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ACTIVATE AURORA

By Ron Weese

What began as a simple but powerful report prepared by Statistics Canada and the World Health Organization in 2006, set off a Global movement in Canada and abroad.
That statistic was that, for the first time since projections like this had been kept, a child born in that year would have a shorter lifespan that his/her parents. It caused alarms and introspection.
What brought us to this point in 2006 is irrelevant. It is a matter of history and is probably worth review to avoid mistakes of the past but, suffice it to say, a number of forces; technological, socio-economic, educational, recreational, sport and health-care related led us down this pathway.
It certainly wasn't because of lack of promotion because everyone knows today that physical activity is a healthy habit. Everyone also knows the relationship sedentary living and poor diets have on health outcomes.
Participaction has been screaming this out for decades and the media is full of advice. Not a person who can read or watch media can claim to be unaware.
So, what has 40 years or so of promotion given us? It has given us a population who is more sedentary than ever before; a population who is overweight with the highest incidence of obesity and type-2 diabetes ever recorded; a population who has soaring orthopedic problems and rising hip and knee replacements.
The empirical evidence is available at Canadian Sport for Life or Participaction, it is in the health, epidemiology and physiology literature. ?Sedentarism? is now a new term being used and a new type of scientific study has arisen called ?Inactivity Physiology? that studies the atrophy of the body under sedentary conditions.
The prognosis is also disheartening when it is reported by such credible sources as the Harvard Medical School that by 2030 almost 50 per cent of the health care dollar is to be spent on the diagnosis, treatment and compensation for those with diabetes alone. This is a tragic health crisis with an economic imperative attached.
By the way, when I use the word ?population,? I mean the whole population. No age is exempt from this looming health problem.
It is time for us to stop promoting healthy physical activity because promotion hasn't changed behaviours. It is time to start delivering meaningful programs to help stimulate physical activity in everybody.
Activate Aurora has begun this rather long, but important delivery process and in coming weeks, months and perhaps years the implementation of these programs, that benefit all ages and stages of development, will be fully underway. Schools, municipal and commercial recreation, older adult organizations and seniors providers, sport, higher education and health care are all engaged.
Through a program of awareness and education, capacity building and program development, we intend to change attitudes and ultimately behaviours so people have the competence and confidence they need to create their own healthy lifestyles.
Through this column and information about Activate Aurora at www.activateaurora.com, I hope you will join us on-line and through our media campaign so you can get and keep informed. Most of all, participate in programs you see offered.
It is time to act for your family
and self.