

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Ontario's Kids are Missing in Action**

*Active Healthy Kids Canada releases the Ontario Supplement to the 2011 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*

**TORONTO, October 14, 2011** – The results are in on the first-ever Ontario Supplement to the 2011 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (Ontario Report Card), and the province has just squeaked by with a passing grade. The Report Card was released yesterday by Active Healthy Kids Canada and its partners, Ophea, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute – Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) and ParticipACTION.

With an overall grade of D- for physical activity, Ontario's children and youth are doing marginally better than the country, but only 32 per cent are taking the recommended 13,500 steps per day to meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

"The indicators show that Ontario is slightly ahead of the country with regards to overall physical activity levels, but this is not a proud point," stated Rachel Colley, Scientific Officer for Active Healthy Kids Canada. "Less than half of Ontario's children and youth are accumulating sufficient steps to achieve desired health benefits and very few are getting the 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity they need every day."

Our children and youth's physical activity levels are not sufficient to prevent the looming healthcare crisis that Ontario is facing. Ensuring children and youth are healthy and active is integral to making Ontario the healthiest province in Canada.

Between 1994 and 2005, rates of high blood pressure among Canadians skyrocketed by 77 per cent, diabetes by 45 per cent and obesity by 18 per cent — affecting both younger and older Canadians. It is also estimated that 45 per cent of males and 40 per cent of females in Ontario are likely to develop cancer in their lifetime. "Physical activity is a key component of chronic disease prevention and efforts must start immediately to preserve and enhance the health and wellness of our children through healthy active living," said Dr. Mark Tremblay, Director of Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research, CHEO Research Institute. "It is imperative that we encourage kids to develop healthy habits early in life and provide supports to ensure they persist for their lifetime."

While there have been some good strides made with respect to policy and strategy development, more effective support for sustained on-the-ground initiatives is needed to facilitate physical activity participation among children and youth in Ontario.

"With the change in Ontario's political landscape, we have a great opportunity to leverage the Ontario Report Card results and recommendations to effect change in our communities," said Chris Markham, Ophea's Executive Director. "By providing implementation support for policies promoting healthy active living we can ensure that our children and youth are physically active now and in the future."

Grades assigned in the Ontario Report Card include:

- "D" for Active Play and Leisure
- "F" for Sedentary Behaviour
- "D" for Physical Education
- "C" for Provincial Government Investments

“We know there are barriers to getting active, due to socioeconomic circumstances, gender, and ethnicity, and we know physical activity levels drop as our children become teens,” said Elio Antunes, Chief Operating Officer, ParticipACTION. “It will take a multi-sectoral approach to overcome these barriers, but efforts can simply start at home, by being a role model for our children.”

### **About the Ontario Report Card**

The Ontario Supplement to the 2011 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth was developed to determine how physical activity indicators differ in this large and diverse province. The Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute’s Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group ([www.cheori.org/halo](http://www.cheori.org/halo)) convened a Research Work Group to lead the coordination, data collection and analysis necessary to develop the Ontario Report Card, and provide access to the latest research findings. Ophea ([www.ophea.net](http://www.ophea.net)) provided project management and communications support for the Ontario Report Card. Communications support is also being provided by ParticipACTION ([www.participACTION.com](http://www.participACTION.com)). Full copies of the short form and long form Report Card, in addition to other tools, can be found at [www.activehealthykids.ca/ontario](http://www.activehealthykids.ca/ontario).

### **About Active Healthy Kids Canada**

Active Healthy Kids Canada is a charitable organization that advocates the importance of physical activity for children and youth where they live, learn, and play. As a national leader in this area, Active Healthy Kids Canada advances knowledge to influence decision-makers at all levels, from policy-makers to parents, in order to increase the attention given to, investment in, and effective implementation of physical activity opportunities for all Canadian children and youth. Production of the Report Card is possible through financial support from The Lawson Foundation, George Weston Limited, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Kellogg’s, Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

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For more information, copies of the Report Card, to schedule an interview or speak to a spokesperson, please contact:

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