



Be part of the
Walkolution!

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

OWN - Ontarians Walking NOW!

OWN, Ontarians Walking Now, is a two year project with the goal of assisting communities to put pedestrians first in their planning processes to create sustainable, healthy, active communities while providing exciting, interesting walking resources and activities to meet the urgent need to get Ontarians walking, today. OWN is a provincial Communities in Action Fund project, with financial support from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion's Active 2010 initiative (<http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/sportandrec/active2010.asp>).

OWN will bring together through a series of regional workshops, teams of municipal leaders, planners, transportation demand management professionals, parks, health, fitness and recreation professionals to work synergistically on creating walkable communities and the promotion of walking for all community members. Workshop participants will be introduced to the innovative programs of StepsCount (<http://stepscount.com/>), including Get W.I.T.H. It! - a program that brings together various community service providers and businesses with schools to offer a low-cost, highly active, and social walking program for all community members. This program has been piloted with an outstanding degree of success in the small northern community of Deep River, Ontario.

The newest fitness trend, Nordic walking, that is spreading rapidly throughout Ontario this year will be introduced. Immensely popular in Europe, it is walking with the assistance of especially designed urban poles that transform Canada's most popular physical activity into a total body workout that uses an impressive 90% of the body's muscles. Vancouver based Urban Poling (<http://www.urbanpoling.com/>) will demonstrate just how easy, effective, and fun this activity is.

Starting the development of a customized community action plan will be an important component of the full day workshop. And, when the workshop is over, OWN team members will follow up with the communities involved in the project at the three, six, and nine month intervals, to ensure implementation of the action steps and provide ongoing support and expertise.

With the issues of obesity, rising oil prices, global warming, pollution/environmental degradation, population growth, traffic congestion and associated public health issues, citizens and politicians alike need to think about serious change, NOW. "As simple as it sounds, one way we can have a substantive impact on all these issues is for people to walk more instead of driving" says Mandy Johnson of Green Communities Canada. "In order to encourage citizens to walk, we need to follow the lead of European countries where villages, towns, and cities have created attractive, effective, and safe walkable environments."

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(OWN - Ontarians Walking NOW!)

Green Communities Canada, organizer of 2007's successful World Record Walk, Walk21 Toronto 2007 Conference, and the Canadian Walkability Roadshow, has formed a collaborative partnership with Walk & Bike for Life, StepsCount, and Urban Poling to continue the momentum of the *Walkolution* with OWN! "It is not the time to be taking baby steps. We need to take major leaps. Over the last 80 years we've been building cities for cars ... and not for people. We need a major shift," states Gil Penalosa, Executive Director of Walk & Bike for Life.

Communities interested in participating in an OWN Regional Workshop in the spring of 2009 should contact Mandy Johnson, Program Consultant with Green Communities Canada at mjohnson@greencommunitiescanada.org or by phoning 1-877-533-4098 on or before September 30, 2008.

Green Communities Canada is a national association of community-based non-profit organizations that deliver innovative environmental programs and services, with a focus on household and community action. Green Communities Canada supports member organizations in working together to achieve environmental sustainability, including healthy ecosystems and communities, sustainable resource use, and clean air, water, and soil. See www.greencommunitiescanada.org.

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