



# Simply Halton

Your Halton  
Connection  
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www.halton.ca

## Let's get active with our kids



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

According to the 2000 Canadian Health Survey, children and youth today are 40 per cent less active than they were 30 years ago. This lack of physical activity is predicted to lead to serious health problems, earlier in life.

Consider these facts:

- Over half of Canadians aged five to 17 are not active enough for healthy growth and development (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute).
- In Ontario, 54 per cent of children and youth are not engaged in enough physical activity to keep themselves healthy.
- In Halton Region, less than 50 per cent of students aged 12-14 are not physically active for even 15 minutes every day in their leisure time (Canadian Community Health Survey).
- According to the Canadian Medical Association Journal, the obesity rate has increased dramatically over the last 15 years. This is cause for concern, since there is a tendency for obese children to remain obese as adults.

When I was growing up, physical activity was a daily part of life, whether it was street hockey, pond hockey or riding a bike to the local pool for a swim. Walking to and from school was the norm.

Today, time pressures, safety concerns and a whole host of other issues mean that our children are becoming less active. According to Statistics Canada, even sports participation is in decline in Canada. Boys' participation in sports declined from 66 per cent in 1992 to 56 per cent in 2005. Over the same time period, sports participation of girls dropped slightly from 49 per cent to 45 per cent.

We need to work together to build opportunities for activity back into daily life. Physical activity - along with a nutritious diet - is key to maintaining a healthy weight.

The Region's **Live Outside the Box Challenge** is a great way to create awareness for yourself, your children, or your students about the amount of time you spend in front of a TV, computer or video game versus the amount of time you spend being physically active. The program also offers tips on building activity into your daily routine. Even something simple can be a starting point. Instead of driving, take your kids for a walk to the park or library, or

**Health Canada recommends that children and youth get 90 minutes of physical activity daily.**

invite them along when you walk the dog. Grab a skipping rope and challenge your kids to a skip off! Take advantage of the free skate time offered at some arenas over the holidays, and try ice-skating.

Health Canada recommends that children and youth get 90 minutes of physical activity daily. The walk to school is another way to work towards this goal.

Although not every child lives in a community where they can walk to school, recent research suggests that while 68 per cent of Canadian children do live within a half hour walk from school, only 36 per cent walk as a rule. Even in neighbourhoods where children are bussed to school, parents or caregivers often drive their children to the bus stop.

With the implementation of the Halton Region **Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS)** pilot project, our goal is to show that a program can be implemented and operated year round that encourages children to walk instead of being driven to school.

Another positive development is the Ministry of Education's introduction of Daily Physical Activity as a mandatory component of the elementary curriculum. This initiative requires a minimum of 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day during instructional time.

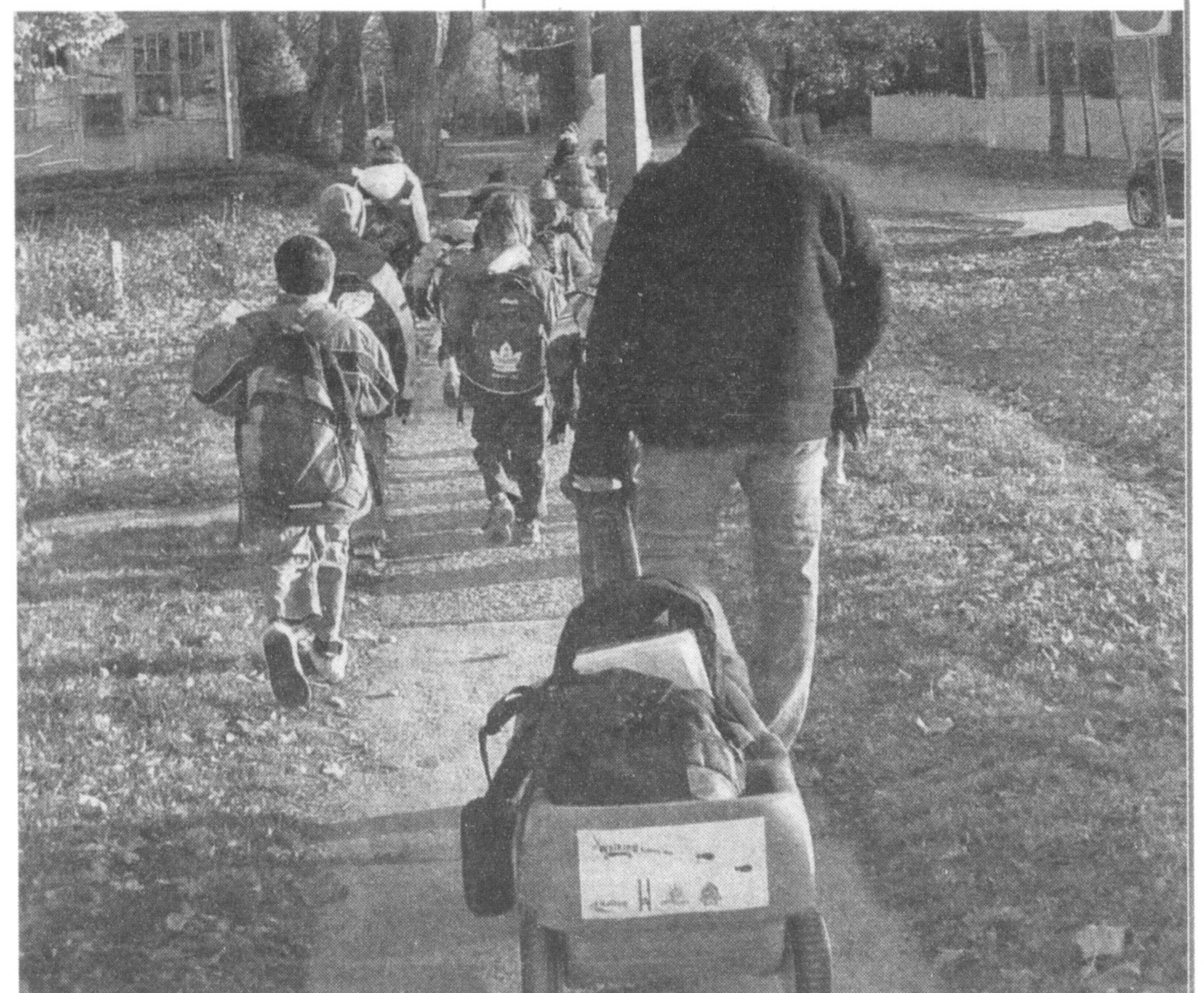
Obesity is a complex issue that requires a partnership approach. There is no easy solution to produce sustainable, long-term change, but I believe we have started to take steps in the right direction. Improving health through sport, play and other forms of physical activity such as walking, can help build lasting habits of physical fitness, while tackling the growing problem of childhood obesity. Let's work together to continue building the kind of environment that will help us all achieve and maintain healthy weights.

To learn more, visit [www.halton.ca](http://www.halton.ca).

## The ASRTS Pilot

The ASRTS program is focused on children who live within walking distance to school. Schools participating in the pilot attended a kick-off forum to learn more about the program this past spring, then chose walking routes which were assessed, through walkabouts, for infrastructure and safety. Action plans were developed and implemented over the summer.

Early indications suggest that the pilot is right on track. Parents, students and teachers are enthusiastic and have customized the program to make it work for their own schools. Some have been piloting "walking school buses." With a walking school bus, adult volunteers walk the route, pick up children along the way and take them to school. Other schools are involved in a special pilot of School Route signs. Students and teachers at one school are walking the neighbourhood during break on "Walking Wednesdays". And many participated in International Walk to School Day in October. Read more about the pilot project at [www.halton.ca/asrts](http://www.halton.ca/asrts).



### December Meetings at Halton Region Headquarters

- Dec 2, 9:30 a.m.** Health & Social Services Cte
- Dec 3, 9:30 a.m.** Planning & Public Works Cte
- Dec 4, 9:30 a.m.** Administration & Finance Cte
- Dec 15, 9:30 a.m.** Budget Review
- Dec 17, 9:30 a.m.** Regional Council
- Dec 24 - Jan 1** Offices closed for holidays

We welcome your feedback. Contact Access Halton at [accesshalton@halton.ca](mailto:accesshalton@halton.ca)  
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