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2nd Compulsory Health and Physical Education Activity Credit Talking Points for MPP Meetings

Healthy Living Niagara has produced the enclosed DVD which is a key component of an initiative to increase the physical activity levels of our teenagers. This initiative, ***Reality PE: The 60 Minute Edge***, supports this government's priority to make Ontarians healthier by reducing obesity and increasing daily physical activity.

Healthy Living Niagara urges the Ontario government to fulfill its commitment to obesity prevention by adding a second compulsory Health and Physical Education activity credit for secondary schools.

Evidence of the need for a 2nd compulsory Health and Physical Education Activity Credit

Over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17,

Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily for healthy growth and development. In many cases, children are not meeting this requirement.

In Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere. Dwyer, J.M., Allison, K.R., LeMoine, K.N., Adlaf, E.M., Goodman, J., Faulkner, G.E., Lysy, D.C. (2006). A Provincial Study of Opportunities for School-based Physical Activity in Secondary Schools. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 39(1), 80-86.*

A second compulsory Health and Physical Education activity credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active. (Dwyer et. al, 2006)

"Increasing physical activity during school could be accomplished by ... increasing the number of physical education classes, particularly in secondary school." (Thomas, H., Ciliska, D., Micucci, S., Wilson-Abra, J., Dobbins, M.

Effectiveness of Physical Activity Enhancement and Obesity Prevention Programs in Children and Youth. *PHRED*, page 9, 2004.)

“Since most interventions increased activity because of increased class time focused on activity, it would be prudent to increase the frequency of physical activity classes as well as increasing the number of physical education credits required in secondary school” (Thomas et. al, page 20, 2004.)

“Once physical education becomes an optional subject, enrolment in physical education tends to decrease significantly with the decrease more noticeable for adolescent females than males (Craig & Cameron, 2004; Deacon, 2001; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996; Spence, Mandigo, Poon, & Mummy, 2001).

CAHPERD has launched a new QDPE award for Secondary Schools. More Ontario schools would qualify for this National award if more students took a second PE credit. <http://www.cahperd.ca/eng/rap/index.cfm>

UNESCO, CAHPERD, and ICHPERD advocate for quality physical education programs for students from K – 12: www.ichpersd.org/i/children.html

Evidence of the link between physical activity and academics

“Movement can be an effective strategy to (1) strengthen learning, (2) improve memory and retrieval, and (3) enhance learner motivation and morale.” (Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, Second Edition, page 60, 2005).

“Exercise improves classroom behaviour and academic performance.” (Dwyer, Sallis, Blizzard, Lazarus & Dean, *Relation of academic performance to physical activity and fitness in children*. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 13, 225-237, 2001).

“Regular physical activity and play are essential for physical, mental, psychological and social development from early childhood through adolescence. Involvement in sports can boost children’s health, improve academic performance and help reduce crime.” (UNICEF).

Evidence of the link between physical activity and health

“Coronary heart disease is responsible for a considerable amount of morbidity and mortality from chronic disease in industrialized countries. Physical activity is ...an important risk factor for developing coronary heart disease (Janus Jongbloed Research Centre, Department of Medical Physiology, and Sports Medicine, University of Utrecht, Netherlands).

“Disturbingly, obesity in childhood, particularly in adolescence, is a key predictor of obesity in adulthood. Moreover, morbidity and mortality in the adult population

is increased in individuals who were overweight in adolescence, even if they lose the extra weight during adulthood.” (Richard J. Deckelbaum and Christine L. Williams).

Data from Canada’s National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth demonstrated that overweight/obese children who took part in 18 or more minutes of physical education per day had increased their level of physical activity four years after this exposure (Perez, 2003).

Economic burden of physical inactivity

“In Canada, it is estimated that physical activity increased productivity by the equivalent of Can. \$513. per worker per year, resulting from reduced absenteeism, turnover, and injury prevention.” (Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Report for the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force, 2003).

In 2001 “the economic burden of physical inactivity (in Canada) was \$5.3 billion while the cost associated with obesity was \$4.3 billion. The total economic costs of physical inactivity and obesity represented 2.6% and 2.2% respectively, of the total health care costs in Canada.” (Katzmarzyk, P.T., & Jansen, J. (Feb, 2004). The economic costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity in Canada: an Update.

Other Jurisdictions

Newfoundland recently approved two credits in physical education for graduation from secondary school.

Notes about dissemination of the DVD to date:

- The Minister of Education, Minister of Health Promotion, and MPPs in Niagara received an email regarding the DVD and second compulsory credit on May 23, 2006.
- The Minister of Education’s office acknowledged receipt of correspondence regarding the DVD on June 28, 2006.
- Minister Bradley received a copy of the DVD and a letter regarding the initiative dated September 15, 2006.
- The coordinator for Healthy Living Niagara hand delivered a copy of the DVD to Minister Watson and Mr. Kim Craiton when they visited the Niagara Region Public Health Department on December 4th, 2006.

- An ambassador of Healthy Living Niagara met with Minister Jim Bradley on December 15, 2006 to discuss the DVD. Minister Bradley was supportive of our philosophy and what we are doing.
- Two ambassadors of Healthy Living Niagara met with Mr. Kim Craiton, MPP of Niagara Falls, on January 8, 2007 to discuss the DVD. Mr. Craiton indicated that he supported what we are trying to achieve. He volunteered to read the petitions from the Niagara Region into the Chamber at Queen's Park.

Information and Action Requested

Healthy Living Niagara requests your help in disseminating the DVD, ***Reality PE: The 60 Minute Edge***, and supportive material to other regions, municipalities and school boards across the province to support increased access to physical education in secondary school. Please consider the following:

- bring our petition forward to the Minister of Education and the legislative assembly to show the public support for a 2nd compulsory health and physical education activity credit at the secondary level, and
- request interministerial discussions regarding a 2nd compulsory health and physical education activity credit at the secondary level.
- consider a roundtable to review the value of current compulsory credits and the impact of increasing or decreasing the number of compulsory credits required in any area. Include discussions with Newfoundland and provinces that are considering a 2nd compulsory health and physical education activity credit such as Nova Scotia and Alberta and private schools.
- One of the Ontario Association for the Supervision of Physical and Health Education's (OASPHE's) key priorities is a second compulsory Health and Physical Education activity credit. OASPHE suggests that an immediate action that could be taken is to allow students to take 2 activity credits in a given year. They suggest that this should be a priority for HPE curriculum review.

Concluding Comments

Our government has introduced some promising leadership to address healthy weights and physical activity. Healthy Living Niagara recognizes that we need to work together to have a meaningful impact on these issues. In the end, we will all share in the benefits. ***Reality PE: The 60 Minute Edge*** challenges the status quo of only one mandatory physical education credit. Research indicates that this change could help to increase physical activity levels in our teenagers and ultimately reduce obesity. Let's get it done together!