

MEDIA RELEASE
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Green Communities Canada Launches Provincial iCANwalk Campaign

Ajax, ON, September 10 – Green Communities Canada is challenging Ontarians everywhere to walk, bike, or use any other form of active transportation instead of traveling by car for short trips, and to record their efforts for one month. The provincial iCANwalk campaign kicks off today with an event in Ajax thanks to a *Community Go Green* grant from the Government of Ontario.

iCANwalk is an initiative of the Canada Walks department of Green Communities Canada. The iCANwalk Pledge, accessible at www.icanwalk.ca, is a call to action encouraging Ontarians to use active transportation thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality.

Many of Ontario's municipalities recognize the important benefits of walking and cycling and are taking great strides to plan and design communities for active transportation. Ajax is a great example.

"In Ajax, we have several initiatives to help reduce traffic," says Mayor Steve Parish. "These include the implementation of a pedestrian and biking strategic plan, our pedometer challenges and our Newcomers to Canada Walking Together group. Ajax is also striving to connect all trails and roadways within town, so making the decision to use travel methods other than a car is an easy choice."

If every driver in Ontario replaced just one kilometre per week of driving with active transportation, it would eliminate 135,626 tonnes of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere every year. That's about 33,907 elephants!

"It's amazing how small individual changes can add up to big environmental benefits," says Kate Hall, project coordinator. "For example, a typical mid-sized car gives off four tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, roughly the weight of an average adult African elephant. Just imagine what we could achieve by leaving the elephant in the room!"

Research shows that there is a lot of potential to make the shift to active transportation as the majority of car trips are short and can easily be walked or biked. Even in more rural areas where it may be necessary to drive a long distance to the closest community, you can choose to park in town and walk to your destinations.

"Using active transportation lowers our dependency on oil, reduces traffic congestion and saves you money," continued Hall. "And it doesn't take as long as you might think. Walking one kilometre only takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Or you can bike the same distance in just five minutes. Walkable communities are also good for business because cars don't shop, people do."

Active transportation is also a great way to build some physical activity into your daily routine, which can help to reduce your risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, osteoporosis and hypertension.

Take the iCANwalk Pledge at www.icanwalk.ca and you will be eligible to win fabulous prizes such as Urban Poles, pedometers, iPod Nanos or Canada Walks merchandise.

Green Communities Canada is a national association of non-profit organizations that deliver innovative, practical environmental solutions to Canadian households and communities (www.gca.ca).

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