



Encouraging more young Quebecers to get moving

For Québec Sports and Physical Activity Day , a time when we celebrate the joys of being active, I would like to remind you that experts are sounding the alarm. Our kids are not moving enough! Only 9% of them get the recommended 60 minutes of moderate- to high-intensity physical activity per day. Why are youth less and less active? The results of the ParticipACTION Report Cards are stark: kids are not walking to school, they are too tired to move, and they are spending less time playing outdoors and more time in front a screen. What are the consequences? Obesity is expected to be the pandemic of the 21st century and children are now suffering from diseases once reserved for adults (high cholesterol, diabetes, hypertension). It is a real public health issue and we must act fast.

So, what should we do? Prevention is key. Learning how to move is just as important as learning how to read or write. And it has a name: physical literacy. Running. Throwing. Catching. Jumping. Hitting... Physical literacy is about helping youth to develop their basic motor skills so they will gain the confidence, motivation and knowledge they need to enjoy being active at an early age. More specifically, it means we must offer physical activities in a stimulating, safe and respectful environment that will allow youth to become more self-assured and motivated, explore different basic movements through play and learn about the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle. A child who has acquired physical literacy will have a greater chance of being active for life and growing up healthy.

I would like to get youth to love being active at an early age and for the rest of their lives. Organizations like the YMCA are part of the solution, but without a collective effort, there is little chance that our kids will adopt an active lifestyle. So, it is important to make sure that healthy choices are more accessible and more attractive to youth, and easier to integrate into their daily lives. Providing financial assistance to more children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Enacting policies that promote physical activity. Offering a rewarding experience with qualified resources and specialized equipment and facilities. Increasing opportunities to be active, for example, by organizing sports events for the whole family. Right now.

As a society, in our rush to strengthen our children's school literacy, we have forgotten the importance of physical literacy. Something that we took for granted just a few years ago, we must now teach our children to take pleasure in sports and physical activities. Do they have opportunities to explore different activities and movements? Are they having fun? Are they getting a chance to socialize and make friends? Do they get an opportunity play non-competitively? On this 2018 edition of Québec Sports and Physical Activity Day , I hope that youth get moving just for the fun of it!

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