

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Community Strategy for a Healthy, Active Niagara

Final Report of the Regional Chairman's
Leadership Roundtable on Obesity Prevention

Executive Summary

The literature suggests that addressing obesity effectively requires a coordinated and holistic approach across diverse sectors (e.g. government, schools, workplaces, community and recreation agencies, planners and developers, health system, industry, media, families and individuals). Non-traditional partnerships are essential for success. Interventions should address the social, economic and physical factors that affect healthy weights.

To that end, Regional Chairman Peter Partington formed a Leadership Round Table (LRT) on Obesity Prevention in April 2005. Community leaders and Regional and municipal representatives (see Appendix I) came together to guide the development of a clear and unifying community-based strategy for making Niagara a healthier place to live, learn, work and play!

Three areas of focus were identified as the foundation upon which Niagara's strategy would be developed: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, and Community Design. The LRT members were steadfast in their desire to make the strategy "*positive, inclusive, health-based and do-able throughout all Niagara communities*".

The LRT members also identified three enablers that would be critical to the success of the strategy:

- i. Social marketing to motivate behaviour change at the individual level;
- ii. Environmental supports and policies (enhanced guidelines, by-laws and infrastructure) to ensure healthy choices are the easy choice in our physical and social environments; and,
- iii. Strong leadership from community champions and lead organizations to informally and formally influence change.

The strategy framework is comprehensive and occurs at three distinct levels:

- awareness-raising and community engagement;
- improved and enhanced infrastructure and environmental supports; and
- policy development and implementation.

The schematic representation of the three areas of focus and the strategic initiatives within each focus area on the next page reinforces the interconnectedness and synergy within the strategy framework. The written summaries of the specific initiatives reflect the ideas/suggestions generated to date regarding desired outcomes, linkages, implementation, and in some cases, unresolved issues or challenges. They are by no means an authoritative précis, but rather a starting point from which further discussion and refinement can take place.

SCHEMATIC OF TREKZONE STRATEGY KEY FOCUS AEAS, ENABLERS & INITIATIVES



¹ A numbering system has been used for ease of reference. It is not indicative of any prioritization or sequencing of the strategies, except for the TREKZONE Challenge which has been selected as the primary launch activity for the strategy.

Description of Strategic Initiatives

1. **Niagara TREKZONE Challenge**

Niagara residents will be challenged to walk, cycle or rollerblade the length of the Niagara Circle Route (160 km) in real-time or virtually through equivalent daily physical activity. Incentives will be offered to encourage participation. A web-based platform will be designed to monitor participation and track progress, as well as provide related information and resources pertaining to the broader strategy and its 3 areas of focus.

2. **Expanded Physical Activity Options for Children**

Formal and informal after school programs would be gradually expanded to be available at all schools and/or community facilities that are within a 5 minute walking distance of schools.

3. **Adoption of Physical Activity Policies**

This strategy focuses on the development and implementation of one or more policies that promote access to opportunities for daily physical activity in a variety of settings and organizations in Niagara.

4. **FOODZONE Campaign**

Niagara residents will be challenged to examine their “Food Zones” and make small changes towards healthier choices, particularly determining appropriate food zones, types of foods served in a food zone, portion sizes, etc.

5. **Eat Smart! Challenge**

This strategy will focus on increasing the number of restaurants, workplace and school cafeterias, that apply for and qualify for an Eat Smart Award of Excellence so that Niagara becomes known as the region with the most Eat Smart! venues in Ontario.

6. **Adoption of Nutrition Policies**

This strategy focuses on the development and implementation of one or more policies that address the availability, pricing and promotion of healthy food and beverage choices in a variety of organizations in Niagara.

7. **Adoption of Active Transportation Plans**

This strategy would see all Niagara municipalities developing and implementing active transportation plans to increase the number of people walking or cycling daily for short trips and excursions (<30 minutes).

8. **Improved Signage and Infrastructure for Trails**

This strategy focuses on enhancing existing trails networks through improvements that enhance safety, security and usability for diverse users. Features for consideration include improved signage, provision of shade and lighting as appropriate, benches/rest-stops, receptacles for litter at access points, regular trail maintenance during all seasons, etc.

9. **Expand and Integrate Trail Networks**

Niagara Region and the local municipal governments collaborate to plan for and create an integrated network of inter-modal walking and cycling routes (within and between municipalities), with a focus on infrastructure requirements and consistent standards.

Supporting Recommendations

The following recommendations address issues which were identified during the planning process but require further discussion and investigation before a more detailed implementation plan can be developed. The recommendations are viewed as necessary supports for the successful implementation of all nine strategic initiatives previously outlined.

Leadership

1. The Regional Chairman's LRT continue to meet at least twice a year to provide ongoing leadership, guidance and feedback on the implementation issues associated with this community strategy.
2. LRT members recognize the importance of engaging youth in finding workable solutions to increasing healthy eating and physical activity choices amongst their peers and agree to work collectively to establish a Youth Action Advisory Group (or groups) to develop, plan and coordinate activities and events for youth 13-18 years of age.
3. The Regional Municipality of Niagara continue to provide dedicated staff in a coordinating capacity to facilitate ongoing collaboration and coordination of efforts within and across the nine strategic initiatives.

Community Partnerships and Resource Contributions

4. LRT members support in principle the need to seek out alternate sources of funding to support the implementation of these strategic initiatives (e.g., grants, corporate sponsorship, fundraising, etc.) and agree to collaborate on securing these alternate funding sources where appropriate.
5. LRT members obtain the authority required from their organizations to actively support the implementation of the various initiatives within the strategy with both in-kind and direct financial support.

Evaluation

6. LRT members recognize that further discussions and planning are required to identify feasible strategies for evaluating the progress and outcomes associated with the various strategies and agree to work collectively to develop a comprehensive evaluation plan.
7. The Regional Municipality of Niagara, in collaboration with appropriate community partners, will prepare and distribute a Community Report Card summarizing progress on strategy implementation.
8. Given the lack of local data pertaining to the prevalence of overweight/obesity for children and youth, Niagara's school boards in collaboration with Public Health and Brock University, consider collecting Body Mass Index height and weight ratio and waist circumference data from elementary-age students beginning in JK and at pre-determined milestones thereafter to monitor the status of local childhood obesity rates.

Future Planning

9. LRT members recognize that further discussions and planning are required to identify feasible strategies for improving access to healthy food choices and physical activity opportunities for low income and otherwise disadvantaged Niagara residents.

Regional Chairman's Leadership Roundtable on Obesity Prevention Member List

<u>NAME</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AGENCY</u>
Peter Partington	Regional Chairman & Chair LRT	Niagara Region
Anne Angelone	Regional Councillor	Niagara Region
Hon. Jim Bradley	MPP St. Catharines	Minister of Tourism Minister Responsible for Seniors
Steve Butz	CEO	YMCA of Niagara
Corwin Cambray	Planning Commissioner	Niagara Region
Judy Casselman	Regional Councillor	Niagara Region
Dalton Clark	Board Member	District School Board of Niagara
John Corlett	Dean, Applied Health Sciences	Brock University
Angelo Di Ianni	Director of Education	Niagara Catholic District School Board
Damian Goulbourne	Mayor	City of Welland
Pat Heidebrecht	Director of Children's Services	Niagara Region
Warren Hoshizaki	Director of Education	District School Board of Niagara
David Howes	President	Lincoln Fabrics
Dragan Matovic	Vice President and Director	Fallsview Golf Inc.
Paul McCuaig	Publisher	St. Catharines Standard
Dan Patterson	President	Niagara College
Tim Rigby	Mayor	City of St. Catharines
Ted Salci	Mayor	City of Niagara Falls
Dr. William Shragge	Chief of Staff	Niagara Health System
Gord Singleton	Community Ambassador	
Wendy Southall	Police Chief	Niagara Regional Police
Marie Alexander (<i>designate</i>)	Manager Human Resources	Niagara Regional Police
Bruce Timms	Regional Councillor & Chair, Public Health and Social Services Committee	Niagara Region
Mary Turner	Vice President Service and Operations	Canadian Tire Financial Services
Tonya Verbeek	Community Ambassador	
Dan Whipple	Board Chair	Niagara Catholic District School Board
Dr. Robin Williams	Medical Officer of Health	Niagara Region
<u>STAFF SUPPORT</u>		
Gary Zalot	Strategic Lead	Niagara Region Public Health
Ellen Wodchis	Director, Chronic Disease Prevention	Niagara Region Public Health
Dianne Coppola	Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention	Niagara Region Public Health
Martina Smith	Office Assistant, Chronic Disease Prevention	Niagara Region Public Health