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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
Report: #2025-INFO-95
Date: December 12, 2025

Subject:

2025 ParticipACTION Report Card for Physical Activity in Adults

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on the report titled [Moving Beyond Stagnation: Elevating Physical Activity in Canada](#), released by ParticipACTION.

2. Background

2.1 ParticipACTION is a Canada-wide non-profit organization with a vision where physical activity is a vital part of everyday life in Canada. The organization works with partners in sports, physical activity, recreation, government and corporate sponsors to help Canadians reduce sedentary time and move more.

2.2 The 2025 ParticipACTION report card was released on November 19, 2025.

2.3 The report card is a comprehensive assessment of adult physical activity in Canada. It summarizes data and assigns grades across 17 indicators to assess how Canada is doing in terms of promoting and facilitating physical activity among adults.

2.4 The report card uses a letter-based grading scheme, including grades of A, B, C, D, and F. The highest grade that can be achieved is an A plus (i.e., 94 to 100 per cent), and the lowest possible grade is an F (i.e., zero to 19 per cent).

2.5 Low levels of physical activity are linked to higher risk of chronic disease, anxiety, depression, and premature death. They also drive-up healthcare costs, reduce productivity, and weaken the social fabric of communities.

3. Report Card Results

3.1 The report card assesses people in Canada's daily behaviours across nine indicators. Following are the results:

- a. Less than half of adults living in Canada (46 per cent) are meeting physical activity guidelines, resulting in a C minus grade.
 - At least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week is recommended.
- b. Some (32 per cent) adults took at least the recommended 7,500 steps per day. This resulted in a D grade.
- c. Less than half (42 per cent) of adults met the stationary time recommendation of less than eight hours per day, resulting in a C minus grade.
- d. Many adults (70 per cent) reported that they met the sleep duration recommendation. This resulted in a B grade, the best score in the indicators measuring daily behaviours.
- e. The four other daily behaviours indicators include muscle-strengthening activities, active transportation, sport participation, and recreational screen time. All these indicators received grades between a C plus to a D.

3.2 The report card assesses people in Canada's individual characteristics across three indicators. The results are as follows:

- a. Many adults agreed that they have the physical ability (75 per cent) and psychological ability (85 per cent) to be physically active. This resulted in an A minus.
- b. Many adults also agreed that they have the physical opportunity (74 per cent) and social opportunity (70 per cent) to be physically active. This resulted in a B grade.
- c. Most adults (80 per cent) agreed that they want to be physically active, but only half (51 per cent) agreed that they sometimes do physical activity without thinking. This resulted in a B minus.

3.3 The report card also assessed governmental strategies and investment in physical activity and movement. This indicator received a B grade or a 68 per cent score based on strategies/investments in the following areas: the number and breadth of

physical activity-related policies; supporting actions; accountable organization(s); reporting structures; funding; and monitoring/evaluation plans.

- 3.4 The report card assesses spaces, places and cultural norms in Canada, showcasing four indicators. Following are the results:
- a. The facilities and infrastructure indicator received a grade of B or 74 per cent across the areas of supportive environments for active transportation and supporting access to safe and appropriate facilities for physical activity and sport.
 - b. The programming indicator received a B minus or 64 per cent for key settings supporting physical activity programming for various populations. Settings include municipalities, workplaces, sport and recreation organizations or public health.
 - c. The policies and leadership indicator received a C grade or 48 per cent across the areas of key settings with a formal strategy or plan for physical activity guidelines and information.
 - d. The social environment indicator received a C minus or 45 per cent across the areas of key settings that have enough staff to fulfill physical activity and sport mandates, support volunteers, and have partnerships for facilities delivering programs.
- 3.5 The 2025 report card focused on the theme of stagnation. It describes how modern lifestyles, driven by technological conveniences, have socially engineered movement out of people's daily routines. The report acknowledges that there are benefits gained from technological advancements, like making basic things more accessible to people that need supports, as well as other efficiencies. Still, the report highlights the importance of reducing the unintended consequences of stagnant, modern lifestyles, which are currently decreasing people's daily movement and impacting health.

4. ParticipACTION's Recommendations

- 4.1 The report offers the following recommendations for improvements in each indicator assessed in the report card:
- a. Physical activity and public health sector organizations can communicate that "while increasing the intensity of physical activity can provide extra benefits, moderate-intensity physical activity is enough to benefit health".
 - b. Employers can develop workplace physical activity policies, such as health club use subsidies, paid time off for non-work-related physical activity, and on-site facilities to get people moving during their workday.

- c. Physical activity sector organizations should add recommendations about daily step counts that include 7,500 steps per day with relative targets to meet people where they are at in terms of their overall activity levels.
- d. Physical activity sector organizations and municipalities can develop policies that make educational resources and certified instructor-led fitness classes focused on promoting safe and effective muscle-strengthening activities more accessible.
- e. Municipalities can offer financial incentives to community-based sports programs for adults, especially for priority populations.
- f. City planners can consider adults when designing parks and playgrounds to encourage movement among adults in these settings too (e.g., multi-generational outdoor equipment).
- g. Promote, support, and invest in active transportation and actively designed spaces, focusing on infrastructure, information-sharing, and policies on environmental planning to reduce barriers to daily physical activity.
- h. The Government of Canada should create national physical activity targets, provide provincial and territorial physical activity statistics every two years, and coordinate between national sport-, physical activity-, and recreation-related strategies.

5. Chronic Disease Impacts

- 5.1 As noted in the ParticipACTION report, low levels of physical activity are linked to higher risk of chronic disease. As such, it is important to also consider disease trends which could be linked to the physical activity levels reported.
- 5.2 The Dalla Lana School of Public Health and the Ontario Hospital Association released a report titled [Projected Patterns of Illness in Ontario](#), in October 2024. The report highlights long-term projections of likely disease patterns up to the year 2040 among people aged 30 and older in the province. Long-term projections are valuable for understanding potential issues and solutions for health system and public health planning.
- 5.3 By 2040, Ontario's population is expected to grow by 36 per cent, with large growth expected among those aged 65 to 84 and 85 and older.
- 5.4 Over the past 20 years, the number of people living with major illnesses has nearly doubled, totaling 1.8 million people in 2020.
- 5.5 In 2040, one in four or 3.1 million people over the age of 30 are expected to live with major illness.

- 5.6 In 2040, another 5.1 million people are expected to be living with other illnesses, which would increase from a total of 3.9 million people in 2020.
- 5.7 Also in 2040, the average number of conditions per person aged 30 and older is expected to grow from 1.5 in 2020 to 1.9. The complexity of Ontario's care needs will increase in parallel with this trend.
- 5.8 To make sense of these estimates, the authors discuss how these trends will be influenced by many factors, including expected population growth and aging, increased incidence and earlier onset of chronic disease, and improved survival across all multimorbidity groups (i.e., people living with more than one chronic condition).
- 5.9 Increasing trends of illness in Ontario will increase the volume of patients requiring healthcare, healthcare utilization, and add complexity to the healthcare system.
- 5.10 To address the growing chronic disease burden in Ontario, it is imperative to improve the overall health of the population by addressing a wide range of factors that influence health outcomes, including social, economic, environmental, and behavioural determinants.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction and Pathway in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:
- a. Healthy People, Caring Communities
- H1. Implement preventive strategies to support community health, including food security.
 - H2. Collaborate with partners to respond to complex social issues that improve community safety and well-being, including mental health and addictions.
 - H3. Integrate and co-ordinate service delivery for positive life outcomes, including investments in poverty prevention, housing solutions, and homelessness supports.
 - H5. Provide services for seniors and work with community partners to support aging in place.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 ParticipACTION's 2025 report card, in combination with Ontario's projected patterns of illness statistics demonstrate the importance of planning for sustainable and equitable solutions that promote physical activity and are responsive to Ontario's expected demographic changes.
- 7.2 The Durham Region Health Department continues to look to national, provincial, and local data to inform chronic disease prevention programs.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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