



8 80 Cities

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Government of Canada Announces \$3 Million Investment to Support Children’s Physical Activity

Toronto (June 17, 2024) - Green Communities Canada, 8 80 Cities and partners will receive \$3 million from the Public Health Agency of Canada to accelerate the implementation of School Streets across Canada. The National Active School Streets Initiative (School Streets) is a nationwide collaboration between not-for-profit organizations (Green Communities Canada, 8 80 Cities, Centre d’écologie urbaine), research institutions (Université de Montréal, University of British Columbia, Queen’s University, Toronto Metropolitan University), and 16 community partners spanning six provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick).

The School Streets program creates car-free spaces in front of schools at the start and/or end of the school day, providing children with access to environments that encourage physical activity. These car-free spaces will be implemented in up to 30 communities and range from a one-day pop-up event to a year-long intervention tailored to the local context of each participating community. The program will also include match funding and community contributions, amounting to a \$6 million investment in children’s physical activity through the next four years. “We know that many chronic diseases—including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer—are often preventable by managing risk factors, including improving physical activity and fitness” says the Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health. “That is why we are proud to work with organizations like Green Communities Canada that are delivering invaluable community-based projects that will help improve the lives of their community members.” The research institutions will conduct extensive evaluation at select implementation sites, collecting data on the number of participants, their socio-demographic background, and changes to children’s physical activity patterns. This research will be integral to understanding the impact of School Streets on communities, particularly underrepresented groups, including low-income, racialized, and new-to-Canada populations.

“Collecting key evaluative data is essential to understanding the needs and priorities of communities that have been historically underrepresented”, states Dr. Katherine Frohlich, Professor at the Université de Montréal and Scientific Director of the Institute of Population and Public Health at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. “Our evaluation activities will lead to the production of new scientific knowledge in population health intervention research, policy pathways, and recommendation reports to support the further delivery of School Streets programming across the country and potentially beyond.”

The Public Health Agency of Canada’s investment in School Streets will support the goal to increase children’s rates of physical activity and encourage communities across the country to rethink the way school communities are planned and built.



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"In communities across Canada, there has been an alarming decline in the number of children walking and cycling to and from school", says Jared Kolb, Interim Executive Director at Green Communities Canada. "Interventions like School Streets help to create safer and more walkable environments in front of schools, and in turn, support increased physical activity and well-being for children, their families, and the broader community".

For more information about the program, please visit www.greencommunitiescanada.org/programs/school-streets.

Quick Facts

- School Streets have been implemented across many cities in Canada, including in Vancouver, Victoria, Winnipeg, Toronto, Kingston, Mississauga, and Montreal.
- The program team has led highly successful School Streets pilots in the past, including the [Ontario School Streets Pilot](#) project and the [Levelling the Playing Field](#) project.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada will be funding the School Streets program through the Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund. This year, the Fund released \$9 million to support 7 physical activity projects across Canada.

Additional Quotes

"Regular physical activity is one of the best investments we can make in our long-term health. Even small changes like introducing more walking into a daily routine can have positive lifelong impacts, especially if introduced at an early age. These small active changes can help us build healthier and stronger communities. Congratulations to Green Communities Canada and partners for facilitating this program and for creating environments that encourage physical activity for kids and their families." - The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Physical Activity.

"The trip to and from school brings us together as neighbours, friends and community. With the National Active School Streets Initiative, we can create an exciting strategy for the route, by offering safe, engaging and accessible pathways. Let's build good health and relationships along the way!" - Joy Lachica, Deputy Mayor and Peterborough City Councillor Ward 3.

"It is our duty to deploy all possible incentives that will encourage active travel to school. School Streets, such as Place Andrée-Lachapelle or the brand-new square on rue de Lanaudière, not only encourage people to walk or bike to school, but they also create places to socialize where it is good to meet, stroll a little longer, enjoy the community and the outdoors in a comfortable setting. These spaces are precious and must be multiplied." - Marianne Giguère, City Councillor, Plateau-Mont-Royal

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Links

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2024/06/government-of-canada-invests-in-programming-to-promote-physical-activity-and-healthy-living.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2024/06/government-of-canada-invests-in-programming-to-promote-physical-activity-and-healthy-living0.html>
- <https://greencommunitiescanada.org/green-communities-canada-funded-to-support-school-streets/>
- <https://greencommunitiescanada.org/programs/school-streets/>
- https://www.880cities.org/portfolio_page/school-streets/
- <https://www.changerlesreglesdujeu.ca/fr/accueil>

Visuals

Photos from previous School Streets across Canada are available in [this folder](#).

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