Executive Assistant to the CCHALW at (613) 824-0865 or [bray.todesco@sympatico.ca](mailto:bray.todesco@sympatico.ca) or Sandy Horne-Price at (403) 337-2933. [ksprice@tcel.com](mailto:ksprice@tcel.com)



# Information for Workplace Settings

- ◆ In the workplace, active living policies and programs reduce absenteeism, injuries, accidents, disability and compensation cost, health care costs, as well as life insurance costs.
- ◆ Research by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) shows that a 16% increase from 1981 to 1995 in Canadians who were physically active translates into savings of \$9 billion because of reduced costs in health care, health insurance, sick leave, disability coverage, group life insurance, and lost revenue from taxes.
- ◆ The industrial revolution was, in large part, devoted to designing and manufacturing labour-saving devices. We have programmed physical activity out of our lives - now we need to program in back in if we want to stay healthy and productive.
- ◆ Based on workplace fitness studies, a one percentage point increase in the proportion of active Canadian adults has been estimated to result in a \$58.9 million increase in productivity to the Canadian economy. A 10% increase in physical activity would, therefore, save \$580 million.
- ◆ A recent Ontario study estimated that increasing physical activity saves \$364 annually per person for medical costs and industrial injuries. A 10% increase in the number of physically active Canadians could save the health care system \$800 million per year (Economic Impact of Physical Activity in Ontario).
- ◆ An active living community: sponsors active transportation such as bike paths and walking trails; encourages physical activity through community events and activities; promotes physical activity in schools, community centres and workplaces; and encourages families to be active together.

Source: Health Canada's *Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*. You can order free copies of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* or its *Handbook*, in the following ways: By calling: 1-888-334-9769, by faxing: 1-819-779-2833, by visiting the Guide Web site:

[www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com) - and downloading or placing a order via the Internet or by mailing your request to: Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9

## TIPS FOR BEING ACTIVE IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ◆ Get off bus or subway a stop or two early and walk the rest of the way,

or park your car at the back of the parking lot. Walk for a least 10 minutes at a time.

- ◆ During your lunch or work breaks, walk/wheel around the block for 10 minutes before returning to work.
- ◆ Start a walking group.
- ◆ Have 'walking meetings'.
- ◆ Whenever possible, use stairs instead of the elevator.
- ◆ If your workplace has a fitness or wellness program, sign up for an activity or try a class.
- ◆ Request shower and change rooms, and secure bicycle parking.

Source: Health Canada's *Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*. See reference above for more information

## MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR

**American Journal of Health  
Promotion 11th Annual Conference**  
**March 6 - 11, 2000**  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
[www.HealthPromotionJournal.com](http://www.HealthPromotionJournal.com)

**Association for Worksite Health  
Promotion**  
**September 13 - 16, 2000**  
Disney's Orlando Springs Resort  
Orlando, Florida  
[www.awhp.org](http://www.awhp.org)

**Health, Work and Wellness  
Conference 2000**  
**Toronto, October 22-25, 2000**  
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# Health Canada Gets Down to Business With Active Living

**By Randy Adams, Fitness and Active Living Unit, Health Canada**

Most Canadians know intuitively that there are many benefits of regular physical activity. These benefits include better health, improved fitness, reduced stress, stronger muscles and bones, more energy, improved self-esteem, and continued independent living in later life.

Physical inactivity is a serious risk factor, increasing the risk of premature death and disability, and several chronic diseases such as heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, adult-onset diabetes, osteoporosis, stroke, depression and colon cancer.

However, research by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute shows that 63% of Canadians are still not active enough to achieve health benefits. To address this, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers jointly established a target to reduce physical inactivity in Canada by 10% between 1998 and 2003.

Health Canada's 1998 release of Canada's Physical Activity Guide and the subsequent release in 1999 of Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults were just two of the key elements designed to help Canadians reach that goal.

Health Canada is currently compiling evidence on the benefits of active living in the workplace, and the consequences of physical inactivity on workplace health and other corporate indicators. This information will be made available in a detailed document entitled the Business Case for Active Living at Work.

The corporate benefits of active living include: increased job satisfaction and employee morale, better performance, reduced short and long-term disability, worker's compensation, absenteeism and turnover. For the 15 million Canadians who spend more than half of their waking life at work, being physically active can also lead to a more productive and satisfying work life.

Research shows, however, that willpower is not enough. Canadians themselves cannot do it alone. They want to be informed. They need advice and support. Creating the opportunities and overcoming the barriers to becoming active in various life settings — including the workplace — is the key to increasing physical activity.

## **THE WORKPLACE: AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ACTIVE**

More than half the population works either full-time or part-time. Millions of Canadians therefore spend a significant number of hours every week on work-related activities.

Active living has long been perceived as synonymous with leisure or free time. Yet there are many opportunities to become active on the way to and from work or in the workplace itself. Organizations can also play a significant role in encouraging and supporting active living.

The Business Case for Active Living at Work will overview the evidence from a wide range of organizations, and illustrate that corporations which engage in some kind of physical activity program (be it modest or extensive) can make a difference. It will quantify the return on investment of physical activity programs for every dollar invested.

The case will be based on a sophisticated analysis of real case studies and normative data from the benefits management industry.

## **CONSULTATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUSINESS CASE**

The Fitness and Active Living Unit of Health Canada held a series of consultation meetings with a wide range of private, public and nonprofit organizations from various sectors to foster the advancement of active living in the workplace.

The coast-to-coast meetings reviewed Health Canada's leadership role in supporting the establishment of active living policies and programs in the workplace, as well as invited feedback and discussion on the Department's progress in developing the Business Case.

The participants in this consultation initiative made it clear that, to be most effective, physical activity in the workplace must continue to be positioned as an essential component of comprehensive workplace health and wellness. They said that it should include an implementation framework if it is to be useful.

## **FORMAT AND DELIVERY OF THE BUSINESS CASE**

In response to the consultations, Health Canada is designing the Business Case as an online data source complete with "how-to" sections and tips in a flexible, interactive and user-friendly format.

The Business Case will allow users from organizations of various sizes to make the case internally to senior decision-makers about building, improving or bolstering their organization's workplace active living policies and programs. The Business Case is also intended to support workplace active living service providers in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

The site will also be frequently updated to ensure the latest information is available to users, who will be able to download and print off those sections of most interest to their organization. It will also allow users to link to related on-line information about active living at work.

## **NEXT STEPS TO OFFICIAL LAUNCH**

Currently, the various draft modules of the Business Case are being reviewed by researchers and experts from the workplace health promotion community to ensure both accuracy and relevance to its intended end-users.

Once the content has been finalized, the Business Case will be posted on the Internet linked to Health Canada's home pages for Canada's Physical Activity Guide ([www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)) and its companion products.

The Business Case web site is scheduled for national launch in the spring of the year 2000.

### **For more information:**

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